

WHAT IS THIS GAME?

This is a game about fighting monsters. About larger-than-life, extraordinary heroes plunging into battle against terrifying, monstrous enemies.

That covers a lot! So let's get specific and talk about what this game is, and what it is not.

This game will absolutely feature dungeons. Ancient underground complexes filled with ravenous undead or creeping oozes. But it isn't a dungeon crawler. It's not about "clearing rooms." It's not a survival horror game where you must track light and food and the weight of every object you carry.

You can fight monsters in a dungeon, but the game is not *about* dungeons. Lots of games focus on that gameplay and do it really well! Like Shadowdark.

It's not a wilderness exploration game, aka a hex crawl. It's not about surviving in extreme weather, getting lost, or trying to navigate your way back to safety.

You can fight monsters in the wilderness, even run a whole campaign in the wilderness, but this game is not about the wilderness. We love games that focus on that fantasy, like Forbidden Lands.

You can run adventures with horror themes, but this is not a horror roleplaying game like Call of Cthulhu. Your sessions can and will feature comedy, but this isn't a comedy RPG like Paranoia.

We genuinely love all those games. But we love them because they focus on specific genres of gameplay and deliver on them really well.

Our game is heroic fantasy. That's its genre. Extraordinary people fighting dragons and necromancers.

But "heroic fantasy" is still a little too broad for our purposes, so we added two other keywords to explain how our game might be different from other games in this genre: tactical and cinematic.

These terms are just guidelines. A vibe. But we find them useful when trying to choose between different features. "Both of these ideas are cool, but which is the most cinematic? The most heroic?"

So let's talk about what we mean when we use these terms.

TACTICAL

Strategy is: "What are we trying to do?" Break a siege, free a prisoner, rescue a captive, steal a tome of ancient lore. Strategy is about long-term goals.

Tactics is about: "How are we going to do that?" We're going to ... surround them! Sneak around them! Pick them off one by one! Kill their leader first. Kill their priest first! "No resurrections!"

In a tactical game, *positioning matters*. So our game is played on a grid. Effects and distances are measured in squares. This means everyone is looking at the same problem, and there is no ambiguity regarding where the heroes and villains are in relation to each other. The hobgoblin troopers are setting themselves up in a line to

stop our tactician and fury from getting into melee with the hobgoblin war mage. We can all see that happening, and can talk about what we're going to do to stop it.

That means *teamwork matters*. That's why initiative works the way it does—to encourage the players to plan! "Okay, you use Concussive Slam on that trooper, it'll push him back, and on my turn I can use Phalanx Forward to get us all into melee with the death captain."

We think focusing on teamwork also makes the game more heroic! :D

In a tactical game, you have many choices each round. You are never reduced to just swinging your sword. You have options. If we do a good job, you don't feel like you outlasted your opponents because you wore their hit points down before they could reduce yours to 0—you feel like you *beat* those hobgoblins! Through stealth and sorcery, coordination and ferocity!

As you play with the same group of characters, you learn what they can all do. You discover synergies, "combos." Some of them intended by the designers, some not! You start to learn these unique characters, and rely on them to do their cool things. It's a great feeling when another player comes up with a cool plan that relies on your unique abilities.

You learn which characters are the "squishies" who need to be protected or healed. You learn which characters can push themselves right to the edge and keep fighting. "Don't worry about healing Barlaca. She's our fury. She's happier with 3 Stamina."

Our game is not *about* tactics. It's not a war game. But it is tactical.

HEROIC

Our game is *definitely* about heroism! :D

For us, this means a couple of things. It means we don't assume your character is primarily motivated by greed. They might be! But we don't *assume* that. Instead we assume you're going to do the right thing. It might take some convincing, and there might be some reluctant heroes in your party, but that's part of the fun!

You should absolutely be able to run a [Chain of Acheron](#)-style campaign where the heroes are hard-bitten mercenaries in a morally ambiguous world. But that's not the baseline assumption. The fiction and adventures that inspire us feature epic villains trying to remake the world in their image, and the dashing, unyielding heroes who strive against them even in the face of impossible odds.

So that's one component of the heroic keyword. But another component, equally important, is what kinds of things happen "on-screen," so to speak. This is very closely related to the cinematic keyword.

For instance, you never see Indiana Jones having to find a local sporting goods store because he needs to stock up on ammo. You never see Katniss Everdeen have to stop and take a shower because she stinks.

These things do happen. No one watching *Raiders of the Lost Ark* thinks that Indy's gun is magical and doesn't need

bullets—but we just don’t need to see Indy doing that stuff. We don’t need to waste time on it.

Likewise in our game, we don’t worry about stuff that heroes in fiction tend not to worry about. We don’t worry how much everything you’re carrying weighs. If you try to lift a bear, you might have trouble, sure. But nowhere on your character sheet are you tracking the weight of every item.

You don’t track food such as rations, and you don’t worry about how many torches you have. Light might factor into a specific environment, because that can be a fun tactical challenge, but the game doesn’t expect that everyone is always worried about running out of light.

Basically, we worry only about those things you’d see your characters doing in a movie, or a comic, or a novel about their adventures. Assume all the tedious stuff happens off-screen.

Speaking of things happening on-screen ...

CINEMATIC

Closely tied to the heroic keyword, the cinematic keyword is about how we like powers and abilities with a strong visual component. You can imagine your character doing or saying these things. “In All This Confusion” is a good name for the shadow’s ability to slip out of melee and retreat to safety. The text of the ability says how it works, but the name creates a visual that explains *how* it’s working.

When Sir Vanazor the dragon knight fury leaps onto a goblin war spider, cleaving through the goblins riding the creature in a single turn, you can *see* it in your mind. It feels like a movie. It doesn’t feel simply as if you rolled well, but like an epic scene, complete with slow motion and a Carpenter Brut soundtrack.

You should imagine your tactician character leading the battle, granting your allies free attacks, extra maneuvers. *Coordinating* the battle. That’s what the name implies. And if we’ve done a good job, when you read the character’s abilities, you think, “Yes! This is what I was imagining! I can’t wait to do this!”

FANTASY

Just ... you know ... it’s got dragons and stuff. :D

It’s worth mentioning—while everyone basically already knows what fantasy means in this context, we do imagine it a little more broadly than your average classical medieval fantasy. We like that stuff! Vasloria is our medieval European fantasy analog with knights on horseback and wizards in towers. But we also like high fantasy urban intrigue, and so we’re developing Capital, the City of the Great Game, the Greatest City In This or Any Age. Vasloria is mostly humans and elves and orcs and dwarves, but Capital has dozens, *hundreds* of different ancestries in it.

Looking back at movies like *Star Wars* and the work of artists like Chris Foss, that ’70s stuff now seems explicitly fantastical. There’s nothing scientific or even plausible

about a lightsaber or a John Berkey spaceship. But damn, they look cool!

So our setting includes the timescape—our multiverse, of which the world of Orden containing Capital and Vasloria is only one part. The timescape is more explicitly “space fantasy.”

These core rules mostly cover the classic fantasy stuff. But we think Capital and the timescape will help us deliver a game where more people can see their fantasy in our worlds.

For us, fantasy includes magic, like wizards casting spells, and psionics, the natural and focused ability some creatures have to manipulate and warp reality with their minds. You know, telekinesis and telepathy! Jean Grey style! Although heroes have a few of these options in the core rules, you’ll see more psionics in later products.

IF YOU’RE COMING FROM D20 FANTASY...

If you’ve most often played medieval fantasy RPGs that use a d20 and have Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma as primary creature statistics, you’re going to notice a lot of similarities between that style of game and *Draw Steel*. But as talked about above, our game is explicitly heroic and tactical, and it includes our own ideas of what a fantasy world should include. As such, you’ll definitely notice some differences. We might use similar terminology for rules, but our use of those game terms might mean different things, because we’re trying to support a specific style of play and there are only so many words that make sense to use with a fantasy game in the English language.

Here are a few key distinctions between this game and typical d20 fantasy that you’ll notice right away. These aren’t the only distinctions, but they’re the most obvious:

Attacks automatically deal damage. You can still have a bad turn! A tier one result is not awesome, but at least you’re making progress. The trick is: who’s making progress *faster*? You or the monsters? Since there’s no “I miss, next” in this game, fights tend to be short. 5 rounds is a *long* fight. Because everyone’s always doing damage!

You don’t need to rest all the time. Most d20 fantasy games are games of attrition. Your spell slots and other features dwindle as the adventuring day goes on. In *Draw Steel*, you need to rest to regain your Stamina and Recoveries (the stat that determine how robust you are in combat). But all characters earn the ability to use their magic and other awesome abilities as they adventure, encouraging you to press on heroically.

Character options are different. We very strongly recommend you start by looking through the character creation section *before* you decide what you want to play. You can't just assume the conduit is "basically a cleric." In some ways it is! But in other ways it's very different. You may have some cool character archetype you love to play in d20 Fantasy and you're dying to see how it works in *Draw Steel*, but you'll have a lot more fun if you start by browsing the Ancestries and Class sections and being inspired. Once you know how the game works, you'll have a better handle on how to build your favorite character in here.

Smaller bonuses and penalties. *Draw Steel* is built around the roll of two ten-sided dice to produce three possible outcomes. On the surface, this might not seem that different from rolling a twenty-sided die and having two outcomes, but we've run the math. A lot. A bonus of +1 or penalty of -2 is significant in *Draw Steel*, much more so than in a typical d20 fantasy game. That means you should feel pretty good attempting most power rolls—the rolls you make to determine success out of combat—if you have a decent characteristic bonus on those rolls. And if you have a specific skill that applies to a power roll made as a test outside of combat, you'll do even better.

Our game has a lot of skills. Your character can make use of a long list of skills, but we don't expect you to memorize that list. We get into why there are so many skills in the [Tests](#) chapter, but the short version is that we think having a lot of skills allows you to create more distinct and specialized heroes, which supports the sort of gameplay we want to see in *Draw Steel*. And skills in *Draw Steel* aren't tied to characteristics. If you're trying to lose someone in a crowd? You can use Presence to Hide! Why not?

We won't be able to point out every difference. Beyond what's noted here, don't assume that these rules work like any d20 fantasy game you've played. We don't have the space to point out every exception. So if you're in doubt about how something works, put d20 fantasy out of your mind and read our rules without those assumptions, and you'll find that things make better sense. If you're still confused, stop by the [MCDM Discord](#) and ask. We've got tons of awesome community members ready to help!

We don't expect you to do everything to the letter. This is actually one thing *Draw Steel* does have in common with d20 fantasy. This is a big book of rules! Don't stress if you need to look something up or make a ruling about an edge case on the fly. If everyone's having fun, you're doing it right.

THE BASICS

The flow of playing *Draw Steel* is like playing any other tabletop roleplaying game with a Director (also called a Game Master or GM in other games). Play is a conversation between the Director and the heroes that describes the story. The Director sets the scene, describing the important elements of the environment that the heroes would notice.

Director: *You stand in the doorway of the top level of the ruined necromancer's tower. The air is stale and reeks of death. A pale full moon shines through a broken ceiling, illuminating six sarcophagi upon a raised dais, each with a lid carved in the likeness of a devil. Broken flasks, beakers, and other laboratory glass covers the floor.*

After the Director sets the scene, each player describes how their character interacts with the area. The Director then describes how the environment and any creatures in it respond to the heroes' actions.

Alyssa (playing Jorn): *I'm going to hang out at the back of the group with my warhammer drawn. I want to be ready in case any of those skeletons we snuck by on the lower levels make their way up the stairs.*

Matt (playing Linn): *Linn uses her Telekinesis ability to sweep up the glass on the floor and form a path free of glass that goes from the door to the dais.*

James (playing Korvo): *I'll light a torch as I step into the room. Is there anything new we can see now?*

Director: *With the glass cleared away and brighter light glowing in the room, you can see that the floor is covered in faded sigils.*

At some point, a player will have their hero attempt a task that has a risk of failing in a way that is narratively interesting. In such cases, the Director calls for some dice to be rolled! Don't worry—the rules outline when and how to do this.

Grace (playing Val): *Before anyone steps on them, I want to examine the symbols and figure out what they mean.*

Director: *Okay, well for that, I need you to make an easy Reason test.*

Grace: *I got a 12! What do I know?*

Director: *You can tell these old sigils are part of a necromancy spell that has been woven into the stone floor. Also, Jorn can hear something coming up the steps. It's the clicking and clacking of bone on stone.*

Alyssa: *Uh, let's make a decision here, folks. We got boneheads incoming!*

Matt: *Linn has had enough of this dillydallying. She moves to the dais and ushers everyone inside the room so we can shut and barricade the door.*

Grace: *Uh-oh.*

Director: *Before anyone else can move, Linn's foot connects with one of the sigils. A burst of red lightning cracks from the place where her foot touched the floor, running to the walls and up to the ceiling.*

Matt: *Oh, right. Necromancy.*

Grace: *Yeah. Should have warned you.*

Director: *The whole tower starts to sway as the sarcophagus lids slide to the floor and clawed undead hands emerge from within. Six decaying devils, each tattooed with glowing green runes, rise. They're eager for violence.*

James: *I think we found the Rotting Lords of Hell.*

Director: *Draw steel!*

When combat begins, it's time to use a square-gridded map and miniatures to represent the position of the heroes relative to their enemies and the environment. The rules become a little more granular during combat to keep things interesting and fair, but the idea that the game is a conversation between the Director and the other players remains the same.

CHARACTERISTICS

Each creature in the game has five characteristics that represent their capacity to interact with other creatures and the environment.

MIGHT

Might (MGT) represents strength and brawn. A creature's ability to break down doors, swing an axe, stand up during an earthquake, or hurl an ally across a chasm is determined by Might.

AGILITY

Agility (AGL) represents coordination and nimbleness. A creature's ability to backflip out of danger, shoot a crossbow, dodge an explosion, or pluck keys from a guard's belt is determined by Agility.

REASON

Reason (REA) represents a logical mind and education. A creature's ability to solve a puzzle that unlocks a door, recall lore about necromancy, decipher a coded message, or blast a foe with psionic power is determined by Reason.

INTUITION

Intuition (INU) represents instincts and experience. A creature's ability to hear the approach of a distant rider, figure out the tell of a bluffing gambler, calm a rearing horse, or track a monster across the tundra is determined by Intuition.

PRESENCE

Presence (PRS) represents force of personality. A creature's ability to lie to a judge, convince a crowd to join a revolution, impress a queen at a royal banquet, or cast a magic spell by singing a song is determined by Presence.

CHARACTERISTIC SCORES

Each characteristic has a score that runs from -5 to +5. The higher a score, the more impact the creature has with

that characteristic. A baby bunny rabbit would have a Might score of -5, while an ancient dragon would have a Might score of 5. The average human has a score of 0 in all their characteristics. Characteristic scores are added to power rolls—the dice rolls you make whenever your character attempts a task with an uncertain outcome (see [Power Rolls](#)).

DICE

This game uses ten-sided dice (also called d10s). Each player and the Director should have two of these. The game also makes occasional use of a six-sided die (called a d6), so it's helpful if each player has one or two of those as well.

D3s

On rare occasions, the rules ask a player to roll one or more three-sided dice (also called d3s). If you don't have a d3, you can roll a six-sided die instead, treating a roll of 1–2 as a 1, a roll of 3–4 as a 2, and a roll of 5–6 as a 3.

POWER ROLLS

Whenever a hero or other creature in the game attempts a task with an uncertain outcome, such as attacking a foe, sneaking by a guard patrol without being seen, or persuading a queen to provide military aid, the creature makes a power roll to determine the outcome of their actions.

TYPES OF POWER ROLLS

The game uses three types of power rolls. An ability roll is used when you activate certain abilities to determine their impact. For instance, if a fury uses their Brutal Slam ability to attack an enemy, their ability power roll determines how much damage the enemy takes and how far back the enemy is pushed. (See [Abilities](#) for more information.)

A resistance roll is a power roll you make to avoid harmful effects, whether generated by another creature's abilities, the environment, or some other source. When you make a resistance roll against an ability used by another creature, you subtract one of that creature's characteristics from your resistance roll.

A test is a power roll you make outside of using your abilities to affect or interact with the world around you. A tactician might not have an ability that lets them climb up the face of a cliff, so climbing is an activity they can attempt with a test. An elementalists doesn't have an ability that lets them automatically intimidate a cultist into backing down from a fight, but they can make a test if they want to try. See [Tests](#) for more information.

MAKING A POWER ROLL

When you make a power roll, you roll two ten-sided dice (sometimes noted as 2d10 in the rules) and add one of your characteristics. The characteristic you add depends on the kind of roll you're making, as outlined in [Abilities](#) and [Tests](#).

POWER ROLL OUTCOMES

The result of a power roll determines your outcome tier—three levels that determine how successful your power roll is.

Tier 1: If your power roll result is **11 or lower**, it is a tier 1 result. This is the worst result a power roll can have. If you're using an ability, a tier 1 result means you still do something, but the impact of what you do is minimal. With this result, an attack ability might deal a little bit of damage and not do much else. For a test, a tier 1 result means you fail at what you set out to do, and you might also suffer a negative consequence.

Tier 2: If your power roll result is **12 to 16**, it is a tier 2 result. This is the average result of many power rolls, especially for heroes who are 1st level. When using an ability, a tier 2 result means that what you do has a moderate impact. With this result, an attack ability deals a decent amount of damage and has an effect that briefly helps allies or hinders enemies. For a test, a tier 2 result means you might succeed at what you set out to do—though depending on the difficulty, success might have a cost.

Tier 3: If your power roll result is **17 or higher**, it is a tier 3 result. This is the best result a power roll can have. When using an ability, a tier 3 result means you deliver the maximum impact possible. With this result, an attack ability deals a lot of damage and has a powerful or lasting effect on enemies or allies. For a test, a tier 3 result means you succeed at what you set out to do. If the test has an easy difficulty, you also get a little something extra in addition to your success.

The specific outcome of any power roll is determined by the ability that requires the roll (see [Abilities](#)) or the rules for tests (see [Tests](#)).

DOWNGRADE A POWER ROLL

Whenever you make a power roll, you can downgrade it to select the result of a lower tier. For instance, if an ability has a tier 3 result that lets you impose the restrained condition on a creature, but the tier 2 result for that ability lets you impose the slowed condition, you can use the tier 2 result if you would rather have the creature slowed than restrained.

If you downgrade a critical hit, you still get the extra action benefit of the critical hit (see [Critical Hit](#) in [Abilities](#)).

NATURAL RESULT

The result of your power roll before your characteristic or any other modifiers are applied is called the natural result. The rules often refer to this as "rolling a natural X," where X is the result of the roll. For example, if you get a 20 on the power roll before adding your characteristic, this is called rolling a natural 20.

Whenever you roll a natural 19 or 20 on a power roll, you always achieve the tier 3 result, no matter what characteristic is added to the roll. This rule exists because some creatures have negative characteristics that reduce the result of a roll.

EDGES AND BANES

An archer standing on a castle wall fires down into a throng of enemies, hitting the mark each time thanks to their high ground. A drunken bandit struggles to land blows on sober opponents as alcohol clouds their senses. Under certain circumstances, you need more than just a characteristic to represent the advantages and disadvantages that heroes, their enemies, and their allies might have.

EDGE

An edge represents a situational advantage a hero or an enemy has when making a power roll. For example, a standing hero who makes a melee attack against a prone creature gains an edge on the power roll for their attack. A pair of magic gloves that makes your hands sticky might grant you an edge when making a power roll to climb walls!

When you make a power roll with a single edge, you add 2 to the roll. If you make a power roll with two or more edges, you have a **double edge**. This means you don't add anything to the power roll, but the result of the roll automatically improves one tier (to a maximum of tier 3).

BANE

A bane represents a situational disadvantage a hero or an enemy has when making a power roll. For example, if you make an attack while prone, the power roll for the attack takes a bane. A rainstorm might give you a bane on a power roll made to climb an outdoor wall because the weather makes the stone surface extra slick.

When you make a power roll with a single bane, you subtract 2 from the roll. If you make a power roll with two or more banes, you have a **double bane**. This means you don't subtract anything from the power roll, but the result of the roll automatically decreases one tier (to a minimum of tier 1).

ROLLING WITH EDGES AND BANES

Under certain circumstances, you might have one or more edges and banes on the same roll. For instance, you might take a bane when weakened by poison, even as you gain an edge for attacking a prone creature. In general, edges and banes cancel each other out, resolving as follows:

- If you have an edge and a bane, or if you have a double edge and a double bane, the roll is made as usual without any edges or banes.
- If you have a double edge and just one bane, the roll is made with one edge, regardless of how many single edge instances contribute to the double edge.
- If you have a double bane and just one edge, the roll is made with one bane, regardless of how many single bane instances contribute to the double bane.

WHEN TO USE EDGES AND BANES

The rules tell you when to modify a roll with an edge or a bane. The Director can also modify rolls with edges and banes as a response to narrative or environmental circumstances. For instance, no rule specifically says that rain imposes a bane on power rolls made to climb a stone

wall. But it makes sense that rainy conditions should make climbing that wall harder, so a Director should absolutely do so!

WHY CAP?

We capped edges and banes at a maximum of two each for several reasons, including thinking about the narrative of those penalties. Every little advantage or disadvantage in a heroic story has diminishing returns, acknowledging that a creature can only benefit or be hindered by short-term circumstances so much. For example, a character who is prone and weakened by poison already finds it difficult to attack—so that becoming restrained by a net can't really make it harder.

We also liked capping edges and banes at two because it keeps play quick. It's nice to not need to count beyond two positive or negative circumstances in a battle with a lot of effects flying around.

BONUSES AND PENALTIES

While edges and banes cover most circumstantial effects that can have an impact on a power roll, a few rules add numeric bonuses or penalties to power rolls. Bonus and penalty values are specified in the rules that impose them, and are calculated independently of edges and banes, and before edges and banes are factored into a power roll. There is no limit to the number of bonuses or penalties that can apply to a power roll, and bonuses and penalties always add together.

Though it might sound as if the math with bonuses and penalties can get confusing, fear not! Bonuses and penalties are rare except in the case of skills, which appear on your character sheet (see [Skills](#) for more information).

HERO TOKENS

When players roleplay their heroes well or take big risks, the Director can reward them with the potential to restore vitality when it's needed, in the form of hero tokens. Hero tokens are given out by the Director one at a time, either to an individual player or to the group as a whole. They can be tracked using poker chips, stones, or other markers, and are then shared by all players.

Whenever hero tokens are available, you can spend a hero token on your turn or whenever you take damage (no action required). When you do, you regain Stamina equal to your recovery value without spending a Recovery. A hero token benefits only one creature at a time, and you can't spend more than one hero token per turn.

Players can also be awarded hero tokens as part of a test's outcome when they succeed in a task with a reward (see [Tests](#)). Unless the Director decides otherwise, unused hero tokens disappear at the end of a session.

FOR THE DIRECTOR: AWARDING HERO TOKENS

You can award hero tokens to the players for taking risks with their heroes beyond what the game typically expects of them. For instance, battling a group of monsters is part of the game and doesn't earn a hero token. However, the following sorts of activities might:

- A hero stands alone against a group of enemies to allow their comrades to escape.
- A hero willingly jumps into quicksand, into lava, off a cliff, or into some other hazard to save another character.
- The group is presented with an easy way out of a difficult situation that involves lying, cheating, stealing, or the like, but they take the more arduous and honorable path.
- A hero gives away an important resource, such as a Healing Potion, to help another creature in need.

GAME OF EXCEPTIONS

This game has a fair number of rules. But it also has plenty of character options, specialized equipment, and other game elements that let you break those rules. This is on purpose! Breaking the rules allows heroes to feel special and makes their foes seem extra dangerous.

If you're not sure what to do when two rules come into conflict with each other, remember that a specific exception always beats a more general rule. The Director has the final say in how rules are adjudicated.

ALWAYS ROUND DOWN

There are times when the rules tell you to divide a number in half. Whenever you divide an odd number in half and it results in a decimal, round the result down to the nearest whole number. For instance, if you have a speed of 7 and become slowed (a condition that halves your speed), then your speed becomes 3.

CREATURES AND OBJECTS

This game uses the terms "creature" and "object." Creatures are living or unliving beings such as animals, elves, humans, dragons, giants, zombies, and valok. Objects are inanimate matter such as walls, carriages, cups, swords, ropes, coins, paintings, columns, and buildings. Creatures always have stat blocks that relay their statistics, but objects do not.

When a creature dies, their body becomes an object, and can be affected by abilities and other effects that target objects. For example, a talent can't use their Telekinesis power to slide an unwilling enemy cult leader into an evil temple's pit of hellfire. But if that boss dies, the talent can slide their body into the pit to prevent the boss from being raised as a powerful undead by the temple's magic.

The game sometimes refers to "unattended objects," which are objects that aren't held, worn, or controlled by a creature. Whenever an ability affects objects, it affects only unattended objects unless the Director determines otherwise. Among other things, this prevents abilities from being used to damage a foe's armor, weapons, clothing, magic items, and so forth while those objects or worn or held.

PCS AND NPCs

Two types of characters inhabit the world of the game—the player characters (also called PCs or heroes) who are created and controlled by the players, and nonplayer characters (NPCs) created and controlled by the Director. NPCs can include any of the game's monsters, but when the rules refer to NPCs, they generally do so in the context of interacting with them outside of combat.

BUILDING A HEROIC NARRATIVE

The game takes place in a series of scenes with the heroes as the main characters. An adventure is a collection of scenes that make up a single story arc, and a campaign is a collection of adventures that tell the entire epic tale of a group of heroes. You can think of each adventure as a movie in a saga of films, a book in a series of novels, or a season of a television show. While many heroes have their stories told over the course of a campaign, some wrap up their careers in a single adventure that takes place in one game session, called a one-shot. You can think of a one-shot as a great stand-alone novella or movie.

This game is built so that each adventure you play and each battle you fight gets more exciting as it goes on. In fantastic tales, the heroes and their foes both grow in power over the course of an adventure. But it isn't time alone that grows a hero's capabilities. Rather, it's the adrenaline that comes from battle, the danger of the hero's profession, and the pressure to save the world that pushes a character to do the impossible. Each small act of heroism gives a hero the confidence and bravery to perform legendary feats against all odds.

The things a hero can achieve at the end of the story are far more daring and impactful than what they do at the start, and the final showdown against a villain's forces is more deadly and desperate than the first. The rules of the game help build a heroic narrative in this same fashion, making use of the four most important mechanics for building heroic narratives: Victories, Experience, Heroic Resources, and Recoveries.

VICTORIES

Your hero's power increases throughout an adventure as you fight more battles and overcome other challenges, measured through a stat called Victories. At the start of an adventure, your hero has 0 Victories.

VICTORIES AFTER COMBAT

Each time your hero survives a combat encounter in which the party's objectives are achieved, your Victories increase by 1. The Director can decide that a trivially easy encounter doesn't increase a hero's Victories.

VICTORIES AFTER NONCOMBAT CHALLENGES

When your hero successfully overcomes a big challenge that doesn't involve combat, the Director can award you 1 Victory. Such challenges can include things like a particularly complicated and deadly trap, a negotiation, a

montage test, a complicated puzzle, or the execution of a clever idea that avoids a battle.

VICTORIES RESET

Whenever you finish a respite (see [Respite](#)), your Victories are converted into Experience.

FOR THE DIRECTOR: AWARDING VICTORIES

We're still figuring out rules for encounter building, but here are some general guidelines.

A successful combat in which the party's objectives are achieved earns the heroes 1 Victory. Particularly hard encounters are worth 2 Victories when completed. We'll have better guidelines on this topic in the future, but for now, consider tough boss battles worth 2 Victories.

A successful negotiation or montage test should earn the heroes 1 Victory. Other noncombat challenges are left to the Director's discretion, but consider the following guidelines to help you determine when awarding 1 Victory is warranted:

- If the heroes overcome a complicated trap that requires more than one test to find and disarm, award them 1 Victory.
- If the heroes investigate a series of clues in a mystery, award 1 Victory when they solve the mystery.
- If the heroes solve a complicated puzzle that requires them to use resources or would take most people at least 10 minutes to complete, award them a Victory.
- If the heroes achieve a major story goal that accomplishes a quest (such as saving a prince trapped by an evil baroness or stopping a necromancer from performing a world-ending ritual), award them 1 Victory.
- If the heroes use clever thinking to easily and surprisingly overcome or bypass a combat encounter, a negotiation, a montage test, a trap, a puzzle, or some other challenge that would award them 1 or more Victories in a more difficult fashion, award them 1 Victory. Clever thinking is just as worthy of a Victory—if not more so!

At the Director's discretion, particularly hard negotiations, puzzles, mysteries, and other noncombat challenges can be worth 2 Victories.

EXPERIENCE

Victories temporarily increase a hero's power during an adventure, but Experience (or XP) permanently improves their capabilities. Each time you finish a respite (see below), you gain XP equal to your Victories, then your Victories drop to 0. In other words, your Victories are converted to XP when you finish a respite.

For more information on how XP increases your hero's power, see [Heroic Advancement](#).

HEROIC RESOURCES

Your hero has a Heroic Resource (sometimes two Heroic Resources) determined by your class, and which you manage during play. For many classes, earning Resources can increase your hero's power, and Resources are spent to activate your most powerful abilities. Other classes, like the talent, earn a negative resource that gives them a penalty during battle, and they gain the resource to activate their most powerful abilities. Each class gains and uses its Heroic Resource differently, and resources aren't

equivalent across classes. For example, 1 piety for the conduit isn't worth as much as 1 focus for the tactician.

Some classes, such as the tactician and the fury, generate and use Heroic Resources only during combat encounters. Others, such as the shadow and the talent, can use their Heroic Resources both in and out of combat.

Your hero's class description has more information about how to use your Heroic Resource.

BAGS OF RATS AIN'T HEROIC

Some players might think that quickly starting a fight with some bar patrons or carrying around a bag of rats is a good way to gather up those sweet, sweet Victories and Heroic Resources. Those strategies don't work! The rules of the game exist to help you tell a cool heroic fantasy story, not so you can try to be clever and exploit them by harming innocent rats to "win." In order to generate Victories and Heroic Resources, you must face and overcome challenges worthy of a hero!

RECOVERIES

Each hero has a limited number of Recoveries that they can use to heal themselves. Recoveries are a way to rally and get back some of the energy you lose in battle by taking a breather, accepting a little magical help from a conduit or troubadour, getting an allied tactician to inspire you with a rush of adrenaline, and so forth. Of course, your body can only rally so many times before your energy reserves are completely shot, so you have a limited number of recoveries as a result.

When you spend a Recovery, you regain Stamina equal to your **recovery value**, which is one-third your Stamina maximum.

SPENDING RECOVERIES

During combat encounters and similarly dangerous situations when time is tracked in rounds (see [Combat](#)), you can use the Catch Breath action to regain Stamina. See [Catch Breath in Actions](#) for more information. Some heroes have abilities that allow them or their allies to spend more Recoveries without using the Catch Breath action.

Outside of combat and other dangerous situations, you can spend Recoveries freely.

REGAINING RECOVERIES

You regain all lost Recoveries when you finish a respite (see [Respite](#)).

RESPITE

A respite is a focused period of rest and recuperation that allows heroes to regain Stamina and Recoveries. During a respite, you must spend 24 hours uninterrupted and doing nothing but sleeping, eating, dressing your wounds, and recuperating. You can also undertake one respite activity, such as making a project roll (see [Research and Crafting](#) in future packets for more information), or changing your kit (see [Kits](#)).

When you finish a respite, you regain all your Recoveries and Stamina, and your Victories convert to Experience. It is best to take a respite in a safe place where you aren't in

a hostile environment or at risk of being attacked. If your respite is interrupted by enemies attacking, an earth tremor, swarms of biting insects, and similar serious distractions, the respite ends early and you don't gain the benefits for finishing it.

The standard eightish hours of sleep one gets at night doesn't count as a respite. The rules assume that all heroes take the time to sleep, eat, and take care of all the other functions necessary for life even if they aren't engaged in a respite.

ORDEN AND THE TIMESCAPE

A new game demands new worlds! Welcome to the timescape—a collection of worlds spanning high fantasy, dark fantasy, and even space fantasy! We sincerely hope you take these rules and adapt them to your own world, or adapt your world to these rules, or something in between!

Our tour begins on the world of Orden, the Prime Manifold—a realm of elves, dwarves, humans, orcs, dragons, and more. But human civilization and politics dominate here, especially in the great city of Capital, a hotbed of urban fantasy intrigue.

Orden contains seven major regions, the largest of which is Vasloria.

VASLORIA

A forested medieval and feudal land, Vasloria holds few cities—just towns and villages. Western Vasloria, including most of Aendrim and Corwell and parts of Graid, was until recently ruled by Good King Omund. His draconian knights, the Dragon Phalanx, protected the weak from the strong, dispensing justice throughout the land. But Omund died fifteen years ago—and so died the rule of law in Vasloria. Now, forests claim towns and roads once held safe under his rule. The woods are dangerous, their only law that of tooth and claw.

When Omund was betrayed by Mandrake, a captain of the Dragon Phalanx, his castle fell to Ajax the Invincible—now called the Overlord and the Iron Saint. Ajax's wizard Mortum unlocked the secret of the ancient flying cities of the sky elves to raise the Chrysopolis, Ajax's city-fortress in the sky.

Ajax abolished all faiths and temples in Vasloria. He executed the dukes who served King Omund loyally, leaving only the three surviving baronies of Dalrath, Bedegar, and Tor to hold human civilization together. Once, the people of all the lands of Vasloria were loose allies. There was trade between humans, elves, dwarves, and orcs.

Now there is only suspicion.

The high elves of the Fallen City, once the sky elf city of Irranys, pay tribute to Ajax with ancient artifacts they plunder from their ruined home. The wode elves of the Orchid Court, lacking any centralized government or cities, refuse to bow to the Iron Saint.

The dwarves of Kal Kalavar pay tribute in prisoners they abduct from among those foolish enough to travel the roads unescorted—prisoners who serve Ajax as forced

labor or are fed into the Body Banks. Brooding under the mountains in their fabled Hanging City of Kal Kalavar, the stone dwarves do not like this deal with the Overlord, but they lack the power—or perhaps the will—to rebel.

The Hawklords of the High Aerie now act as Ajax's royal guard. Mounted on their giant hawks, these human warriors project Ajax's power, enforce his tyrannical order, and extend his influence into every corner of the wilderness. Their mastery of the air means that any revolt or rebellion is seen and crushed quickly.

The Dragon Phalanx is broken now, its knights scattered. Ajax has placed a high bounty on their heads. Some folk still see Omund's knights as symbols of justice, heroes of a lost age before might made right. But in every town, every village, there are always desperate people willing to collect the bounty, summoning the Hawklords to pluck any dragon knight foolish enough to travel without a disguise away to the Chrysopolis.

The peoples of Dalrath, Bedegar, and Tor, isolated and outnumbered, desperately fight a losing battle against the encroaching wilderness. Law dies. Chaos thrives.

CAPITAL

The Greatest City in This or Any Age! City of the Great Game! Located west across the Bale Sea from Vasloria on the eastern coast of Rioja, Capital is not only the largest city in Orden. It's the largest city there has ever been—larger than the fabled steel dwarf capital of Kalas Valiar, larger even than Alloy, the City at the Center of the Timescape. Capital is the exception to many rules.

It is a city of playwrights and opera, of spies and sorcery. Famed throughout the world as a city of high magic where flying tapestries act as taxis. But the reality of living in Capital is somewhat more mundane, for only the very wealthy can afford such luxuries.

THE GREAT HOUSES

The Great Houses, Capital's ancient noble families, reluctantly share power with the upstart guilds who think that their vast wealth entitles them to rule. The members of the Great Houses are proud of their city, and believe to anyone, from anywhere, should be able to come to Capital and earn a living, own property, expect justice. They just don't think anyone else should be able to rule. The guilds of the city, by contrast, are more egalitarian, more democratic, largely obsessed with accruing wealth—and caring little for the welfare of the city or its people.

The Great Game is espionage, and House Alvaro are the best players in the world. Led by Duke Prospero, House Alvaro sponsors the Imperial University, the greatest center of learning in the world. Nobles from across Orden, including from lands as far away as Vanigar, send their children to learn diplomacy and statecraft at the university. The greatest spies in the world are all graduates of the Actian School, one of the university's many colleges, which once doubled as the intelligence agency of Capital's late prince.

House Vorona runs the city's navy, the largest military organization of any kind in Orden. Their engineers perfected the secret of blackpowder and guard it jealously.

The Imperial Navy's canons protect trade across Orden, placing Capital at the center of international affairs. Vorona's Far Mariners, aka the marines, are the closest thing to a citywide law enforcement organization. Each Great House is expected to police its own district.

Duke Marco Vorona sponsors the Imperial War College, also known as the Academy. A prestigious institution rivaling any college of the Imperial University, the Academy boasts graduates among all the noble families in Orden. This widespread allegiance creates a vast informal network in the city, referred to cynically as the Old Class Ring, that gives House Vorona access to intelligence that other factions can only dream of.

House Navarr, the oldest of the Great Houses, enforces the law of the Church of Saint Ysabella the Pitiless, which they call justice. The house is led by His Grace Orsino, Duke Navarr, archbishop of that most powerful church in the city. Under his rule, House Navarr consolidates a vast network of different churches and knights across the region under one elaborate system of patronage.

Arguably the most powerful Great House, House Valetta controls the city's tax collectors, known as the Arbitros Fiat. Valetta is led by the Duchess Lenore, who opened the *Codex Mortis* while in mourning for her assassinated husband Maximo, speaking a ritual from that ancient necromantic artifact that should have returned her love to life. Instead, she brought about the Lilac Night, which transformed everyone in her district into undead—including herself. The Duchess Lenore is now an immortal vampire queen, a dead lady ruling over a dead city.

THE POWER OF THE GUILDS

After the Lilac Night, with the city no longer able to rely on House Valetta to deliver the taxes it collected, Lady Shirome bought Great House status for the Fulcrum—the city's assayer's guild she controls—along with the Broadsheet Guild and the Farrier's Guild. The Fulcrum controls the Trade Integrity Board, which sets lending rates and leads trade negotiations between Capital and other governments in Orden. It was that guild that convinced the late prince to switch the city to paper money. As a result, Capital is the first and only city in Orden to have a robust monetary policy.

The Broadsheet Guild, formally known as the Font, publishes the thrice-daily news sheets that everyone in the city reads. Guildmaster Inān al-Adwiyya uses a vast network of young people called the Paperfeathers to deliver and sell the broadsheets throughout the city. Lady al-Adwiyya knows almost everything happening anywhere in Capital.

The Farrier's Guild, popularly known as the Rasp, controls transport throughout the city. The guild is led by Lord Kashmir, a heliox from the planar gateway city of Alloy. It was he who introduced the flying tapestries that metaphorically shrank Capital, allowing the rich and powerful to cross the thirteen-mile-wide city in just a few minutes. He also created the Kites, couriers famous for being able to get a message to anywhere in Capital in only a few hours. His monopoly on importing flying tapestries from Alloy gives Lord Kashmir enormous power, and he is not shy about wanting more.

THE MYRIAD WORLDS OF THE TIMESCAPE

Orden is only one world in the timescape! Each star in the night sky is another world, though this fact is not known to most people living on Orden. Higher worlds are more energetic, affording access to alien technologies. Great star freighters ply the space lanes, with knights wielding psionically powered hard-light blades dueling against star pirates with hard-light blasters.

The lower worlds lack the energy necessary for such extraordinary technology to function, and so rely on magic to break the rules.

On Axiom, the Plane of Uttermost Law, the memonek live on a world teeming with complex, inorganic life. UNISOL, the Universal Solar League, ensures and protects trade across the upper worlds, defending the star freighters from pirates such as the time raiders and the infamous Sunrunners on their legendary ship the *K.R.A.D Fearless*.

Meanwhile, on Proteus, the Sea of Eternal Change, the formless proteans rebelled against the synlirri who once ruled the plane of uttermost chaos, exiling the voiceless talkers to the World Below. Now the masters of their world, the proteans take to the stars in their living change-ships, hurling their small fleet against what they perceive as the tyrannical might of UNISOL.

On Quintessence, the lowest of the upper worlds, proteans and memonek alike rub shoulders with devils, fire dwarves, and even humans in Quintessence's capital city of Alloy, the City at the Center of the Timescape. The Free City of Alloy, also known as the City of Brass, is the gateway to the timescape. People traveling to or from the upper and lower worlds meet here to trade goods and information, free from the inflexible laws of UNISOL.

Traveling downward from Quintessence, one arrives on Orden, the Plane of Gods and Sorcery, highest of the lower worlds where magic rules. The gods, forbidden from interfering directly in a world with such a low energy state, rely on saints to enact their will. The technology from the upper worlds does not function down here, unless powered by a strong psionic mind, or the miracle mineral prismacore.

Almost coterminous with Orden is its sister-plane, the World Below, and the Dark Under All. This plane of exiles is ruled by A Lie Cloaked In Star's Silver—the Queen of Night, and the first of the Three Sisters Below. The World Below is a land of vast caves and sunless seas. There are no stars here, no sky, but only endless caves and warrens. Some of those are vast enough to hold entire cities, including Or-Mazaar, the City of the Black Star, from where the Queen of Night rules.

The power of the World Below wanes, even as the power of Equinox rises. Also known as Dusk, this smaller parasitic manifold is home to the exiled shadow elves and ruled by the Queen of Shadows, third of the Three Sisters Below. She plots to return her people to their homeland in Orden, and to escape the twisted shadow world.

The last plane of law, the Seven Cities of Hell is among the lowest of the lower planes. A realm of devils proud of their

civilization, the Seven Cities are each ruled by an archduke who schemes to ascend to the Throne of Hell. Living in a world of bureaucratic law, the devil denizens of Hell have little interest in the other planes. Life is so much more interesting down here. The seven dukes of hell conspired together once, agreeing to create the Order of Desolation, also known as the illriggers. Doing so was meant to extend their power into the timescape, and to defend the Seven Cities from the demon hordes below.

The demons of the Abyssal Waste, the lowest plane, claw and scramble over each other, competing for souls in this heat-blasted desert under a baleful, giant orange sun. Mindless collections of organs, claws, and teeth, demons collect souls until they reach sentience, gaining identity and the blessing of memory. These demons will do anything to escape upward out of the wasteland, lest they lose their collected souls, lose their identities, and fall into that mindless state called lethe.

At the center of the Abyssal Waste lies the Necropolitan Ruin, the Last City. A great city of the dead, the site is ruled by Khorsekef, once the Infinite Pharaoh of the desert wasteland of Khemhara, now the Ultralich. Khorsekef intends to return to Orden and sit once again on his throne in the grand Heliopolis at the center of Khemhara—and he has a plan ...

THE TIMESCAPE IN YOUR GAME

We use the timescape and its medieval fantasyland Orden as the default setting presented in these books. Doing so makes it easier for us as designers to marry our design with real examples from a real (imaginary) fantasy world. We also think it's easier for you to take the names for places, languages, and gods, and replace them with your own. We might reference some hero or villain, saint or god, whose name makes you think, "Well, I don't have that in my setting." If we do a good job, though, you might be inspired to say, "But that makes me think ..." And being inspired is part of the fun!

If you're the Director, you can use as many or as few of the details of the timescape as you like. You might wish to create your own world within the timescape, or use a setting you've created that exists outside of the official MCDM manifolds. You can use details from settings published by other companies. There are no rules when it comes to world-building. Feel free to take what you like from this book and change the rest. For example, you might not care for our dwarves having literal stone skin. That's fine. You can make them fleshy, stout, bearded folk, or mohawked, barrel-chested punk rockers, or anything else you wish. As long as you're running a heroic fantasy campaign about fighting monsters, then the game's rules are still likely to serve your narrative even if that narrative deviates from ours.

If you're a player, ask your Director about the setting where the game takes place and discuss with them the sort of hero you want to create. Maybe you want to play a more traditional gruff and bearded dwarf rather than go all short and stony. An open dialogue and honest discussion with your Director can lead to everyone getting what they want out of the game.

MAKING A HERO

If you're not the Director, then you create and play one of the main characters in the game's story—a hero. Your hero is a person motivated to fight forces of evil to protect the innocent, but each hero has their own personal reason for doing so. You don't have to be a pure beacon of good. Heroes have flaws and are complex, just like people in the real world. But your hero should be someone who isn't afraid to battle monsters for altruistic reasons. If you're only interested in playing a money-grubbing sellsword, you can achieve that with these rules, but you'll likely be happier playing another game.

The hero you create will be roleplayed by you. Often when referring to your hero, the rules use second-person pronouns (you/your) for shorthand, only making a distinction between you and your hero when that distinction is important.

YOUR FIRST SESSION

Getting together with your friends to make characters can be a lot of fun. Many groups spend most of their first session talking about the campaign's story, making heroes, and going over expectations for the game. It's a great way to kick off a long-term campaign.

The Director should make an agenda for a campaign's first session—often called “session zero”—which can include any of the following items:

- The Director and players talk about the safety tools they want to employ at the game table (whether physical or virtual), so that everyone has a good time and understands which topics should be avoided in the game's narrative and which should be embraced. For more information, check out the *MCDM Tabletop Safety Toolkit* at mcdm.gg/SafetyToolkit, which includes advice for running a successful session zero.
- The Director discusses the campaign's world and the major story themes they want to introduce into the game.
- The players get a chance to tell the Director what they would like to see in the campaign. This can include anything from “I'd love to play out some chase scenes!” to “I want to explore themes of loss and grief.” These wishes should be starting points for a conversation. If not all players are comfortable with certain themes or content requested by other players, then session zero is a great time to discuss that and come to a consensus about what everyone wants out of the game.
- Make heroes! Once everyone understands what the campaign is about, it's the perfect time to get into character creation. When a group of players make heroes together, they can tie backstories together and strategize to build a tactically dominant party both in and out of combat.
- The Director runs an encounter to kick off the campaign. If all the players have the time, it's totally worth it to get some play in during the first session, even if it's just a quick brawl in a tavern with some cultists! Giving the players a little action lets them see what the game is all about—and leaves them excited for the next session.

STEP-BY-STEP HERO MAKING

Use the following step-by-step guide to create a hero. These steps are presented in what we believe is the best way to approach making your first hero for *Draw Steel*. That said, the order of the steps is still a suggestion, not a hard and fast rule.

Many players like to build a hero from the backstory up, making ancestry and culture ideal first choices. However, some players like to start more in the present, choosing an inciting incident and a class—the choices with the most potential impact on what your character can do in the game—and then going back and figuring out where their hero came from. There's no wrong way to do it!

You'll want a character sheet to fill out while you make your hero.

(Playtest note: The character sheet is still to come.)

1. THINK

The first thing you should do is think about the kind of hero you want to make. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Do you fight with weapons, magic, psionics, or some combination of these abilities?
- Outside of combat, what do you want your hero to do well?
- What did you do before becoming a hero?
- Why did you choose to become a hero?
- What is your personality like?
- What people, places, and objects are important to you?
- How will your hero complement the strengths and weaknesses of the other heroes?

2. ANCESTRY

Choose your hero's humanoid ancestry from among the range of ancestries available in the game—devil, dragon knight, dwarf, hakaan, high elf, human, memonek, orc, polder, revenant, time raider, or wode elf. Future supplements will introduce additional ancestries you can choose from. See [Ancestries](#) for more information.

(Playtest note: A selection of the game's full range of ancestries are currently available, some of which feature lore entries.)

3. CULTURE

Create your hero's culture. Although ancestry gives your hero a number of physiological benefits, your culture describes the community that raised you and gives you languages and skills. See [Culture](#) for more information.

4. CAREER

Choose your hero's career, which describes what you did for a living before you became a hero. Your career gives you skills and a title, and might also give you languages, Renown, or knowledge for crafting and research. See [Careers](#) for more information.

5. CLASS

Choose your hero's class. This choice has the biggest impact on how your hero interacts with the rules of the game, especially the rules for combat. Your class provides your characteristic scores and Stamina, in addition to skills, several abilities, and other benefits. You can be a censor, conduit, elementalist, fury, null, shadow, tactician, talent, or troubadour. See [Classes](#) for more information.

(Playtest note: The currently available classes are the conduit, elementalist, fury, shadow, and tactician, each of which includes only 1st-level features.)

6. KIT

Choose your hero's kit. Your kit provides you with equipment and a fighting style that grants a signature ability and bonuses to one or more of your game statistics.

7. ADD FREE STRIKES

Every hero has the ability to make free strikes under certain circumstances—extra attacks that don't require your action. (You can also make a free strike as an action on your turn, though you'll usually have better options for your action.) Your class might grant you free strike options, but each character also has two standard free strikes.

A melee weapon free strike is a melee attack made with an unarmed strike or improvised weapon. A ranged weapon free strike is a ranged attack made with an improvised weapon.

MELEE WEAPON FREE STRIKE

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage**
- 12–16: **6 damage**
- 17+: **9 damage**

RANGED WEAPON FREE STRIKE

Keywords: Attack, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage**
- 12–16: **5 damage**
- 17+: **8 damage**

See [Free Strikes](#) for more information on using free strikes, and see [Abilities](#) for information on the ability format.

8. COMPLICATION

Your hero experienced an event that has left them with a benefit and a drawback. Complications are optional, so check with your Director to make sure your game is using them. See [Complications](#) for more information.

9. DETERMINE DETAILS

Once you've created your hero, it's time to determine the additional details of their backstory, appearance, and

personality. How do the events of their culture, career, inciting incident, and class tie together into a cohesive narrative? What's their name? What do they look like? Do they have any cool scars? Any dope tattoos? Do they still sleep with their teddy bear? These sorts of details can help define a well-rounded hero.

10. MAKE CONNECTIONS

Ask the Director if all the heroes start the campaign knowing each other. If they do, talk to the other players and build some connections between your heroes. If you like, you can use the following prompts to make those connections, or to come up with prompts of your own:

- While fighting a monster, another hero saved your life. What were you battling and who saved you?
- In your group, who looks after everyone's health and well-being and makes sure that all the characters get along? If it's not you, how do you view this other hero?
- Who is the grumpiest member of your party? If it isn't you, how do you react to that hero's sour nature? If it is you, how do you react to other characters teasing you or trying to cheer you up?
- What's one thing your fellow heroes know about you that other people do not?
- What's your favorite way to bond with your fellow heroes?
- You've known one of the other heroes in your party longer than the rest. Who is it, and how did you meet?
- Another hero creates food, music, clothing, trinkets, or something else that you enjoy. Who is that hero and what do they make?
- Another hero is teaching you a new skill. Who is it, and what are they teaching you?

Answer these questions with the other players present, and be sure to get a player's approval if your answer makes use of their character.

CHOOSING SKILLS

This game has lots of skills, and lots of opportunities during character creation to gain them. We recommend recording a list of all the skills you might gain from the different steps of the character creation process, then making your choices at the end of that process rather than flipping back and forth through the book.

If you gain the same specific skill from two different sources (for instance, from a career and a class), you can pick a different skill from the same skill group. See [Skills](#) for more information.

CHANGING CHARACTER OPTIONS

If you pick a skill, ability, class, or any other option that you end up not liking after using it in the game—even your character's ancestry—you can always freely change that option between game sessions. If you want to change an option during a session, ask your Director. If they say it's fine to swap that option out for something else, go for it.

HEROIC ADVANCEMENT

Your character's heroic advancement is marked by level. Each time you gain a new level in your class, your Stamina increases, and you gain new features or abilities according to your class's advancement, as detailed in [Classes](#).

In the standard setup for the game, heroes gain Experience each time they finish a respite. When you gain sufficient Experience, you gain a level during the same respite (see [Building a Heroic Narrative](#)). The Heroic Advancement table shows how much Experience (XP) you need to advance from one level to the next. The amount of Experience you gain is cumulative.

HEROIC ADVANCEMENT

XP	Level
0–9	1
10–24	2
25–39	3
40–54	4
55–69	5
70–84	6
85–99	7
100–114	8
115–129	9
130+	10

ALTERNATIVE ADVANCEMENT

Though many games might advance using the standard setup for heroic advancement, the Director can decide that their game uses different advancement. Check with your Director to see what method of advancement they plan to use.

ADJUSTED XP ADVANCEMENT

Some Directors prefer that heroes level up faster or slower to suit the pace of their story. The Adjusted XP Advancement table is set up for campaigns where heroes advance at double or half the usual pace. Directors can also create their own customized pace for XP-based advancement.

ADJUSTED XP ADVANCEMENT

Level	XP for Double Speed	XP for Half Speed
1	0–4	0–19
2	5–12	20–49
3	13–20	50–79
4	21–28	80–109
5	29–36	110–139
6	37–43	140–169
7	44–51	170–199
8	52–58	200–229
9	59–65	230–259
10	66+	260+

MILESTONE

Rather than tracking XP, some games see the heroes advance in level when they achieve a particular story milestone. For example, when a party defeats the main villain of an adventure and foils their dastardly plot, each hero gains a level for achieving this objective, no matter how many or few obstacles they faced along the way.

For many Directors using milestone advancement, the end of each adventure within a campaign serves as a milestone for leveling up. The Director can share these milestones with the players to encourage them to work toward particular goals, and to engage with the story and world the Director has prepared. For example, in a campaign where the heroes have to face nine evil mages, it makes sense that each time the heroes defeat a mage, they gain a level. The Director should keep milestone goals flexible, though. Defeating a mage could mean stopping them with violence, using negotiation to make them stand down, or anything else that thwarts their evil plans.

DIRECTOR SAYS SO

Some games don't track XP or goals at all. The heroes simply gain a level whenever the Director decides it's appropriate for the story.

ANCESTRIES

Fantastic peoples inhabit the worlds of *Draw Steel*. Among them are devils, dwarves, elves, time raiders—even humans with their ability to sense the supernatural.

Your hero is one of these folks! The fantastic ancestry you choose bestows benefits that come from your anatomy and physiology. This choice doesn't grant you cultural benefits, like crafting or lore skills. While many game settings have cultures made of mostly one ancestry, other cultures and worlds have a cosmopolitan mix of peoples. Ancestry describes how you were born. Culture (in the next chapter) describes how you grew up. If you want to be a wode elf who was raised in forest among other wode elves, you can do that! If you want to play a wode elf who was raised in a underground city of dwarves, humans, and orcs, you can do that too!

ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES

Orden is a fantasy world. It works on principles similar to those many people throughout history believed governed the real world. "I dunno a god did it probably."

Humans, elves, orcs, dwarves, dragons, all have creator gods—the elder gods, four of whom made the world for some reason. Maybe they were bored.

The fashion among those gods for creating new, intelligent, species petered after the orcs. Once humans came along and invented war, it stopped being fun.

It may be *all* species were created by gods. That's certainly what a lot of people throughout our own history assumed. Orden has no Darwin and probably won't ever. There's still inheritance. People expect children to look like their parents, but there aren't evolutionary pressures except on a very local scale.

And in a world where powerful, world-altering magics are available, mortals sometimes try to recreate the gods' efforts. Some succeed, and new intelligent, speaking peoples are born.

However, mortals are not gods and lack their ineffable wisdom. They are, in fact, very effable. Many have sought the power to create. It is available to any sorcerer of near-godlike power with the right rituals, though these days that power is very obscure. Creating new intelligent species was easier for mortal wizards back in the youth of the world when magic was friskier.

In every instance in recorded history, attempts by mortals to make obedient servitor species backfire. The steel dwarves worked marvels with valiar, the truemetal, and the miracle mineral prismacore that grants objects a semblance of life. Eventually their science and magics produced the omnivok, machines that were self-aware. Perhaps uniquely, when the dwarves realized they had created beings equal to themselves they stopped their work and gave their creation full rights and independence, preferring to work with them rather than attempt, and inevitably fail, to be their masters.

Normally, it doesn't work out that nicely. Even with the best of intentions, things go awry. The Dragon Phalanx

were created by Good King Omund's wizard Vitae to be the perfect knights, dispensing justice throughout the lands. But the same sorceries that grant self-awareness also grant independence. Agency. And though they enjoyed thirty years of peace and justice, eventually the dragon knights were betrayed by one of their own, seduced by the power offered by Ajax.

The law of unintended consequences applies to the just and the unjust alike.

Usually when some powerful being tries to *create* an intelligent people, it's for less than virtuous reasons. The synliroi are responsible for several intelligent species in the timescape, each an attempt to create a perfectly obedient servitor species. The most notorious example are the kuran'zoi, the time raiders who rebelled almost immediately and carry a burning hate for the voiceless talkers to this day.

A perhaps less egregious use of this power is called *quicken*ing. Used when a powerful mage lives in and amongst some clever species just on the cusp of self-awareness. These instances, which are much more numerous than creating a new species from whole cloth, are more like the concept of *uplifting* found in science fiction. The mage or witch or shaman didn't create anything. They just gave these cute, clever, frog-things a little boost. A little nudge. And suddenly there are angualotls walking around having conversations with each other, wondering when someone will invent a fabric that doesn't get moldy in the swamp.

This also carries serious ethical repercussions! "You didn't create angualotls! You screwed up some perfectly good frogs! Look at them, you gave them anxiety!"

This is only how it works on Orden. You may have completely different explanations for why there are several different intelligent species walking around in your world. Or no explanation! Or competing and irreconcilable theories on the matter! Use whatever inspires you.

At the end of the day, if you throw out all of this and replace it with something you made up, it will be better. Because it's *yours*!

STARTING SIZE AND SPEED

Unless otherwise noted, a character from any of these ancestries is size 1M and has a speed of 5.

Where an ancestry provides you with an ability, see [Abilities](#) for details of the ability format.

DEVIL

"Go to hell!"

"You know, I have a rather interesting story about that ..."

The native ancestry of the Seven Cities of Hell, devils are humanoids with red or blue skin expressed in a wide variety of hues, from bright crimson to deep purple. Each devil is born with some hellmark—horns, a tail, cloven hooves, a forked tongue, fanged incisors, or even wings.

Hell is dominated by the Seven Cities of Hell, each ruled by a different archdevil who constantly plots and schemes against the others in the hope of ascending to the Throne of Hell.

Those devils who join “the trade,” as their civil service is called, spend their days in bureaucratic service hoping or scheming for promotion. Devils looking for a quick path up the bureaucratic ladder sign up for the Exchange, whereby mortals in the mundane world who perform the right rituals can summon a devil, who bargains with the supplicant on behalf of their archdevil. Archdevils can grant temporary worldly power in exchange for a supplicant’s soul, with the summoned devil acting as the broker.

On rare occasions, the summoning goes wrong and the supplicant dies before the deal can be struck, stranding the summoned devil on Orden permanently. Some stranded devils seek to return to Hell, but most prefer life in Orden, where the phrase “stabbed in the back by a colleague” is usually a metaphor.

The majority of devils in Orden are not from, nor have ever been to, the Seven Cities. They are descendants of devils who were stranded in the mundane world decades, centuries, even millennia ago.

ON DEVILS

Adelard scuttled across the floor of his basement, a heavy tome clutched in one hand, his index finger marking a page. Occasionally he would stop, open the book, consult a diagram, look at the chalk markings he’d made on the floor, tilt his head, then bend down and refine or rub out an esoteric symbol.

One of the red candles suddenly guttered out, making the small room noticeably darker. “Damn and blast!” he hissed. Then he relit it from another candle.

Stepping back to admire his handiwork, Adelard crossed his arms and nodded. He’d spent his last coppers on the candles—they weren’t cheap. And he feared the skull might be fake, but did it matter? The book just said a skull—it didn’t even specify a *human* skull! Did it matter if it was real? It was probably real. What kind of market was there for replica skulls? But it was awfully cheap. Anyway, did it matter? How would the ritual know if the skull was real?

He was wittering, putting off the inevitable. He pulled himself together. It was either going to work, or it wasn’t, and wittering wasn’t going to help. He opened the book and turned the page—then began to speak the ritual.

Moments later, the candles flared, there was a burst of flame, and acrid brimstone filled his nostrils. When the smoke cleared ... there was a devil standing in his basement—dark purple skin, horns, even a twitching tail.

“Aha! Yes, finally.” It rubbed its hands together. “It’s about time,” the creature said, pulling on the bottom of his waistcoat to straighten it. “Now then! How does it go? Oh, yes.” He cleared his throat. “On behalf of my lord, his grace Archduke Dispater, Lord of Dis, I am empowered to offer you ...” But his speech fell on deaf ears.

“It worked!” Adelard said, holding his clenched fists up. “Ahahaha! It worked! Finally, after *years*! I will have my revenge! Hahaha ...!” *cough* *cough* Adelard was suddenly gripped by a coughing fit, but he kept crowing.

“Dismiss me from service, will they?! *cough* Old and useless ... am I?! I’ll show *them*!” He coughed again, fighting to breathe now. “I will *hex* them and *torture* them until they ...”

He stopped cavorting and capering, and his eyes went wide. “Until they ... until ...” He clutched his chest.

“Uh-oh,” the devil said, genuinely worried.

“HNNG!” Adelard grunted. Then he collapsed to the ground, curled into a fetal position, obviously in immense pain.

“Nono. Nurse!” the devil called out. “Doctor!? Is anyone ... you should lie down. Well, you are lying down. Do some ... some deep-breathing exercises. Have a cup of tea! That always ...”

Adelard gasped one last time and uncurled, muscles relaxed. Eyes open but unseeing.

“... calms me down,” the devil said quietly.

Suddenly, the candles were extinguished as one, plunging the room into pitch-blackness. The devil’s hellsight meant this was only a minor inconvenience for him. “Um,” he said to the empty room. “Uh-oh.”

He poked the tip of his boot at the chalk symbol surrounding him on the floor. Nothing happened. He stepped on it. Nothing happened. He put his weight on that foot. No alarms went off.

He walked out of the circle. Nothing happened. No one, it seemed, cared.

A few moments later, the door to a small home, little more than a wooden shack, on the outskirts of a small village opened. A well-dressed devil peeked out and then slowly emerged, stepping onto the dirt road that led through the center of the village. A keep stood atop a hill in the distance.

“Ah,” the devil said.

A wide woman dressed in wool, carrying a pile of clean clothes, saw him and stopped in her tracks, her mouth open.

“Oh! Good day to you madam, I wonder if you could tell me...”

“AAAAHHHH!!!” she screamed. For quite a long time. Then she dropped her laundry and ran.

“Ah. Um. Hmm.”

A young man in a low, stone building saw this exchange, grabbed what looked like a long iron poker, and ran out to confront the new arrival.

“Have at you, devil!” he said, assuming something like a dueling pose.

“I say! Steady on!” The devil raised his hands.

The two of them stood there, frozen in the middle of the street for a few moments.

Then the devil turned and ran away as quickly as he could.

“And that’s how I ended up here!” Riyalkin toasted his dinner companion. “Now, after years of obscurity, a legendary hero!”

“Legendarily vain,” his dinner guest teased with a smile.

“Simply playing my part, darling. People expect a certain amount of vanity in a troubadour, don’t they?”

She laughed. “Riyalkin the Red Pen is every bit as advertised.”

“Thank you. And besides, accusations of vanity are a bit rich coming from my leading lady.”

“Not all actors are vain.” She took offense beautifully. “Just the good ones.” She sipped her drink.

“Well then, you must be very vain indeed,” the devil said. “Anyway, does that answer your question?”

“Mostly. Do they speak Caelian in hell?”

“*What* a good question. Unless it’s *very* old, the ritual usually grants knowledge of the summoner’s language. I gather in the bad old days, we used to just show up in a cloud of brimstone and gabble at people. I’m sure it was impressive, but what did it achieve? Not very professional, I can tell you that.”

“No cloud of brimstone now?” she teased.

He wagged his eyebrows. “Style counts for something.”

“But wait, that was ...” She did some quick mental math. “Fifteen years ago?”

“Well, I was an accountant here in Capital for several years in between.”

“An accountant!”

Riyalkin shrugged. “It’s what I did before. I’m moderately good at it.”

“And how does one go from being an alien accountant to a famous troubadour?”

“Well ...” Riyalkin seemed uncomfortable suddenly. “It’s just that ... the thing is, accountancy in the Seven Cities is just so much more *interesting* than it is here. Plotting and scheming, always on the lookout for an assassin, people constantly trying to claw their way up the ladder, usually over your dead body. And I guess I just ... missed the excitement.”

“The excitement of being an accountant.”

“The excitement of being an accountant in *Hell*,” Riyalkin said. “In any event, enough about me and the thrill of double-entry bookkeeping. Perhaps you can enlighten me. Why is it, in spite of my impeccable taste and the outrageous sums I spend looking good, I always feel underdressed in your presence? Do you employ sorcery? Or is it that any outfit is improved by your unearthly beauty?”

She blushed in spite of herself and raised her own glass in a toast.

“You silver-tongued devil.”

DEVIL BENEFITS

As a devil character, you have the following benefits.

FIENDISH FEATURES

When you create a devil character, you have 3 fiend points, which you use to select a number of the following features.

BARBED TAIL (1 FIEND POINT)

Your pointy tail allows you to punctuate all your actions. Once per round, you can deal 1 extra damage on a melee attack or free strike.

BEAST LEGS (2 FIEND POINTS)

Your powerful legs improve your speed by 1.

EXPOSED SKELETON (2 FIEND POINTS)

Your bones are visible and hardened above your skin, granting you Weapon immunity 2.

GLOWING EYES (1 FIEND POINT)

Your eyes are a solid, vibrant color that flares to show your excitement or rage. Whenever you take damage from a creature, you can use a triggered action to curse that creature for daring to do you harm. The creature takes 1d10 psychic damage.

HELLSIGHT (1 POINT)

Your eyes let you see through the dark, fog, and other types of concealment. You don’t take a bane on attacks against concealed, unhidden creatures.

HORNS (1 FIEND POINT)

Your cherished horns are a hardened representation of your force of will, granting you an edge on Presence resistance rolls.

PREHENSILE TAIL (2 FIEND POINTS)

Your prehensile tail allows you to challenge foes on all sides. You can’t be flanked.

WINGS (2 FIEND POINTS)

You possess wings powerful enough to take you airborne. As a maneuver, you can switch between walking and flying when you are touching the ground, or vice versa when you are within 1 square of the ground. While flying, your stability drops to 0 and you have damage weakness 5. While using your wings to fly, you can stay aloft for a number of rounds equal to your Might (minimum of 1 round) before you fall prone.

SILVER TONGUE

You can twist how your words are perceived to get a better read on people. You gain an edge when attempting to discover an NPC’s motivations and pitfalls during negotiations (see [Negotiation](#)).

DRAGON KNIGHT

“I thought the dragon knights would save us, but even they couldn’t stop Ajax. Now the roads aren’t safe. People are taken from their homes without cause or warning, never to return. I don’t know what’s going to happen now, except everyone’s afraid all the time.”

"I think things are going to get a lot worse before they get better."

The Ritual of Dracogenesis that grants the power to create a generation of dragon knights—also known as draconians or wyrmwights—is obscure and supremely difficult for even an experienced sorcerer to master. Small populations of draconians in Khemhara, Higara, and Khorshir attest to this. Descendants of original generations created millennia ago by powerful wizards, they have never been numerous. A typical clutch yields only a single egg. After only a few generations, these draconians begin to show new adaptations like feathers or frilled ridges.

The largest extant population of draconians is the remnants of the Dragon Phalanx in Vasloria. Created by Good King Omund's wizard Vitae, the Dragon Phalanx once numbered several thousand of the king's greatest knights, ensuring the rule of law across the land.

Knighthood was a title carried by every member of that first generation of dragon knights. Within the Dragon Phalanx were shadows, censors, tacticians, and elementalists. Members of virtually every heroic vocation could be found in one of the eight dragonflights that made up the phalanx. For over thirty years, these heroes were symbols of justice, protecting the weak from the strong, and standing between the common folk and those who sought power over others. Those who grew up in that place and time could never have imagined any other way of life.

Then Ajax came.

ON THE DRAGON KNIGHTS

The cloaked figure at the back of the inn stood up. As they did so, their hood slipped down, revealing their head and face. A susurrant rippled through the crowd. One man standing near the bar dropped his jaw, followed by his flagon of mead.

A tall, broad draconian stepped into the light. He was old, his scales battle-scarred. He rested one clawed hand on the pommel of a mace that hung from a loop on his belt, while the other carried his shield by a strap. His flat, expressionless look was more terrifying than any threatening glower.

The three human bandits took a step back. One of the dwarves just sneered—then, sensing his human compatriot's reluctance, turned to look at them. "What's this?" the lead dwarf growled.

"Don't be cowards now!" the other dwarf said, a hint of joy in his voice. "Look what a *prize* we have caught!"

"We didn't ..." one bandit said, shaking. "We didn't know ..."

Looking at the dragon knight, the other bandit added quickly, "We didn't know there was one of you here."

The draconian didn't move. Didn't give any indication he heard the man. Just stared unblinking at the lead dwarf. "Think of the *bounty*," the dwarf hissed to the humans, but he kept his eye on the draconian. "We'll all be rich."

"I don't ..." One of the bandits dropped her sword and held her hands up as she backed away from the group toward the exit. "I don't need it that bad," she said. Then she

turned and ran out the door. Her human compatriots followed.

The two dwarves surveyed the tavern. The people were now all facing them. A few had stood up. They weren't afraid anymore.

"We'll be back," the lead dwarf said, and the two of them backed out of the inn, sheathing their shortswords before they turned and left.

As one, the people in the tavern turned to look with undisguised awe at the dragon knight. He noticed this, ducked his head to avoid their gaze. "Show's over," he growled, then he turned to go back to his seat in the rear.

"Thank you," the woman behind the bar said. "Thank you for ..." She stopped when she saw the draconian was ignoring her.

A short, doughty, middle-aged man stood up, and two equally doughty women at the same table stood up with him. "Excuse me, sir knight," the man said as the dragon knight walked past their table.

The knight moved on, ignoring them. The man reached out and grabbed the massive draconian's arm. The knight wheeled on the peasant, looming over him.

The man bowed his head and touched his forelock. The two women with him curtsied and tried to avoid making eye contact.

"Begging your pardon, sir, but we been lookin' for you."

The dragon knight sneered and bared a set of sharp teeth. "*Look for someone else*," he growled as he pulled his arm away.

The man scurried around to stand in front of the draconian, blocking his way. He took off his worn cap and held it over his breast. "I'm sorry sir, but there ain't no one else. And there's this new tax, you see, from the new baron. And a priest says he's of Saint Ajax."

The knight bared his impressive teeth, ready to scare Jago and the other two away—when someone else spoke.

"You might want to hear 'em out, Vaant," said a voice from the table the three peasants had been sitting at.

The dragon knight turned sharply to look at the man who'd spoken. His back was to the draconian, but the voice gave him away.

"John?"

The man turned to look up.

"Hi Vaant," he said, smiling. He rose from the table. He was middle-aged, fit. Black hair hung down to his shoulders. He was armed with many weapons, looked like a captain of the guard. "Folks," he said, "this is Vaantikalisax, Knight of King Omund in the Thunder Phalanx. He may be the last of the Storm Knights."

The man held out his hand. The dragon knight looked at it for a moment before reaching out slowly to grasp it. "What are you doing out here?" Vaantikalisax asked.

"These people need help. I said I'd find it. Heard a rumor someone matching your description was holed up here having a drinking contest with Mr. John Barleycorn."

The draconian sniffed, released John's hand, and looked at the three peasants. "Why do you people need me? You're in the company of Sir John, Commander of the Fifth ..."

"Just John," Sir John said, holding a hand up. "The new baron stripped me of my title. My lands."

"I didn't know that." The draconian's voice softened. "I'm sorry."

"I'll be fine. But these people ..." John said, gesturing to the three older peasants. Vaantikalisax waved him to silence.

"Sure," he said. "But why me?"

"Thought maybe you'd like to get back in the game."

"The game."

"Yeah." Sir John smiled. "The hero game."

Vaantikalisax said nothing. The inn had mostly gone back to its business but the three peasants watched intently. Eventually the dragon knight spoke again, his voice low.

"I owe you a lot, John—but not everything."

"I'm not asking everything."

"No, that's not how it starts. But I have this feeling that's how it'll end."

"What does your oath say? 'Even should the sun stop in the sky, even should the night—'"

"John," the dragon knight said, his voice suddenly sad. Exasperated. "You don't want to quote my oath to me. You really don't. I liked serving with you. I have fond memories of that time—of you. Don't spoil it." He looked at his friend, the three peasants, then shook his head and turned to leave the inn.

"Vaant," Sir John said, following. "Sir Vaantikalisax, by your oath!"

The dragon knight stopped and spun around. Everyone in the inn was watching the show again. Act two.

"The people need leadership," John said as he looked at all the folk watching.

Vaantikalisax's reptile eyes flashed in anger. "They had it. Thirty years, and what did it amount to?! I watched Ajax ... I watched him ..." The dragon knight's eyes flinched. His clawed hands tightened on his mace and shield. "I watched the oath ... fail."

"Vaant ... Vaant, the Dragon Phalanx didn't fail. You were betrayed. It was Mandrake! One of your own, don't you get it? You're just as fallible as the rest of us. You were never 'incorruptible.' It's just what we wanted to believe. You're just people—like the rest of us."

The dragon knight looked at the people around him, at the three peasants desperate for someone, anyone, to help them. Then he looked back to his friend.

"Exactly," Vaantikalisax said. Then he turned and left the inn.

DRAGON KNIGHT BENEFITS

As a dragon knight character, you have the following benefits.

WYRMPLATE

Your hardened scales grant you immunity 5 to one of the following damage types: cold, corruption, fire, lightning, or poison. You can change your damage immunity type while out of combat (no action required).

KNIGHTHOOD

The legacy of the Dragon Phalanx lives in you. Choose one of the following benefits.

DRACONIAN RUSH

As a maneuver, you can fly in a straight line up to your speed. Until you reach level 6, you must end your turn on a solid surface or fall, then fall prone.

DRACONIAN GUARD

When you or a creature adjacent to you is attacked, you can use a triggered action to swing your wings around and guard against the blow, reducing any damage from the attack by an amount equal to your level + your Victories.

DRACONIAN PRIDE

You can use the following ability:

DRACONIAN PRIDE

You let loose a mighty roar to repel your foes and shake their spirits

Keywords: Area, Magic

Distance: 2 burst

Power Roll + Might or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage; push 1**
- 12–16: **4 damage; push 3**
- 17+: **7 damage; push 5; frightened (EoT)**

Effect: You have a bane on the power roll for this ability when you use it in consecutive rounds of the same encounter.

Type: Action

Target: All enemies

DWARF

"Remember, we are dwarves. Our strength is the strength of the earth. The strength of the marble column that rises to the heavens. The strength of the granite foundation that reaches deep into the ground. But what is the value of strength if it is not used in service of justice?"

—Zarok the Lawgiver, Hero, Dwarves 232

Possessed of a strength that belies their size, dwarves have flesh infused with stone—a silico-organic hybrid making them physically denser than other humanoids. They enjoy a reputation in Orden as savvy engineers and technologists thanks to the lore they inherited from their elder siblings, the long-extinct steel dwarves.

Dwarves are the children of the elder god Ord, and a common phrase among dwarves is "Ord made the world"—their way of saying, "What will be, will be." They take great pride in knowing that along with Aan, Eth, and Kul, their god created the mundane world, and many dwarves leave their homes to see the world and seek glory in Ord's name.

ON DWARVES

There's nothing a team of dwarves can't do! Five dwarves alone can easily kill a dragon. Ten dragons!¹ Why, Vorka the Fell-Handed alone slew five dragons at the Siege of Var Loska before succumbing to her wounds. One dwarf! Think what a small, dedicated party of dwarves could do!

There aren't many of the great dragons left, alas, so we must ... I mean, dwarves must content themselves with fighting lesser evils. Necromancers, tyrants. Folks who cheat at dice.

Dwarves take the long view. Well, so do elves, but elves seem more interested in preserving things. Dwarves want to make things! Improve the world! "The world is fine the way it is ..." Shut up! No it's not! The world is full of pain, misery, injustice. We cannot make a perfect world, but we can strive to improve the one we've got!

Anyway. Humans make too much of this so-called rivalry between dwarves and elves. Yes, it was an elf army that slew the last steel dwarves in the War Against Night, but that was tens of thousands of years ago. And anyway, those were the shadow elves, long banished to the World Below. And none now live who remember those days.

The steel dwarves—the greatest of us—are dead now, and our cousins the fire dwarves left this world for Quintessence long ago. There they built Alloy, the City of Brass, the City at the Center of the Timescape. A marvel! Not so large as Capital, perhaps, but not so ... fragrant either.

It is left to us, the stone dwarves, the Last Children of Ord, to work stone, create great marvels with it. Our greatest days are not behind us! Who speaks thus!? Have we not been to the Hanging City of Kal Kalavar together? Will you ever forget that place? I will not should I live to be a thousand, and neither will you. And it was finished in my lifetime. Only three hundred years ago! It's brand new!

Elven rivalry. Pagh! Did we not name the most precious metal in the earth "valiar" after their god Val? Val is a noble god, a worthy patron of the elves. He seeks justice and glory in his own way, we deem. Were one to choose the path of the conduit, you could pick worse gods than Val to serve.

It is the humans who make so much of rivalries between the ancestries. It was the humans who called us "dwarves." We do not know the significance of this word in their tongue, but we accept it. Their speech is crude, true, but they are a young species after all. We must not judge them too harshly. "Elemental" would be a faithful translation of our word for ourselves into the Caelian tongue.

Ah, the record of dwarven achievement is long ... too long to tell in so short a space. And it is not seemly to compare ourselves so. This entry spends many words on elves and

men as though we were competitors, but who says it? Why should it be thus? Was it a dwarf who slew Baalorak the Griefbringer? No! It was the Crown of Nine Stars! That legendary company of heroes who counted three dwarves among their number, but also elves and orcs and humans. Like the great cosmopolitan city of Alloy, we are stronger together.

Look you again at the Hanging City. Yes, your eyes well with tears from the magnificence of it, but see it clearly. Is it a dwarven city? Everyone calls it thus, but do you know how many humans live there? Thousands. And orcs. And elves! Of course! How else should it be?

Some say the greatest ages of the world are behind us, but this is not so. Not so. While there is yet will in the world, there is greatness. You will see. The elves, the orcs. Humans and dwarves. All the speaking peoples have wonder in them yet. Our greatest days are ahead. Did not Ord make the world?

None of us ask to come into this world, and apart from the Hakaan, none of us know how we will leave it. But remember, you are a dwarf. You have it in you to work marvels. To change the world, be you a holy conduit of Valak-koth the Peacebringer, one of the talented Mind Masters of the White Gem, a beastheart of the Darkdivers seeking through the World Below for deep knowledge, or a master tactician of the Imperial War College in Capital. You will make a better world.

You are young yet, but already those who work evil deeds should fear you. You are a dwarf. You have a great destiny ahead.

DWARF BENEFITS

As a dwarf character, you have the following benefits.

GROUNDING

Your heavy stone body and connection to the earth makes it difficult for others to move you. Your stability increases by 1.

RUNIC CARVING

You can carve a magic rune onto your skin. The rune you carve determines the benefit you receive. You can change or remove this rune with 10 minutes of work while not engaged in combat.

- **Detection:** Pick a specific type of creature, such as "goblins" or "humans" or an object, such as "magic swords" or "potions." Your rune glows softly when you are within 20 squares of a chosen creature or object, regardless of line of effect. You can change the type of creature as a maneuver.
- **Light:** Your skin sheds light for 10 squares. You can turn this on and off as a maneuver.
- **Voice:** As a maneuver, you can communicate telepathically with another willing creature you have met before whose name you name, who can speak and understand a language you know, and is within 1 mile of you. You and the creature can respond to one another as if having a normal conversation. You can change the person you communicate with by changing the rune.

¹ This is what happens when you let a dwarven troubadour write the dwarf entry.

SPARK OFF YOUR SKIN

Your stone skin affords you potent protection. Your Stamina increases by 6 at 1st level, then increases by an additional 1 each time you gain a new level.

ELF, WODE

*See you the wood so dark and deep,
Where runs the fox and hare?
You know now why your mother weeps.
Your father's bones lie there.*

*See you the river clear and sweet
So beautiful and fair?
Follow it in and you may meet
The Queen of Dark and Air*

Children of the sylvan celestials and masters of the elf-haunted forests called wodes, wode elves see all forests as their domain by birthright. They know and enjoy their reputation among humans for snatching children who wander too far into the woods. Humans *should* fear the trees.

The wode elves' natural ability to mask their presence, called glamor, complements their guerilla style of fighting, letting them strike quickly from cover and then meld back into the underbrush. These traits also make the relatively few wode elves who dwell in cities naturally adept at urban warfare.

ON WODE ELVES

"I'm scared," Wenna said. "We should go back." The forest felt as if it was closing in on them.

"We're not going back," Jeremy said. Normally, such a statement would be the end of the discussion, but they were alone and far from home.

"What if we're going in circles?"

"Then we keep going in circles!" Dade said from somewhere up ahead. "Until we find the elves."

"The elves have found you!" a clear, bright voice called out. The children froze. They scanned the wood, but there were no signs of the speaker.

Then, only a few feet from them, a half-dozen figures melded out of the background, as if the trees and bushes and grass had been painted on them to perfectly match the wode. They wore light armor covered in leaves, moss, and vines, and they bristled with weapons.

"Black gods!" Meliora gasped. Credan frowned, and Wenna hushed her for swearing. Dade was ushered back toward them by two more wode elves, his bow in hand. The children huddled together, Credan's hand on the symbol of Saint Gryffyn around his neck, and Jeremy's hand on the hilt of his sword.

The elves were tall, taller than an adult human, but seemed always to crouch as soon as they stopped moving. Their eyes were unsettling, widely spaced and huge. But it was their ears, long and tall and twisting and set with great scoops to catch all sound, that marked them as elves of the wode.

"Admittedly, though, most terrans regret the experience." The voice they had heard called out again—from above. The children looked up and now saw a wode elf with long, furry, twisting ears and nut-brown skin smiling down at them. They were wearing a brightly colored outfit. The children watched the elf leap lightly from branch to lower branch until finally landing with a flourish on the forest floor before them.

"Consort!" An elf before them spoke in Yllyric as he stood from his crouch and bowed. "*We have been tracking these since they entered the wode.*"

Meliora, who understood the words, whispered to the others. "They called that one 'consort!' "

Llyander smiled, looking from Meliora to the elf who had just addressed them with a *See? I told you!* look on their face.

The tall, swashbuckling elf bowed to the children. "I am Llyander, the Lightning Strike, Consort to Queen Imyrr." They indicated the elf who had spoken. "This is my cousin, Rhythylthin."

"How did you know we were here?" Jeremy asked. Dade stood just behind him, with an arrow now nocked.

The one called Rhythylthin reached out while Dade was turned, looking at the queen's consort, and deftly plucked the arrow from the young man's bow.

"Nothing happens within the wode without our knowledge," the elf said. Dade spun on him and nocked another arrow. "And approval," Rhythylthin added, closing his hand and snapping the arrow in it.

"You come bearing a gift for our queen—the *Codex Dryadalis*." Llyander nodded at the heavy scroll Meliora carried. "My cousin Rhythylthin here was sent to capture you and escort you to the Orchid Court. But I am the queen's consort, and have my own thoughts on the matter."

The elf smiled at the children. "But have no fear," they said. Their Vaslorian was perfect, their voice a song. "You are safe ... now." The pause before "now" spoke volumes.

"Are you a ... a ... boy or a girl?" Wenna asked.

Llyander smiled gaily. "I am a song! I contain melodies and harmonies alike," they said. Wenna smiled.

Rhythylthin rolled his eyes. Llyander noticed this and winked at him. "Fashions change. My cousin here wears the new trends." They gestured at the other wode elf's garb and masculine appearance. "Me? I'm old fashioned." They gestured to their own outfit and appearance. "Grace never goes out of style."

Llyander turned to Rhythylthin and the rest of the wode elf band. "Their gift goes to Lord Tear, methinks. I will escort them." Then, suddenly imperious, they added, "You may go."

In spite of his previous skepticism toward the queen's consort, Rhythylthin straightened and bowed. As one, the elves turned and flowed into the wode. In only a few steps, they melded into the trees and undergrowth.

"How did they *do* that?" Meliora demanded, spinning to confront their benefactor.

"Hmm? Do what?" Llyander asked, looking after the elves, wondering what Meliora meant.

"Just ... disappear like that!"

Llyander looked at the other children with a combination of wonder and annoyance. "Do terran children not play hiding games?"

"Well ..." Jeremy looked at Dade, who was no help. "We do, but ..."

Llyander made a theatrical, dismissive gesture with one arm. "Well, it is the same thing, then. But for our people, it is a game we practice all our lives! We would be poor protectors of the wode if we could not conceal ourselves within it."

"But that was ..." Meliora was frustrated at the elf's seeming evasion. "That was *magic*!"

"You say? Well," Llyander mused, "terrans are a part and apart, it is said. It is your blessing and your curse methinks. Perhaps someday you can explain it to me!" The elf's eyes twinkled at Meliora's frustration.

Llyander turned and marched off. "Come!" they called. The children ran to catch up.

"Where are we going?" Wenna asked.

"I enjoy the favor of Lord Tear," Llyander said. "We are old friends. With me as your guide, he will treat you well—likely bestow favor upon you! You should be in anticipation of great treasure." They smiled.

The elf stopped suddenly and spun toward them, serious but kindly. They pointed to each of the children in turn.

"I will instruct you on the proper etiquette, but remember this: Lord Tear will test us. Some tests for you and some for me. The high elves and the wode elves are but distant cousins. You will hear much that is polite, much that is flattering, but it is all another kind of glamor. It hides deep tensions, recently exacerbated by the treaty with Ajax."

The children nodded. The elf, satisfied, marched off and they followed.

Jeremy turned to Dade. "I feel like we're in a dream," he whispered.

"You are!" their escort called out. "The wode is a dream! With a little luck, one you may soon wake safely from."

WODE ELF BENEFITS

As a wode elf character, you have the following benefits.

OTHERWORLDLY GRACE

Your elven body and mind can't be contained for long, and accessing memories is as easy as living in the present for you. You gain an edge on resistance rolls, and on tests that use any skills you have from the lore skill group.

SWIFT

Your speed is 6.

WODE ELF GLAMOR

You can magically alter your appearance to better blend in with your surroundings. You gain an edge on Agility tests made to hide and sneak, and tests made to find you while you are hidden take a bane.

ELF, HIGH

"Ajax has a kind of crude style, perhaps, but no taste. I have no objection to a villain, you understand. The world is a tale, but a tale is only as good as its villain. And Ajax is so ... artless. We deserve a better villain."

Children of the solar celestials created to tend their libraries and attend to the true elves as heralds, the high elves remember a better age, before the coming of humans and war. A time when the celestials were still in the world, and all that mattered was art and beauty.

In the millennia since their creators retired to Arcadia, the high elves built a civilization for themselves, primarily living in and among the fallen celestial sky cities. With no creators left to please, the elves continue as they did before—collecting lore and knowledge, worshiping art, and turning more inward and distrusting of outsiders with each generation.

ON HIGH ELVES

"They're so beautiful," Wenna said. "It's hard to imagine we're in danger."

"It's not that hard," Dade said darkly.

The five children stood alone in the center of a large circular courtyard open to the sky, their wode elf escort Llyander at their side. Lord Tear, King of the High Elves, sat on a marble throne, holding the scroll of the *Codex Dryadalis* in his lap. He had not spoken since Llyander made their speech and handed the codex over. The members of the court, nobles and courtiers and learned sages, gathered to watch. Implacable warriors in golden plate with fine filigree etched into the metal stood guard around the perimeter. They bristled with weapons.

"They seem like ..." Meliora said, searching for the words.

"Like the lords of all the world," Wenna said with awe and wonder.

"And we are their prisoners," Jeremy said, looking at his brother Dade and Credan beside him.

"You're not prisoners," Llyander said quietly. "You are guests. You're safer here than you would be even in your own homes."

"Yes," Jeremy said, looking at the nearest guards with their longswords and spears. "We feel very safe."

"Who are you kidding?" Dade said. "Everyone knows how much elves hate humans."

At this, Lord Tear exchanged a look with Llyander, consort to Queen Imyrr. It was a knowing look, full of sadness and melancholy. Then he broke his silence.

"Show me an elf who hates humans," he said, his voice deep and sonorous, "and I will show you an elf who loved a

human and watched them grow old and die." He looked at the children for the first time and smiled a melancholy smile. "Love is like sunlight for us, you see. We love completely but rarely. The loss of it means an eternity of grief for us."

The king tapped the scroll against his lap, seeming to have reached a decision.

"Well done, consort. Young humans, your escort here seeks to shame me. For they know well they could have taken this prize to their queen and earned her favor. Instead, Llyander brought it to me in the hopes that by doing so, they deliver me the power necessary to throw off the yoke of Ajax's rule. Long has Llyander resented the decision I made and sought to change it ..."—he looked at Llyander—"... by changing my mind."

Llyander nodded deferentially, silently congratulating the king on his insight.

"Alas, your escort's efforts are for naught." Then the king's face became softer. He held up the heavy scroll. "But this is not nothing," he said. "We made a treaty with Ajax to deliver unto him any artifacts our search teams discover from the ruins of this city. He benefits from this bargain more than we. But this, methinks, will stay with us. It was written by my mother in the youth of the world, and there are some things which must be denied the Iron Saint, even should they violate the treaty."

Llyander turned to the children and smiled brilliantly, eyebrows wagging in a show of glee. Wenna and Credan couldn't help but smile. "Well, you see children?" Llyander said. "We only have *more* to do, not everything to do."

The king stood up and a herald beside the throne announced, "Gather ye, and attend! The Lord of Fallen Irranys, Morning Dew On a Single Leaf Like a Tear from the Sun, speaks. And know his word is law!"

Lord Tear glided down the steps until he was standing, as tall as Llyander, before the children. His face was noble and beautiful. Wisps of silver-like strands of smoke spread across his golden skin. He seemed at once eternal and youthful.

"You have heard many things about my people, but this above all you should know. We do not value lore for lore's sake, but beauty first and above all other things. And the truth, to us, is a kind of beauty. Thus do we find knowledge beautiful.

"You have returned something not only of enormous worldpower, but at the same time, a work of art my mother labored over for many of your centuries. It is something of a miracle that it is returned to me now. I will not forget this. You have made an ally of the lord of the high elves. And though you lead brief lives, while you live, you shall have the favor of the elves." He turned to hand the scroll over to a sage and confer with his herald.

"He seems wise," Credan said.

"And smart," Meliora said.

"I'm surprised how kind he is," Jeremy said. "He seems a good king."

Llyander chuckled. Wenna noticed. She didn't say anything at first, but eventually she couldn't resist. "What?"

Llyander raised an eyebrow, then walked in front of the children so that as the wode elf spoke, their back was to the king.

"Do you remember when my cousin's soldiers hid in the wode?" they said, their voice low. "How astonished you were?"

Wenna and Meliora nodded. Llyander nodded to the guards and guests. "This is *their* glamor. Whatever you find pleasant and attractive in another? That is what you see in them. If you value good humor, they are jesters. If you value beauty, they are breathtaking. If you find intelligence attractive, they are sages. It is not just an effect of appearance, though it is also that. It is one of *demeanor*."

"But how do they do ..."

Llyander put a finger to their lips, silencing young Meliora. "It is not a thing they *do*. It is an effect in your mind."

"You mean they don't even know they're doing it?" Meliora asked.

"Then what do they *really* look like?" Wenna asked.

Llyander shrugged. "What does anyone really look like?" And while the other children chalked this up to their escort's normally abstruse mode of communication, Meliora caught a glimpse of understanding somewhere in her mind.

The king turned back to them. "Should any of you seek hidden lore or deep wisdom, please allow me to serve you first. But you, young woman, the human child who learned our language, I name thee *elf friend*. And my naming carries power. You will find the learning of our lore will come more quickly to you, and all those who still revere the elves will give you safe passage in their lands."

Llyander put their hands on their hips and regarded the children. "Not bad for your second quest. What shall you do for an encore?"

HIGH ELF BENEFITS

As a high elf character, you have the following benefits.

HIGH ELF GLAMOR

A magic glamor makes others perceive you as interesting and engaging, granting you an edge on Presence tests using the Flirt or Persuade skills. This glamor makes you look and sound slightly different to each creature you meet, since what is engaging to one might be different for another. However, you never appear to be anyone other than yourself.

OTHERWORLDLY GRACE

Your elven body and mind can't be contained for long, and accessing memories is as easy as living in the present for you. You gain an edge on resistance rolls, and on tests that use any skills you have from the lore skill group.

UNSTOPPABLE MIND

Your mind allows you to maintain your cool in any situation. You can't be dazed.

HAKAAN

Defending the Society's flank, the Pillar stood alone against the Bloodstone Legion. The Arrow was awestruck and afraid. She was a different person in a fight.

"COME FORTH, SONS OF ORD!" the hakaan metamorph bellowed as Ajax's dwarven legion advanced. "AND MEET A BETTER WOMAN THAN THEE!!"

In spite of their friendly, outgoing nature, the rare presence of a hakaan in human society is considered a harbinger—an omen of dark times.

Descended from a tribe of giants in upper Vanigar, the original Haka'an tribe made a bargain with Holkatja the Vanigar trickster god. They traded some of their gigantic size and strength for the ability to see the future.

But Holkatja betrayed them, and the only future they are allowed to see is the moment and nature of their own death. These visions are never of some mundane tragedy. No hakaan ever received a vision of dying from choking on a grape. The doomsight is always momentous—always dramatic.

This doomsight can happen at any moment. It does not come for all or even most hakaan, but when it comes, it is considered an act of overwhelming hubris to ignore it. Trying to escape the doomsight means a painful, tragic death, and cursing your family to live with shame.

For this reason, the only hakaan the average human meets is one trying to fulfill their doom. The human superstition—that the arrival of one or more hakaan in human lands is a sign of great forces acting in the world, auspicious times—is literally true. In dark times, many hakaan experience the doomsight and leave their communities to venture out into the mundane world, in search of their destiny.

Humans in Vanigar have their own word for this concept of a personal fate, "wyrd." Traditional hakaan sometimes refer to the doomsight as wyrdken.

ON HAKAAN

"You ... you *know* when you're going to die?"

The Pillar, dressed in her civilian clothing—a simple pleated dress cinched at the waist that left her bare arms free to work—dipped her hand in the pail of water. It immediately sprang to life, the water sizzled and danced as her fingers cooled. She pulled her hand out, shook off the water, and went back to sculpting the granite.

The hard, tough stone melded like clay under her fingers. Whatever she was doing, it generated enormous heat in her fingertips, hence the pails of water beside her. The Arrow couldn't tell if this was her talent manifest, or something her people could do, or neither. As he watched, he realized he recognized the bust. It was the girl they

rescued during the Society's recent battle with the Academy.²

"Not exactly," the Pillar said as she concentrated on her art. "Not when. More sort of ..." She looked away from her sculpture and looked out the window, thinking. "How. Why. I am told there is a sense of ..." she looked at the young man, a teenager, only recently recruited to the Society. "Anticipation. Eagerness when the time is nigh. So," she took in a deep breath, which was an impressive sight to see in a 9-foot-tall woman, and let it out, smiling at the young man. "Not anytime soon." Her smile was like a sunrise.

Though he had lived with fear most of his young life, mortality was not something that plagued the Arrow's mind. He had a hard time grasping it. "That must be ... awful."

"Oh no," she went back to her work. "No it's ... I do not know how to say it in Caelian. It is a blessing. I have seen people die for no reason. Be taken from their loved ones without warning, without ... without purpose. There are unjust deaths. They destroy families. Communities.

"But the doomsight only comes in time of great need. People forget Holkatya is also the goddess of luck, and those who beat luck—under ... underdogs, as you say. She gave more than she stole, I sometimes think.

"I do not know how long I have. No one does, but I know my death will have meaning. I *know* it, do you understand? I know it like I know my own name. Often I feel ..." Her great hands clenched and unclenched, as though she were trying to grasp something just out of reach. "I yearn for it. I *want* it to happen. What greater end can there be than fulfilling one's destiny?" She looked at the mostly-finished sculpture. "It gives everything I do a sense of purpose." She went back to work.

"My people are a serene and peaceful lot. We do not seek glory like the folk of Vanigar. But, in battle sometimes, knowing I am getting closer to my wyrd, my destiny, I think I know how they feel. Something comes over me, some enormous sense of ... of rightness." She smiled again at the young man. "It scares my friends sometimes, I know."

The Arrow had seen it, and enthusiastically agreed. "You're not from the Barrow Hills," he said.

The Pillar shook her head, "No, I do not wot of your hills. I am from the hills north of the Blue Cloud Mountains in far Vanigar." She turned and looked down at the Arrow with some pride. "My people are descended from the original Haka'an tribe." She went back to work. "Though I am sure the Barrow Men, as you call them, are a fine people. We're all related, you see."

"Is that why you joined the Society?"

"Oh yes," the Pillar said. "I had only left home a fortnight previous when Memory came to Vanigar to recruit me. I

² See last ish. -MC.

had a sense my wyrd lay in some distant land, but I did not know the world was so big.”

“Did she look like herself?” the Arrow asked, smiling. Enjoying a moment of shared experience with the giant woman.

The Pillar chuckled, and the Arrow’s chest vibrated with the force of it. “No, she looked like an aged wise woman of Vanigar. I think only in fabled Alloy could the Memory of a Sunset at Dawn walk the streets without ‘scaring the horses,’ as they say.”

“Alloy?”

The Pillar looked at the Arrow out of the corner of her eye. “You’ll see,” she said with some glee.

“You were following your vision, you said.”

“Yes, my wyrd as the Vanigair call it.”

“What did you see?”

“Oh,” she smiled and blushed, “it is not meet to say.”

“It’s bad luck?”

“Mmmm ... you would say maybe. I think ... rude is closer, but the doomsight is rarely clear in any event. It is full of symbolism and metaphor. My father is the shaa’er of our tribe. The skald as the Vanigair call it. He thought the symbolism was a kind of protection. So that I might know with certainty the meaning, but be unable to clearly convey it to others.” She nodded. “I think he is right.”

“Is it like a dream or a nightmare?” The Arrow wasn’t sure how much it was okay to ask.

“No, it was not a dream, it was a thing that happened.” She turned to face the Arrow and leaned her massive arms on her legs. “I know not how it is for other doomseekers, but this is how it was for me. I was collecting flecks of jasper, a ... a mineral we add to our food. I was picking flakes of rock up off the ground when I saw a bee that could not fly and a horde of ants all around, one with wings. In that moment, that was all that I could see. It was like the rest of the world fell away, and the bee and the ants filled my sight. Though the bee was surrounded and the ants seemed to go on forever, I could see the ants were afraid. There were dozens of dead ants on the ground.”

“What did you do?”

“Mm?” The Pillar was lost for a moment, remembering the moment.

“What happened next?”

The Pillar shrugged, giant muscles in her shoulders rippling. “That was the end of my vision. At that moment, I knew I had to leave home.”

“Wow.”

“Indeed. Its meaning is clear to me. I stand alone against the endless horde. In my heart, they are Ajax’s war dogs. I think I know this, but ...” She shrugged again.

“But how come you’re alone? Where am I? Where’s the Society?”

“Who knows?” she smiled. “When the vision comes upon you, it is all you can see. Maybe it is like a painting, and I

am the painter. And if only I could turn my head a little ways to the left or right, I would see my friends there, fighting with me. I like to think mine is a great sacrifice, made so my friends can escape some overwhelming evil. It is a common theme among the fated I am told.”

“What about the bee? What happened to the bee?”

“Oh, feeling sorry for it, I placed my finger gently on the ground, and you must see,” she held up her pinky, “even my little finger is like a mighty wall for the bee. I sought only to protect it from the ants, but it quickly scrambled onto my finger, and after I stood up, it cleaned itself and flew away.”

“It could fly!” the Arrow said, suddenly full of youthful exuberance. “It could fly the entire time! It was just waiting ... for someone else to come along.”

The Arrow stared, wide-eyed at the Pillar. Even before the young man spoke, the hakaan talent’s eyes widened in realization. “My vision ...” she said.

“Wasn’t over!” the Arrow said, his joy impossible to hide.

HAKAAN BENEFITS

As a hakaan character, your size is 1L, and you have the following benefits.

DOOMSIGHT

Working with your Director, you can predetermine an encounter in which you will die. When that encounter begins, you become doomed. While doomed, you lose the Undaunted benefit from this ancestry, you automatically get tier 3 results on tests and resistance rolls, and you don’t die no matter how low your Stamina falls. You then die immediately at the end of the encounter.

If you don’t predetermine your death encounter, you can choose to become doomed while you are dying with the director’s approval (no action required). Doing so should be reserved for encounters in which you are dying as a result of suitable heroism, such as making a last stand against a boss or saving civilians, or when the consequences of your actions have finally caught up to you—not because you’re playing a one-shot and have nothing to lose, Hacaarl.

HAKAAN MIGHT

When you force move a creature or object, you can increase the distance moved by 1.

UNDAUNTED

You can’t be weakened. Additionally, when your Stamina equals the negative of your winded value, you turn to rubble instead of dying. You are unaware of your surroundings in this state. After 12 hours, you regain Stamina equal to your recovery value.

HUMAN

“Humans,” the dwarf said with a combination of exasperation and awe. “Their only virtue seems to be believing in impossible things.”

"Humans belong to the world in a way the other speaking peoples do not. You can sense the presence of magic—that ... oily smell in the air, as I've heard it described. And the presence of deathless causes the hairs on the back of your neck to stand up. Or why do you think graveyards affect you so? Whatever magic is, its grip on you is light. Whatever drives the deathless, your nature rebels against it.

"No one knows why this should be. We elves have no such senses. Nor do the elementals or the kanin ... the dwarves and the orcs as you say. What is it that sets humans apart? I am an historian, not a physician. I cannot say. Perhaps some of you will one day find out and teach us all the reason."

ON HUMANS

So, we arrive here at the end of your first semester of Human Culture. I hope to see you next year in the Caelian Empire course, and though it may be hard to believe now, I often see former students' names in our textbooks years later. Perhaps that will be some of you.

I will now answer the one question I am asked most often, and which I save answering until the last day of class. What do I think of humans?

I am a high elf, as you deem it in your tongue. A child of the solar celestials. And I have taught this class, mostly to young humans, since the Caelian emperors founded this city. I was asked to join the faculty by the first chancellor. I have seen generations of your people come through this classroom, and that alone would well qualify me to answer this question.

What do I think of humans? Well, I will tell you.

I was here, teaching this class during the fire of Enlightenment 373. The fire leveled this city. Can you imagine that? Can you imagine the heat, the death, destruction that such a thing causes?

Six months after the Great Fire, your ancestors had rebuilt ... everything. I have seen many miracles in my life. Witnessing that feat might be chief among them.

Liches are almost always humans. Did you know that? I think I know why. Your lives are so short—almost as soon as you're born, you're thinking about dying, and you refuse to yield.

That refusal to yield to death ... to *death* ... is what drives you, I think. Drives you to leave the world better than you found it. Causes ruined people to rebuild great city.

We studied human history in this room. Did you feel that those great ancestors of yours were perhaps made of finer stuff than you? Do not think thus. I knew them, and I know you, and your future is greater. I sometimes think each human generation greater than the last—more courageous, more generous. Quicker to forgive.

Today, Ajax's name is on everyone's tongue, but I have seen many great evils arise in the world. I was teaching in this classroom when the Pharaoh Khorsekef, desperate, his power failing, opened the Great Tet and drank of the time stored there, becoming the Ultralich. He was defeated, and now rules the Necropolitan Ruin in the Abyssal Waste.

I was alive, though not yet a professor, when Cthriion Uroniziir tried to reduce the timescape into one singular universe, wiping out reality as we know it. She was defeated, and we see her cage every day.³

Each of these great evils was defeated by a coalition. The armies and heroes of many speaking peoples. And all of them—all of them—were led ... by humans. That's a fact. That's history. You can look it up.

Is there some rare trait that makes you uniquely qualified to lead disparate peoples, bring them together to achieve great things? I think ... there must be.

Those great humans, your ancestors, did not focus on differences. They did not weigh different people and grade them based on arbitrary traits deemed virtues and flaws. That is what Ajax does. No, those humans focused on the future. On making a better world ... for all of us. A world many of them knew they would not live to see. That is a sacrifice ... I can scarcely imagine.

The people who stand against Ajax and tyrants like him will be just like you—normal people. Priests and scholars and merchants and farmers. Maybe even teachers.

Stopping Ajax will require you to become something else. You must become heroes. Conduits of saints, warmasters of great armies. Censors and shadows. That may seem unlikely now, but the future has a way of surprising us.

Some of your names, I will see written in future textbooks.

But some of your names, I will see written in the stars.

HUMAN BENEFITS

As a human character, you have the following benefits.

DETECT THE SUPERNATURAL

As a maneuver, you open your awareness to detect supernatural creatures and phenomena. Until the end of your next turn, you know the location of any supernatural object, Undead, Construct, or creature from another plane of existence within 5 squares of you, even if you don't have line of effect to them. You know if you're detecting an item or a creature, and you know if a creature is Undead, a Construct, or from another plane of existence.

RESIST THE SUPERNATURAL

Your connection to the natural world protects you from supernatural forces. You have Magic immunity 2 and Psionic immunity 2. Each of these immunities increases by 1 each time you level up.

STAYING POWER

Your human anatomy allows you to fight, run, and stay awake longer than others. Increase your number of Recoveries by 2.

³ Professor Cilliarwn did not elaborate on this.

MEMONEK

"This world of yours. Ships of wood and swords of steel. It's so ... primitive. Like a fairy tale."

"Where do you come from, lady, that our world seems a fable? You have no ships and swords?"

"We have them." Lady Urusistra cast a hand across the sky. "You see those stars? That is my home—the timescape. Our ships are great star freighters that ply the space lanes. And among those stars, light hits as hard as steel."

The native denizens of Axiom, the Plane of Uttermost Law, memonek dwell in a land with lakes and trees and birds and flowers. But on this alien world, the lakes are seas of mercury, the birds glitter with wings of glass stretched gossamer thin, and the flowers' petals are iridescent metal as flexible and fragile as any earthly rose.

The minds of memonek are highly ordered. Their reason is their great pride. But when descending to the lower planes, including a manifold like Orden where law and chaos mix, a sickness comes over them—an uncontrollable sensation called ... *emotion*.

ON MEMONEK

"You want to tell me what just happened?" Sir John asked. Count Revile avoided his gaze, then turned and stamped away across the bloody battlefield.

"I'm fine!" Revile shouted, all evidence to the contrary.

"I know what I saw," John said as he followed his friend. "You went into a bloodlust. And it's not the first time. Whether you like it or not, whether I like it or not, I'm in charge of this mission. Either you tell me what's going on, or I have no choice. I *have* to conclude you're a danger to the team and cut you loose."

Revile stopped and turned to look at the rest of the party, recovering from their wounds. The memonek's white porcelain chest heaved as he tried to calm himself. His ceramic skin looked as strong as plate, but John knew it was brittle, fragile.

Count Revile took a deep breath. "We call it *velloparatha*," he said. "In your tongue it would be ... world-sick ... or world-sickness? It is a thing that happens ... to my people ... when they come to your world. It is an illness of ... of feeling. Emotion."

"Are you going mad?" John asked in a whisper.

The memonek smiled ruefully. "It feels that way sometimes. I spent an hour this morning staring at an insect that landed on my finger—a grasshopper, the polder called it. I thought I had never seen a thing so perfect and beautiful. That was awe. As powerful as I have ever felt. In the battle today, anger—just as powerful.

"I thought I could resist it. When I arrived here and felt no different, I thought perhaps world-sickness was a legend. But it is a slow process, this illness, these insidious emotions."

"No emotions where you're from?"

Count Revile shook his head. "Not like this. We are creatures of reason, we of Axiom. It is our art, our pride—our religion sometimes, methinks. We have emotions. Joy, sadness, wonder, grief. Love. But they are... a fashion. They do not *happen* to us. They are something we indulge in, out of propriety. Here... everything is order and chaos mixed—even in me. In *me*." Revile placed his hand on his chest.

"In the battle today," he said. "That anger was not directed at Ajax's War Dogs. It was directed at myself."

"At yourself? Why? What did you—"

"John," the memonek said, and now it was his turn to whisper. "I was afraid. Afraid of ... of being wounded, of failing you, failing my friends ... of dying. And out of that fear came ... enormous anger—at myself. Anger that I was so weak, so ... useless. Anger so ... strong, so powerful ... I forgot who I was."

John chuckled. "That's just ..." He smiled broadly. "That's normal, man. That's just normal. We all feel that way."

"What? No, you don't understand—"

"Oh, I don't understand? Okay, let me guess—it felt like you were gonna piss yourself."

"Yes!"

"Yeah, happens to all of us."

"Even you?!"

Sir John shrugged. "Are you kidding? Sure. But it doesn't help. You still got a job to do. In fact, I'd say that *is* the job. Anyone can learn the blade." He placed his hand on the pommel of his sword. "Nothing special about that. It's learning to deal with the fear. That's the job—what separates the professionals from the amateurs."

Count Revile said nothing, just thinking.

"Feeling better?"

Revile nodded. "I always recover afterward, but these outbursts come unbidden, like thunder from a clear sky."

"Hmm. Yeah. Well, that explains what happened when you met Embers."

Count Revile did not like being reminded of that. He looked to the sky and shook his head. "I made a fool of myself."

"Don't be so hard on yourself. If you're trying to seduce our void mage, you made a good start of it. She's three thousand years old, I've known her since I was fifteen. I don't think I've ever seen her *blush*. Anyway, now that I know what's going on, now that I know you're basically a giant teenager with overactive glands, I can relax a little."

Sir John and Count Revile, both tacticians, stood together on the bloody battlefield, looking at each other.

"John, I fear this may get worse before it gets better."

"So, just like everything else?" He clapped the memonek on the shoulder. "Don't worry, we'll help you get through it. I'll let the others know. Once they understand, they'll help too. They'll probably just take the piss out of you. That'll help, you'll love that."

“You’re a good friend, John.”

“Heh. Is that you, or the world-sickness talking?”

“Me, I think. The world-sickness would have me say ... you’re a bastardly son of a bitch. But you’re my bastardly son of a bitch.” Count Revile smiled.

John laughed and put his arm around his friend as they headed back to the party. “Funny. The world-sickness sounds a lot like *me*.”

MEMONEK BENEFITS

As a memonek character, you have the following benefits.

LIGHTWEIGHT

Your silicone body is aerodynamic and low in density. Your speed is 7 and whenever you fall, you reduce the distance of the fall by 2 squares. Additionally, your stability decreases by 2 to a minimum of 0. When you are force moved, you are force moved an additional 2 squares.

KEEPER OF ORDER

When you or a creature adjacent to you makes a power roll, you can remove an edge or a bane on the roll as a free triggered action. You can only use this benefit once per round.

ORC

"Even should an arrow pierce their heart, each kanin warrior has within them one last act of revenge."

An anger that cannot be hidden. A fury that drives them in battle. Orcs are famed throughout the world as consummate warriors—a reputation that the peace-loving orcs find distasteful.

The fifth of the speaking peoples, orcs arrived on Orden after humans and elves. They made their homes in the borderlands between those two cultures, preferring the natural forests and avoiding the elf-haunted wodes. For generations, this put them directly in the path of humans who cut down the trees and built roads and farms.

Each orc has within them a fire that causes their veins to glow once blood is drawn. This anger propels them right to the edge of death. The dichotomy between their desire to be left alone and their zeal in battle is summarized in a dwarven proverb:

"Be thankful orcs do not hold grudges."

ON ORCS

What a world we have made.

Indeed, what a marvel!

It is a marvel *now*, with the dragons and celestials, elementals and terrans.

It is unseemly. It was better before things started talking.

And having *opinions*. About our creation. About *us*!

Oh, I don't know. I thought I agreed, but then look you what our sibling Ord has made. A fine people, these elementals. They make marvels. Ord made them, and now they make miracles.

We make marvels. The world is a miracle, and enough.

Yes. But still. I think I might try my hand at children. It seems a worthy pursuit.

Heed the lesson of our Shamèd Brother. It was better before the coming of the terrans. Before the coming of war.

But war has come. Ord and I are of one mind in this: what is done cannot be undone. My children should not seek war, but they would excel at it should it come to them. They would be strong, like the elementals. But theirs would be a strength of spirit. They would never relent, never give up. Always seeking, always striving. Like life itself.

They should love the forest and green things, like the children of Val. But they should be at home in the cities the terrans and elementals build. In this world of chaos and law, they should seek *balance*. Not quick to anger. But once angered? A *wildfire*.

If they excel at war, the terrans will be jealous. They will be in constant conflict with each other.

Perhaps. Yes, I think you're right. It seems to be the great tragedy of our creation, war. But the constant threat of it will bring wisdom. It will take great wisdom to avoid such

conflict, and those possessed of such wisdom will become great leaders.

Would they be lorewise and crafty?

Oh, I would leave that to them. It is not meet that children should be too closely molded by their parents. But you ask, and my mind goes to Ket. They should lack the pride of Ket's children....

Look where *that* got him.

Hush, you. We should not be too hard on our Brother In Mourning. He has paid for his hubris. My children would love the world more than lore. That is my answer.

They seem a fine people, if you ask me.

And there they are, look at them! Kul, your thoughts made real! Only in the world a little while, and already growing, learning.

Ah! My children! So fierce and unyielding. I see you lead short lives, like the terrans. Perhaps this is good.

I see they get along well with Ord's children. I think this a good sign.

Already they make homes in the forests by the elves. Some little skirmishing over borders, I note. Nothing serious. What shall you call them?

Oh, I do not care for such things. They should be free of our designs, like the terrans. Let them name themselves. Oh! They already have! Kanin. It means "the people" in their tongue. I like that. Very democratic. Good for them.

And will they know you?

If they wish. Much as I agreed with...the Father of Men...I find worship unseemly.

Agreed.

Agreed!

Let me introduce myself, at least.

Ahem.

"Hear me, kanin! This world we made is yours, as much as it is anyone's. You belong here.

"Know that you are my children, the children of Kul, he who put fire within the world. And there is fire in you. And though the world and fate and baser minds may conspire to destroy your light, you will survive. And more than survive, you will thrive. And in thriving, you will conquer!"

ORC BENEFITS

As an orc character, you have the following benefits.

BLOODFIRE RUSH

When you take damage, your speed increases by 2 until the end of your next turn. You can benefit from this feature only once per round.

RELENTLESS

When a creature deals damage to you that leaves you dying, you can make a free strike against any creature. If the creature is reduced to 0 Stamina by your attack, you can spend a Recovery.

POLDER

"Wait, where'd he go? Where'd that little son of a bitch go? AAAAGGH!"

After humans, polders are the most numerous and diverse ancestry in Orden. They are not humans, but they live in and among humans, sharing their gods and culture. Almost every human culture in Orden has a polder saint or a human saint venerated by polder.

Short creatures averaging three-and-a-half feet tall, polders have obscure origins. They are a young species who, like humans, have no single patron god. Their natural ability to blend in with shadows makes them excellent spies and thieves. However, many polders consider this stereotype a base slander, pointing out that they're also famed as chefs—though polders can be found in virtually every profession, especially in cities.

ON POLDERS

The three peasants—Jago, his wife Sarah, and his sister Beth—sat together watching the three heroes talk in the crowded common room of the inn. Well, Jackson Bootblack seemed to be doing most of the talking.

"This kind of shit doesn't work if it's just a bunch of ratcatchers like us," the polder said. "You need the people to rise up. Been fifteen years since Omund died—fifteen years of fighting wolves and bandits and worse. The people welcome a tyrant after that. They like order, you know? They adapt."

"If you stand on the grass long enough, it learns to lie flat," A Mist Coils Around Dying Embers said. "But what do *you* say?"

"Eh?" the polder asked her. But he glanced at Sir John staring at him.

"You say the people have no stomach for rebellion," Embers said. "But what about you?"

"Oh," the polder said, "I say it doesn't matter much what I say. Why's he looking at me like that?" the polder asked the high elf and pointed at Sir John. Realizing he was being rude, John shook his head to clear it. "Sorry, I just ... I never met a polder before," he said.

"Are you kidding me?" Jackson said.

"No! Sorry, I just ..."

"What are you, from the moon? Where you from that you never met a polder before? There's polder in every fucking village and town from here to the sea."

"Really? That's weird. I'm from Tor, I've been all over—just never met a polder before."

Jackson looked at his friend, the high elf void mage. "Am I crazy?"

"You're not crazy." Embers smiled. She was enjoying watching two of her friends get to know each other. "John's just never run into one, it seems."

"Well, we're adorable," the polder said, and drank some ale.

"They must have been around I guess," John said. "I probably just never noticed."

The polder put his drink down. "Oh, thank you. Thank you very much. You know, it's funny. I never have any problem noticing you big assholes. One of you makes about as much noise as a cow, which ... I don't even know how you manage that."

"You're talking just ... my voice is just as loud as yours!"

"I mean the way you walk around. Just the way you move, the way you stand up and sit down. You make so much goddamn noise."

Jago, Sarah, and Beth all smiled at the exchange.

"Humans are loud, yes," Embers agreed.

"Do we have to ... can we talk about something else, please?"

"I just ..." The polder wouldn't let it go. "You seriously never ... you never been to an inn? Cavall's teeth, I can't count how many inns and taverns I've been to run by polders, got polders in the kitchen or waiting tables. One of the only two things we're good at, I think."

"Yeah?" John asked. "What's the other one?"

The little man smiled. "Getting into places we ain't supposed to be."

"Now we're talking," Sir John said. "You were saying we need the people behind us. I agree."

"Yeah, okay. To business: How to rally the people." The polder took the question seriously. "It's not hard. First, we need someone they'll rally around. I could make someone up, invent a local folk hero, but if we can find the real thing? They just need to look the part, that's all. I'll take care of the rest."

"I'm working on that," John said. "But it's ... slower going than I thought. I'm betting on a long shot."

"What's the holdup?"

John thought about how to put what he knew into words. "You know," he shrugged. "Some people can only be heroes if they think they're above everyone else. Some people can only be heroes once they realize they're not. And some people ..."

He looked at his drink, at the expensive clear glass the innkeep had given him because he recognized Sir John. He turned the glass slowly on the table and now he was mostly talking to himself. "Some people still have to figure that out."

"Which is best?" Jackson asked, and Embers could tell the little man was testing John.

John took a deep breath and came back to reality. "Well. If we could be picky, we wouldn't need a hero," he said.

The polder looked at the high elf and nodded, impressed. Test passed.

"Okay. Well, if you've already got a candidate, I could get things started. The other half is: we need a good story—short, punchy. Something that'll catch on, needs to be easy to relate to, but bigger than life. A tax. A toll! Bridge toll, classic. An ogre ... no, three ogres. Yeah, three is better. Three ogres in Ajax's livery. A lone figure standing against them. See? Easy."

"Where are we going to find three ogres?" John asked.

"What do you mean?" Now it was the polder's turn to be confused.

"What do you mean, 'What do I mean?' " John said.

"I'm not ... we don't need *real* ogres." Jackson looked at the elf. "Is he for real?"

"Trust me," the void mage said.

"You mean you're going to make it up?!" John exclaimed.

"I..." Jackson looked with incredulity at the high elf void mage, then back at the human. "Yes, I do mean that. Does he know what I do?" he asked the elf.

"He'll learn." Embers smiled.

The polder turned back to Sir John. "Hello. I lie for a living. And I'm *really good at it*. Sometimes also kill people, but only if lying or running away doesn't work."

John turned to Embers. "I thought he was a thief."

"I was a thief," the polder said.

"You *were* a thief."

"Yeah, I was with the Clock. Probably still am—they don't exactly let you just walk away. We sort of have an agreement. I agree to do what they tell me and they agree not to tell me to do anything."

"Did they kick you out, or did you quit?"

"Depends on who you ask. I don't like being told what to do. It's sort of a polder thing. Hereditary or ancestral or whatever. Everybody wants a polder chef until they start trying to tell us what to cook."

"So what are you now?"

"I'm annoying."

The elf smiled. "He's a troubadour—one of the best."

Sir John looked at him, nodded. "No lute, I notice. And you don't seem the type to sit by the hearth telling stories."

The polder grinned. "I ain't that kind of troubadour. I'm the other kind. I think the best story is the one people tell each other."

"Propaganda," Sir John said, a grin spreading across his face. The polder pointed a finger at him and smiled. John heard the door to the inn open behind him. This wasn't notable, but the gasp from the customers was.

"Hey," the polder said, looking past John to the doorway. "Hey, I think our folk hero just showed up. Damn, he looks the part all right. Or she, I can never tell with these guys."

John turned to see.

Sir Vaantikalisax loomed just inside the doorway, his scales and armor glowing in the light of the hearth fire. Sir John shot up out of his chair, a huge smile on his face.

"I, uh ..." Vaantikalisax said. The tall, broad draconian looked from John to the three peasants. Jago, Sarah, and Beth were beaming with even more joy than John, if that were possible.

The knight stared at them for a moment, then turned back to his friend.

"Maybe you're right," the dragon knight said.

POLDER BENEFITS

As a polder character, your size is 1S and you have the following benefits.

POLDER GEIST

When you start your turn while no creatures have line of effect to you, or while you are hidden from or have concealment from all creatures with line of effect to you, your speed is increased by 3 until the end of your turn.

SHADOWMELD

You gain the following ability.

SHADOWMELD

You become an actual shadow.

Keywords: Magic

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Self

Target: Self

Effect: You flatten yourself into a shadow against a wall or floor you are touching, and become hidden from any creature you have cover or concealment from or who isn't observing you. While in shadow form, you have full awareness of your surroundings, attacks against you and tests made to find you take a bane, and you can't move or take actions or maneuvers except to exit this form. Any ability or effect that targets more than 1 square affects you in this form only if it explicitly affects the surface you are flattened against. You can exit this form as a maneuver.

REVENANT

"I will suck the life from your flesh and leave you a withered corpse!"

The revenant null flexed his arms and assumed a fighting pose. He smiled.

"Little late for that."

The dead walk among us. Some of them are happier about it than others.

Unlike the necromantic rituals that produce wights and wraiths and zombies, revenants rise from the grave through a combination of an unjust death and a burning desire for vengeance. Creatures sustained on pure will, they have no need of food or water or air—and, unlike their zombified cousins, they retain all their memories and personality from life.

These revenants are rare. Many are hunted by ignorant villagers who see only their dead flesh and assume the worst. Those who survive the pitchfork brigade either

choose a solitary life, often as a wandering soul seeking out living company yet constantly in fear of it, or they migrate to a metropolis such as Blackbottom or Capital, where lost souls gather to make a home.

ON REVENANTS

"I'm telling you, we are being *followed*."

"No one knows we're here. No one even knows this place exists! We got all day. We stash everything here, and take a sample to ..." The head thief pulled a vial out of a crate stuffed with straw and looked at it.

"It's just ..." The junior cutpurse spoke nervously. "There was this lady knight in Blackbottom sniffing around. She seemed serious. I got this weird ... chill when I looked at her."

"Hey," the head thief said, his brow furrowed as he looked at the label on the vial. "Where'd you say you bought this stuff? You said a ship—a ship from where?"

"I dunno, uh ... uh, Capital I think."

The head thief looked at the panicking cutpurse. "This lady knight—she have a red and blue device on her shield?"

"Black gods," one of the other thieves said. "It can't be Lady Filliamo, can it?"

There was a firm knock at the door to the safe house. A door which, from the outside, looked like an unremarkable section of wall.

"Oh, you've got to be kidding me."

"Nonono! How could she ... Capital was *nine months ago*!"

"She's a revenant, idiot! She doesn't even need air. She could have walked here! Just ... into the water and across the bottom of the sea! Black gods, why didn't you say anything?"

"I did! You asshole, I just did! I been trying to tell you for—"

"Man, there is a *difference* between, 'Hey I think we're being shadowed,' and, 'There's a deathless *copper* coming after us!'"

One of the four thieves opened a vial and dipped his dirk into the red oil within.

"What is *that* gonna do? *She's already dead!*" Another knock at the hidden door. "Forget it. Let her knock. Grab as many as you can, and we'll go out the back."

The head thief ran for the door out the back of the safe house. He jerked it open—and the other thieves watched as a silver flash silently flared across his forehead. Through the open door, they could see the silhouette of the knight, her open hand held up in front of her.

She clenched her hand into a fist and the judgment she had placed on the head cutpurse detonated, hurling him backward. He sprawled across the floor, conscious but stunned.

The gray-skinned knight walked into the room. Metal heels rang out on the wooden floor. She seemed relaxed, but her eyes burned with inner fire.

"Boys," Lady Filliamo said pleasantly. "Busy morning."

"How did you ... this is impossible, how did you find us?"

She looked at the man groaning on the floor. "Your boss didn't tell you about the vengeance mark?"

"You marked us. Back in Capital. You marked one of us and just ... just walked here."

"Don't be stupid. I marked you in Blackbottom. Capital was just normal detective work. I came here by ship." She smiled—black lips on pale gray skin.

"Come on." The braver of the three remaining thieves drew twin daggers. "She can't get all of us at—"

Lady Filliamo made a broad gesture with her right hand and argent marks flared across the foreheads of all three thieves. A clatter of weapons hitting the floor. Three pairs of hands slowly rose in the air.

"Good boys. Here, put these on." She tossed three pairs of manacles on the floor.

"Hang on, you can't arrest us," one of the thieves, unarmed and still holding his hands up, said. "This isn't Capital. You don't have jurisdiction!"

Lady Filliamo shrugged. "I'm a knight of the church. Jurisdiction's for the city watch." She drew her silver sword a few inches from the scabbard just to show them the blade.

"I deal in steel."

REVENANT BENEFITS

As a revenant character, you have the following benefits.

FORMER LIFE

Choose the ancestry you were before you died. Your size equals that ancestry's size. Your speed is 5. You lose all other ancestral benefits from your original ancestry.

VENGEANCE MARK

As a maneuver, you place a magic sigil on a creature within 10 squares of you. When you place a sigil, you can decide where it appears on the creature's body, and whether the sigil is visible to only you or to all creatures.

You always know the direction to the exact location of a creature who bears one of your sigils and is on the same plane of existence as you.

Additionally, you gain the following ability.

DETONATE SIGIL

A magical sigil you placed on a creature explodes with energy.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 10 **Target:** 1 creature with your sigil

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage; slide 1**
- 12–16: **7 damage; slide 2**
- 17+: **10 damage; slide 3**

Effect: The sigil disappears from the creature.

You can have an active number of sigils equal to your level. You can remove a sigil from a creature harmlessly (no action required). If you are already using your maximum

number of sigils and place a new one, your oldest sigil disappears with no other effect.

TOUGH BUT WITHERED

Your undead body grants you cold, corruption, lightning immunity, and poison immunity equal to your level. You also have fire weakness 5. You can't suffocate, and you don't need to eat or drink to stay alive.

Additionally, when your Stamina equals the negative of your winded value, you become inert instead of dying. You can continue to observe your surroundings, but you can't speak, take actions, maneuvers, or triggered actions, or move and you fall prone. If you take any fire damage while in this state, your body is destroyed and you die. Otherwise, after 12 hours, you regain Stamina equal to your recovery value.

UNDEAD INFLUENCE

Your supernatural gifts allow you to influence other undead. You gain an edge on Reason, Intuition, and Presence tests made to interact with undead creatures.

TIME RAIDER

"I fear no living thing, but the time raiders."

—Chief Executive Admiral Lithiri Aswandala

Commander of the *HOV First Get Behind Them*

Memonek

The original servitor species of the synliiroi—evil psions with near god-like power—the kuran'zoi liberated themselves during the First Psychic War. In the centuries since, they built their own culture and civilization as nomads of the timescape. The exonym "time raiders" was given to them by denizens of the lower worlds who, seeing the advanced technology they wield, concluded they must be from the future.

Extraordinarily rare in Orden, the time raiders thrive on the Sea of Stars, the Sea Between Worlds, where the winds of limbo roar.

In place of eyes, kuran'zoi possess crystalline ocular sensors that grant them high-spectral vision hardened against the extreme radiations encountered in the Sea of Stars, permitting them to operate freely outside their vessels with only their portable rebreathers. Time raiders also have two sets of arms, allowing them to wield melee weapons at the same time as ranged weapons. A single well-trained kuran'zoi is like a squad unto itself.

ON TIME RAIDERS

"You will tell me the location of the ship you came here in."

Taxiarch Lycaon paced outside the ruined church. The four-armed woman with crystal eyes and flaming pink hair in a strip down the center of her shaved head sneered at him. She was chained to the ruin of a stone column outside the ruin of a stone church.

"Is it that your brain is so small you must *talk* in order to *think*?" The woman's smile was a sneer.

Lycaon strode toward the alien, grabbed a length of chain around her waist and yanked on it, pulling it taut so the chain around her neck tightened. "You are going to die in any event," he said. "If you wish to deny me the pleasure of hearing you howl and scream for mercy, tell me what I want to know now and my dogs will kill you quickly."

Up close she could see the fine stitching along Lycaon's cheeks and forehead, the very slight differences in skin tone that showed his skin was not his own.

"You seem to be made of *bits*," the alien said as she peered at Lycaon, her crystalline eyes catching and reflecting prismatic light. "And not the best bits. Leftovers? Is that what you are? A walking assemblage of cast-off scraps? Hahah, I thought the proteans were hideous. Someone should let them know! There are creatures even more foul-seeming and *useless* in the timescape."

The Taxiarch smiled to himself, nodded with respect at the woman's epithets. He placed his foot on a low piece of rubble, once part of the wall of the stone church, and leaned his arm on his knee. He was not dressed as the other war dogs. No black leather for him. He wore a gold breastplate with the embossed head of a ram molded into it, a white cape over his back. Gold greaves and red leather boots and gloves. The other war dogs only had patches of hair but his was long and blonde.

He struck a casual, jaunty pose. "Where is your worldship?" he said in a more reasonable voice. "Or came you here in a single-seater starskimmer?" At this, the alien's crystal eyes went wide, betraying surprise. "You see?" The Taxiarch said, impressed with himself. "I am not a primitive like these peasants, who hounded you because you are alien," he nodded at the folk of the small town watching from the stables some distance away. "I am Ajax's elite. Better than his chosen. I was *made* for victory." Indeed, Taxiarch Lycaon looked almost fully human. Handsome and fit like a statue from Phaedros, which his model had almost certainly been inspired by. Unless you looked closely, there was no sign he was a product of the body banks. "If you agree to lead me to your vessel, I will let you go free."

The alien sighed. "Blaap blaa blaa," she said. "You should hear yourself. Like barking thrax, you sound to me. Who holds your leash I wonder? For surely a microbrain such as you could not command any more than these rabble," she nodded her head at the other twenty or so war dogs.

Her taunts worked. Lycaon hauled back and punched the alien in the jaw. Her head smashed into the ruined column. She was dazed but she shook it off and laughed.

"Look how easily this one is goaded!" she said. She spat out dark blue blood and turned to the peasants gathered. "You people! Why do you let yourselves be cowed by these ... bits? Bits of people kludged together? Even the least of you is worth more than these."

"Perhaps from the air," Flight Captain Lyria offered, and she stroked the feathers of her giant hawk mount to calm it. "I could scout the forest around the ..."

"No!" Taxiarch Lycaon pointed a finger at the hawklord and strode toward her. "You are the elite of Ajax's winged harriers, I am his chosen brigade commander. We are not scavengers! This one," he stabbed a gloved finger at the

alien, “will come to heel, or I will give her to my war dogs.” He turned to face the chained alien, who yawned. Lycaon seethed.

“They may pull you apart,” he said to her, and at this his squadron of soldiers, all in black leather and golden pauldrons, started making barking sounds. Then they laughed at each other.

“Or I may let my crucibite melt the skin from your bones.” At that, a war dog clad in leather from head to foot wearing a heavy mask with glass circles where the eyes should be and some kind of canister over his mouth stepped forward. The long thin brass tube in his hands connected to a large metal tank on his back.

“Shall I let you choose?” the Taxiarch said and drew a dagger from his belt. “I will cut off one finger. If you cry out, I kill you. If not, another finger. And if you cry out then ...”

Slowly everyone assembled could make out the sounds of a conversation, quiet with a metallic ring to it. The voices got louder until eventually they could be heard.

“... should be ready for anything,” one voice said, deep, commanding, and images started to form around and between the war dogs, the hawklord, and the Taxiarch. Like faded images in a manuscript they seemed, gaining pigment and clarity and, eventually, depth as their voices grew louder and clearer.

“Oh, thank you for the brilliant tactical advice,” another voice, high pitched, piped up.

Suddenly, the images became three dimensional, solid, and four heroes stood among them. A human in working battle plate. A polder with twin rapiers in his hands. A tall willowy high elf with night-black skin and golden hair. And a Dragon Knight. The people of the town gasped when they saw him. Even at a distance, even with the war dogs between them, they recognized the device of Good King Omund on the knight’s shield.

The war dogs scrambled. For a moment, it seemed they might flee at this sudden intrusion, but the Taxiarch bellowed “Hold fast!” and they held their ground, uncertainty over the unknown threat of a band of heroes battling in each of them with the certain fear of their commander.

John immediately read the situation. It was a clear enough picture.

There was something about the war dogs. They loved Ajax’s cruelty—revealed in it. John had crossed swords with other commanders in Ajax’s army before. Ground Commander Vordokov was a professional—could be reasoned with, but he was an orc.

Not the war dogs—they were fanatics.

“What’s this?” the Taxiarch called out with a hungry grin. “Allies of the alien?” He was projecting confidence. Trying to muster his wary soldiers.

Sir John ignored the war dog, tilted his head toward the alien. “Embers?”

“A kuran’zoi,” the high elf said, and the alien held her head up with pride. “A time raider from the upper worlds. What the truth is I cannot say, and no people are all one thing.

But by reputation? They’re intractable, ungovernable, they loathe authority, hate tyranny and are totally, utterly without fear.”

John watched the alien. They sneered their approval at Ember’s summary. That was enough for Sir John, they could work out the details later. After everything they’d been through before, he trusted Embers implicitly.

He could see the shape of the next moments play out, all he had to do was take the initiative. If he was right, the whole thing would be over in seconds. There was no time to communicate. No time to plan, and everyone, *everyone* had to play their part.

John knew what came next, but he wasn’t an assassin. He had his own part to play. He took a step forward, away from his teammates, and noted the Taxiarch didn’t react. This spoke volumes. He locked eyes with his enemy.

“She goes free,” John commanded, his voice steel, “or you die here.” He could feel the muscles tightening in his comrades, the whole company like a steel spring wound tight.

Lycaon cocked his head at Sir John and took a few foolish steps toward the tactician. He was just out of reach. But close enough.

“I see you are a man, like Ajax. Why do you lower yourself with these ... creatures?” the war dog Taxiarch looked at the elf, polder, and dragon knight. “Little more than slimy things crawled out of the sea? Join us. Join me. Join Ajax. It’ll be nice for you,” his voice lowered almost to a whisper, “to be on the winning side for a change.”

Sir John took a deep breath, his body language changed and that was enough. Several things then happened at once, so quickly no one would later be able to say who acted first.

Ember’s eyes flashed into a starfield. The time raider’s chains dissolved into starspace and reappeared around Flight Captain Lyria pinning her arms to her side. She was giving the hawklord an excuse to sit this one out. Gods, John was glad she was with them.

The time raider’s right upper hand shot out, as though she’d been waiting for the void mage to do exactly what she just did, and her meson blaster leapt out of the hands of the war dog who’d chained her. The pistol made of glass and bronze slammed into her hand and its tip flared with prismatic light.

From the sun’s shadow cast by Taxiarch Lycaon the polder Jackson Bootblack emerged, a rapier in each hand, and no one had seen him move from where he’d been a moment before.

At the same instant, a call—a horn. From directly behind John a blast of sound like a chord played by a dozen trumpets, and hope sang in John’s heart—the Clarion Call of the last Storm Knight!

John hadn’t hesitated, he’d already drawn his sword. “Alright, you patchwork son of a bitch.” He charged Lycaon who fumbled with the short-sword on his belt.

“Draw steel!”

TIME RAIDER BENEFITS

As a time raider character, you have the following benefits.

FORESIGHT

Your senses extend past mundane obscuration and the veil of the future alike. You instinctively know the location of any concealed creatures who aren't hidden from you, negating the usual bane on attacks against them. Additionally, whenever you are attacked, you can use a triggered action to impose a bane on the power roll.

FOUR ARMS

Your multiple arms let you take on multiple tasks at the same time. Whenever you use the Grab or Knockback maneuver against an adjacent creature, you can target an additional adjacent creature, using the same power roll for both targets. You can grab up to two creatures at a time.

PSIONIC GIFT

Your mind is a formidable layer of defense, granting you psionic immunity 5.

CULTURE

What makes a hero? Is their desire to stand up for the innocent and protect others somehow innate? Are they born knowing that tyrants must fall? Does a higher power instill the idea that sometimes those least deserving of compassion are those who need it most?

No. A hero's life experience teaches them right from wrong—and that experience starts with the culture that raised them.

(Playtest note: Sample cultures are coming.)

CREATING A CULTURE

A hero's culture describes the beliefs, customs, values, and way of life held by the community in which they were raised. This community provides life experiences that give a character some of their game statistics. Even if a hero doesn't share their culture's values, those values shaped their early development and way of life. In fact, some people become heroes primarily from the rejection of the ways of their culture.

For our purposes, a hero's culture represents people, not a place. Yes, you might have grown up in the city of Capital, but your culture is more specific than that. One hero's culture might be House Alvaro, a noble house in Capital where they were raised. Another's culture could be a group or organization that moves around, such as a band of pirates or a secret order of sorcerers sworn to protect books of fell magic. It helps to get specific when thinking about your culture, and working with the four aspects of a culture can help you do that: **language**, **environment**, **organization**, and **upbringing**.

USING CULTURE

Directors can use the rules in this section to build cultures that players can choose for their characters. Players can use these rules to build a unique culture or modify an existing culture for their character, working with the Director to find a right place for that culture within the world of the campaign's world. The Vasloria Cultures table provides a cultural breakdown for Vasloria, the game's medieval European fantasy analog. *(Playtest note: That table is still to come.)* You can use the table for a campaign that takes place in Vasloria, or pillage from it liberally for a custom setting.

In many worlds, at least some cultures have a majority ancestry. The people of Bedegar, a duchy in Vasloria, are mostly humans. The folk dwelling in the Great Wode, a forest realm north of Bedegar, are primarily wode elves. However, you can always choose to be from one of these cultures and take a different ancestry. A dwarf raised in the culture of the Great Wode speaks Ylyric and probably knows a lot about nature, while a dwarf raised in the dwarven thanedom of Kal Kalavar speaks Zaliac and might know a good deal about smithing.

WHY BUILD A CULTURE?

Building a character is about more than adding up your stats, picking skills and abilities, and recording that

information on a character sheet. You're building a hero—a main character in a story, be it a one-shot or a heroic campaign. Think about the personality and the past of who you are creating. That's why the game lets you build a culture rather than simply saying, "Pick three skills and a bonus language." We want players to imagine their heroes as complex and intricate characters.

CULTURE BENEFITS

The culture you choose or create grants you the following benefits:

- You know the language of your culture, in addition to knowing Caelian.
- From the environment, organization, and upbringing aspects of your culture, you gain access to skills. You can select one skill from each aspect's list of options. (See [Skills](#) for details.)
- You gain an edge on tests to recall lore about your culture, and on tests to influence and interact with people of your culture.

LANGUAGE

Your culture's language aspect determines how the people of your culture communicate. This can be any language in [Languages](#).

ENVIRONMENT

Your culture's environment aspect describes where the people of that culture spend most of their time. Is your culture centered in a bustling city or a small village? Did you spend your early life in an isolated monastery? Or did you wander the wilderness, never staying in one place for long?

When you build a culture, select its environment aspect from the following options: nomadic, rural, secluded, urban, or wilderness. You then gain skill options from your chosen environment. All of these environments can be found in any sort of terrain, whether aboveground, in subterranean caverns, deep in trackless forest, or even underwater.

NOMADIC

A nomadic culture travels from place to place to survive. They might follow animal migrations or the weather, travel to sell their wares or services, or simply enjoy a restless lifestyle full of new experiences and peoples. Those who grow up in nomadic cultures learn to navigate the wilderness and interact with others.

Skill Options: One skill from the exploration or interpersonal skill groups.

RURAL

A rural culture is one located in a town, village, or smaller settled enclave. People dwelling in such places often cultivate the land, trade goods or services with travelers passing through, harvest fish from the sea, or mine metals and gems from the earth.

Living among a small population, most folks in a rural community learn a trade and are handed down bits of essential knowledge to help their community survive. For

example, when a rural culture has only one blacksmith, it's important to have an apprentice already learning at the anvil well before that smith starts to get old. If the only priest in town gets the sniffles, folks want an acolyte ready to wear the fancy robes should the worst occur.

Skill Options: One skill from the crafting or lore skill groups.

SECLUDED

A secluded culture is based in one relatively close-quarters structure—a building, a cavern, and so forth—and interacts with other cultures only rarely. Such places are often buildings or complexes such as monasteries, castles, or prisons. Folk in a secluded culture have little or no reason to leave their home or interact with other cultures on the outside, but might have an awareness of those cultures and of events happening outside their enclave.

When people live together in close quarters, they typically learn to get along. They often spend much time in study or introspection, as there is not much else to do in seclusion.

Skill Options: One skill from the interpersonal or lore skill groups.

URBAN

An urban culture is always centered in a city. Such a culture might arise within the walls of Capital, a massive metropolis with a cosmopolitan population; within a network of caverns that hold an underground city; or in any other place where a large population lives relatively close together. The people of urban cultures often learn to effectively misdirect others in order to navigate the crowds and the political machinations that can come with city life.

Skill Options: One skill from the interpersonal or intrigue skill groups.

WILDERNESS

A wilderness culture doesn't attempt to tame the terrain in which its people live, whether desert, forest, swamp, tundra, ocean, or more exotic climes. Instead, the folk of such a culture thrive amid nature, taking their sustenance and shelter from the land itself. A wilderness culture might be a circle of druids protecting a great wode, a band of brigands hiding out in desert caves, or a camp of orc mercenaries who call the trackless mountains home. People in a wilderness culture learn how to use the land for all they need to live, typically crafting their own tools, clothing, and more.

Skill Options: One skill from the crafting or exploration skill groups.

ORGANIZATION

Your culture's organization aspect determines the functioning and leadership of your community. You might come from a place with an officially recognized government and a system of laws. Or your culture might have enjoyed a less formal organization, with the people in charge having naturally gravitated toward their positions without any official offices or oaths.

When you build a culture, select its organization aspect from the following options: anarchic, bureaucratic, or

communal. You then gain skill options from your chosen system of organization.

ANARCHIC

In an anarchic culture, there are no rules and no one person leads the others. This might sound like complete chaos—people taking what they want when they want it—and some cultures that practice anarchy are. Other anarchic cultures are peaceful places where people mostly work for themselves, their friends, or their family, but rely on the whole group when times get tough.

Many anarchic cultures come together when the need arises, but they leave day-to-day responsibilities up to the individual. If an informal leader appears, it's because each member of the culture has decided to follow that person for a time, and the leader enjoys their power only as long as they keep everyone happy. A group of rangers who protect a vast forest, a gang of rebels fighting against a tyrannical despot leader, and a bandit group roving the wilds without a leader are all anarchic cultures.

Most anarchic cultures operate outside of settled lands, sticking to the wilds, city sewers, or other secret places. For even when such cultures are harmless, their members know that outsiders might try to impose rules upon them if they live in the same place. As such, many folks in anarchic cultures learn how to navigate the wilds and fend for themselves while avoiding the danger that other folks can represent.

Skill Options: One skill from the exploration or intrigue skill groups.

BUREAUCRATIC

Bureaucratic cultures are steeped in official leadership and formally recorded laws. Members of such a culture are often ranked in power according to those laws, with a small group of people holding the power to rule according to birthright, popular vote, or some other official and measurable standard. Many bureaucratic communities have one person at the very top, though others might be ruled by a council. A trade guild with a guildmaster, treasurer, secretary, and a charter of rules and regulations for membership; a feudal lord who rules over a group of knights, who in turn rule over peasants who work the land; and a militaristic society with ranks and rules that its people must abide are all examples of bureaucratic cultures.

Those who thrive in bureaucratic cultures don't just follow the rules. They know how to use those rules to their advantage, either bending, changing, or reinterpreting policy to advance their own interests. Schmoozing with those who make the laws is often key to this approach. Others in a bureaucratic culture might specialize in operating outside the strict regulations that govern the culture without getting caught.

Skill Options: One skill from the intrigue or lore skill groups.

COMMUNAL

A communal culture has no formal book of laws or rules for governing. Instead, the community works together to pick leaders and make important decisions. Often in these cultures, each person has a relatively equal say in how the

culture operates, and everyone contributes to help the culture survive and thrive. People share the burdens of governing, physical labor, childcare, and other duties. A collective of farmers who work together to cultivate and protect their land without a noble, a city of pirates where each person can do as they wish, and a traveling theatrical troupe whose members vote on every artistic and administrative decision are all communal cultures.

Some communal cultures have one or more people who serve as leaders, but the way these leaders come to power is never official. Some are thrust into the role by people who admire their stances and actions. Other leaders seize power without the help of an official process, dethroning a previous leader and claiming their power without a challenge. People in communal cultures learn that their voice and individuality has worth, as do the opinions and hard work of others.

Skill Options: One skill from the crafting or interpersonal skill groups.

UPBRINGING

Your culture's upbringing aspect is a more specific and personal part of your hero's story, describing how you were individually raised within your culture. Were you trained to become the newest archmage in a secret order of wizards, or to be a sword-wielding bodyguard who protected that arcane organization? Did you learn to delve deep into mines looking for ore in a mountain kingdom, or did you build machines meant to dig faster and deeper than any person could alone? Whatever your culture, your upbringing makes you special within that culture.

Pick your upbringing aspect from the following list: academic, creative, illegal, labor, martial, or noble. You then gain skill options from your chosen aspect.

ACADEMIC

Heroes with an academic upbringing were raised by people who collect, study, and share books and other records. Some academics focus on one area of study, such as a college for wizards dedicated to the study of magic, or a church that teaches the word of one deity. People in an academic culture learn how to wield the power that is knowledge.

Skill Options: One skill from the lore skill group.

CREATIVE

Heroes with a creative upbringing were raised among folk who create art or other works valuable enough to trade. A creative culture might produce fine art such as dance, music, or sculpture, or more practical wares such as wagons, weapons, tools, or buildings. People in such cultures learn the value of quality crafting and attention to detail.

Skill Options: The Music or Perform skill, or one skill from the crafting skill group.

ILLEGAL

Heroes with an illegal upbringing had caregivers who performed activities that other folk—whether within or outside their culture—considered unlawful. A band of

pirates, a guild of assassins, or an organization of spies all commit unlawful acts for money. People with illegal upbringings typically don't mind breaking the rules when it suits them—and are good at making sure no one finds out they did.

Skill Options: One skill from the intrigue skill group.

LABOR

People who labor for a living survive through cultivation, typically raising crops or livestock on a farm; by harvesting natural resources, whether by hunting, trapping, logging, or mining; or through manual labor tied to settlement and trade, such as construction, carting, loading cargo, and so forth. People with a labor upbringing know the value of hard work.

Skill Options: One of the Blacksmithing or Handle Animals skills, or one skill from the exploration skill group.

MARTIAL

Heroes who have a martial upbringing are raised by warriors. These might be the soldiers of an established army, a band of mercenaries, a guild of monster-slaying adventurers, or any other folk whose lives revolve around combat. Heroes with a martial upbringing are always ready for a fight—and they know how to finish that fight.

Skill Options: One of the Alertness, Blacksmithing, Climb, Endurance, Fletching, Intimidate, Jump, Monsters, Ride, or Track skills.

NOBLE

Heroes with a noble upbringing were raised by leaders who rule over others and play the games of politics to maintain power. Many families are nobles by birthright, but some cultures have noble titles that are earned through deeds or popularity. Whatever the case, heroes with this background understand why the whispered words in the right ear can sometimes be more powerful than any army.

Skill Options: One skill from the interpersonal skill group.

BUT I REALLY WANT ALERTNESS

If the culture you create doesn't grant a skill that you want, check with your Director about modifying what the culture's aspects offer. For instance, you can easily make the case that a culture with the martial upbringing aspect should give a character access to the Alertness skill, given that being successful in battle means always being aware of your surroundings.

CAREER

Hero isn't a job. It's a calling. But before you answered that call, you had a different job or vocation that paid the bills. Thank the gods for that, because the experience you gained in that career is now helping you save lives and slay monsters.

(Playtest note: Eight careers are detailed below, with more coming.)

CAREER QUESTIONS

The careers in this section don't go into great detail about the actual jobs they represent. We assume that you know the basics of what an artisan, a criminal, or a gladiator does for a living. However, each career does include a list of questions that you should think about to help you define the specific details of your hero's career. For instance, if you pick the Artisan career, one of the questions is, "What did you create?" You don't need to answer these questions, but doing so helps shape a more complete picture of your hero.

CAREER BENEFITS

Your career describes what your life was before you became a hero. When you select a career, you gain a number of benefits, the details of which are specified in the career's description.

SKILLS

Each career grants you two or three skills. If a career grants you a skill you already have, you can select a different skill.

LANGUAGES

Some careers allow you to learn extra languages, chosen from those available in [Languages](#).

RENOWN

Some careers increase your starting Renown score. See [Renown](#) for more information.

PROJECT POINTS

Some careers provide project points that you can put toward research and crafting projects (see [Research and Crafting](#) in future packets for more information). These points can be divided among multiple projects, but they can't be used more than once. At the Director's discretion, your career might also let you start the game with the materials needed for one or more projects, so that you can immediately put your project points toward them.

CAREER TITLE

Your career provides you with a common title. See [Titles](#) for more information. *(Playtest note: The Titles section is still to come.)*

INCITING INCIDENT

Each career has a list of inciting incidents, each of which suggests a potential reason why you gave up your career, turned away from a possibly comfortable and reliable living, and took up the sword (or axe or wand) to become an adventuring hero. Each inciting incident represents a life-changing event that might have motivated you to change course, becoming a person who risks it all to save others.

You can roll for or choose an inciting incident from the table that accompanies each career. You can also use the table as inspiration and work with your Director to come up with a unique inciting incident of your own.

(Playtest note: There are currently three inciting incidents for each career. More are coming.)

WHAT WAS TAKEN FROM YOU?

During your inciting incident, something was taken from you. It might have been a material object, such as an heirloom sword or a locket that proves your royal heritage. It could be a person you loved who was killed, kidnapped, or cursed. It might be something deeper and more abstract, as with a chance for happiness or a lifetime goal snatched away.

It might be the case that you're obsessed with getting back what you lost. You might be in a position where you'll never recover what was taken from you, but you want to prevent that same loss from happening to others. It might be a little bit of both. Whatever the case, the loss you've suffered is part of what drives you to be a hero. Record what was taken from you on your character sheet, and let your Director know.

ARTISAN

You started off making and selling art or useful wares. In defining your career, think about the following questions:

- What did you create?
- Who taught you your craft?
- Was there any particular creation you were known for?
- Did you have a shop, or did you travel to sell your wares?

You gain the following career benefits:

- **Skills:** Two skills from the crafting skill group
- **Languages:** One language
- **Project Points:** 100
- **Title—Expert Artisan:** Whenever you make a test as part of a research or crafting project that uses a skill you have from the crafting skill group, you can roll the test twice and use either roll.

ARTISAN INCITING INCIDENTS

d3	Incident
1	Continue the Work: A great hero was a fan of the things you created, and gave you a generous commission to create your best work for them. While working on this commission, you and the hero became close friends. The day you finished the work was the same day they disappeared. To honor their legacy, you took up the mantle of a hero with the intent of finishing your friend's work.
2	Inspired: As you traveled the road selling your wares, troll bandits attacked you. One of the bandits claimed an item belonging to someone precious to you—or perhaps claimed that person's life—but the rest were driven off or slain by a group of heroes. Seeing the quick work these heroes made of the bandits inspired you to follow in their footsteps.
3	Robbery: A criminal gang stole your goods and harmed a number of people who worked for you. You became a hero to prevent such indignities from being visited upon others, to seek revenge for the assault, or to find the thieves and get your stuff back.

CRIMINAL

You once worked as a bandit, insurgent, smuggler, outlaw, or even as an assassin. In defining your career, think about the following questions:

- What sorts of crimes did you commit, and why?
- Did anyone help you perform your illicit activities?
- What's one crime that you botched?
- Who was your nemesis while you were a criminal?

You gain the following career benefits:

- **Skills:** The Criminal Underworld skill, plus two skills from the intrigue skill group
- **Languages:** One language
- **Project Points:** 50
- **Title—Lucky Dog:** When you fail a test using any skill from the intrigue skill group, you can roll a d6. You lose Stamina equal to the roll and improve the result of your test by one tier. You can make this roll only once per test.

CRIMINAL INCITING INCIDENTS

d3	Incident
1	Atonement: The last criminal job you pulled led to the death of someone or the destruction of something you love. In order to make up for the loss you caused, you left your criminal ways behind and became a hero.
2	Friendly Priest: You went to prison for your crimes and eventually escaped. An elderly priest took you in and shielded you from the law, convinced that your soul wasn't corrupt. They never judged you for your past, speaking only of the future. Eventually, the priest died, imparting final words that inspired you to become a hero.
3	Stand Against Tyranny: When a tyrant rose to power in your homeland, they began cracking down on all criminals with deadly raids and public executions. The nature of the crime didn't matter—pickpockets and beggars were made to kneel before the axe alongside murderers. After losing enough friends, you stood up and joined the resistance—not just against this tyrant, but against authoritarians anywhere.

GLADIATOR

In the past, you entertained the masses with flashy displays of violence in the arena. In defining your career, think about the following questions:

- What led you to this life of violent entertainment?
- What was your gladiator name and persona?
- Who was your biggest rival?
- What happened during your most famous match?

You gain the following career benefits:

- **Skills:** Two skills from the exploration skill group
- **Languages:** One language
- **Renown:** 2
- **Title—Monologue Champion:** When you are not in combat, you can shout to get the attention of all creatures within 10 squares of you. Each creature who is not hostile toward you listens to what you have to say for at least the next minute, or until they sense danger or any form of imminent harm. While creatures are listening to you, your allies gain an edge on tests made to avoid being noticed by those creatures.

GLADIATOR INCITING INCIDENTS

d3	Incident
1	Betrayed: A local crime lord offered you money to throw your last bout, promising that you'd live through the ordeal and get a cut of all the wagers placed on the match. You held up your end of the deal—which made the knife in your back after the loss so surprising. You woke in a shallow grave, barely alive, and ready to mete out justice.
2	Heckler: As you stood victorious on the arena sands, a voice cried out among the cheering. “This violence is just for show. You should be ashamed. There are people who need you—who need your skills!” Why did that voice ring so clear? And why did it sound so familiar? You never saw the face of the person who uttered the words, but they weighed heavy on you. The next day, you fled the arena to begin a hero's life.
3	New Challenges: You earned every title you could. You beat every opponent willing to face you in the arena. Your final battle with your rival ended with you victorious—and yet you were unsatisfied. There are other, greater foes out there, and you mean to find them.

LABORER

You worked as a farmer, a builder, a lumberjack, a miner, or some other profession engaged in hard manual labor. In defining your career, think about the following questions:

- What type of manual labor did you do?
- What important friendship did you make on the job?
- Where did you go with your coworkers to blow off steam when the job was done?
- What aspect of the job was most difficult for you?

You gain the following career benefits:

- **Skills:** The Endurance skill, plus choose any two skills from Blacksmithing or the skills of the exploration skill group
- **Languages:** One language
- **Project Points:** 50
- **Title—Team Backbone:** When you take your first turn during a montage test, you can both make a test and assist another hero's test.

LABORER INCITING INCIDENTS

d3	Incident
1	Disaster: A disaster, such as a cave-in, wildfire, or tidal wave, hit your crew while you were working. You saved as many folks as you could, but the ones you couldn't save weigh heavily on your mind. You took up the life of a hero to save as many people as possible, vowing that what happened to you won't happen again.
2	Embarrassment: A noble you worked for admonished you publicly for work done poorly—more than once. Finally, you had enough. You vowed to take up a new path and show this noble that you are far more than what they make you out to be.
3	Live the Dream: You worked with a good friend, and on the job you'd always fantasize about what it'd be like to hit the road as adventuring heroes—someday. You didn't count on your friend falling ill and passing away. Now it's time to live out that dream for both of you.

MAGE'S APPRENTICE

For long years, you studied magic under the mentorship of a more experienced mage. In defining your career, think about the following questions:

- Who did you study under, and what kind of person were they?
- What were your mentor's areas of expertise?
- What aspects of magic did you struggle to comprehend?
- What is your current relationship with your mentor?

You gain the following career benefits:

- **Skills:** The Magic skill, plus two skills from the lore skill group
- **Languages:** One language
- **Renown:** 1
- **Title—Hedge Mage:** You have the Arcane Trick ability.

ARCANE TRICK

You cast an entertaining spell that creates a minor but impressive magical effect.

Keywords: Magic

Distance: Self

Type: Action

Target: Self

Effect: Choose one of the following effects:

- You teleport an unattended size 1T or 1S object within 1 square of you to an unoccupied space within 1 square of you.
- Until the start of your next turn, a part of your body shoots a shower of harmless noisy sparks that give off light within 1 square of you.
- You ignite or snuff out (your choice) every mundane light source within 1 square of you.
- You make up to 1 pound of edible food you can touch taste delicious or disgusting.
- Until the start of your next turn, you make your body exude a particular odor you've smelled before. This smell can be sensed by creatures within 5 squares of you, but can't impose any condition or other drawback on creatures.
- You place a small magical inscription on the surface of a mundane object you can touch, or remove an inscription that was made by you or by another creature using Arcane Trick.

- You cover a size 1T object that you touch with an illusion that makes it look like another object. A creature who handles the object can see through the illusion. The illusion ends when you stop touching the object.

MAGE'S APPRENTICE INCITING INCIDENTS

d3	Incident
1	Oops: While studying magic, you accidentally sent yourself from your original world to this one. Now you're stranded here, hoping to get back home by finding ancient texts or powerful magical treasures that might transport you there. A life of adventure it is!
2	Ultimate Power: The mage you worked for was a kindly old soul, but the basic magic they taught you always seemed like a small part of something bigger. It wasn't until you met an adventuring elemental that you realized hitting the road as a hero was the only way to truly improve and hone your skills. You resigned your apprenticeship and found yourself walking the path of a hero the next day.
3	Missing Mage: One day you woke up and the mage you worked for was just gone. They didn't take any of their belongings, and there was no sign of any foul play—just the scent of sulfur in their bedchamber. You set out on your heroic journey in the aftermath, and have been looking for them ever since.

PERFORMER

You can sing, act, or dance well enough that people actually pay to see you do it. Imagine that! In defining your career, think about the following questions:

- What is the tone of your performances?
- What song, role, or dance are you most known for?
- Did you perform in the same place throughout your career, or did you travel?
- Were you part of a troupe, or were you a solo act?

You gain the following career benefits:

- **Skills:** The Music or Performance skill, plus two skills from the interpersonal skill group
- **Renown:** 2
- **Title—Dazzler:** When a creature watches you perform a song, dance, or role (as an actor, not in disguise) for at least 1 minute, you gain an edge on tests made to influence that creature for 1 hour after the performance ends.

PERFORMER INCITING INCIDENTS

d3	Incident
1	Cursed Audience: During a performance, you watched in horror as the audience was suddenly overcome by a curse that caused them to disintegrate before your eyes. You're not sure what happened, but seeking that answer quickly led you to places where only heroes dare to go.
2	Fame and Fortune: You thought you were famous—then that hero came to your show. Suddenly, all eyes were on the dragon-slaying brute instead of the stage where they belonged. The audience even gave them a standing ovation when they entered the room. All you got was polite applause. Fine. If people want a hero, then a hero you shall be.
3	Tragic Lesson: When a producer who once shortchanged you shouted out on the street for you to stop a thief who had picked their pocket, your spite toward the producer inspired you to let the thief run right on by. But that decision led to tragedy when the thief later harmed someone you loved. From that moment on, you decided to make it your responsibility to protect others.

SAGE

From an early age, you dedicated yourself to learning, whether you shared the knowledge of the world with others or sought out secret lore only for yourself. In defining your career, think about the following questions:

- What subjects did you study?
- Where did your studies take place?
- How did you acquire the books and other materials you needed for work?
- Who benefited most from your research?

You gain the following career benefits:

- **Skills:** Two skills from the lore skill group
- **Languages:** One language
- **Project Points:** 100
- **Title—Expert Sage:** Whenever you make a test as part of a research or crafting project that uses a skill you have from the lore skill group, you can roll the test twice and use either roll.

SAGE INCITING INCIDENTS

d3	Incident
1	Bookish Ideas: You were always content to live a peaceful life in your library, until you found that one book—the one that told the tale of heroes who had saved the timescape. They didn't spend their days behind a desk. They made a real difference. It was time for you to do the same.
2	Cure the Curse: You used to think knowledge could fix everything. You were wrong. When someone you loved fell under a curse, the means to cure them couldn't be found in any of the books you owned. But that wasn't going to stop you. The answers are out there, and you'll find them even if you need to face down death to do so.
3	Lost Library: An evil mage took all your books for themselves, cackling at your impotence as they raided your shelves. Now you're off to search through ancient ruins and secret libraries to rebuild your collection of rare tomes—and to find the mage who stole from you.

SOLDIER

In your formative years, you fought tirelessly in skirmishes and campaigns against enemy forces. In defining your career, think about the following questions:

- Which army and company did you serve?
- What conflicts were you a part of?
- What rank did you achieve?
- What heroics did you perform in the heat of battle?

You gain the following career benefits:

- **Skills:** One skill from each of the exploration skill group and the intrigue skill group
- **Languages:** Two languages
- **Renown:** 1
- **Title—Drill Sergeant:** At the start of a group test or montage test, you can spend a hope token. If you do, all participants make tests as if they also had your exploration skills.

SOLDIER INCITING INCIDENTS

d3	Incident
1	Dishonorable Discharge: You enlisted in the military to protect others, but your commander ordered you to beat and kill civilians. When you refused, things got violent. You barely escaped the brawl that ensued, but now you vow to help people on your own terms.
2	Out of Retirement: You had a long and storied career as a soldier before deciding to retire to a simpler life. But when you returned to your old home, you found that your enemies had laid waste to it. Now the skills you earned on the battlefield are helping you as you become a different kind of warrior, seeking to save others from the fate you suffered.
3	Sole Survivor: You were the last surviving member of your unit after an arduous battle or monstrous assault, surviving only because of your luck. You turned away from the life of a soldier then, seeking to become a hero who could stand against such threats.

CLASSES

(Playtest note: Introduction to come.)

Your class provides you with most of your abilities. For details on the ability format, see [Abilities](#).

(Playtest note: The currently available classes are the conduit, elementalist, fury, shadow, and tactician, each of which includes only 1st-level features.)

CONDUIT

The power of the gods flows through you! As a vessel for divine magic, you don't just keep your allies in the fight. You make those allies more effective, even as you rain divine energy down upon your foes. While the deity or saint you serve might have other faithful and clergy, you are special among worshippers, receiving your abilities from the highest source.

As a conduit, you heal and buff your allies, and debuff your foes while smiting them with divine magic. The spark of divinity within you shines, aweing your enemies and granting you increased empathy.

BASICS

Starting Characteristics: You start with an Intuition of 2 and a Presence of 2, and can choose one of the following arrays for your other characteristics scores:

- 2, -1, -1
- 1, 1, -1
- 1, 0, 0

Starting Stamina at 1st Level: 18

Stamina Gained at 2nd and Higher Levels: 8

Recoveries: 10

Skills: Choose any two skills from the interpersonal or lore skill groups.

CONDUIT ADVANCEMENT

Level	Features	Abilities
1st	Deity and Domains, Piety, Domain Feature, Healing Grace, Pious Force, Triggered Action, Conduit Abilities	Signature, 3, 5
2nd	Gift of the Gods, Domain Feature, Domain Ability	Signature, 3, 5, 5 (Domain)
3rd	Restore Life, 7-Piety Ability	Signature, 3, 5, 5 (Domain), 7

1ST-LEVEL FEATURES

As a conduit, you gain the following features.

DEITY AND DOMAINS

Choose a god or saint who you revere from the Conduit Deities table, or ask your Director about the deities in your campaign world. With the Director's permission, you can

also create your own deity, and can choose four domains to be part of their portfolio.

After choosing your deity, pick two domains from their portfolio. Your choice of domains determines many of the features you'll gain from this class.

(Playtest note: More gods and saints are coming, along with their descriptions.)

CONDUIT DEITIES

Deity	Domains
Adun	Love, Protection, Storm, War
Cavall	Knowledge, Protection, Sun, War
Cyrviss	Fate, Death, Nature, Trickery
Malus	Creation, Fate, Life, Knowledge
Salorna	Death, Nature, Storm, Sun
Viras	Creation, Life, Love, Trickery

PIETY

Your deity grants you a Heroic Resource called piety to fuel your abilities. You use piety to heal and empower your allies, and to unleash your deity's power upon your foes.

Outside of combat and other dangerous situations tracked in turns and rounds, you have piety equal to your Victories. If you lose some or all of this piety outside of combat, it takes you 1 minute to regain it.

When a combat encounter begins, you keep any piety you had outside of combat. At the start of each of your turns during combat, you gain 2 piety. You can also use the Prayer ability to gain additional piety. When combat ends, you once again have piety equal to your Victories.

PRAYER

I beseech you!

Keywords: Magic

Distance: Self

Type: Maneuver

Target: Self

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **1d6 damage; bleeding (EoT)**
- 12–16: **Gain 1 piety**
- 17+: **Gain 2 piety and choose and use a domain effect**

Effect: The first time you use this ability during an encounter, it has a double edge. The second time you use it, it takes an edge. The third time you use it, it takes a bane. The fourth and each subsequent time you use this ability during an encounter, it has a double bane.

DOMAIN EFFECTS

Whenever you get the tier 3 result of the Prayer ability, you can choose one of your domain's effects to immediately take effect.

CREATION DOMAIN EFFECT

You create a 5 wall of stone within 10 squares of you.

DEATH DOMAIN EFFECT

Two enemies of your choice within 10 squares of you take corruption damage equal to 5 + your conduit level.

FATE DOMAIN EFFECT

Choose another creature you have line of effect to. That creature automatically gets a tier 1 or tier 3 result (your choice) on their next power roll.

KNOWLEDGE DOMAIN EFFECT

Choose up to three allies within 10 squares of you. Each ally has a double edge on the next power roll they make.

LIFE DOMAIN EFFECT

You or an ally within 10 squares of you can spend 2 Recoveries, can end any effects on them that have a duration of EoT or are ended by a resistance roll, and can stand up if they are prone. Alternatively, you or an ally within 10 squares of you gains 20 temporary Stamina.

LOVE DOMAIN EFFECT

Each ally within 10 squares of you gains 5 temporary Stamina, and gains an edge on the next power roll they make before the end of the encounter.

NATURE DOMAIN EFFECT

Vines whip up from the floor or ground around a creature of your choice within 10 squares of you, then slide that creature a number of squares equal to 3 times your Intuition score.

PROTECTION DOMAIN EFFECT

An ally of your choice within 10 squares of you gains damage immunity equal to your Intuition score plus your level, which lasts until the end of your next turn.

STORM DOMAIN EFFECT

Each enemy in a 3-cube area within 10 squares of you takes lightning damage equal to 5 + your conduit level.

SUN DOMAIN EFFECT

An enemy of your choice within 10 squares of you takes fire damage equal to 10 + your conduit level.

TRICKERY DOMAIN EFFECT

Choose a creature within 10 squares of you. You can slide that creature a number of squares equal to 5 + your conduit level. If you choose a willing ally, this movement can ignore their stability.

WAR DOMAIN EFFECT

Your attacks deal extra damage equal to twice your Intuition score until the end of your next turn.

1ST-LEVEL DOMAIN FEATURE

You gain a domain feature from one of your domains, as shown on the 1st-Level Conduit Domain Features table.

Additionally, you gain a skill from the chosen domain, selected from the skill group indicated on the table.

1ST-LEVEL CONDUIT DOMAIN FEATURES

Domain	Feature	Skill
Creation	Hands of the Maker	Crafting
Death	Grave Speech	Lore
Fate	Fate Trance	Lore
Knowledge	Cypher Mind	Lore
Life	Revitalizing Ritual	Exploration
Love	Compassionate Aura	Interpersonal
Nature	Animal Spirit	Exploration
Protection	Alertness Ward	Exploration
Storm	Control Weather	Exploration
Sun	Inner Light	Lore
Trickery	Divine Thievery	Intrigue
War	Ritual of Preparation	Exploration

ALERTNESS WARD

You exude a magic aura of awareness, granting you and each ally within 2 squares of you an edge on tests that use the Alertness skill.

ANIMAL SPIRIT

As an action, you conjure an animal spirit that takes the form of any animal you have seen. The incorporeal animal can't physically interact with the world, but they have a speed of 5 (fly) and can move through mundane objects. While you are within 20 squares of the spirit, you can sense everything an animal of their form could sense, in addition to sensing your own surroundings. You can dismiss the spirit at any time (no action required).

COMPASSIONATE AURA

You exude a magic aura that can soothe those willing to socially engage with you. You gain an edge on any test made to assist another creature with a test.

Additionally, when you are present at the start of a negotiation, the NPC's patience increases by 1 (to a maximum of 5), and the first test made to influence them gains an edge.

CONTROL WEATHER

When you finish a respite, you can decide the weather conditions in the local area. Those weather conditions follow you through any mundane outdoors locations where you travel until the end of your next respite.

Choose one of the following types of weather:

Clear: You and your allies each gain an edge on tests that use the Search or Navigate skills.

Foggy: You and your allies each gain an edge on tests that use the Hide skill.

Overcast: You and your allies each gain an edge on tests that use the Endurance skill.

Precipitation: When the ground is muddy or snowy, you and your allies each gain an edge on tests that use the Track skill.

CYPHER MIND

Given a little time, you can translate almost any text into a language you know, even if you don't know the text's original language. For the purpose of making project rolls (see [Research and Crafting](#) in future packets for more information), you are considered fluent in all languages.

DIVINE THIEVERY

The gods favor your thievery with magic. Whenever you make a test that uses a skill you have from the intrigue skill group, you can use Intuition on the test instead of another characteristic.

FATE TRANCE

If you spend 10 minutes in an uninterrupted meditative state without moving, you get a glimpse of any significant events that will happen in the area around you in the next 24 hours unless you or your allies intercede in those events. As described by the Director, these glimpses of the future might be clear and concise, or might be vague and hard to understand.

GRAVE SPEECH

You gain the following ability.

GRAVE SPEECH

The power of death lets you speak with those who have passed from the world.

Keywords: Magic
Distance: Reach 1

Type: Maneuver
Target: Special

Effect: You can speak to the corpse or head of a creature who has died within the last 24 hours and who can speak a language you know. The target regards you as they would have in life, and you might need to make tests to influence them and convince them to speak with you. After 1 minute, the effect ends. You can't use this ability on the same creature twice.

HANDS OF THE MAKER

You gain the following ability.

HANDS OF THE MAKER

Craft objects with the power of your mind!

Keywords: Magic
Distance: Self

Type: Maneuver
Target: Self

Effect: You create a mundane object no larger than size 1S that you hold. If you use this feature again or stop holding the object, it disappears.

INNER LIGHT

Each time you finish a respite, you can choose yourself or another character who is also ending a respite to gain the benefit of a divine ritual. As you perform the ritual, you place a ray of morning light into the target's soul, granting the target an edge on resistance rolls. This benefit lasts until you complete another respite.

REVITALIZING RITUAL

Each time you finish a respite, you can choose yourself or another character who is also ending a respite to gain the benefit of a divine ritual. When you perform the ritual, the target's recovery value increases by an amount equal to your level. This benefit lasts until you complete another respite.

RITUAL OF PREPARATION

As a respite action, you can bless a weapon. Any creature who wields the weapon gains a +1 bonus to damage with abilities that use the weapon. This benefit lasts until you complete your next respite.

HEALING GRACE

You gain the following ability, which you can use once on your turn.

HEALING GRACE

Your divine energy restores the righteous.

Keywords: Magic, Ranged
Distance: Ranged 5

Type: Maneuver
Target: Self or 1 ally

Effect: The target can spend 1 Recovery.

Spend Piety: For each piety spent, you can choose one of the following enhancements:

- You can target one additional ally within distance.
- You can end one effect on a target that has a duration of EoT or is ended by a resistance roll.
- A prone target can stand up.
- A target can spend 1 additional Recovery.

PIOUS FORCE

You gain the following ability, which can be used as a ranged free strike:

PIOUS FORCE

You unleash a blast of raw divine magic upon your foe.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged
Distance: Ranged 5

Type: Action
Target: 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage**
- 12–16: **6 damage**
- 17+: **9 damage**

Effect: You can choose to change the damage type to holy.

TRIGGERED ACTION

Choose one of the following triggered actions.

DIVINE DISRUPTION

You sap the strength of an attacking enemy with divine energy.

Keywords: Magic, Ranged
Distance: Ranged 5

Type: Triggered
Target: 1 enemy

Trigger: The target makes an attack. You can use this ability after seeing the result of the attack.

Effect: The attack takes a bane and the damage to one creature targeted by the attack is reduced by an amount equal to your Intuition.

Spend 1 Piety: The attack has a double bane and the damage to one creature targeted by the attack is reduced by an amount equal to twice your Intuition score.

HOLY INFUSION

You invigorate an attacking ally with divine energy.

Keywords: Magic, Ranged
Distance: Ranged 5

Type: Triggered
Target: 1 ally

Trigger: The target makes an attack. You can use this ability after seeing the result of the attack.

Effect: The attack gains an edge and deals holy damage equal to twice your Intuition score.

Spend 1 Piety: The attack has a double edge and deals holy damage equal to twice your Intuition score.

CONDUIT ABILITIES

Your training and faith let you specialize in magic that buffs your allies, debuffs your foes, and lets you hold your own in combat even while aiding your friends.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

Select one signature ability from the options below. Signature abilities can be used at will.

HOLY LANCE

A tendril of divine energy shoots forth to draw in your foe.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **2 holy damage; pull 2**
- 12–16: **6 holy damage; pull 3**
- 17+: **9 holy damage; pull 4**

LIGHTFALL

Holy light scours your foes and sets your allies into perfect attack position.

Keywords: Area, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Cube 3 within 5 **Target:** All enemies

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **2 holy damage**
- 12–16: **3 holy damage**
- 17+: **4 holy damage**

Effect: You can teleport each ally in the area and yourself if you're in the area to an unoccupied space within the area.

SACRIFICIAL OFFER

The divine energy of creation tears at your foe.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **2 corruption damage**
- 12–16: **6 corruption damage; the next ally to damage the target before the start of your next turn deals an extra 1d6 corruption damage**
- 17+: **9 corruption damage; the next ally to damage the target before the start of your next turn deals an extra 1d10 corruption damage**

WITHER

A bolt of holy energy saps the life from a foe.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **2 corruption damage**
- 12–16: **6 corruption damage; the target takes a bane on ability power rolls (EoT)**
- 17+: **9 corruption damage; the target has a double bane on ability power rolls (EoT)**

HEROIC ABILITIES

You make use of a number of heroic abilities, all of which channel piety to empower them.

3-PIETY ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 3 piety to use.

ANGEL OF WRATH (3 PIETY)

You conjure an angelic spirit who lashes your foes with burning radiance.

Keywords: Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** Special

Effect: You summon an angelic spirit of size 1M who can't be harmed, and who appears in an unoccupied space within distance. The spirit lasts until the end of your next turn. You and your allies can move through the spirit's space, but enemies can't. The first time on a turn that an enemy moves within 1 square of the spirit or starts their turn there, they take holy damage equal to twice your Intuition score.

PUNISHING SMITE (3 PIETY)

Your divine fury is a hammer that crashes down upon the unrighteous.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **6 holy damage**
- 12–16: **8 holy damage; prone**
- 17+: **13 holy damage; prone and can't stand (EoT)**

RIGHTEOUS REBUKE (3 PIETY)

Divine wrath strikes your foe with lightning that follows them across the battlefield.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **6 lightning damage**
- 12–16: **8 lightning damage**
- 17+: **13 lightning damage**

Effect: If the target deals damage to another creature before the end of their next turn, the target of this ability takes another 1d10 lightning damage.

THUNDER OF THE DIVINE (3 PIETY)

A resounding clap of thunder disrupts your foes.

Keywords: Area, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: 4 cube within 5 **Target:** All enemies

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **4 sonic damage; push 1**
- 12–16: **5 sonic damage; push 3**
- 17+: **8 sonic damage; push 5**

Effect: You can also push each willing ally in the area, and their stability doesn't count against this forced movement.

5-PIETY ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 5 piety to use.

ARMOR OF THE FAITHFUL (5 PIETY)

The divine light of protection surrounds your allies.

Keywords: Magic, Ranged **Type:** Maneuver

Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 3 allies

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **Gain 10 temporary Stamina**
- 12–16: **Gain 15 temporary Stamina**
- 17+: **Gain 20 temporary Stamina**

Effect: This temporary Stamina disappears at the end of the encounter.

DIVINE WEAKNESS (5 PIETY)

Divine energy scourges your target to make them more susceptible to harm.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action

Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **7 corruption damage; whenever the target takes damage, they take an extra 3 corruption damage (EoT)**
- 12–16: **10 damage; whenever the target takes damage, they take an extra 5 corruption damage (EoT)**
- 17+: **16 damage; whenever the target takes damage, they take an extra 5 corruption damage (EoE)**

TERRIFYING SMITE (5 PIETY)

A mote of holy light racks your foe with their greatest fear.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action

Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **7 holy damage**
- 12–16: **10 holy damage; frightened (EoT)**
- 17+: **16 holy damage; frightened (EoE)**

WAVE OF VIRTUE (5 PIETY)

A pulse of divine magic lets your comrades draw on their reserves of inner strength.

Keywords: Area, Magic **Type:** Action

Distance: 5 burst **Target:** All allies

Effect: Each target can spend one or two Recoveries, and end one effect that has a duration of EoT or is ended by a resistance roll.

ELEMENTALIST

Air for movement. Earth for permanence. Fire for destruction. Water for change. Green for growth. Rot for death. Void for the unknown. Years of study and practice and poring over tomes brought you the revelations that allow you to manipulate these building blocks of reality. Now you use your mastery of the seven elements to destroy, create, and warp the world with magic.

As an elementalist, you can unleash your wrath across a field of foes, put an enemy exactly where you want them, debilitate foes with harmful effects, ward yourself and allies against danger, manipulate terrain, warp space, and more. Your choice of elemental specialization determines which of these things you do best.

BASICS

Starting Characteristics: You start with a Reason of 2 and an Intuition of 2, and can choose one of the following arrays for your other characteristics scores:

- 2, -1, -1
- 1, 1, -1
- 1, 0, 0

Starting Stamina at 1st Level: 15

Stamina Gained at 2nd and Higher Levels: 6

Recoveries: 8

Skills: You gain Magic and can choose any three skills from the crafting or lore skill groups.

ELEMENTALIST ADVANCEMENT

Level	Features	Abilities
1st	Elemental Specialization, Essence, Hurl Element, Persistent Magic, Practical Magic, Specialization Feature, Specialization Triggered Action, Elementalist Abilities	Signature, 1, 3, 5
2nd	Specialization Feature, New 5-Essence Ability	Signature, 1, 3, 5, 5
3rd	Specialization Feature, 7-Essence Ability	Signature, 1, 3, 5, 5, 7

1ST-LEVEL FEATURES

As an elementalist, you gain the following features.

ELEMENTAL SPECIALIZATION

Through your studies, you know and can manipulate the seven primal elements of the timescape:

Air is the element of movement. Air abilities allow you to manipulate speed, quickness, flight, and breath.

Earth is the element of permanence. Earth abilities create and shape physical terrain in a permanent way, and bolster the strength and hardiness of allies.

Fire is the element of destruction. Fire abilities harm enemies and objects.

Green is the element of creation and growth. Green abilities make and manipulate plants, fungi, and other forms of life to hamper foes and nourish your allies.

Rot is the element of death. Rot abilities decay and debuff enemies.

Void is the element of the unknown. Void abilities warp space and reality, allowing you to teleport, create illusions, and make things incorporeal.

Water is the element of change. Water abilities enhance what your allies can do, and alter the abilities of your enemies for the worse.

Heroic abilities that include your specialization's keyword have their initial essence cost reduced by 1 (to a minimum of 1). This reduced cost doesn't apply to abilities you gain because of your specialization, such as Manipulate Earth or Void Sight.

Choose one of the following elements to be your specialty: earth, fire, green, or void. (Other elemental specializations will be featured in future products.) Your choice of specialization determines many of the features you'll gain from this class.

ESSENCE

You channel the substance of creation in the form of a Heroic Resource called essence. In times of great stress, you can focus your control on this substance, gathering and burning it to cast and maintain spells.

Outside of combat and other dangerous situations tracked in turns and rounds, you have essence equal to your Victories. If you lose some or all of this essence outside of combat, it takes you 1 minute to regain it. You can also dedicate that essence to maintaining persistent abilities (see [Persistent Magic](#) below).

When combat begins, you keep any essence you had outside of combat. At the start of each of your turns during combat, you gain 2 essence. When combat ends, you once more have essence equal to your Victories.

HURL ELEMENT

You gain the following ability, which can be used as a ranged free strike:

HURL ELEMENT

You hurl a ball of elemental energy at a nearby foe.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged

Type: Action

Distance: Ranged 5

Target: 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage (type varies)**
- 12–16: **6 damage (type varies)**
- 17+: **9 damage (type varies)**

Effect: When you make this attack, choose the damage type from one of the following options: acid, cold, corruption, fire, lightning, poison, or sonic.

PERSISTENT MAGIC

Some of your heroic abilities have the Persistent keyword. Whenever you use a persistent ability, you decide whether you want to maintain it. If you maintain a persistent ability in combat, you reduce the amount of essence you earn at

the start of your turn by an amount equal to the ability's persistent value, which enables the ability's persistent effect. All your active persistent abilities end when combat ends.

You can maintain a persistent ability outside of combat as long as you have Victories equal to or greater than its persistent value. If you maintain a persistent ability outside of combat, the maximum essence you can use on other abilities is reduced by the ability's persistent value. For instance, if you have 4 Victories and maintain the Stone Ward ability (a persistent ability with a cost of 1 essence), you can only use abilities costing 3 essence or less outside of combat.

You can't maintain any abilities that would make you earn a negative amount of essence at the start of your turn or have a negative amount of essence outside of combat. You can stop maintaining an ability at any time (no action required).

If you maintain the same ability on several targets and the effect includes a power roll, you make that roll once and apply the same effect to all targets. A creature can't be affected by multiple instances of a persistent ability.

Whenever you take damage while you have an active persistent ability, you must make the following power roll.

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **You lose all active persistent abilities.**
- 12–16: **If you have only one persistent ability active, it remains active. Otherwise, you lose one active persistent ability of your choice.**
- 17+: **All your active persistent abilities remain active.**

PRACTICAL MAGIC

You have the following ability:

PRACTICAL MAGIC

Your mastery of elemental power lets you customize your magic.

Keywords: Magic

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Self

Target: Self

Effect: Choose one of the following effects:

- You use the Knockback maneuver, but you make a Reason test instead of a Might test. For this use of the maneuver, you can target a creature at a distance equal to the distance of your Hurl Element ability.
- You choose a creature within the distance of your Hurl Element ability and deal damage to that creature equal to your Reason score. The damage type can be acid, cold, corruption, fire, lightning, poison, or sonic.
- You teleport a number of squares equal to your Reason score.

1ST-LEVEL SPECIALIZATION FEATURE

Your elementalist specialization grants you a feature, as shown on the 1st-Level Elementalist Specialization Features table.

1ST-LEVEL ELEMENTALIST SPECIALIZATION FEATURES

Specialization	Feature
Earth	Manipulate Earth
Fire	Melt
Green	Speech of the Wild
Void	Void Sense

MANIPULATE EARTH

You gain the following ability.

MANIPULATE EARTH (2 ESSENCE)

The earth rises, falls, or opens at your command.

Keywords: Earth, Magic, Melee

Type: Action

Distance: Reach 1

Target: Special

Effect: You touch a square containing mundane dirt, stone, or metal and create a 5 wall of the same material, which rises up out of the ground and must include the square you touched.

Alternative Effect: You touch a structure of mundane dirt, stone, or metal that takes up at least 2 squares. You can open a 1-square opening in the structure where you touched it.

Alternative Effect: You touch a doorway or other opening in a mundane dirt, stone, or metal surface that is no larger than 1 square. The opening is sealed by the same material that makes up the surface.

Spend No Essence: You can use this ability without spending essence. If you do, you must spend 1 uninterrupted minute using the ability while within reach of the target before its effect occurs.

MELT

You gain the following ability.

MELT (2 ESSENCE)

With the merest touch, you cause an object to turn into slag or ash.

Keywords: Fire, Magic, Melee

Type: Action

Distance: Reach 1

Target: 1 mundane object

Effect: You heat the target and cause it to combust and melt. If the object is larger than 1 square, then only the square of the object that you touch is destroyed.

Spend No Essence: You can use this ability without spending essence. If you do, you must spend 1 uninterrupted minute using the ability while touching the target before its effect occurs.

SPEECH OF THE WILD

You can speak with and understand Animals, Plant Creatures, and Monstrosities, even if they don't share a language with you. Your ability to communicate with such creatures doesn't make them inherently more intelligent or less hostile toward you.

Additionally, when you touch a living plant object, you can communicate with it telepathically. You can use words to communicate with the plant, but it communicates with you only by transmitting feelings and sensations that can't be overly specific.

VOID SENSE

You instantly recognize illusions for what they are, you can see invisible creatures, and supernatural effects can't conceal creatures and objects from you. You always know if an area or object you observe is magical or affected by magic, and the specifics of what that magic can do.

You also gain the following ability.

SHARED VOID SENSE (1+ ESSENCE)

You share your special senses with others.

Keywords: Magic, Ranged, Void **Type:** Maneuver
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** Special

Effect: For each essence you spend, you can target 1 creature. That creature gains the benefit of your Void Sense feature until the end of your next turn, but doesn't gain the use of Shared Void Sense.

SPECIALIZATION TRIGGERED ACTION

Your specialization grants you a triggered action, as shown on the Elementalist Triggered Actions table.

ELEMENTALIST TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Specialization	Triggered Action
Earth	Earthen Force
Fire	Explosive Assistance
Green	Mend the Soul
Void	Void Embrace

EARTHEN FORCE

You imbue an attack with the strength of stone.

Keywords: Earth, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Triggered
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** Self or 1 ally
Trigger: The target makes a melee attack.

Effect: The attack deals extra damage equal to 3 times your Reason score.

Spend 1 Essence: The attack deals extra damage equal to 4 times your Reason score instead, and pushes the target a number of squares equal to your Reason score.

EXPLOSIVE ASSISTANCE

You add a little magic to an ally's aggression at just the right time.

Keywords: Fire, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Triggered
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** Self or 1 ally
Trigger: The target force moves a creature or object.

Effect: The distance of the forced movement is increased by a number of squares equal to your Reason score.

Spend 1 Essence: The distance of the forced movement is increased by a number of squares equal to twice your Reason score instead.

MEND THE SOUL

The power you channel grants the ability to get back in the fight.

Keywords: Green, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Triggered
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** Self or 1 ally
Trigger: The target starts their turn.

Effect: The target can spend a Recovery.

VOID EMBRACE

You call on the void to swallow and spit out an ally.

Keywords: Magic, Ranged, Void **Type:** Triggered
Distance: Self or ranged 5 **Target:** Self or 1 ally
Trigger: The target starts their turn or moves.

Effect: At any point during the move, you teleport the target a number of squares equal to your Reason.

Spend 1 Essence: You teleport the target a number of squares equal to twice your Reason score instead.

ELEMENTALIST ABILITIES

Your mastery of elemental magic grants you unique magical abilities that let you damage, move, and debuff your enemies, empower your allies, and alter the terrain around you.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

Select one signature ability from the options below. Signature abilities can be used at will.

DEBRIS

A sudden storm of detritus assaults your foes and leaves them struggling to move.

Keywords: Area, Earth, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: 3 cube within 5 **Target:** All enemies

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage**
- 12–16: **3 damage**
- 17+: **4 damage**

Effect: The ground beneath the area becomes difficult terrain for your enemies.

FIRE LANCE

A jet of fire erupts with elemental fury where it strikes.

Keywords: Attack, Fire, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **2 fire damage; push 2**
- 12–16: **6 fire damage; push 3**
- 17+: **9 fire damage; push 5**

GROWING PAINS

Whipping vines erupt from a foe's body to grasp at another close by.

Keywords: Attack, Green, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage**
- 12–16: **6 damage**
- 17+: **9 damage**

Effect: A creature within 5 squares of the target is pulled 2 squares toward the target.

VOID RAY

A beam of energy corrupts and hinders whatever it touches.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged, Void **Type:** Action

Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **2 corruption damage**
- 12–16: **6 corruption damage; slowed (EoT)**
- 17+: **9 corruption damage; slowed (EoT)**

HEROIC ABILITIES

You channel a range of heroic abilities, all of them fueled by your essence.

3-ESSENCE ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 3 essence to use.

BURN! (3 ESSENCE)

Fire engulfs a target of your choice and burns at your command.

Keywords: Attack, Fire, Magic, Persistent, Ranged **Type:** Action

Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **6 fire damage**
- 12–16: **8 fire damage**
- 17+: **13 fire damage**

Persistent 1: If the target is within distance at the start of your turn, make a power roll for this ability again.

INVIGORATING GROWTH (3 ESSENCE)

Mushrooms erupt from a foe, sapping their vitality to spread strengthening spores.

Keywords: Attack, Green, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action

Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **6 poison damage**
- 12–16: **9 poison damage**
- 17+: **14 poison damage**

Effect: The mushrooms can be removed by the target or by an adjacent creature as an action. While the mushrooms are on the target, each of your allies adjacent to the target gains an edge on attacks against them.

PUNCH THE EARTH (3 ESSENCE)

You slam the ground, which buckles out from you in every direction.

Keywords: Area, Earth, Magic **Type:** Action

Distance: 3 burst **Target:** All enemies

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **5 damage**
- 17+: **8 damage; prone**

Effect: You must be touching the ground or floor to use this ability. The surface beneath the area becomes difficult terrain for your enemies.

STARE INTO THE ABYSS (3 ESSENCE)

You open a rift into the void to harry your enemies.

Keywords: Area, Magic, Persistent, Ranged, Void

Type: Action

Distance: 4 cube within 5

Target: All enemies

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **3 psychic damage**
- 12–16: **4 psychic damage**
- 17+: **6 psychic damage**

Persistent 1: At the start of your turn, you can use this ability again as a maneuver without spending essence.

5-ESSENCE ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 5 essence to use.

CONFLAGRATION (5 ESSENCE)

A storm of fire descends upon your enemies.

Keywords: Area, Fire, Magic, Persistent, Ranged

Type: Action

Distance: 4 cube within 5

Target: All enemies

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **5 fire damage**
- 12–16: **7 fire damage**
- 17+: **10 fire damage**

Persistent 2: At the start of your turn, you can use this ability again as a maneuver without spending essence.

INCORPOREALNESS (5 ESSENCE)

The material substance of a creature shreds away at your command.

Keywords: Magic, Melee, Persistent, Void

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Self or Reach

Target: Self or 1 ally

Effect: Until the start of your next turn, the target has damage immunity 5 and can move through 1 square of solid matter once per turn. If the target ends their turn inside solid matter, they are shunted out into the space where they entered it and this effect ends.

Persistent 1: The effect lasts until the start of your next turn.

NOURISHING RAIN (5 ESSENCE)

You call down a rain that burns your enemies and restores your allies.

Keywords: Area, Green, Magic

Type: Action

Distance: 5 burst

Target: All enemies

Power Roll + Reason:

- 11 or lower: **3 acid damage**
- 12–16: **5 acid damage**
- 17+: **7 acid damage**

Effect: You and each ally in the area suffering any effect that has a duration of EoT or is ended by a resistance roll has all such effects end.

OPEN THE EARTH (5 ESSENCE)

The surface of the world around you opens up at your command.

Keywords: Magic, Earth, Persistent, Ranged

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Ranged 5

Target: Special

Effect: You open four holes with 1-square openings that are 6 squares deep, and which can be placed on any mundane surface within distance. You can place these holes next to each other to create fewer holes with wider openings. For each creature standing above a hole when it opens and small enough to fall in, make a power roll.

Power Roll + Reason:

- *11 or lower:* **The target can shift up to 1 square from the edge of the hole to the nearest unoccupied space of their choice.**
- *12–16:* **The target falls into the hole.**
- *17+:* **The target falls into the hole and can't reduce the height of the fall.**

Persistent 1: At the start of your turn, you open another hole.

FURY

You do not temper the heat of battle within you, you unleash it! Like a raptor, a panther, a wolf, your experience in the wild taught you the secret of channeling unfettered anger into martial prowess. Primordial chaos is your ally. Leave it to others to use finesse to clean up the pieces you leave behind.

As a fury, you have abilities that deal a lot of damage, move you around the battlefield, and grow in strength as your rage increases. Nature has no concept of fairness—and neither do you.

BASICS

Starting Characteristics: You start with a Might of 2 and an Agility of 2, and can choose one of the following arrays for your other characteristics scores:

- 2, -1, -1
- 1, 1, -1
- 1, 0, 0

Starting Stamina at 1st Level: 21

Stamina Gained at 2nd and Higher Levels: 10

Recoveries: 12

Skills: Nature, plus choose any two skills from the exploration or intrigue skill groups.

FURY ADVANCEMENT

Level	Features	Abilities
1st	Primordial Aspect, Rage, Growing Rage, Mighty Leaps, Aspect Features, Aspect Triggered Action, Fury Abilities	Signature, 3, 5
2nd	Aspect Feature, Aspect Ability	Signature, 3, 5, 5 (Aspect)
3rd	Aspect Feature, 7-Rage Ability	Signature, 3, 5, 5 (Aspect), 7

1ST-LEVEL FEATURES

As a fury, you gain the following features.

PRIMORDIAL ASPECT

You come from a tradition older than civilization, older than warfare, older than most of the world. You have undergone a rite of passage that revealed the building blocks of the timescape—the Primordial Chaos—and which left an aspect of the Primordial Chaos inside you. As you channel the rage that shapes you, you can choose a primordial aspect from the following:

Berserker: You channel your rage into expressions of physical might, acting as a living version of the forces that reshape the world. You gain the Lift skill.

Reaver: You channel your rage into instinct and cunning, challenging the false order of civilization. You gain the Hide skill.

Stormwight: You channel your rage into the form of animals and primordial storms. You gain the Track skill.

Your choice of primordial aspect determines many of the features you'll gain from this class.

RAGE

As the battle intensifies around you, your determination and anger grow, fueling a Heroic Resource called rage.

Outside of combat and other dangerous situations tracked in turns and rounds, you have fury equal to your Victories. If you lose some or all of this rage outside of combat, it takes you 1 minute to regain it.

When a combat encounter begins, you keep any rage you had outside of combat. At the start of each of your turns during combat, you gain 1d3 rage. When combat ends, you once again have rage equal to your Victories.

GROWING RAGE

You gain certain benefits in combat based on the amount of rage you have. See [Aspect Features](#) for details. The benefits from your growing rage last until the end of your turn, even if a benefit would become unavailable to you because of the amount of rage you spend during your turn.

MIGHTY LEAPS

You always succeed on Might tests made to jump. You can still roll to see if you get a reward result.

1ST-LEVEL ASPECT FEATURES

Your chosen primordial aspect grants you features as shown on the 1st-Level Primordial Aspect Features table.

1ST-LEVEL PRIMORDIAL ASPECT FEATURES

Aspect	Feature
Berserker	Primordial Strength
Reaver	Primordial Cunning
Stormwight	Primordial Shape, Relentless Hunter

PRIMORDIAL CUNNING

You are never surprised. Additionally, whenever you would push a target with forced movement, you can slide them instead.

As your rage grows, your primordial cunning intensifies. These benefits are cumulative.

PRIMORDIAL CUNNING GROWING RAGE

Rage	Benefit
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You gain an edge on Agility tests and resistance rolls.• Once per turn, when you slide a target or when you move adjacent to a target during a shift, you can deal weapon damage to the target equal to your Agility score.
4	Once per turn, when you slide a target or when you move adjacent to a target during a shift, you can deal weapon damage to the target equal to twice your Agility score, instead of once your Agility score.
6	You have a double edge on Agility tests and resistance rolls.

PRIMORDIAL SHAPE

When you select a martial kit, you can instead select a stormwight kit (see [Stormwight Kits](#)). Your stormwight kit grants you a number of benefits, including effects tied to your Growing Rage feature.

PRIMORDIAL STRENGTH

When you damage an object with a weapon attack, it takes an additional 5 damage. Additionally, whenever you push another creature, you can make it a vertical push.

As your rage grows, your primordial strength intensifies. These benefits are cumulative.

PRIMORDIAL STRENGTH GROWING RAGE

Rage	Benefit
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You gain an edge on Might tests and resistance rolls.You gain a bonus to weapon damage equal to your Might score if you are at least 2 squares from where you started your turn when you attack.
4	You gain a bonus to weapon damage equal to twice your Might score, instead of once your Might score, if you are at least two squares from where you started your turn when you attack.
6	You have a double edge on Might tests and resistance rolls.

RELENTLESS HUNTER

You gain an edge on tests that use the Track skill.

ASPECT TRIGGERED ACTION

Your primordial aspect grants you a triggered action, as shown on the Fury Triggered Actions table.

FURY TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Aspect	Triggered Action
Berserker	Relentless Toss
Reaver	Uncanny Dodge
Stormwight	Regeneration

REGENERATION

Your transformative abilities bring you back into the fight.

Keywords: Melee **Type:** Triggered
Distance: Self **Target:** Self
Trigger: You lose Stamina and are not dying.

Effect: After damage is resolved, if your rage is high enough, you can enter your animal or hybrid form as a free triggered action. If you can't gain the temporary Stamina from that form because you have already done so this encounter, you gain temporary Stamina equal to your Might.

Spend 1 Rage: If you are not dying, you can spend a Recovery.

RELENTLESS TOSS

The Primordial Chaos allows you to redirect kinetic energy for a monstrous smash!

Keywords: Magic, Melee **Type:** Triggered
Distance: Self or reach **Target:** Self or 1 creature
Trigger: The target is force moved.

Effect: You can select a new target of the same size or smaller within distance to be force moved instead.

Additionally, you can increase the forced move distance by a number of squares equal to your Might score. You can use your Primordial Strength benefit to make this forced movement vertical.

Spend 1 Rage: You can increase the forced move distance by a number of squares equal to twice your Might score instead.

UNCANNY DODGE

When a damaging effect surrounds you, you stay two steps ahead.

Keywords: Melee **Type:** Triggered
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** Self
Trigger: You are targeted by a damaging area of effect.

Effect: You shift up to 2 squares. If that moves you out of the area of effect, you ignore the attack. Otherwise, you take half damage.

Spend 1 Rage: You move a willing adjacent ally affected by the attack with you, applying the same outcome to them.

FURY ABILITIES

You specialize in dealing massive damage on the battlefield, mastering a number of unique martial abilities that allow you to strike hard and keep moving in combat.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

Select one signature ability from the options below. Signature abilities can be used at will.

BRUTAL SLAM

The heavy impact of your weapon attacks drives your foes ever backward.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage; push 1**
- 12–16: **8 damage; push 2**
- 17+: **12 damage; push 4**

HIT AND RUN

Keeping in constant motion helps you slip out of reach after a brutal assault.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **8 damage**
- 17+: **12 damage; slowed (EoT)**

Effect: You can shift 1 square after the attack is resolved.

HUMILIATING STRIKE

You hit with a strength that's worth the risk of raising your opponent's ire.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **8 damage**
- 17+: **12 damage**

Effect: You can choose to do an extra 1d6 damage to the target. If you do, the target gains an edge on their next attack against you.

IMPALING STRIKE

Fighting up close lets you keep your foe exactly where you want them.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature of your size or smaller

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage; slowed (EoT)**
- 12–16: **8 damage; grabbed**
- 17+: **12 damage; grabbed**

Effect: If the target is grabbed, they take a bane on attempts to escape the grab. If you move while you have the target grabbed, they take 1 damage for each square you move.

HEROIC ABILITIES

You fight with an array of heroic abilities, all of which cost rage to fuel them.

3-RAGE ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 3 rage to use.

DEATH BEFORE BEAUTY (3 RAGE)

Your enemies will get out of your way—whether they want to or not.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage; slide 2**
- 12–16: **5 damage; slide 3**
- 17+: **8 damage; slide 5**

Effect: When you force move the target, you can move into squares they leave. The target takes the damage from any free strikes you provoke with this movement.

STAB ME SO I CAN PULL MYSELF CLOSER TO YOU (3 RAGE)

When you barrel through your foes, they feel your wrath.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Self **Target:** Self

Effect: Move up to your speed in a straight line toward a creature or object. You don't treat enemy creatures as difficult terrain for this move. If the target is a creature, you can end your movement in the target's square, moving them to an adjacent open square. Make a power roll against the target and every enemy you moved through.

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **5 damage**
- 12–16: **6 damage**
- 17+: **9 damage**

Effect: The target takes an extra 1d6 damage for every free strike you triggered from your move.

WHIRLWIND STRIKE (3 RAGE)

As your foes close in around you, why bother taking them on one by one?

Keywords: Area, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: 1 burst **Target:** All enemies

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **4 damage; push 1**
- 17+: **7 damage; push 3**

YOUR ENTRAILS ARE YOUR EXTRAILS! (3 RAGE)

Unless they get some help, your foe is finished.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **6 damage; slowed (EoT)**
- 12–16: **9 damage; slowed (EoT)**
- 17+: **14 damage; slowed (EoE)**

Effect: While slowed in this way, the target takes an extra 3 damage at the start of each of your turns.

5-RAGE ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 5 rage to use.

BLOOD FOR BLOOD! (5 RAGE)

A mighty strike leaves your foe reeling.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **7 damage; weakened and bleeding (EoT)**
- 12–16: **11 damage; weakened and bleeding (EoT)**
- 17+: **17 damage; weakened and bleeding (EoE)**

Effect: You can choose to deal 1d6 damage to yourself to deal an extra 2d6 damage to the target.

BRUTE PRECISION (5 RAGE)

You can always trust to your anger to get the job done.

Keywords: — **Type:** Free maneuver
Distance: Self **Target:** Self

Effect: The next attack you make this turn automatically achieves a tier 3 result and deals an extra 1d6 damage.

DYING BLOW (5 RAGE)

You focus your rage into a single devastating strike.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **9 damage**
- 12–16: **13 damage**
- 17+: **21 damage**

Spend 1 or More Additional Rage: If you are winded, you can add 1d6 damage for each rage spent. If you are dying, you can add 1d10 damage for each rage spent. In either case, you then lose 1d6 Stamina.

PRIMORDIAL SHOCKWAVE (5 RAGE)

The destructive power of nature cannot be contained.

Keywords: Area, Melee, Weapon

Type: Action

Distance: 5 × 1 line within 1

Target: All enemies

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage; push 2**
- 12–16: **5 damage; push 4**
- 17+: **8 damage; push 6**

Effect: Targets are pushed one at a time, starting with the target closest to you.

STORMWIGHT KITS

The primordial aspect of the stormwight lets you channel your rage into the form of an animal, and grants you knowledge of one of a number of special stormwight kits. You can master additional stormwight kits through play, swapping them out during a Respite as with any other kit. (See [Kits](#).)

KIT FEATURES

All stormwight kits have the following features in common.

ASPECT BENEFITS

You always have the noted benefits, whether in your true form, the animal form you can take at any time, or the hybrid form that some stormwight kits grant you as your rage increases.

ANIMAL FORM

You have some of the noted benefits all the time, but gain other benefits only while in animal form, as noted on the table that tracks the benefits you gain from your Growing Rage feature for each stormwight kit.

The animal form feature for each stormwight kit grants you the following ability:

ANIMAL FORM

You take on the form of the animal who channels your rage.

Keywords: —

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Self

Target: Self

Effect: You can shapeshift into the animal defined by your stormwight kit or back into your true form. While in animal form, you can't use signature abilities or heroic abilities unless they have the Animal keyword. Additionally, you can both speak normally and speak to animals who share your form. If negotiation with an animal comes into play, you treat your Renown as 2 higher than usual while in your animal form.

Spend 1 Rage: As a free maneuver on your turn, you can shapeshift a second time, either into another animal form or back into your true form.

PRIMORDIAL STORM

Each stormwight is associated with a primordial storm that refers to a specific damage type used by certain stormwight abilities.

EQUIPMENT

You wear no armor, and wield only your unarmed strikes—which become devastating natural weapons as your rage grows.

KIT BONUSES

These bonuses apply in your true form, your animal form, and your hybrid form if you have one.

GROWING RAGE

Each stormwight gains a specific set of benefits for their fury Growing Rage feature, as noted in the table for each stormwight kit. These benefits are cumulative.

BOREN

With this stormwight kit, you channel your primordial rage into the form of a bear, becoming large, durable, and imposing. Boren are tied to the craggy, rocky north, and this aspect is associated with the blizzard's bitter cold.

ASPECT BENEFITS

Whenever you use forced movement to push a creature, you can pull that creature instead. Whenever an attack pulls a creature adjacent to you, you can attempt to grab that creature as a free triggered action.

ANIMAL FORM: BEAR

When you are in your bear form, your speed increases by 2, your size becomes 2, and you have a +1 reach bonus with melee attacks. You gain 10 temporary Stamina the first time you shapeshift into bear form during an encounter.

PRIMORDIAL STORM: BLIZZARD

Your primordial damage type is cold.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +9
- **Stability Bonus:** +2
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +0/+0/+4

SIGNATURE ABILITY

BEAR CLAWS

Attacks with your sharp and deadly claws send your foes staggering back.

Keywords: Animal, Attack, Melee, Weapon

Type: Action

Distance: Reach 1

Target: 2 creatures or objects

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage; push 1**
- 12–16: **3 damage; push 2**
- 17+: **8 damage; push 3**

BEAR GROWING RAGE

Rage	Benefit
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You gain an edge on Might tests, resistance rolls, and power rolls made to grab.While in bear form, your attacks deal extra damage equal to your Might score, and any target you have grabbed at the start of your turn takes damage equal to your Might score.
4	While in bear form, you can use all your abilities, your attacks deal extra damage equal to twice your Might score, instead of once your Might score, and any target you have grabbed at the start of your turn takes damage equal to twice your Might score, instead of once your Might score.
6	You have a double edge on Might tests, resistance rolls, and power rolls made with the Grab ability.

CORVEN

With this stormwight kit, you channel your primordial rage into the form of a crow. Corven are tied to the mountain passes and the hot winds that flow through them. This aspect is associated with the katabatic wind.

ASPECT BENEFITS

You gain an edge on tests made to hide and sneak. Whenever you are falling, you can use your Animal Form ability as a free triggered action.

ANIMAL FORM: CROW

When you are in your crow form, your movement gains the Fly keyword, and your size becomes 1T. You can use the Hide maneuver as a free maneuver, and you can use your allies as cover when you hide.

Whenever your rage is 4 or higher, you can shapeshift to become a hybrid bipedal crow of your true form's size. You gain 10 temporary Stamina the first time you shapeshift into hybrid crow form during an encounter.

PRIMORDIAL STORM: KATABATIC WIND

Your primordial damage type is fire.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +3
- **Speed Bonus:** +3
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

WING BUFFET

Foes who try to close around you do so at their peril.

Keywords: Animal, Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action

Distance: Reach 1

Target: 3 creatures or objects

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **5 damage**
- 17+: **7 damage**

Effect: Resolve each attack individually using one power roll. You can shift 1 square after resolving damage for each

target, then choose your next target from your new location.

CROW GROWING RAGE

Rage	Benefit
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">You can shift 1 square as a free maneuver once per turn.While in crow form, your attacks deal extra damage equal to your Agility score.Once per turn while in crow form, when you move away from an enemy, that enemy takes damage equal to your Agility score.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">While in crow or hybrid crow form, you can use all your abilities, and your attacks deal extra damage equal to twice your Agility score, instead of once your Agility score.Once per turn while in crow or hybrid crow form, when you move away from an enemy, that enemy takes damage equal to twice your Agility score, instead of once your Agility score.
6	You can shift up to 2 squares as a free maneuver once per turn.

RADEN

With this stormwight kit, you channel your primordial rage into the form of a rat. Raden are associated with the true nature of the rat, before cities became their habitat. Rats are avatars of the balance between green and rot, and this aspect is associated with the rat flood.

ASPECT BENEFITS

You gain an edge on tests made to hide and sneak. Additionally, you ignore difficult terrain, and you gain an edge on tests made to climb other creatures. If you are hidden, you automatically achieve a tier 3 result on attempts to climb and remain hidden.

ANIMAL FORM: RAT

When you are in your rat form, your movement gains the Climb keyword, and your size becomes 1T. You can use the Hide maneuver as a free maneuver, and you can use your allies as cover when hiding. You can stay hidden while moving through squares occupied by a creature.

Whenever your rage is 4 or higher, you can shapeshift to become a hybrid bipedal rat of your true form's size. You gain 10 temporary Stamina the first time you shapeshift into hybrid rat form during an encounter.

PRIMORDIAL STORM: RAT FLOOD

Your primordial damage type is corruption.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +3
- **Speed Bonus:** +3
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

DRIVING POUNCE

Your enemies try in vain to fall back from your pouncing attack.

Keywords: Animal, Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 2 creatures or objects

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **5 damage; push 1**
- 17+: **6 damage; push 2**

Effect: Resolve each attack one at a time. After each attack, you can shift the same number of squares that you pushed the target. You select your second target from the square where you end your shift, which can be the first target again.

RAT GROWING RAGE

Rage	Benefit
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You have Weapon immunity 2.• While in rat form, your attacks deal extra damage equal to your Agility score.• While in rat form, if you attack a creature you are climbing, that creature is bleeding (EoT).
4	While in rat or hybrid rat form, you can use all your abilities, and your attacks deal extra damage equal to twice your Agility score, instead of once your Agility score.
6	You have Weapon immunity 2. Any damage you ignore because of this immunity is dealt to each enemy adjacent to you when you are attacked.

VUKEN

With this stormwight kit, you channel your primordial rage into the form of a wolf. Vuken are tied to forests and open steppes, and this aspect is associated with the thunderstorm.

ASPECT BENEFITS

You and an ally gain the benefits of flanking whenever you are both adjacent to a target. If you and at least two other allies are all adjacent to a target, each of you has a double edge for flanking.

ANIMAL FORM: WOLF

When you are in your wolf form, your speed increases by 2, you ignore difficult terrain, and your size becomes 1M.

Whenever your rage is 4 or higher, you can shapeshift to become a hybrid bipedal wolf of your true form's size. You gain 10 temporary Stamina the first time you shapeshift into hybrid wolf form during an encounter.

PRIMORDIAL STORM: LIGHTNING STORM

Your primordial damage type is lightning.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +9
- **Speed Bonus:** +2
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2

- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

PROBING ATTACK

A savage assault forces your foes back.

Keywords: Animal, Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **5 damage**
- 12–16: **9 damage; push 1**
- 17+: **12 damage; push 2; prone if the target is your size or smaller**

Effect: You can shift up to 2 squares as long as you end the shift adjacent to the target.

WOLF GROWING RAGE

Rage	Benefit
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• You gain an edge on Agility tests and resistance rolls.• While in wolf form, your attacks deal extra damage equal to your Agility score.• When you attack a target while in wolf form, the next ally to damage that target before the start of your next turn deals extra damage equal to your Agility score.
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• While in wolf or hybrid wolf form, you can use all your abilities, and your attacks deal extra damage equal to twice your Agility score, instead of once your Agility score.• When you attack a target while in wolf or hybrid wolf form, the next ally to damage that target before the start of your next turn deals extra damage equal to twice your Agility score, instead of once your Agility score.
6	You have a double edge on Agility tests and resistance rolls.

SHADOW

Subtlety is your art, the tip of the blade your brush. You studied at a secret college, specializing in alchemy, illusion, or shadow-magics. Your training and knowledge places you among the elite assassins, spies, and commandos. But more powerful than any weapon or sorcery is your insight into your enemy's weakness.

As a shadow, you have abilities that deal a lot of damage, let you move swiftly across the battlefield and away from hazards, and allow you to fade from notice even in the middle of the most heated combat encounter. You also possess more skills than any other hero.

BASICS

Starting Characteristics: You start with an Agility of 2 and a Presence of 2, and can choose one of the following arrays for your other characteristics scores:

- 2, -1, -1
- 1, 1, -1
- 1, 0, 0

Starting Stamina at 1st Level: 18

Stamina Gained at 2nd and Higher Levels: 8

Recoveries: 10

Skills: Hide and Sneak, plus choose any five skills from Criminal Underworld or the skills of the exploration, interpersonal, or intrigue skill groups.

SHADOW ADVANCEMENT

Level	Features	Abilities
1st	Shadow College, Insight, College Feature, College Triggered Action, Hesitation is Weakness, Shadow Abilities	Signature, 3, 5
2nd	College Feature, College Ability	Signature, 3, 5, 5 (College)
3rd	Assess and Aim, 7-Insight Ability	Signature, 3, 5, 5 (College), 7

1ST-LEVEL FEATURES

As a shadow, you gain the following features.

SHADOW COLLEGE

Shadow colleges are secret institutions that turn ordinary folk into something else. Finding a college is the first step in a rigorous initiation process that tests the mettle of an applicant. Even those who make the cut often wash out—or are kicked out—as the master shadows who teach stealth, magic, and assassination to their students are often less than gentle in their approach.

You are one of the few who has graduated from a shadow college, chosen from the following options:

College of Black Ash: The College of Black Ash founded the art of being a shadow. Its graduates use Black Ash sorcery to teleport around the battlefield in clouds of soot, and to manipulate and create darkness. Graduates of the college are unmatched in mobility. You gain the Magic skill.

College of Caustic Alchemy: The College of Caustic Alchemy teaches its students recipes for the acids, bombs, and poisons used in their grim work. Graduates of the college are exceptional assassins. You gain the Alchemy skill.

College of the Harlequin Mask: Graduates of the College of the Harlequin Mask learn illusion magic, which they use to infiltrate enemy strongholds and create orchestrated chaos in combat. You gain the Lie skill.

Your choice of shadow college determines many of the features you'll gain from this class.

INSIGHT

By observing your enemy, you learn how to use their weaknesses against them. You have a Heroic Resource called insight.

Outside of combat and other dangerous situations tracked in turns and rounds, you have insight equal to your Victories. If you lose some or all of this insight outside of combat, it takes you 1 minute to regain it.

When a combat encounter begins, you keep any insight you had outside of combat. At the start of each of your turns during combat, you gain 2 insight. You gain 1 insight whenever you get a tier 3 result with an attack. When combat ends, you once again have insight equal to your Victories.

1ST-LEVEL COLLEGE FEATURES

Your choice of college grants you one or two features, as shown on the 1st-Level Shadow College Features table.

1ST-LEVEL SHADOW COLLEGE FEATURES

College	Feature
Black Ash	Black Ash Teleport
Caustic Alchemy	Coat the Blade, Smoke Bomb
Harlequin Mask	I'm On Your Side

BLACK ASH TELEPORT

You gain the following ability.

BLACK ASH TELEPORT

In a swirl of black ash, you step from one place to another.

Keywords: Magic

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Self

Target: Self

Effect: You teleport up to 5 squares. If you end this movement in concealment or cover, you can use the Hide maneuver even if you are observed.

Spend Insight: You teleport 1 additional square for each insight spent.

Coat the Blade

You gain the following ability.

COAT THE BLADE

Just a little poison goes a long way.

Keywords: —

Distance: Self

Type: Maneuver

Target: Self

Effect: You coat one of your weapons with a harmful poison. The next creature you damage with an ability that uses that weapon takes extra poison damage equal to twice your Presence score or the target is weakened (EoT). You choose the effect when you apply the poison. The poison loses its potency after you damage the creature or at the end of the encounter.

Spend Insight: For each insight you spend, the damage dealt by the poison increases by a number equal to your Presence score. You can't spend more Insight than your shadow level on this ability.

I'M ON YOUR SIDE

You gain the following ability.

I'M ON YOUR SIDE

Taking on the illusory countenance of another creature gives you an advantage on subterfuge.

Keywords: Magic

Distance: Self

Type: Maneuver

Target: Self

Effect: Choose a creature of your size, whose size is no more than 1 greater than yours, and who is within 10 squares of you. Your body is covered in an illusion that makes you appear to be that creature. This illusion covers your entire body, including clothing and armor, and changes your voice to sound like the creature. While this illusion lasts, you gain an edge on attacks against and Presence tests made to interact with the creature's allies, and you don't provoke opportunity attacks from those allies. These benefits don't apply against the creature whose appearance you've taken on. The illusion ends when you harm another creature, when you and another creature physically interact, when you use this ability again, or when you end the illusion (no action required).

SMOKE BOMB

You always carry a supply of smoke bombs to make it easy for you to distract and get away from foes. You can use the Hide maneuver even if you are observed and don't start in cover or concealment. If you do, you can shift a number of squares equal to your Agility. If you end this movement in cover or concealment, you are hidden.

COLLEGE TRIGGERED ACTION

Your college grants you a triggered action, as shown on the Shadow Triggered Actions table.

SHADOW TRIGGERED ACTIONS

College	Triggered Action
Black Ash	In All This Confusion
Caustic Alchemy	Defensive Roll
Harlequin Mask	Misdirection

DEFENSIVE ROLL

When an enemy attacks, you roll with the impact to reduce the harm.

Keywords: —

Distance: Self

Type: Triggered

Target: Self

Trigger: Another creature damages you.

Effect: You shift up to 2 squares, halve the triggering damage, and don't suffer any effect associated with the damage. If you end this movement with concealment or cover, you can use the Hide maneuver even if you are observed.

Spend 1 Insight: If the triggering damage was from an attack, you also reduce the attack's damage by one tier.

IN ALL THIS CONFUSION

You teleport away in a plume of black smoke to avoid danger.

Keywords: Magic

Distance: Self

Type: Triggered

Target: Self

Trigger: You take damage.

Effect: You teleport up to 4 squares, halve the triggering damage, and don't suffer any effect associated with the damage.

Spend Insight: You teleport 1 additional square for each insight spent.

MISDIRECTION (1 INSIGHT)

You sow a moment of confusion in combat, to your enemy's peril.

Keywords: Magic

Distance: Self

Type: Triggered

Target: Self

Trigger: An enemy attacks you.

Effect: Choose an enemy within distance of the attack. The attack targets that enemy instead.

HESITATION IS WEAKNESS

You know how to seize the advantage in battle, working with your allies to find the perfect moment to strike. You have the following ability.

HESITATION IS WEAKNESS (1 INSIGHT)

Waiting for your enemies to act was never your style.

Keywords: —

Distance: Self

Type: Free triggered action

Target: Self

Trigger: Another hero ends their turn.

Effect: You take your turn immediately.

SHADOW ABILITIES

You specialize in dealing damage, then getting out of harm's way before the inevitable counterattack. You know a number of unique martial abilities that define your presence on the battlefield.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

Select one signature ability from the options below. Signature abilities can be used at will.

DISTRACTING PAIN

Your precise strikes let your allies take advantage of a target's agony.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 or Ranged 3 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **8 damage; the next attack against the target gains an edge**
- 17+: **12 damage; the target falls prone**

I WORK BETTER ALONE

Facing an enemy alone lets you exploit their overconfidence.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 or Ranged 3 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **8 damage**
- 17+: **12 damage**

Effect: If the target has no allies adjacent to them, you gain an edge on the attack.

SHOT AND STEP

Being fast on your feet makes your ranged attacks especially deadly.

Keywords: Attack, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **7 damage**
- 17+: **10 damage**

Effect: You can shift 1 square before or after the attack.

SUCKER SLICE

Keeping an enemy's focus on you lets your ally hit hard.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **8 damage**
- 17+: **12 damage**

Effect: If you are flanking the target when you make this attack, one ally who is flanking with you has a double edge on melee attacks against the target until the end of the ally's next turn, even if they are no longer flanking the target.

HEROIC ABILITIES

A range of heroic abilities define your combat prowess, all of which make use of your insight.

3-INSIGHT ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 3 insight to use.

BLADE DANCE (3 INSIGHT)

As you move across the battlefield, every foe within reach feels your wrath.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Self **Target:** Self

Effect: You move up to your speed, and that movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks. You make one power roll that targets each enemy who becomes adjacent to you during the move.

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **4 damage**
- 17+: **7 damage**

QUICK PURSUIT (3 INSIGHT)

A foe forced away from you might assume they're out of danger, but they'll soon learn otherwise.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **6 damage; slide 2**
- 12–16: **9 damage; slide 3**
- 17+: **14 damage; slide 5**

Effect: You can shift into squares the target leaves behind when you force move them.

TWO THROATS AT ONCE (3 INSIGHT)

Striking two foes at once is second nature to you.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 or Ranged 5 **Target:** 2 creatures or objects

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **6 damage**
- 17+: **9 damage**

WOUNDING STRIKE (3 INSIGHT)

You leave your foe bleeding out after a devastating attack.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 or Ranged 3 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **6 damage**
- 12–16: **9 damage; bleeding until a creature uses a maneuver to staunch the wound**
- 17+: **14 damage; bleeding until a creature uses an action to staunch the wound**

Effect: While bleeding, the target takes 4 damage at the start of each of your turns.

5-INSIGHT ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 5 insight to use.

ASSASSINATE (5 INSIGHT)

You seize the perfect moment and strike with fatal precision!

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon

Type: Action

Distance: Reach 1

Target: 1 creature

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **2d6 + 8 damage**
- 12–16: **2d6 + 12 damage**
- 17+: **2d6 + 18 damage**

GET IN, GET OUT (5 INSIGHT)

Move unexpectedly, strike fast, and be gone!

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon

Type: Action

Distance: Reach 1

Target: 1 creature

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **7 damage**
- 12–16: **11 damage**
- 17+: **17 damage**

Effect: You can move up to your speed, and that movement doesn't provoke opportunity attacks. You can move before or after your attack, or can split your movement before and after your attack.

IMPAIRING SHOT (5 INSIGHT)

Your attack leaves a foe in the perfect position for your allies to finish them.

Keywords: Attack, Ranged, Weapon

Type: Action

Distance: Ranged 5

Target: 1 creature

Power Roll + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **7 damage; attacks against the target gain an edge (EoT)**
- 12–16: **11 damage; attacks against the target gain an edge (EoT)**
- 17+: **17 damage; attacks against the target have a double edge (EoT)**

QUICKNESS (5 INSIGHT)

You put on a burst of magical speed to get the job done.

Keywords: Magic

Type: Action

Distance: Self

Target: Self

Effect: You make two signature attacks that each deal extra damage equal to twice your Agility.

TACTICIAN

Strategist. Defender. Leader. With sword in hand, you lead allies into the maw of battle, barking out commands that inspire your fellow heroes to move faster and strike more precisely. All the while, you stand between your compatriots and death, taunting the followers of evil to best you if they can.

As a tactician, you have abilities that heal your allies and grant them extra damage, movement, and attacks. You can taunt your enemies into attacking you instead of targeting your allies, and can help soak up damage when those allies stand alone.

BASICS

Starting Characteristics: You start with a Might of 2 and a Reason of 2, and can choose one of the following arrays for your other characteristics scores:

- 2, -1, -1
- 1, 1, -1
- 1, 0, 0

Starting Stamina at 1st Level: 21

Stamina Gained at 2nd and Higher Levels: 10

Recoveries: 12

Skills: Lead, plus choose any two skills from Alertness, Architecture, Blacksmithing, Brag, Culture, Empathize, Fletching, History, Mechanics, Monsters, Search, or the skills of the exploration skill group.

TACTICIAN ADVANCEMENT

Level	Features	Abilities
1st	Tactical Doctrine, Focus, Mark, Seize the Opening, Doctrine Features, Doctrine Triggered Action, Field Arsenal, Tactician Abilities	Field Arsenal, 3, 5
2nd	Doctrine Features, Doctrine Ability	Field Arsenal, 3, 5, 5 (Doctrine)
3rd	All According to Plan, 7-Focus Ability	Field Arsenal, 3, 5, 5 (Doctrine), 7

1ST-LEVEL FEATURES

As a tactician, you gain the following features.

TACTICAL DOCTRINE

Warfare is as old as civilization—and perhaps even older. As battle became ever more developed and complex, military leaders invented doctrine, outlining how combatants should be structured, used, and deployed. Doctrine can be learned at war colleges passing on ancient martial traditions, or directly through blood and sweat on the battlefield.

You have developed a mastery of tactics of historical significance, letting you choose one of the following doctrines:

Vanguard (Shock and Awe): You have learned the tactics and stratagems of the heroes of ancient history, letting you lead from the front lines of battle and seek victory through sheer force of will and personality. You gain a skill from the interpersonal skill group.

Mastermind (Grand Strategy): You have an encyclopedic knowledge of warfare, viewing the battlefield as a game board, and seeking victory by thinking multiple steps ahead of your opponents. You gain a skill from the lore skill group.

Insurgent (Asymmetric Warfare): Doing your duty, playing fair, and dying honorably in battle is your opponent's job. By contrast, you'll do whatever it takes to keep your allies alive. You gain a skill from the intrigue skill group.

Your choice of doctrine determines many of the features you'll gain from this class.

FOCUS

The ring of steel panics others but brings order to your mind, granting you a Heroic Resource called focus.

Outside of combat and other dangerous situations tracked in turns and rounds, you have focus equal to your Victories. If you lose some or all of this focus outside of combat, it takes you 1 minute to regain it.

When a combat encounter begins, you keep any focus you had outside of combat. At the start of each of your turns during combat, you gain 2 focus. If an ally gets a tier 3 result on an attack against a target you have marked, you gain 1 focus. When combat ends, you once again have focus equal to your Victories.

MARK

You know how to focus the attention of your allies as you push them toward victory. You have the following ability.

MARK

You draw your allies' attention to a specific foe—with devastating effect.

Keywords: Ranged

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Ranged 10

Target: 1 creature

Effect: The target is marked by you until the start of your next turn. When attacking a marked target, you and each of your allies gains an edge on power rolls and deals extra damage equal to your Reason score.

Spend 1 Focus: You mark 1 additional creature within distance.

SEIZE THE OPENING

Your ability to command your allies in combat grants you the following ability.

SEIZE THE OPENING

As the battle unfolds, you tell your allies exactly when to strike!

Keywords: Ranged

Type: Action

Distance: Ranged 10

Target: 1 ally

Effect: The target makes a signature attack as a free triggered action, and deals extra damage equal to your Reason score.

Spend 5 Focus: You target two allies instead of one.

1ST-LEVEL DOCTRINE FEATURES

Your chosen doctrine grants you two features, as shown on the 1st-Level Tactical Doctrine Features table.

1ST-LEVEL TACTICAL DOCTRINE FEATURES

Doctrine	Feature
Vanguard	Imposing Attitude
Mastermind	I Read Your Book!
Insurgent	Covert Operations

COVERT OPERATIONS

While in your presence or working according to your plans, each of your allies gains an edge on tests with any skill from the intrigue skill group. Additionally, you can use the Lead skill to assist on any test made with a skill from the intrigue skill group. At the Director's discretion, you and your allies can use skills from the intrigue skill group to attempt research or reconnaissance during a negotiation instead of outside of negotiation.

IMPOSING ATTITUDE

You command any room you walk into. While you are present, each hero with you is treated as having a Renown 2 higher than usual for the purpose of negotiations and influencing tests. Additionally, each hero with you has a double edge on tests made to stop combat and start a negotiation with the other side.

I READ YOUR BOOK!

Your encyclopedic knowledge of the history of battle lets you apply that knowledge to current challenges. While you are with them, any hero treats the Discover Lore project as one category cheaper, with projects seeking common lore becoming free. (See [Research and Crafting](#) in future packets for more information.)

Additionally, if you have a reasonable amount of time before a combat encounter or negotiation, and you have at least one clue or rumor regarding the encounter, you can make a Reason test as a Respite activity. The following test results apply to a combat encounter:

- **11 or lower:** The Director tells you the number of creatures in the encounter.
- **12-16:** The Director tells you the number and level of the creatures in the encounter.
- **17+:** As 12-16 and when the encounter begins, all enemies are surprised.

The following test results apply to a negotiation:

- **11 or lower:** The Director tells you three different motivations, one of which is one of the NPC's motivations, and the other two are not.
- **12-16:** The Director tells you one of the NPC's motivations.
- **17+:** As 12-16 and you and your allies gain an edge on tests made to influence NPCs during the negotiation.

You can only make this test once for each encounter and negotiation.

DOCTRINE TRIGGERED ACTION

Your doctrine grants you a triggered action, as shown on the Tactician Triggered Actions table.

TACTICIAN TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Doctrine	Triggered Action
Vanguard	Parry
Mastermind	Overwatch
Insurgent	Flank Them Now!

FLANK THEM NOW!

You help keep your side in motion as attacks rain down on your foes.

Keywords: Ranged

Type: Triggered

Distance: Self or Ranged 10

Target: You or an ally

Trigger: A nontarget ally is about to make an attack.

Effect: The target can shift up to 2 squares before the attack resolves. After the attack resolves, both the original attacker and the target can shift up to 2 squares.

Spend 1 Focus: The attack deals an extra 1d6 damage.

PARRY

Your quick reflexes cost an enemy the precision they seek.

Keywords: Melee, Weapon

Type: Triggered

Distance: Self or Reach 1

Target: Self or 1 ally

Trigger: A creature makes a Weapon attack against the target.

Effect: The attack's damage against the target is halved.

Spend 1 Focus: The result of the attack's power roll is treated as one tier lower before the damage is halved. If the attack is a critical hit, the attacker can still take an additional action.

OVERWATCH

Under your direction, an ally waits for just the right moment to strike.

Keywords: Ranged

Type: Triggered

Distance: Ranged 10

Target: 1 enemy

Trigger: The target moves.

Effect: At any point during the target's movement, one ally can make a free strike against the target.

Spend 1 Focus: The target's speed becomes 0 (EoT).

FIELD ARSENAL

You have drilled with a broad array of weapons and have developed techniques to optimize their use. Whenever you select or change your kit, you can select an additional martial kit and gain the benefits of both kits. (See [Kits](#).)

If both kits grant you the same benefit, you take one or the other and can't change your choice until you finish a Respite. (This usually means taking the higher of two bonuses.) You also gain access to the signature abilities of both kits.

For example, if you take the Shining Armor and Sniper kits, you gain the following benefits overall:

- **Stamina Bonus:** +12
- **Stability Bonus:** +1
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2
- **Speed Bonus:** +1
- **Ranged Weapon Damage Bonus:** +0/+0/+4
- **Distance Bonus:** +10
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.
- You also the use of the Protective Attack and Patient Shot signature abilities.

Kit signature abilities already have their bonuses applied. For example, you might take the Martial Artist kit, which gives a melee weapon damage bonus of +2/+2/+2, and the Mountain kit, which gives a melee weapon damage bonus of +0/+0/+4. If you choose to use the Mountain kit's damage bonus, then the Battle Grace signature ability from the Martial Artist kit would reduce its damage by -2/-2/-2, as it loses the bonus from the Martial Artist kit. It then gains the +0/+0/+4 of the Mountain kit, to deal damage of 3/7/14 for its tier 1, tier 2, and tier 3 results.

TACTICIAN ABILITIES

You are a formidable combatant in your own right, but your greatest strength in battle is the ability to make your allies even more formidable. You know a range of abilities that shape the scope of your control of the battlefield.

KIT SIGNATURE ABILITY

Your additional kit from your Field Arsenal feature grants you a second signature ability. Signature abilities can be used at will.

HEROIC ABILITIES

Your heroic abilities cover a range of combat tactics, all of which require focus to use them.

3-FOCUS ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 3 focus to use.

BATTLE CRY (3 FOCUS)

Hearing your shout of triumph fills your allies with combat fervor.

Keywords: Ranged **Type:** Maneuver
Distance: Ranged 10 **Target:** Up to three allies

Effect: Each target gains an edge on the next attack or resistance roll they make before the end of the encounter.

DAZING BLOW (3 FOCUS)

Your precise strike leaves your foe struggling to respond.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach or Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

11 or lower: 6 damage; slowed (EoT)

12–16: 8 damage; dazed (EoT)

17+: 13 damage; dazed (EoE)

INSPIRING STRIKE (3 FOCUS)

You hit a foe so hard that it gets your allies back in the fight.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 or Ranged 5

Target: 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

• 11 or lower: 6 damage; you or an ally within 10 can spend a Recovery

• 12–16: 8 damage; you or an ally within 10 can spend a Recovery

• 17+: 13 damage; you or an ally within 10 can spend a Recovery, and each of you gains an edge on the next attack they make this encounter

PHALANX FORWARD! (3 FOCUS)

On your command, you and your allies force back the enemy line.

Keywords: Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Maneuver
Distance: Ranged 10 **Target:** Self and all allies

Effect: Each target can move their speed, push an adjacent enemy 1 square at the end of that move, and shift 1 square into the square the enemy left.

5-FOCUS ABILITIES

Choose one heroic ability from the following options, each of which costs 5 focus to use.

HAMMER AND ANVIL (5 FOCUS)

Your attack is your allies' signal to strike!

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 or Ranged 5

Target: 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

• 11 or lower: 7 damage; an ally within 10 can make a signature attack against the target as a free triggered action

• 12–16: 10 damage; an ally within 10 can make a signature attack with an edge against the target as a free triggered action

• 17+: 16 damage; two allies within 10 can each make a signature attack with an edge against the target as a free triggered action

Effect: If an attack is left to be resolved and the target was reduced to 0 Stamina, the attacker can pick a different target.

NOW! (5 FOCUS)

Your allies wait for your command—then unleash death!

Keywords: Ranged **Type:** Maneuver
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** All allies

Effect: Each target can make a free strike.

THEIR WEAKNESS IS OUR STRENGTH (5 FOCUS)

Leaving your foe struggling gives your allies a strategic opening.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action

Distance: Reach 1 or Ranged 5

Target: 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **7 damage; weakened (EoT)**
- 12–16: **10 damage; weakened (EoT)**
- 17+: **16 damage; weakened (EoE)**

Effect: The target is marked (EoE). Each of your allies can spend a Recovery the first time they attack any target you've marked before the start of your next turn.

THIS IS WHAT WE PLANNED FOR (5 FOCUS)

A quick signal from you gives your allies a chance to turn the tide of battle.

Keywords: Ranged

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Ranged 10

Target: 2 allies

Effect: Each target who hasn't acted yet this round can take their turn in any order immediately after yours.

KITS

(Playtest note: This is not all the kits we imagine will be available in the game, but just a sampling. There might be more implement and weapon categories too.)

The knight in shining armor. The warrior priest. The hermit mage. As you build your character, you can tap into these and many more archetypal concepts using kits. A kit is a combination of weapons, armor, implements, and fighting and spellcasting techniques that lets you personalize your character for battle.

The game features two types of kits. A hero can take any kit, but some kits are better suited to specific classes.

Martial kits are collections of weapons, armor, and related combat training. They are meant for heroes who primarily fight with weapons, such as furies, shadows, and tacticians.

Caster kits often include equipment, but are primarily methods of using magic that you meditate on. They are meant for heroes who primarily fight with magic abilities, including conduits and elementalists.

CHANGING YOUR KIT

Your choice of kit is always flexible, and your character is never locked into a specific kit. If you want to change your kit, you can do so as a respite activity (see [Respite](#)).

KIT EQUIPMENT

Each kit includes an armor entry. Martial kits also have a weapons entry, and caster kits have an implement entry. It's important to know what equipment a kit uses, because that informs your hero's appearance and story. It also determines the type of treasures they can wield.

The description of gear in your kit is limited to broad categories, leaving you free to decide the specifics that best align with your vision of the character. For instance, the Guisarmier kit provides medium armor and a polearm. One player using this kit could wear heavy layers of hide and wield a longspear, while another might wear a shining breastplate and carry a halberd into battle.

The equipment categories your kit gives you are part of what affects the math behind your kit's benefits, alongside the fighting techniques each kit provides.

CUSTOMIZING EQUIPMENT APPEARANCES

You should absolutely feel free to describe your equipment in a way that makes sense for the story of your game and hero. For instance, if your hero uses a weapon in the whip category as part of their kit, they could use a leather whip, a spiked chain, or a dagger tied to a knotted rope. A hero who wears heavy armor might wear a suit of chain mail, plate armor, or heavy wooden planks tied together. Your choices for equipment aren't limited just to the examples in this book.

KIT ARMOR CATEGORIES

Each kit has an armor category that indicates the kind of protection you have while using the kit.

NONE

If a kit has no armor, you can wear whatever clothing you like! Robes, a fashionable tunic and pants, or just loincloth it—totally up to you.

LIGHT ARMOR

If a kit features light armor, you might wear padded cloth, leather armor, or even a chain shirt.

MEDIUM ARMOR

If a kit has medium armor, you might wear layers of thick hides, a breastplate, or armor made of metal scales.

HEAVY ARMOR

If a kit has heavy armor, then you're likely wearing metal from head to toe. Chain mail, ring mail, and suits of plate armor protect you better than any other mundane protection.

SHIELD

If a kit has a shield, then you wield a shield that can be any shape and made of any mundane material you like. The best shields have a sweet insignia on them, so start thinking about yours!

KIT WEAPON CATEGORIES

Each martial kit has a weapon category that indicates the types of weapons you wield while using the kit. You can use any ability with the Weapon keyword even if your kit doesn't have a weapon, but you don't get to apply your kit's bonuses to that ability.

NONE

If a kit uses no weapons, then you don't wield any weapons effectively, not even your own fists and feet.

BOW

Bows cover any weapon used to fire an arrow or bolt projectile. This includes crossbows, longbows, and shortbows. You don't need to track mundane ammunition for these weapons, unless the Director says otherwise.

ENSNARING WEAPON

Ensnaring weapons include bolas, nets, and other weapons made to capture an enemy and hold them in place.

HEAVY WEAPON

Heavy weapons are two-handed melee weapons with weighty bladed or bludgeoning heads, made to seriously harm or kill enemies in a single mighty blow. Greatswords, greataxes, mauls, and morningstars are all examples of heavy weapons.

LIGHT WEAPON

Light weapons are one-handed melee weapons that can be used to make several strikes in rapid succession. Many such weapons can be thrown or used as an off-hand defensive weapon. Daggers, shortswords, rapiers, and throwing hammers are typical light weapons.

If your kit uses a light weapon, you can wield two light weapons at a time.

MEDIUM WEAPON

Medium weapons are one-handed melee weapons that can be carried into battle while leaving one hand free, or while using that hand to hold a shield or implement. Battleaxes, clubs, longswords, and warhammers are medium weapons.

POLEARM

Polearms are two-handed melee weapons with long hafts that increase the wielder's reach. They include glaives, halberds, longspears, and quarterstaves.

UNARMED STRIKE

Any kit that uses unarmed strikes allows you to use your body as a weapon. Punches, kicks, eye gouges, and the like are your forte.

WHIP

Whip weapons include the standard whip, but also include spiked chains, flails, and any similarly long and flexible melee weapon.

IMPROVISED WEAPONS

Improvised weapons include rocks, bottles, plates, furniture, and anything else you pick up that can be bashed, hurled, or stabbed into an enemy. As well, any weapons that aren't part of your kit count as improvised weapons for you. If you're not using a kit with unarmed strikes, then your feet and fists are improvised weapons.

Improvised weapons can be used to make attacks with the Weapon keyword that you gain from your class, though not from your kit. They add no special bonuses from your kit to the attack. Many melee-focused heroes choose a kit that maximizes their melee capabilities, then make ranged free strikes with improvised weapons.

KIT IMPLEMENT MATERIALS

Caster kits have an implement that enhances and focuses a hero's magic abilities. Even a creature who doesn't use magic abilities can eke a bit of power from an implement by using the proper spellcasting style and techniques. Each material can boost some of a caster's magic abilities, but also focuses on improving a specific aspect of their magic.

Your implement might be an amulet or a book of incantations, a holy symbol, orb, rod, staff, or wand, or any other similar item that you touch while using your abilities. The exact look of an implement is for you to decide.

Each material that can be used to create an implement (such as bone, crystal, or metal) enhances a different aspect of your fighting style and magical abilities. The materials used to create your implement are determined by your kit, but you choose how much they factor into the implement's visual design. For example, a hero with the Frigid kit wields an implement made of crystal. This could be a crystal-tipped cane, rod, staff, or wand, or it could be a tome with a large crystal embedded in the cover. You can also include other materials in your implement, though they have no effect on your kit's bonuses.

You can use any ability with the Magic keyword even if your kit doesn't have an implement, but you don't get to apply your kit's bonuses to that ability.

BONE

Implements made from bone siphon the residual energy of your magic abilities to create or enhance a protective ward around you.

CRYSTAL

Crystal implements spread the energy of magic abilities that create areas of effect to send their power farther.

GLASS

While wielding a glass implement, your magic abilities are drawn into your body, giving you the gift of alacrity to increase your speed.

METAL

When supernatural force flows through metal, that force's ability to harm is enhanced. Metal implements increase the damage you deal with magic abilities.

STONE

When you wield a stone implement, you absorb the metaphysical weight of your magic abilities, increasing your stability.

WOOD

Wood implements catapult magic energy that travels through them, increasing the range of your supernatural abilities.

KITS AND TREASURES

When you find a supernatural item such as a magic sword, you can use the item as long as it matches one of your kit's equipment categories. A Blade of Quintessence is a medium weapon, so you can use it with the Ranger or Shining Armor kits. However, you can't use it with the Cloak and Dagger or Spellslinger kits because those kits don't use medium weapons, meaning you haven't done the necessary preparations to use the weapon effectively. You can still swing a Blade of Quintessence around, but you don't get any of its bonuses or benefits.

If you find a piece of equipment you really want to use that isn't part of your kit, you can always change your kit as a respite activity.

KIT BONUSES AND TRAITS

Taking a martial kit can increase your Stamina, speed, and stability, as well as the damage, distance, and reach of your weapon abilities. Caster kits can increase your Stamina, speed, and stability, as well as the damage, distance, and area of your Magical abilities. Kit bonuses are applied to free strikes.

STAMINA BONUS

Your kit's Stamina bonus is added to your Stamina maximum.

SPEED BONUS

Your kit's speed bonus is added to your speed.

STABILITY BONUS

Your kit's stability bonus is added to your stability.

DAMAGE BONUSES

Martial and caster kits can grant you a bonus to damage with certain types of abilities.

MELEE WEAPON DAMAGE BONUS

Martial kits can have a melee weapon damage bonus. This bonus is added to abilities with the Melee and Weapon keywords that deal damage.

RANGED WEAPON DAMAGE BONUS

Martial kits can have a ranged weapon damage bonus. This bonus is added to abilities with the Ranged and Weapon keywords that deal damage.

MAGICAL DAMAGE BONUS

Caster kits can have a magical damage bonus. This bonus is added to magic abilities that deal damage.

BONUSES ACROSS TIERS

Kit damage bonuses are presented as "+X/+Y/+Z." The X bonus is added to qualifying tier 1 power roll results, the Y bonus is added to qualifying tier 2 power roll results, and the Z bonus is added to qualifying tier 3 power roll results.

For example, the Shining Armor Kit has a +2/+2/+2 melee weapon damage bonus, increasing the damage of your abilities with the Melee and Weapon keywords across all tier results. The Dancer kit has a +0/+1/+2 magic damage bonus, having no effect on tier 1 results, increasing the damage of tier 2 results by 1, and increasing the damage of tier 3 results by 2 for your magic abilities.

DISTANCE BONUS

If you have a martial kit, its distance bonus increases the distance of your abilities with the Ranged and Weapon keywords.

If you have a caster kit, its distance bonus increases the distance of your abilities with the Magic and Ranged keywords.

A distance bonus doesn't increase the size of any ability's area of effect.

REACH BONUS

Your kit's reach bonus is added to the reach of your melee weapon attacks.

AREA BONUS

Some caster kits have an area bonus. For all areas except walls, the bonus is added to all dimensions of any area of effect created by your magic abilities. For walls, the bonus is added to the number of squares the wall can create. For

example, the conduit's Thunder of the Divine ability has a 4 cube area of effect, so an area bonus of +1 increases the ability's area of effect to a 5 cube.

MOBILITY

Some martial kits grant you the Mobility trait. With this trait, when an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

KIT SIGNATURE ABILITY

Each kit grants you a signature ability, which already includes the kit's bonuses.

For details on the ability format, see [Abilities](#).

KIT WARDS

Each caster kit grants you a ward that is active as long as you are alive and not unconscious. This ward protects you from harm and can hinder your foes. The narrative details of how this ward manifests are up to you. A ward might be something anyone can notice, such as a glimmering field of energy that always surrounds you. Or it might be hidden from the senses of others until combat begins.

OPTIONAL RULE: LOSING EQUIPMENT

The rules of the game expect that heroes always have access to their equipment. That's because for most of the time in the game, heroes aren't worried about surviving for days on end in a dungeon and tracking every piece of gear they carry. However, there could be times where your group wants to tell a story of heroes who are captured and stripped of their equipment, or who find themselves at a masquerade where weapons need to be checked at the door. For those sorts of scenarios, you can use the following rules:

- If your kit has armor and you aren't wearing or wielding it, then you lose your kit's bonuses to Stamina and stability. If you lose your shield but keep the rest of your armor, your Stamina decreases by 3. As long as you are carrying your shield, you don't lose its bonus to Stamina, even if you aren't actively wielding it.
- If your kit has a medium or heavy weapon that you aren't wielding, you lose the kit's melee damage bonus.
- If your kit has a light weapon that you aren't wielding, you lose the kit's melee damage, ranged damage, and distance bonus.
- If your kit has a reach weapon or whip that you aren't wielding, you lose the kit's melee damage and reach bonus.
- If your kit has an ensnaring weapon that you aren't wielding, you lose the kit's signature ability.
- If your kit has an implement that you aren't wielding, you lose the kit's speed, stability, distance, area, damage bonus, and ward.

MARTIAL KITS

This section details a number of martial kits, whose bonuses and benefits are summarized in the Martial Kits table.

CLOAK AND DAGGER

Providing throwable light weapons and light armor easily concealed by a cloak to confuse your enemies, the Cloak and Dagger kit makes you more mobile while providing a boost to your effectiveness at range and to your damage. This kit is good for a hero who wants to be able to move all over the battlefield while keeping their options open for using short-range attacks.

EQUIPMENT

You wear light armor and wield one or two light weapons.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +3
- **Speed Bonus:** +2
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +1/+1/+1
- **Ranged Weapon Damage Bonus:** +1/+1/+1
- **Weapon Distance Bonus:** +5
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

FADE

A stab, and a few quick, careful steps back.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 or range 10 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage; you shift 1 square**
- 12–16: **9 damage; you shift up to 2 squares**
- 17+: **13 damage; you shift up to 3 squares**

GUISARMIER

The Guisarmier kit is for those who want to use a polearm for extended reach and still gain the extra protection of armor. This is the kit that allows you to become the ultimate halberd, longspear, or glaive fighter.

EQUIPMENT

You wear medium armor and wield a polearm.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +6
- **Stability Bonus:** +1
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2
- **Reach Bonus:** +1

SIGNATURE ABILITY

FORWARD THRUST, BACKWARD SMASH

In your hands, the haft is as good as the head.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 2 **Target:** 2 creatures or objects

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **6 damage**
- 17+: **8 damage**

MARTIAL ARTIST

If you want to be fast in a fight, then Martial Artist is the kit for you. Unencumbered by weapons or armor, this fighting style rewards quick, focused unarmed strikes to opponents, and allows you to be the ultimate skirmisher.

EQUIPMENT

You wear no armor and wield only your unarmed strikes.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +3
- **Speed Bonus:** +3
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

BATTLE GRACE

You feint to move your enemies into perfect position.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **5 damage**
- 12–16: **9 damage; you swap places with the target**
- 17+: **12 damage; you swap places with the target, then slide the target 2 squares**

Effect: If you roll a 12 or better and can't swap places with the target because one or both of you is too big to fit into the swapped space, you both remain in your original spaces and the target takes 2 extra damage.

MOUNTAIN

The Mountain kit does exactly what it says on the tin. You don heavy armor and a heavy weapon to stand strong against your foes, quickly demolishing them when it's your turn to attack.

EQUIPMENT

You wear heavy armor and wield a heavy weapon.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +9
- **Stability Bonus:** +2
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +0/+0/+4

SIGNATURE ABILITY

PAIN FOR PAIN

An enemy who tagged you will pay for that.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **8 damage**
- 17+: **16 damage**

Effect: If the target dealt damage to you since the end of your last turn, this attack gains an edge.

PANTHER

If you want a good balance of protection, speed, and damage, the Panther kit is for you. This kit increases your Stamina not by wearing armor, but through the focused battle preparation of body and mind, letting you be fast and mobile while swinging a heavy weapon at your foes.

EQUIPMENT

You wear no armor and wield a heavy weapon.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +6
- **Speed Bonus:** +1
- **Stability Bonus:** +1
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +0/+0/+4

SIGNATURE ABILITY

DEVASTATING RUSH

The faster you move, the harder you hit.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **8 damage**
- 17+: **16 damage**

Effect: You can move up to 3 squares straight toward the target before this attack. You deal extra damage equal to the distance moved this way.

PUGILIST

Meant for brawlers and boxers, the Pugilist kit gives you access to a melee fighting style that gives you a boost to Stamina and damage while allowing you to float like a butterfly. If you want to be a tough, strong hero who doles out punishment with your fists, then this kit is for you.

EQUIPMENT

You wear no armor and wield only your unarmed strikes.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +6
- **Speed Bonus:** +2
- **Stability Bonus:** +1
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +1/+1/+1

SIGNATURE ABILITY

LET'S DANCE

Keeping your enemies stumbling around the battlefield is second nature to you.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **9 damage; slide 1**
- 17+: **13 damage; slide 2**

Effect: You can shift into any square your target leaves after you slide them.

RAIDER

The Raider kit keeps you protected while granting you full mobility, providing a boost to speed and distance that lets you run around the battlefield like a Viking warrior.

EQUIPMENT

You wear medium armor, and wield a shield and a light weapon.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +9
- **Speed Bonus:** +1
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +1/+1/+1
- **Weapon Distance Bonus:** +5
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

SHIELD BASH

In your hands, a shield isn't just for protection.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage; push 1**
- 12–16: **8 damage; push 2**
- 17+: **11 damage; push 3; prone if the target is your size or smaller**

RANGER

The Ranger kit outfits you with light armor and several weapons, letting you easily switch between using a melee weapon and a bow. This kit provides a good balance of bonuses to Stamina, speed, damage, and range to create a hero who is a jack-of-all-trades.

EQUIPMENT

You wear medium armor and wield a medium weapon and a bow.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +6
- **Speed Bonus:** +1
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +1/+1/+1
- **Ranged Weapon Damage Bonus:** +1/+1/+1
- **Weapon Distance Bonus:** +5
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

HAMSTRING SHOT

A well-placed shot leaves your enemy struggling to move.

Keywords: Attack, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 10 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **7 damage; slowed (EoT)**
- 17+: **10 damage; slowed (EoE)**

RAPID-FIRE

The Rapid-Fire kit is for archers who want to deal maximum damage by shooting as many arrows as possible into nearby enemies. With this kit, your fighting technique focuses on peppering foes at medium range.

EQUIPMENT

You wear light armor and wield a bow.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +3
- **Speed Bonus:** +1
- **Ranged Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2
- **Weapon Distance Bonus:** +7
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

TWO SHOT

When you fire two arrows back to back, both hit their mark.

Keywords: Attack, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 12 **Target:** 2 creatures or objects

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **6 damage**
- 17+: **7 damage**

RETIARIUS

The retiarius is often depicted as a lightly armored warrior with a net in one hand and a trident in the other, and this kit gives you the equipment and fighting technique to make that happen. Tie up your foe with a net and then poke them to death!

EQUIPMENT

You wear light armor, and wield a polearm and several ensnaring weapons.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +3
- **Speed Bonus:** +1
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2
- **Reach Bonus:** +1
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

NET AND STAB

The well-thrown net that follows your main attack leaves your foes right where you want them.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 2 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **7 damage; slowed (EoT)**
- 17+: **10 damage; restrained (EoT)**

SHINING ARMOR

The Shining Armor kit provides the most protection a kit can afford, providing you with the sword, shield, and armor necessary to play the prototypical knight.

EQUIPMENT

You wear heavy armor and wield a shield and a medium weapon.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +12
- **Stability Bonus:** +1
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2

SIGNATURE ABILITY

PROTECTIVE ATTACK

The strength of your assault makes it impossible for your foe to ignore you.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **5 damage; taunted (EoT)**
- 12–16: **9 damage; taunted (EoT)**
- 17+: **12 damage; taunted (EoT)**

SNIPER

The Sniper kit gives you the tools and techniques to take down enemies from afar. This kit can help you become the archer who lurks behind trees or down tunnels, picking off enemies with a bow or crossbow as they approach.

EQUIPMENT

You wear no armor and wield a bow.

KIT BONUSES

- **Speed Bonus:** +1
- **Ranged Weapon Damage Bonus:** +0/+0/+4
- **Weapon Distance Bonus:** +10
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

PATIENT SHOT

Breathe ... aim ... wait... then strike!

Keywords: Attack, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 15 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **7 damage**
- 17+: **14 damage**

Effect: If you don't take a move action this turn, you gain an edge on this attack.

STICK AND ROBE

Armed with a simple reach weapon, often a quarterstaff, heroes using the Stick and Robe kit are highly mobile thanks to their light armor. This allows them to make maximum use of their weapon's length.

EQUIPMENT

You wear light armor and wield a polearm.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +3
- **Speed Bonus:** +2
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +1/+1/+1
- **Reach Bonus:** +1
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

WHERE I WANT YOU

When your stick speaks, your enemy moves.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 2 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **8 damage; slide 1**
- 17+: **11 damage; slide 3**

SWASHBUCKLER

If you want to be mobile and deal a lot of damage with melee attacks, then you should reach for the Swashbuckler kit. This is a great kit for heroes who want to be master duelists.

EQUIPMENT

You wear light armor and wield a medium weapon.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +3
- **Speed Bonus:** +3
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

FANCY FOOTWORK

All combat is a dance—and you'll be the one leading.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **5 damage**
- 12–16: **10 damage; push 1**
- 17+: **14 damage; push 2**

Effect: You can shift into any square your target leaves after you force move them with this ability.

WHIRLWIND

The Whirlwind kit makes effective use of whips, granting you mobility, damage, and reach. If you want to be a mobile warrior who uses a chain or whip, then this is the kit for you.

EQUIPMENT

You wear no armor and wield a whip.

KIT BONUSES

- **Speed Bonus:** +3
- **Melee Weapon Damage Bonus:** +1/+1/+1
- **Reach Bonus:** +1
- **Mobility:** When an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift up to 2 squares as a free triggered action.

SIGNATURE ABILITY

EXTENSION OF MY ARM

When you draw your whip back after an attack, your enemy comes ever closer.

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 3 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **4 damage**
- 12–16: **8 damage; pull 1**
- 17+: **11 damage; pull 2**

MARTIAL KITS

Kit	Armor	Weapon	Stamina	Speed	Stability	Melee Damage	Ranged Damage	Weapon Distance	Reach	Mobility
Cloak and Dagger	Light	Light	+3	+2	—	+1/+1/+1	+1/+1/+1	+5	—	Yes
Guisarmier	Medium	Polearm	+6	—	+1	+2/+2/+2	—	—	+1	—
Martial Artist	None	Unarmed strike	+3	+3	—	+2/+2/+2	—	—	—	Yes
Mountain	Heavy	Heavy	+9	—	+2	+0/+0/+4	—	—	—	—
Panther	None	Heavy	+6	+1	+1	+0/+0/+4	—	—	—	—
Pugilist	None	Unarmed strike	+6	+2	+1	+1/+1/+1	—	—	—	—
Raider	Medium, shield	Light	+9	+1	—	+1/+1/+1	—	+5	—	Yes
Ranger	Medium	Medium, bow	+6	+1	—	+1/+1/+1	+1/+1/+1	+5	—	Yes
Rapid-Fire	Light	Bow	+3	+1	—	—	+2/+2/+2	+7	—	Yes
Retiarius	Light	Polearm, ensnaring	+3	+1	—	+2/+2/+2	—	—	+1	Yes
Shining Armor	Heavy, shield	Medium	+12	—	+1	+2/+2/+2	—	—	—	—
Sniper	None	Bow	—	+1	—	—	+0/+0/+4	+10	—	Yes
Stick and Robe	Light	Polearm	+3	+2	—	+1/+1/+1	—	—	+1	Yes
Swashbuckler	Light	Medium	+3	+3	—	+2/+2/+2	—	—	—	Yes
Whirlwind	None	Whip	—	+3	—	+1/+1/+1	—	—	+1	Yes

CASTER KITS

This section details a number of caster kits, whose bonuses and benefits are summarized in the Caster Kits table.

BLOODPACT

Sometimes you need a direct line to your heart to get the most of your magic. The Bloodpact kit trades your blood or life force for more power and heightened casting. With careful control of your natural resources (or borrowing someone else's), you can take care of business before succumbing to your own hubris. While using this kit, the smell of blood becomes super intense to your senses.

EQUIPMENT

You wield an implement of metal, such as a tome or a crown.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +6
- **Magic Damage Bonus:** +2/+2/+2
- **Magic Distance Bonus:** +5

SIGNATURE ABILITY

DRAIN

You drain the energy from your target and revitalize your senses.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Melee **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **5 corruption damage**
- 12-16: **10 corruption damage**
- 17+: **14 corruption damage; you can spend 1 recovery to regain Stamina**

KIT WARD: BLOOD WARD

The blood ward is a large projection of your heart that magnifies the sound of your heartbeat. Whenever an ability lets you spend a Recovery, you can forgo regaining Stamina to instead increase your speed by 2 and have your abilities deal 2 extra corruption damage until the end of the encounter instead.

DANCER

The Dancer kit forgoes nearly all equipment in exchange for speed, letting you rely purely on kinetic energy to channel your power. The more you move, the more others may want to move with you. Select this kit when your party regularly needs to close the distance on your enemies. While you use this kit, your heartbeat becomes an audible metronome.

EQUIPMENT

You don a tiny implement of glass such as a pendant or an anklet.

KIT BONUSES

- **Speed Bonus:** +2
- **Magic Damage Bonus:** +0/+1/+2

SIGNATURE ABILITY

TARANTELLA VOLLEY

Visible energy sparks off you to wash across a nearby foe, who you invite to dance with you.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Melee **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 2 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Agility, Intuition, or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage**
- 12-16: **7 damage; you swap places with the target**
- 17+: **11 damage; you swap places with the target, and a hero within distance can shift up to 2 squares**

Effect: If you roll a 12 or better and can't swap places with the target because one or both of you is too big to fit into the swapped space, you both remain in your original spaces and the target takes 2 extra damage.

KIT WARD: WALTZING WARD

Your ward surrounds you with a soft, enchanting melody whose volume you control, and grants you the following benefits:

- Whenever an enemy ends their turn adjacent to you, you can shift 2 squares as a free triggered action.
- Whenever a creature damages you with a melee ability, you can slide them a number of squares equal to your highest characteristic score.

FRIGID

The Frigid kit is for heroes who want to tap into the power of arcane blizzards and magical cold. Armed only with an implement of crystal, you can create bursts of ice and protect yourself with frigid winds. When you meditate to prepare this kit, others notice the area around you becoming slightly cooler.

EQUIPMENT

You wield an implement of crystal, such as a staff or a wand.

BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +3
- **Magic Distance Bonus:** +7
- **Magic Area Bonus:** +1

SIGNATURE ABILITY

FROZEN EXPLOSION

You unleash a blast of frigid air to freeze and hinder your foes.

Keywords: Area, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: 3 cube within 12 **Target:** All enemies

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **2 cold damage**
- 12-16: **3 cold damage; slowed (EoT)**
- 17+: **4 cold damage; slowed (EoE)**

KIT WARD: ICE ARMOR

Your ward covers your body in ice, and grants you the following benefits:

- You have cold immunity and fire immunity equal to your highest characteristic score.
- When a creature damages you with a melee ability, they take cold damage equal to your highest characteristic score.

MEDITATOR

The Meditator kit allows you to wield magic hardened by experience and isolation. Your spirit visibly extends beyond your physical form in the form of moss, spores, and pulsing aura of light. While using this kit, you tend to skip meals and ignore inclement weather.

EQUIPMENT

You wear light armor and wield an implement of bone such as a staff or a skull.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +9
- **Speed Bonus:** +1

SIGNATURE ABILITY

BOUNTIFUL DECAY

Your curse causes a foe's flesh to rot off as spores that aid your allies.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **2 corruption damage; a hero within distance can make a resistance roll to end an effect**
- 12–16: **6 corruption damage; a hero within distance can make a resistance roll to end an effect**
- 17+: **9 corruption damage; a hero within distance who is affected by an "(EoT)" or "(resistance ends)" effect has the effect end**

KIT WARD: SPIRIT WARD

Your spirit overflows and warms the area around you. It grants you the following benefits:

- You gain an edge on resistance rolls.
- Whenever an enemy damages you with a melee ability, you deal corruption damage to that enemy equal to your highest characteristic score.

MISSILE

The Missile kit allows you to throw your implement at your foes, then recall it back to you. Enemies impacted by this concentration of magic are left reeling while you stand safely out of their reach. When you use this kit, your competitive nature is more pronounced, and you wield your implement recklessly.

EQUIPMENT

You wield an implement of wood such as an orb or a hooked rod.

KIT BONUSES

- **Magic Damage Bonus:** +0/+1/+2
- **Magic Distance Bonus:** +10

SIGNATURE ABILITY

SPIKE!

You lob your implement at high speed toward your opponent, unleashing a chaotic flare of magic.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 15 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **2 fire damage**
- 12–16: **8 cold damage**
- 17+: **11 lightning damage**

Effect: If your Magic Eye Ward is locked onto the target, you can target them with this ability regardless of the distance as long as you have line of effect to them, and this ability deal additional damage equal to your highest characteristic.

KIT WARD: MAGIC EYE WARD

Your ward wraps itself around your head and shields your eyes, granting you the following benefits:

- You have Ranged immunity equal to your highest characteristic score.
- Whenever an enemy within 15 squares of you damages you with a ranged ability, your ward locks onto them until the end of the encounter.

NATURE CALLING

The Nature Calling kit allows you to tap into the magical forces of nature. You wield an implement of stone so that your feet stand firm on the earth and your magic can be carried by the wind. While using this kit, you can faintly hear the whispers of the land around you.

EQUIPMENT

You wield an implement of stone, such as a club or a crown.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stability Bonus:** +2
- **Magic Distance Bonus:** +7

SIGNATURE ABILITY

LIGHTNING SPARK

You call forth a small bolt of lightning, then hurl it at your foe.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 12 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **2 lightning damage**
- 12–16: **6 damage; the target takes a bane on their next power roll**
- 17+: **9 damage; the target has a double bane on their next power roll**

KIT WARD: VINE WARD

Your ward surrounds you with protective animal spirits, and grants you the following benefits:

- The area within 2 squares of you is difficult terrain for your enemies.
- Whenever an enemy within 12 squares of you damages you with a ranged ability, you can either shift towards them or pull them a number of squares equal to your highest characteristic score.

ROOK

The Rook kit allows you to use strong armor so you can be better protected while you heal and enhance your allies on the frontline. Heroes with this kit often dive into support magic. While using this kit, your armor resonates with the sounds of choirs from on high as you polish it.

EQUIPMENT

You wear heavy armor and wield an implement of bone, such as a scepter or a staff.

KIT BONUS

Stamina Bonus: +12

SIGNATURE ABILITY

BLESSED LIGHT

Burning radiance falls upon your foe, outlining them with a holy glow.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **2 holy damage; the next attack against the target has an edge**
- 12–16: **6 holy damage; the next attack against the target has an edge**
- 17+: **9 holy damage; the next attack against the target has a double edge**

KIT WARD: CASTLE GUARD

Your armor is reinforced by a bright ward of holy energy, and grants you the following benefits:

- Allies within 2 squares of you have their stability increased by 1.
- Whenever an enemy damages you with a melee ability, you or an ally within 2 can shift 2 as a free triggered action.

SPELLSLINGER

The Spellslinger kit is for those who want to focus magic on their foes from far away, becoming a magical blaster surrounded by rippling energy. While using this kit, you can faintly see auras of energy emanating from far-off creatures.

EQUIPMENT

You wield an implement of metal, such as a knife or a scepter.

KIT BONUSES

- **Speed Bonus:** +1
- **Magical Damage Bonus:** +1/+1/+1
- **Magic Distance Bonus:** +5

SIGNATURE ABILITY

SPLIT BEAM

Two beams of supernatural force lance out at your command.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 10 **Target:** 2 creatures or objects

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage**
- 12–16: **5 damage**
- 17+: **6 damage**

KIT WARD: INVIGORATING WARD

Your ward surrounds you with crackling energy. Whenever you take damage, you gain a bonus to damage equal to your highest characteristic score, which you apply to the next damage-dealing magic ability you use before the end of the encounter. This benefit is cumulative, so that you can accrue bonus damage multiple times, then expend it all on one use of an ability.

WARD WEAVER

The Ward Weaver kit allows you to protect yourself in combat with telekinetic techniques that also boost your damage. This kit creates a supernatural hero who can more effectively ward themselves and their allies. While you use this kit, you occasionally take on the mannerisms of your allies without realizing it.

EQUIPMENT

You wield an implement of stone such as a wand or pendant.

KIT BONUSES

- **Stamina Bonus:** +6
- **Stability Bonus:** +1
- **Magic Distance:** +5

SIGNATURE ABILITY

ENERGY SIPHON

Absorbing psychic energy from another creature lets you shield yourself within it.

Keywords: Attack, Magic, Ranged

Type: Action

Distance: Ranged 10

Target: 1 creature

Power Roll + Intuition:

- *11 or lower:* **2 psychic damage; you gain damage immunity 1 until the end of your next turn**
- *12–16:* **6 psychic damage; you gain damage immunity 3 until the end of your next turn**
- *17+:* **9 psychic damage; you gain damage immunity 5 until the end of your next turn**

KIT WARD: REPULSIVE WARD

You have an invisible ward of magical force that extends 2 squares from you in all directions. When you or an ally within the area of your ward take damage from another creature's melee ability, you can push that creature a number of squares equal to your highest characteristic score.

CASTER KITS

Kit	Armor	Implement	Stamina	Speed	Stability	Magical Damage	Magic Distance	Area
Bloodpact	None	Metal	+6	—	—	+2/+2/+2	+5	—
Dancer	None	Glass	—	+2	—	+0/+1/+2	—	—
Frigid	None	Crystal	+3	—	—	—	+7	+1
Meditator	Light	Bone	+6	+1	—	—	—	—
Missile	None	Wood	—	—	—	+0/+1/+2	+10	—
Nature Calling	None	Stone	—	—	+2	—	+7	—
Rook	Heavy	Bone	+12	—	—	—	—	—
Spellslinger	None	Metal	—	+1	—	+1/+1/+1	+5	—
Ward Weaver	None	Bone	+6	—	+1	—	+5	—

COMPLICATIONS

Beyond your abilities and features, your hero might have something else that makes them ... unusual. Perhaps you have an earth elemental living in your body. Or you might wield a magic sword that devastates enemies but feeds on your own vitality.

A complication is an optional feature you can take to enrich your hero's backstory, with any complication providing you both a positive benefit and a negative drawback. Because complications are optional, check with your Director before taking one.

BENEFIT AND DRAWBACK

Your complication gives your hero both a benefit and a drawback. Some of these benefits and drawbacks are mechanical, while others are narrative. The benefit and drawback of a complication makes your connection to the game deeper and more interesting, and provides hooks to let the Director better draw your hero into the campaign's story.

Not all complication benefits and drawbacks are created equal, but each benefit is balanced by its drawback. If you have a powerful positive side to your complication, be prepared to have an equally influential bit of negative backstory as well.

MODIFYING THE STORY

You can modify the narrative of a complication to better fit with your vision of your character's backstory—or change it entirely. For instance, if you choose Devil Deal as a complication, you can have your hero instead make that deal with an archfey or an undead general!

Many of the details of each complication are purposefully left vague, so that you can connect it to the rest of your backstory. If your complication took place during “an attack” or “an accident,” you decide the specific details of who or what attacked you, or what type of accident befell you.

DETERMINE COMPLICATION

You can choose your character's complication, or you can roll on the Complications table.

(Playtest note: More complications are coming.)

CULT VICTIM

Cultists captured you while raiding your home, then began an unholy ritual to turn your body into an undead spirit. The ritual failed, but your body became infused with corrupted magic, turning you partially incorporeal.

Benefit: Once per turn, you can move through a solid mundane object no more than 1 square thick. If you end your turn inside the object, you take 5 damage and are shunted out into the space where you entered the object.

Drawback: Your body is more susceptible to negative energy. You have corruption weakness 5.

DEVIL DEAL

Your ancestors made a deal with an archdevil that has tied you to that fiend's service. When you first learned of this deal, you were taken to the Seven Cities of Hell, where some of the timescape's best minds taught you the ways of battle or magic. The archdevil allows you to use these gifts as you will ... until they require a favor from you.

Benefit: Whenever you are present for a battle in which all the creatures on one side are not surprised, your side goes first on a result of 4 or greater on the d10 roll (see [Determine Who Goes First](#) in [Combat Round](#)).

Drawback: The archdevil occasionally asks you to defeat enemies on their behalf. If you refuse, your fiendish patron sends devils after you and those you care about.

ELEMENTAL ABSORPTION

When an evil mage threatened someone you loved, you blocked your foe's summoning of an elemental creature by absorbing their magic with your body. You are now infused with the power of that elemental—and they're not happy about it.

Benefit: Your Stamina increases by 6 at 1st level, then increases by an additional 1 each time you gain a new level.

Drawback: When you are dying, your possessing elemental takes control of your body. The elemental yearns for destruction, causing you to attack the closest creature they notice without regard for your desires or your body's safety.

FIRE AND CHAOS

A great monster who breathed fire burned your home to the ground. While everything around you was consumed, you somehow stood strong amid the inferno, your body adapting to ignore the effects of the flames.

Benefit: You have fire immunity 5.

Drawback: You have cold weakness 5.

PRIMORDIAL SICKNESS

You once contracted a terrible illness for which no one could find a cure. You sought out a primordial swamp said to be either incredibly poisonous or miraculously salubrious. It turned out to be both, keeping your illness at bay while corrupting your body with its unnatural energy.

Benefit: You have poison immunity 5 and corruption immunity 5.

Drawback: The number of Recoveries you have is reduced by 1.

PUNISHMENT CURSE

Through ignorance, fear, spite, or selfishness, you refused to help someone in need. To teach you a lesson, a deity offered you what seemed to be a blessing—extra power to help you heal yourself in times of need, but harsh

consequences should your need become excessive. You took the deal, and now benefit from the blessing but also suffer from a curse.

Benefit: You have 2 additional Recoveries.

Drawback: When you are out of Recoveries, you are dying, no matter what your current Stamina is.

SHIPWRECKED

You are the sole survivor of a shipwreck that left you stranded on a remote and inhospitable island for years. Your struggle to survive there granted you insight into the natural world but distanced you from who you once were.

Benefit: You gain two skills from the exploration skill group.

Drawback: You have forgotten one language you know.

VIVID DREAMS

You broke a magic amulet that immersed your mind in weird magic. This magic has given you the power of premonition, but you struggle to control this new gift.

Whenever you take a respite, make a Reason power roll to determine whether you gain this complication's benefit or drawback.

Benefit: On a 12 to 16, you experience a vision of an event currently happening in your world. The vision lasts for just a few seconds, but the information you glean is helpful to you. On a 17 or higher, you receive a full minute or more of the scene.

Drawback: On an 11 or lower, you receive a painful vision that is fractal and inscrutable. When the respite ends, you immediately lose 1 Recovery.

WARD

Your childhood sweetheart was royalty, and the two of you stayed close throughout the years. When your former sweetheart died, you swore an oath to dedicate your life to become a tutor for their child, advising them in the ways of being a benevolent monarch.

Benefit: You know how to talk to monarchs, aristocrats, and other wealthy leaders. When you engage with any such NPC during a negotiation, their patience increases by 1 (to a maximum of 5).

Drawback: Your royal ward regularly calls upon you for advice and takes that advice to heart—for better or for worse.

WAR OF THE GUILDS

Being in the wrong place at the wrong time saw you caught in the middle of a conflict between two warring thieves' guilds. Whether by choice or by accident, you wound up helping one faction at the expense of the other.

Benefit: Having gained the favor of the faction who you helped, you can call on its members three times for favors. If a favor is reasonable and within the faction's power to grant, they'll do it, no questions asked.

Drawback: The faction you wronged hates you, and its members would love to see you pay for your transgression.

COMPLICATIONS

d10	Complication
1	Cult Victim
2	Devil Deal
3	Elemental Absorption
4	Fire and Chaos
5	Primordial Sickness
6	Punishment Curse
7	Shipwrecked
8	Vivid Dreams
9	Ward
10	War of the Guilds

TESTS

When you want your hero to rifle through a desk and locate a specific document, scale a castle wall, negotiate a treaty with a monarch, or undertake any other activity with a chance of failure, you'll need to make a test to determine how successful you are on the task. A test is any power roll that has failure as an option.

WHEN TO MAKE A TEST

The Director should ask a player to make a test only when the player's hero attempts a task where the consequences of failure are interesting or dramatic, and where failure won't grind the story to a halt. For example, if a hero wants to leap over a waist-high wall while casually walking through a peaceful city neighborhood, the worst case for failure is probably that the hero falls on their butt, takes no damage, and can stand up to either try again or walk around the wall. As such, no test is required. But if the hero were being chased by enemies, failing to leap over the wall means the pursuers can catch them, so the Director might decide to call for a test to determine what happens.

The advancement of a story shouldn't be halted by failing a test. For instance, the heroes might need to know the color of a dwarf king's crown to solve a puzzle, with that puzzle opening the only entrance to a tomb they must enter to stop a world-ending ritual. It could be that a successful Reason test allows the heroes to recall that lore, but the test shouldn't be their only option to get the information. If the test fails, perhaps the heroes need to go to a flying library to do research, or they might be able to delve into a ruin to find the ancient monarch's portrait. A failed test should always result in a story becoming more interesting, not in the action coming to an end.

IT JUST WORKS!

When a hero attempts to solve a task that normally requires a test with clever, outside-the-box thinking, the Director can instead decide that no test is required and the attempt automatically works! For example, if a hero who wants to climb a wall first covers their hands and feet in giant strands of sticky spider webs, the Director might decide that they can climb up the wall without needing to make a test.

That said, such clever ideas often work for free the first time, but the Director could decide they require tests if they are used again.

HOW TO MAKE A TEST

Each test has the following steps:

- The Director decides that a hero's actions call for a test and asks the hero's player to make a power roll using an appropriate characteristic (see [Characteristics and Tests](#)). The Director then selects a difficulty for the power roll, either secretly or publicly (see [Test Difficulty](#)).

- The player makes the power roll. If the character has a skill that applies to the test (see [Skills](#)), they gain a +2 bonus to the roll.
- The player reports the result, and the Director interprets the success or failure of the roll.

CHARACTERISTICS AND TESTS

When you describe a task you want your hero to undertake and the Director determines that a test is necessary, they then determine which characteristic the test uses based on the nature of the task. For instance, if you're scaling a wall, the Director could ask for a Might test to determine how far and how quickly you're able to climb. If you're attempting to plead your innocence in court for a murder you didn't commit, the Director might ask for a Presence test if you're attempting to win over the jury with your personality, or a Reason test if you're laying out a logical argument to support your innocence.

Though the Director can decide to call for tests in any circumstances, a number of tasks that heroes routinely undertake are commonly set up as tests.

MIGHT TESTS

You make a Might test whenever a risky task calls for the use of physical strength. Might tests are most often used for breaking down doors and other structures, hurling heavy objects, pulling your body up a sheer wall, swimming against a mighty current, and other feats of physical power.

AGILITY TESTS

You make an Agility test whenever a risky task calls for the use of your physical coordination and nimbleness. Agility tests are most often used for tumbling, sneaking, picking locks, and engaging in sleight of hand.

REASON TESTS

You make a Reason test whenever you attempt a risky task that requires the use of your mental acumen and education, formal or otherwise. Reason tests are most often used to recall lore, deduce information based on clues, complete a puzzle, forge counterfeit items or documents, break a code, convince others of a logical argument, or make an estimation.

INTUITION TESTS

You make an Intuition test whenever you attempt a risky task that requires the use of your powers of observation and instinct. Intuition tests are most often used to notice hidden creatures or details, discern another person's motivations or honesty, calm and reassure others, and train animals.

PRESENCE TESTS

You make a Presence test whenever you attempt a risky task that requires the use of your force of personality. Presence tests are most often used to gain trust, project confidence, and influence and lead other creatures.

INFLUENCING PLAYER CHARACTER ACTIONS WITH TESTS

Tests can't be used by NPCs or PCs to influence the actions of PCs. Many players feel that their agency is taken away if they're compelled to jump into a pile of gold filled with hidden scorpions because an NPC convinced them to do so with a Presence test. For most players, it's not fun to be in control of a single hero and lose some of that control.

Instead, Directors should do their level best to have an NPC suggest that a character dive headlong into the gold like a billionaire duck, then let the player decide what their character does. Similarly, a Director might decide that one player character can't make an Intuition test to discern another PC's motivations or honesty.

That said, if everyone in your gaming group decides to lift one or more of these restrictions after talking about it, go for it! There's no wrong way to play as long as everyone is having fun. The MCDM Safety Toolkit (available for download at <https://mcdm.gg/SafetyToolkit>) discusses how to talk about potentially problematic topics such as limiting character agency at your table.

TEST DIFFICULTY

The Director decides how difficult a task that requires a test is: easy, medium, or hard. If a task seems as though it's easier than easy, then no test is necessary. The hero simply accomplishes the task. If the task seems harder than hard, then the Director is free to decide that it's impossible to complete with a test.

On a test-by-test basis, the Director can share the difficulty of a task before the player makes the test, which makes interpreting the result faster at the table. The Director can also keep the test's difficulty secret until after the player rolls the test, for dramatic effect.

EASY TESTS

An easy test has some risk of failure, but most heroes will likely overcome it. The power roll you make for an easy test determines the outcome (see [Test Outcomes](#)):

- 11 or lower: **You fail the task.**
- 12–16: **You succeed on the task.**
- 17+: **You succeed on the task with a reward.**

MEDIUM TESTS

A medium test has some risk of failure that most heroes will likely overcome—but with a cost. The power roll you make for a medium test determines the outcome:

- 11 or lower: **You fail the task and incur a consequence.**
- 12–16: **You succeed on the task and incur a consequence.**
- 17+: **You succeed on the task.**

HARD TESTS

A hard test has a greater risk of failure, and most heroes are likely to suffer some hardship while trying to overcome the intended task. The power roll you make for a hard test determines the outcome:

- 11 or lower: **You fail the task and incur a consequence.**
- 12–16: **You fail the task.**
- 17+: **You succeed on the task.**

NATURAL 19 OR 20: SUCCESS WITH A REWARD

When you get a natural 19 or 20 on a test's power roll, you succeed on the task with a reward, even if the test has a medium or hard difficulty.

TEST OUTCOMES

Depending on a test's difficulty and the result of the power roll made to accomplish a task, you can obtain one of the following outcomes.

FAILURE WITH A CONSEQUENCE

If you fail a test and incur a consequence, you don't do what you set out to do—in addition to which, you suffer an impactful setback. The Director determines the exact nature of the consequence, which is typically related to the specific task. For instance, if a hero suffers a consequence while trying to climb a wall, they might make it halfway up the wall and then fall, taking damage and landing prone. A hero trying to sneak by cultists might be spotted by those foes, who immediately attack. If a consequence strikes when a hero attempts to bribe a prison guard, the guard might decide to arrest the hero or lead them into a trap. If a hero suffers a consequence on a Reason test made to recall lore about the king's favorite meal, they might confuse it for a dish to which the monarch is deathly allergic.

Not all consequences need to be immediate or apparent. For example, a hero might fail with a consequence on a test made to cheat at a high-stakes game of cards with a noble. The failure means that the noble notices, but the Director decides that the noble doesn't say anything. This consequence isn't made apparent until later in the evening, when the noble has guards surround the hero and take the cheater down to the dungeon for stacking the deck.

Common consequences for failing a test include the following:

- Making an NPC so upset that they storm off, or betray, attack, or otherwise attempt to harm you
- Drawing the attention of a group of foes
- Triggering a trap or hazard that captures or significantly harms you or an ally
- Breaking an important piece of equipment that is difficult to replace or repair
- Thinking you know something that you don't
- Getting stuck in a situation that must be resolved with a negotiation or a montage test that you didn't need to make before

In lieu of other consequences, the Director has the option to gain 2 additional Villain Power (VP), a resource their

creatures use in combat, at the start of the next combat encounter.

FAILURE

If you fail a test without incurring a consequence, you simply don't do what you set out to do. If you're attempting to climb a wall, you find no purchase. If you're attempting to recall lore, you can't remember the desired facts. If you're attempting to bribe a guard, they don't take the bait.

When you get this result, the Director can decide that there might still be a small penalty for failure, depending on the circumstances of the test. This penalty shouldn't be as harsh as rolling a failure with a consequence, though. For instance, a hero who gets this result on an Agility test made to sneak by a group of cultists might draw the attention of one cultist with their failure. Now that cultist is coming to investigate, but they haven't raised the alarm ... yet.

SUCCESS WITH A CONSEQUENCE

If you succeed on a test and incur a consequence, you do what you set out to do, but with an added cost. You might succeed in climbing up a wall, but the surface of the wall crumbles and becomes unstable as you do, making the climb more difficult for the ally ascending after you. When trying to sneak by a cultist, you successfully do so, but you leave footprints or other evidence of trespassing behind that someone will eventually find. If you attempt to bribe a guard to let you sneak into a prison, the guard lets you in—but then demands that you hand over a gemstone you need for an important crafting project before they let you out.

Just like failure with a consequence, the consequences accompanying success don't need to be immediately apparent. In lieu of other consequences, the Director has the option to gain 2 additional VP at the start of the next combat encounter.

Sometimes when a hero rolls a failure without a consequence, the Director can offer to let them succeed with a consequence. Likewise, a hero who rolls a success with a consequence might be given a chance to fail without a consequence if doing so is the better option. For instance, when a hero rolls a 10 on an easy Might test to break down a locked door, that's a failure. But the Director could offer the player the choice of either not breaking down the door, or breaking down the door and losing 1d6 Stamina as they get injured in the effort.

SUCCESS

If you succeed on a test without consequence or reward, you simply achieve whatever you set out to do. You climb that wall, sneak by those cultists, or bribe that guard just like you planned it. Smooth.

SUCCESS WITH A REWARD

If you succeed on a test with a reward, you accomplish whatever you set out to do. But you also gain a little something extra, in the form of momentum or luck that makes the immediate future easier for you or your friends. The Director determines your reward, which is most often related to the task at hand. For instance, if you succeed

with a reward while climbing a wall, you might find a ladder at the top that you can lower so any allies climbing after you can do so without needing to make a test. A hero trying to sneak by cultists who succeeds with a reward might then be able to dose the cultists' nearby water barrel with sleeping poison as they pass by unseen. Succeeding with a reward while bribing a prison guard could mean that the guard will unlock a door for you in addition to forgetting you were ever there.

As with consequences, the reward that comes with a success doesn't need to be immediate or apparent. For example, a hero succeeds with a reward on an easy test made to cheat at a high-stakes game of cards with a noble. Not only does the hero win the game, but the Director decides that their reward comes from a servant watching the game who's impressed with the character's performance. After the game, the servant approaches the hero, offering a Flying Potion from the noble's private stash in congratulations and admiration.

Some common rewards accompanying success on a test include the following:

- Automatically accomplishing a related follow-up task that would normally require a test
- Allowing an ally engaged in the same task to accomplish the task without needing to make the test too
- Obtaining a consumable supernatural item or useful piece of mundane equipment
- Learning a piece of helpful information
- Impressing or ingratiating yourself with someone who grants you a small favor
- Noticing a hidden danger well before it strikes, giving you time to avoid or prepare for it

In lieu of other rewards, the director can also decide that a hero who succeeds on a test with a reward earns the players a hero token (see [Hero Tokens](#)).

OPTION: LET PLAYERS PITCH CONSEQUENCES AND REWARDS

Coming up with consequences and rewards for tests can be a big part of the fun for many Directors, but even the best of us occasionally run low on ideas. That's why the game gives the default option of consequences and rewards in the form of Villain Power and hero tokens. However, if you're a Director who prefers narrative consequences and rewards, consider asking the players to pitch you different consequences and rewards when they make a test. You can reject, add to, or modify their ideas as you see fit. Players who take this option should understand that they need to pitch real consequences when they suffer one, and not minor rewards disguised as consequences.

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?

The amount of time required for a task involving a test is determined by the Director. A task such as recalling lore with a Reason test might take no time at all. Ducking behind a barrel to hide with an Agility test might require a maneuver or an action, while tracking a band of voiceless talkers through the World Below could take hours or even days.

TESTS DURING COMBAT

Many (but not all) tests that a hero might make during combat are made as maneuvers. See [Make a Test in Maneuvers](#) for more information.

CAN I TRY AGAIN?

In many cases when you fail a test, you can't attempt the test again unless the circumstances of the test change. For instance, if you attempt an Agility test to pick a lock and fail, you can't attempt to pick the lock again unless you get some better lockpicks, oil the lock, have someone demonstrate how to pick a similar lock, and so on.

The Director decides when the circumstances have changed enough to allow a new attempt at a test.

HEROES MAKE TESTS

If a hero attempts to sneak by an enemy guard unnoticed, should the hero make an Agility test to sneak, or should the guard make an Intuition test to catch the hero in the act? If a cultist lies to a hero about the location of a secret temple, does the cultist roll a Presence test to conceal the truth, or does the hero roll an Intuition test to discern the cultist's honesty?

Unless the rules state otherwise, heroes make tests and NPCs do not. Heroes are the stars of the story, and the consequences and rewards of tests have longer-lasting implications for them. There are exceptions to this rule, of course. If a hero travels with an NPC retainer or companion, that NPC would almost certainly make tests too. But for the most part, NPCs working against the heroes never need to make tests.

To quickly assess the difficulty of a task and the test made to attempt it, the Director can use the following guidelines (though these are not hard and fast rules):

Easy Test. A test is easy if only one creature opposes the hero, and that opposed creature would have a lower bonus to their test roll for the task than the hero does. If a hero with an Agility score of 2 attempts to sneak by a guard with an Intuition score of 0, the test is easy.

Moderate Test. A test is moderate if multiple creatures oppose the hero and those creatures would have lower bonuses to their test rolls than the hero, or if only one creature opposes the hero and has the same test bonus as the hero.

Hard Test. A test is hard if an opposed creature would have a higher bonus to their test roll than the hero, or if multiple creatures with the same test bonus as the hero oppose the hero.

The failure consequences of opposed actions are some of the easiest to create on the fly. Fail to hide from someone, and they see you. Fail to lie to someone, and they catch your duplicity. Fail to arm wrestle someone for a free ale, and you're picking up the tab. The consequence is that the opposition bests the hero.

NPCs ROLL FOR DECEPTIVE TASKS

At times, a hero and an NPC might oppose each other in a scenario where the Director chooses for the NPC to make a

test instead of a player. This occurs when an NPC undertakes an action the heroes aren't aware of or aren't seeking actively to notice. By having the NPC roll in these scenarios, the Director can keep secret the fact that the task is happening, as well as its outcome.

For example, if an assassin attempts to ambush the heroes while they sit around a campfire without anyone keeping watch for danger, the assassin makes an Agility test to sneak up on the heroes unnoticed. The Director rolls and doesn't reveal the result until the heroes actually realize someone is approaching their camp. If the assassin fails the test, the heroes notice immediately as their assailant loudly steps on a twig. If the assassin succeeds, the heroes don't notice until the assailant is right on top of them. But if any player had said that their hero was on the lookout for danger, that hero would make an Intuition test instead.

An NPC might also make a Presence test if they lie to the heroes, as long as the heroes have no reason to believe the character would be deceptive. You'll know if the heroes are wary in that way, because the players will ask if they can make a test to discern the NPC's honesty.

The difficulty of the NPC's test can be modified by the skills and characteristics of the heroes they attempt to deceive, in the same way NPC statistics can modify a hero's test difficulty.

As an optional rule, the Director is also free to ask the heroes to make a reactive test to a deceptive NPC action instead (see [Reactive Tests](#)) whenever they see fit.

OPTIONAL RULE: OPPOSED POWER ROLLS

In the very rare occurrence that two or more heroes are in conflict with each other in a way that requires them to make tests, the Director can have all the heroes involved make a test. The hero with the highest result on their power roll wins. You can't earn a reward as part of these opposed power rolls, and they don't follow the typical difficulty structure or have three different tiers of possible outcomes.

For example, if your hero attempts to sneak by an allied hero, you would make an Agility test opposed by the player of the other character making an Intuition test. If your hero gets the higher result, you sneak by without the other hero noticing. If the other hero gets a higher result, they catch you in the act of sneaking. If multiple sneaking heroes attempt to get by multiple heroes on the lookout for sneaks, then each character makes a test and all the results are compared to determine which heroes on guard notice which sneaking heroes.

In the event of a tie in an opposed test, the state of the scene doesn't change. In the previous example, a tie means that if a hero on guard duty didn't know a sneaking hero was there, then the guard hero remains oblivious. If the guard did know the sneak was out there somewhere and the sneak is trying to avoid being noticed, a tie means that the guard still knows the sneak is there.

The Director can also use opposed power rolls when heroes face off against important NPCs using tests.

REACTIVE TESTS

At certain times when a hero isn't engaged in overcoming a task, the Director might ask the player of the hero to make a test without context, explaining the test only after the power roll is made. This often happens when a hero has a chance of knowing or noticing something of significance that the player doesn't know to look for or ask about.

Reactive tests are typically made in the following circumstances, though the Director can call for them in any appropriate scenario:

Hidden Environmental Features. The Director asks for an Intuition test to notice a secret door, a hidden trap, or some other disguised environmental feature.

Hidden Monsters. The Director calls for an Intuition test to notice a hidden monster (or they could use the rules in [NPCs Roll for Deceptive Tasks](#)).

Hidden Motives. The Director can ask for an Intuition test during a conversation to gauge how well a hero can read an NPC, judging whether they're lying, withholding information, or concealing an emotional response. (The Director could also use the rules in [NPCs Roll for Deceptive Tasks](#).)

Recall Lore. The Director might ask a hero to make a Reason test when dealing with a new object, a piece of information, or an event to see what history or details the hero might already know about it.

DIRECTOR'S OPTION: SECRET REACTIVE TESTS

Some Directors prefer to make the power rolls for reactive tests for the heroes rather than asking the players to do so. This allows the Director to make the rolls when appropriate for hidden objects, creatures, motivations, and information without tipping off the players that there is information to be gained. Having the Director roll requires the Director to have everyone's characteristics and skills written down (whether physically or digitally) for easy reference.

SKILLS

(Playtest note: Currently, some skills are more useful than others. This is likely going to be the case for a while, since the game isn't completed yet. There are also certain skills that will always be more useful in a particular type of campaign. This is called out in the "Are All Skills Equal?" sidebar.)

Skills represent the different specializations a hero has outside of attacking, defending, and using their ancestry features, class features, and equipment. Whenever you make a test, having a particular skill associated with the test increases your chance of success.

APPLYING SKILLS

If you have a skill that applies to a test you make, you gain a +2 bonus to the test. For instance, if your hero has the Hide skill, you have a +2 bonus to any test you make that involves hiding yourself. This might include an Agility test to hide behind a barrel, or a Presence test to disappear into a crowd.

Unless the Director deems otherwise, you can make a skill test even when you don't have the appropriate skill. This means you simply make the test using the typical characteristic but without the +2 bonus the skill grants.

You can't apply more than one skill to a test.

MIXING CHARACTERISTICS AND SKILLS

The bonuses from characteristics and the +2 from skills are separate and can apply to the same roll. Although certain skills are often paired with one characteristic more than others, a skill can apply to any characteristic test that makes sense. The Director has the final say on which characteristic is used to complete a task, and can call for a different characteristic based on the circumstances.

For example, intimidating someone with a purely verbal threat is a Presence test. But if a player describes their character tearing a log in half with their bare hands to intimidate a foe, the Director is likely to call for a Might test instead. The Intimidate skill applies to both tests. In the same way, scaling the side of a building is covered by a Might test, but if a hero does a series of leaps from one balcony to another to reach a roof, the Director could call for an Agility test instead. The Climb skill applies to both of these tests.

MANY SPECIFIC SKILLS

This game includes a big list of skills, and each is fairly specific. For example, instead of one Athletics skill that covers climbing, jumping, swimming, and lifting heavy objects, your character might use separate Climb, Jump, Lift, and Swim skills. Instead of a Thievery skill that covers picking locks, picking pockets, and disabling traps, the game has three skills: Pick Lock, Pick Pocket, and Sabotage.

We made the decision to have a lot of specific skills based on our design goals. First, having skills this specific means that you will frequently make tests that don't use one of your character's skills and simply apply a characteristic. By not having a few broader skills, it means that having a character who covers the spread of every skill is actually impossible. Luckily, the math of the game doesn't require you to have a skill to have a decent chance of success on a test. That means heroes can attempt tasks without the help of a skill just because someone needs to do it, and that is pretty darn heroic!

Since players don't need to be worried about their characters covering a wide spread of skills, they're free to choose the skills they think fit their heroes best and are the most fun to work with. In this way, you can get pretty specific with the hero you want to make. Maybe you're thinking about an elementalist who has a gymnastic background in jumping and tumbling, and who also studied religion and blacksmithing. You can make that in our game! Having a specific backstory is part of cinematic storytelling.

Our rules for skills allow for them to be flexibly applied to any test that is appropriate for the skill. This encourages clever thinking. A player can ask the Director, "I want to impress the duke with a story about how I ascended the sheer Cliffs of Azgahnan. Can I use my Climb skill to get a +2 bonus to my Presence test?" That's great! Getting creative like that is a lot of fun. It paints a visual picture,

and it's tactical thinking! However, if the skills in a game are too broad in the kinds of activities they represent, that sometimes encourages players to find a way to apply the same skill over and over again with as many tests as possible. This isn't fun for anyone, and doesn't make a very compelling story.

SKILL GROUPS

Skills are broken down into five groups: crafting, exploration, interpersonal, intrigue, and lore.

FOR THE DIRECTOR: MAKE YOUR OWN SKILLS

Directors should feel free to make their own skills that they feel are relevant and useful to their campaigns and adventures. For instance, the game doesn't have a Brewing skill for brewing ale or a Painting skill for making art because those aren't tasks that typically come up or require a test in a game about fighting monsters and saving the world. However, a Director could decide that their campaign involves poisoned barrels of ale and large amounts of counterfeit art, and that adding these two new skills to the game would make it more fun for the players. The Director simply needs to pick a group for these new skills—in this case, crafting makes sense. They then let the players know that they can swap out any crafting skill they have for these new skills.

CRAFTING SKILLS

Skills from the crafting skill group are used in the creation and appraisal of goods and for jury-rigging contraptions. They are especially useful during rests and downtime.

Rewards for tests made with crafting skills typically include having leftover rare material used in the creation process, knowing a buyer willing to pay extra for goods or items you're appraising, or making a jury-rigged device so amazing that it lasts for more uses than it should.

Failure consequences for tests made with crafting skills typically include wasting rare materials used in the creation process, greatly overestimating or underestimating an item's value, and poorly jury-rigging a contraption so that it harms people (or at least the wrong people).

CRAFTING SKILLS

Skill	Use
Alchemy	Make bombs and potions
Architecture	Create buildings and vehicles
Blacksmithing	Forge metal armor and weapons
Fletching	Make ranged weapons and ammunition
Forgery	Create false badges, documents, and other items
Jewelry	Create bracelets, crowns, rings, and other jewelry
Mechanics	Build machines and clockwork items
Tailoring	Craft cloth and leather clothing

EXPLORATION SKILLS

Skills from the exploration skill group are used to physically explore the environment around the characters, and to overcome physical obstacles.

Rewards for tests made with exploration skills typically include helping another creature engaging in the same task succeed without needing to also make a test, automatically succeeding on a follow-up test while engaged in the same task, reaching a destination faster than you anticipated, and learning about or avoiding an upcoming hazard.

Failure consequences for tests made with exploration skills include harming yourself, your gear, or your allies, becoming lost, or stumbling headlong into a hazard or a place you were trying to avoid.

EXPLORATION SKILLS

Skill	Use
Climb	Move up vertical surfaces
Drive	Control vehicles
Endurance	Remain engaged in strenuous activity over a long period of time
Gymnastics	Move across unsteady or narrow surfaces, and tumble
Heal	Use mundane first aid
Jump	Leap vertical and horizontal distances
Lift	Pick up, carry, and throw heavy objects
Navigate	Read a map and travel without becoming lost
Ride	Ride and control a mount who isn't sapient, such as a horse
Swim	Move through deep liquid

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Skills from the interpersonal skill group are used to socially interact with other creatures, and are particularly useful during negotiations. Aside from the Handle Animals skill, you can generally only use interpersonal skills when you attempt to influence creatures who have emotions and who can understand you.

Rewards for tests made with interpersonal skills typically include gaining an extra favor, item, or piece of information from the person or people you interact with.

Failure consequences for tests made with interpersonal skills include making the person you're interacting with angry, sad, embarrassed, offended, or otherwise upset or uncomfortable, which might cause them to ignore you, storm off, spread rumors about you, attack you, betray you, blackmail you, or otherwise attempt to harm you.

INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

Skill	Use
Brag	Impress others with stories of your deeds
Empathize	Relate to someone on a personal level
Flirt	Attract romantic attention from someone
Gamble	Make bets with others
Handle Animals	Interact with animal wildlife that isn't sapient
Interrogate	Obtain information from a creature withholding it
Intimidate	Awe or scare a creature
Lead	Inspire people to action
Lie	Convince someone that a falsehood is true
Music	Perform music vocally or with an instrument
Perform	Engage in dance, oratory, acting, or some other physical performance
Persuade	Convince someone to agree with you through use of your charms and grace
Read Person	Read the emotions and body language of other creatures

INTRIGUE SKILLS

Skills from the intrigue skill group are used in tasks centered around investigation, thievery, and spycraft.

Rewards for tests made with skills from this group typically include helping another creature engaging in the same task succeed without needing to also make a test, automatically succeeding on a follow-up test while engaged in the same task, discovering helpful information in addition to what you set out to learn, and performing an extra bit of clandestine activity in addition to what you set out to do.

Failure consequences for tests made with intrigue skills include getting caught in the act or failing to notice a detail that places you in danger, such as triggering a trap or walking into an ambush.

INTRIGUE SKILLS

Skill	Uses
Alertness	Intuitively sense the details of your surroundings
Conceal Object	Hide an object on your person or in your environment
Disguise	Change your appearance to look like a different person
Eavesdrop	Actively listen to something that is hard to hear, such as a whispered conversation through a door
Escape Artist	Escape from bonds such as rope or manacles
Hide	Conceal yourself from others' observation
Pick Lock	Open a lock without using the key
Pick Pocket	Steal an item that another person wears or carries without them noticing
Sabotage	Disable a mechanical device such as a trap
Search	Actively search an environment for important details and items
Sneak	Move silently
Track	Follow a trail that another creature has left behind

LORE SKILLS

Skills from the lore skill group are used to research and recall specific information. They are especially useful during rests and downtime.

Rewards for tests made with lore skills typically include learning an extra piece of useful information.

Failure consequences for tests made with lore skills typically include learning an incorrect piece of information that seems useful, but which actually makes things worse or wastes time. (It's fun to roleplay these sorts of moments, so lean in!) Alternatively, the Director can make medium and hard lore tests for each hero in secret and let the players know the narrative outcome without revealing the result of the dice.

LORE SKILLS

Skill	Use
Culture	Knowing about a culture's customs, folktales, and taboos
Criminal Underworld	Knowing about criminal organizations, their crimes, their relationships, and their leaders
History	Knowing about significant past events
Magic	Knowing about magical places, spells, rituals, items, and phenomena
Monsters	Knowing monster ecology, strengths, and weaknesses
Nature	Knowing about natural flora, fauna, and weather
Psionics	Knowing about psionic places, spells, rituals, items, and phenomena
Religion	Knowing about religious mythology, practices, and rituals
Rumors	Knowing gossip, legends, and uncertain truths
Society	Knowing noble etiquette and the leadership and power dynamics of noble families
Timescape	Knowing about the various planets of the timescape

ARE ALL SKILLS EQUAL?

This game has a big list of skills, and it's impossible for us or anyone else to know in advance which will be most useful during a campaign. For instance, the Swim skill might be used constantly during a campaign that takes place on the ocean and has heroes exploring underwater ruins, but it won't come up as much in a campaign that takes place entirely in a vast desert. The Psionics skill might come up a lot in a campaign where voiceless talkers are the main foes, and Magic might be more useful in a game where the heroes take on a circle of evil wizards. If you're worried about whether a skill you'd like to take will be useful, discuss your skill list with the Director after you create a hero. At the Director's discretion, you can swap out any skill you have with any other skill in the same group.

ASSIST A TEST

You can attempt to assist another creature with a test they make, provided you have a skill that applies to the test, the other creature isn't using that same skill on the test, and you can describe how your character helps to the Director's satisfaction. In other words, your attempt to help has to make sense, and you have to bring some useful expertise to the table. Helping another creature sneak by shouting encouragement at them isn't going to make them stealthier.

When you attempt to assist another creature, make an easy test using the skill you choose, and with a characteristic chosen by the Director based on the action you take to help. The outcome of that test determines the bonus applied to the test you're assisting:

- **11 or lower:** You get in the way or make things worse. The creature takes a bane on their test.
- **12–16:** Your help grants the other creature an edge on their test.
- **17+:** Your help gives the other creature a double edge on their test.

For example, if you want to use the Flirt skill to help another hero pick a jailor's pocket, the Director might ask you to make a Presence test using Flirt. The outcome of that test determines the bonus you provide to the other hero's Agility test to pick the pocket.

GROUP TESTS

Whenever two or more heroes attempt to overcome a single, simple task together that calls for them to make the same test, the Director can call for a group test. For example, if several heroes are all attempting to climb the outside of a tower at the same time, giving each other boosts and advice, they could be asked to make a Might group test. If a group of heroes attempt to sneak by a sleeping ogre, they might make an Agility group test.

GROUP TEST DIFFICULTY

The Director determines the difficulty of a group test the same way they do for individual tests. Group tests can be easy, medium, or hard.

MAKING A GROUP TEST

Each hero participating in the group test makes the test individually as usual, but the Director waits until all the tests have been made to interpret the results. A hero who is participating in the group test can't assist another hero participating in the test.

GROUP TEST OUTCOME

When interpreting the outcome of a group test, the Director first determines if the task succeeded or not before figuring out rewards and consequences. If half or more of the heroes making the group test succeed, then the group test succeeds. Otherwise, the group test fails.

If the heroes succeeded and half or more of them obtained a reward from the test, the Director gives the group a collective reward and ignores any consequences incurred in the test. This collective reward should be equivalent to earning two individual rewards. In fact, it could be two consumable items, juicy pieces of information, or hero tokens. However, it could also be something more tailored to the task. For instance, if the heroes earn a collective reward while sneaking through the camp of an enemy army, the Director might allow them to sabotage a bunch of war engines or steal a few horses on their way out.

If the heroes failed the group test and more than half of them incurred a consequence as a result, the Director gives the group a collective consequence and ignores any earned rewards. This collective consequence should affect everyone. An easy option is for the stress of failing the test to cause each hero to take a bane on their next power roll or for the Director to gain 2 VP per hero at the start of the next combat encounter, but the consequence could also be tailored to the task. For instance, if the heroes fail in their attempt to sneak through the camp of an enemy army, they're spotted and the camp immediately goes on alert as waves of enemies attack them.

If fewer than half the heroes get a consequence or reward on their individual tests, then the group test simply succeeds or fails.

MONTAGE TESTS

When a group of heroes works together over time to accomplish a common goal that requires more than a single characteristic, the Director can call for a montage test. Such tests typically take place over a prolonged period and focus on collective or shared activities. Navigating a vast desert, convincing farmers to rise up against a tyrannical leader, and performing a ritual to open a magically sealed gate can all be accomplished with montage tests.

In a montage test, the players take turns making tests as their characters tackle a task together in a montage test round. Each hero has a chance to make a test (or to assist another hero's test) intended to influence the outcome of the task (see [Assist a Test](#)).

A hero can also spend their turn using an item, ability, or other option they have available that they believe can help in the montage test. For example, if a group of heroes wants to cross an ocean on a sailing ship before a storm begins, one hero might make use of a magic fan that creates wind to keep the sails full day and night. The Director decides that this clever action gives the heroes 2 automatic successes in the montage test, with no individual tests necessary (see [Total Successes and Failures](#)).

Once a hero makes a test, assists with a test, or uses an ability or other option, they can't do anything else as part of the montage test until each other hero involved in the montage test does so as well. A hero can also choose to do nothing, most often if they have no one to assist and fear that their actions might make the situation worse (see [Montage Test Outcomes](#)). Once every hero has had a chance to act, the montage test round ends and a new one begins.

TIME AND STAKES

As the name suggests, montage tests create a kind of cinematic montage in the action of the game. A montage test can take place over the course of several hours or days, with each individual test or other activity set up as a brief vignette within the montage, and starring one of the heroes. Combat encounters, negotiations, and other challenges and scenes can break up a montage test (see [Sample Montage Test](#) below).

The Director should deploy montage tests only when the players are engaged in overcoming a goal that has stakes for the story and some sort of pressure, such as a looming deadline or impending harm. A montage test is great for a race to get to another location before an enemy army does, a chase to escape or catch up to a foe, weathering a hazard, preparing a village for war, or similar activities. Low- or no-stakes activities such as travel through a forest with no time pressure, or training during a respite to use a new kit, can be narrated in montage style, but they don't require a montage test.

DIRECTOR SETS THE SCENE

At the start of a montage test, the Director should describe the scenario underlying the task at hand, and the various challenges the heroes might face as they attempt to collectively accomplish it. For example, if the heroes are attempting to chase down a pickpocket through a crowded market, the Director might talk about the throngs of innocent people blocking the way forward, obscuring the characters' vision, and making noise that complicates attempts to hear the thief's nimble footsteps. There are also traveling carts to dodge, the speed and dexterity of the pursued character to contend with, and a pack of stray dogs who chase after anyone who sprints through the market. Describing these obstacles gives the heroes ideas about what they're trying to overcome as they attempt to achieve their goals.

INDIVIDUAL TESTS IN MONTAGE TESTS

The difficulty of each individual test in a montage test is set by the Director and can vary from test to test. For instance, if the heroes are preparing the defenses of a village threatened by a band of approaching raiders, the Director might decide that a character who wants to dig a trench around the village needs to make an easy Might test. Another hero wants to train the untested farmers of the village in the ways of war, and the Director decides this is a hard Reason test.

The same rules and guidelines that apply to all individual tests apply here. If a hero has a clever, out-of-the-box idea that the Director thinks should automatically succeed without rolling dice, it does. If the circumstances of the test should grant an edge or a bane, they do. Individual test outcomes shouldn't halt the story.

The Director should couch each success or failure as it relates to the overall goal of the montage test. If the heroes are trying to reach an ancient temple, failing a Might test to ford a river in their path doesn't mean they don't cross the river and are stuck on the other side. But it could mean that failing to cross the river in a timely manner gives a rival group of villains the chance to beat the party to the temple.

The rewards and consequences of individual tests made during a montage test should be handled on an individual basis. The Director can use the default additional VP in the next combat encounter for consequences and hero tokens for rewards to keep the montage moving.

CAN'T USE THE SAME SKILL TWICE

An individual character can't use the same skill more than once in a montage test. Though multiple heroes can use the same skill, a test or an assist with a specific skill represents each characters' entire contribution to the montage test with that skill. At the Director's discretion, this restriction can be lifted for prolonged montage tests, or for montage tests that are limited in scope and have only a small number of skills that apply to them.

NEW CHALLENGES FOR EACH TEST

In general, when a hero makes a test as part of a montage test, they should choose new obstacles to overcome that haven't already been tackled as part of the test. If the heroes are chasing a thief through the marketplace and one of them has already distracted the pack of stray dogs with a deft hand and a piece of meat, additional tests made to distract the animals don't count toward the result of the montage test.

When it fits the scenario, the Director can adjust this restriction. If part of a montage test involves searching for people trapped in a burning building, the Director is likely to allow multiple tests to fight or avoid the fire, since this will happen throughout the montage test, not just once.

DIRECTOR CAN INTRODUCE MORE CHALLENGES

During a montage test, a Director can introduce new challenges for the heroes to face. While attempting to run out of a burning building from the top floor, the characters might discover that by the time they reach the second floor, beams are starting to fall and glass windows are exploding as the structure begins to collapse. These new challenges can be incorporated into the tests the heroes subsequently make.

TOTAL SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

The Director or another player will track the total number of successes and failures the heroes earn during a montage test. Every montage test has a success limit and a failure limit. When the number of successful tests equals the success limit, the montage test ends and the heroes achieve total success (see [Montage Test Outcomes](#)). The montage test can also end when the number of failed tests equals the failure limit, and the heroes suffer total failure.

LIMITED ROUNDS

A montage test should last only 2 montage test rounds. If the heroes don't end the montage test by achieving the success limit or failure limit, the montage test ends when the second montage test round is over. This time limit helps to keep a montage test from becoming a slog, and prevents heroes from simply using their turns to assist the one hero with the best chance of success. This can inspire each hero to be a more active participant in the montage test. That said, the Director can increase the number of rounds a montage test lasts if they wish to create a particularly grueling challenge.

MONTAGE TEST DIFFICULTY

The Director determines the success limit and failure limit of a montage test. They can share this information or keep it secret, depending on what feels the most fun and dramatic for the situation and the players.

In general, the higher the success limit, the harder and more complicated it is for the heroes to overcome the montage test, since a hero can't make the same test twice. The Montage Test Difficulty table gives a recommended

success limit and failure limit for easy, moderate, and hard montage tests for groups with five heroes.

MONTAGE TEST DIFFICULTY

Difficulty	Success Limit	Failure Limit
Easy	5	5
Moderate	6	4
Hard	7	3

For larger or smaller groups, you can make the following adjustments to keep montage tests achievable but challenging:

- For four or fewer heroes, decrease the success limit and failure limits by 1 (to a minimum of 2) for every hero fewer than five. For example, if your group has only three heroes, an easy montage test has a success and failure limit of 3.
- For six or more heroes, increase the success and failure limits by 1 for every hero more than five.

MONTAGE TEST OUTCOMES

A montage test can have three different outcomes:

- If the heroes hit the success limit before hitting the failure limit or before the time runs out for the test, they achieve total success.
- If the heroes hit the failure limit or time runs out, and if they've achieved at least two more successes than failures, they achieve a partial success.
- If the heroes hit the failure limit or time runs out, and if they don't have at least two more successes than failures, they suffer total failure.

TOTAL SUCCESS

If the heroes earn a total success, they achieve what they set out to do without complication. For instance, if the heroes engaged in a montage test to see if they can cross a desert to reach a city before a tyrant's army arrived there and leveled the place, a total success sees them arrive at the city gates with plenty of time to warn people of the impending assault. The heroes earn 1 Victory when they achieve total success on an easy or moderate montage test, and 2 Victories on a hard montage test.

PARTIAL SUCCESS

If the heroes earn a partial success, they succeed at what they set out to do, but there is a complication or a cost involved. For instance, when crossing the desert to reach and warn the city of the tyrant's army, a mixed success sees the characters arrive at the city gates with the enemy forces just behind them. Alternatively, the Director might allow the heroes to arrive well before the army, but they don't cover their movements well enough. The tyrant realizes the city has been warned and decides to call in a favor to have a powerful dragon join the siege. The heroes earn 1 Victory when they achieve partial success on a hard or moderate montage test.

TOTAL FAILURE

If the heroes suffer total failure, they don't achieve what they set out to do. Just as with standard tests, failure on a group test shouldn't bring a story to a halt. Total failure should make things more interesting and challenging! With a total failure in a montage test to cross the desert and warn the city, the characters arrive at the city to find it already under siege by the tyrant.

SAMPLE MONTAGE TEST

Four heroes must cross the vast and inhospitable Infinite Desert to warn the city of Ahset that the tyrannical Empress Vardo is coming to conquer them. If the characters arrive in time, they can organize the defenses of the city, giving its people a greater chance of defeating the tyrant.

The Director determines that crossing the desert is a montage test of hard difficulty. With four heroes involved, the success limit is 6 and the failure limit is 2 as the montage test begins:

- When the test begins, the Director sets the scene. They tell the players that the desert has extreme temperatures, sudden sandstorms, high dunes to cross, deep sand, chasms, and quicksand lakes. The Director decides that challenges of dunes, deep sand, and quicksand can be tackled multiple times in the test, since the Infinite Desert is filled with these hazards.
- Urdoncara, a fury, starts things off by asking to make an Intuition test using the Nature skill to predict the best times of day to travel and rest. She wants the party to avoid the worst of the desert's extreme temperatures and any sandstorms or other weather phenomena, so that their journey is quickened. The Director decides this is an easy test. Urdoncara makes the test and gets a result of 12, earning 1 success for the montage test.
- Loric, a tactician, wants to make a Reason test using the Climb skill to lead the party over dunes and other hazards with minimal effort. The Director allows the attempt, but says that knowing what makes one dune easier to climb than another is difficult, setting the difficulty at medium. Loric gets a 9 on the test and fails with a major consequence, which the Director decides will cause him to take a bane on his next power roll due to the exertion. The montage test currently has 1 success and 1 failure.
- Karrel, an elemental, thinks the group might cross the desert faster if they have specially modified sandals that distribute their weight and prevent their feet from sinking into the sand. The Director loves the idea, and decides that making four pairs of the shoes while traveling the desert is a medium Reason test. Karrel gets to use their Tailoring skill and winds up with a result of 13—a success with a consequence. The Director gains an additional 2 VP at the start of the next combat encounter as a consequence, but the group now has 2 successes and 1 failure on the montage test.
- Adrian, a conduit, offers to scout ahead for the group with an Intuition test, using the Navigate skill to find the best path forward and avoid hazards such as chasms and quicksand. The Director thinks this straightforward task of acting as lookout in a vast desert is an easy task. Adrian smashes it with a 21, and the Director decides to

get creative with the reward. Adrian's lookout skills grant the next hero to act in the montage test an edge on their test. At the end of the first montage test round, the heroes have 3 successes and 1 failure.

Before the next montage test round, the Director pauses the montage test to run a battle with a kingfissure worm, who attacks the heroes as they cross over an ancient ruin partially buried in the sand. After the heroes defeat the kingfissure worm, the test continues:

- Urdoncara wants to make a Might test using the Lift skill to carry most of the group's equipment as they cross the desert, allowing her allies to move more quickly while she keeps up with her superior endurance. The Director thinks this arduous task has a hard difficulty. Urdoncara gets a 17 on the test thanks to the edge from Adrian's earlier success. The montage test has 4 successes and 1 failure.
- Loric, eager to prove himself after his last failure, asks to make a Might test using the Lead skill, representing tying a rope around his waist to drag his weaker friends over the tallest dunes. The Director likes the idea, but doesn't think the Lead skill applies to the task. He tells Loric that Lift is more appropriate, since the tactician is using their physical skill to aid their friends and not really doing anything interpersonal. Loric agrees, and the Director sets the test at medium difficulty. Making the test with a bane because of his previous failure, the tactician rolls a 15, which is a success with a consequence. The montage test has 5 successes and 1 failure, but the consequence gives the Director another 2 VP at the start of the next combat encounter.
- Since the group needs only 1 more success to achieve total success, Karrel says she'd like to assist Adrian in whatever task he decides to take on. Adrian wants to recall lore about the Khem-hor—the inhabitants of the Infinite Desert—to remember their time-honored travel techniques using the History skill. Karrel has the Culture skill, which she can use to assist by providing information about the lives and society of the Khem-hor. She makes a Reason test to assist and gets a 16, granting Adrian an edge on his upcoming test.
- Adrian attempts to recall lore about the Khem-hor, wanting to see if he can remember any of their travel from his studies of the history of the region. The Director has him make a hard Reason test with an edge, thanks to Karrel's input on the current state of Khem-hor culture. Adrian gets a 17, and the Director decides that the conduit recalls a shortcut through a canyon tunnel that leads directly to Ahset, avoiding a vast lake of quicksand. The heroes get their sixth success in the montage test, achieving total success, and earn 2 Victories.

The heroes could have attempted other tests during their travels, such as an Agility test using the Stealth skill to lead the group through dangerous shortcuts in the desert without being seen or waylaid by predators, a Reason test using the Nature skill to find enough food and water to keep the group hydrated and fed, or a Presence test using the Music skill to inspire allies to travel faster with song.

ADVENTURING

This section collects a number of the rules for adventuring that make up the heart of the game. These rules will be organized differently as the game is developed.

RESISTANCE ROLLS

Resistance rolls are special power rolls made to avoid harmful effects from traps, hazards, and other creatures' attacks and abilities. You don't decide when it's time to make a resistance roll. Instead, you make one in response to a dangerous situation when the rules or the Director call for it. The higher the result of the resistance roll, the less harm the effect does to your character.

For example, a hero who activates a fire trap might need to make the following resistance roll:

Resistance + Agility:

- 11 or lower: **9 fire damage**
- 12–16: **6 fire damage**
- 17+: **2 fire damage**

ADJACENT

Many abilities and other options refer to creatures, objects, or spaces that are adjacent to a specified creature. Something is adjacent to a creature if it is within 1 square of that creature.

FALLING

When you fall 2 or more squares, you take 2 damage for each square you fall, then you land prone. When you fall, you reduce the effective height of the fall by a number of squares equal to your Agility score. Falling into liquid that is at least 1 square deep reduces the effective height of a fall by 4 squares.

Falling is not forced movement, but being force moved downward is considered falling (see [Forced Movement in Combat](#)). Movement from falling doesn't provoke opportunity attacks (see [Opportunity Attacks](#)).

FALLING ONTO ANOTHER CREATURE

If you land on another creature when you fall, that creature takes the same damage you do from the fall. You then land prone in the nearest unoccupied space of your choice. If your size is greater than the creature's Might score, the creature also falls prone.

FALLING FAR

When you first fall from a great height, you fall 100 squares in the first round. At the end of each subsequent round that you remain falling, you fall another 100 squares.

HIDE AND SNEAK

Hiding and sneaking are important tools for heroes and their foes. You might want to avoid another creatures'

notice to eavesdrop on conversations, steal items, set up an ambush, or avoid a combat encounter.

HIDING

When you wish to hide from a creature, you must have cover or concealment (see [Combat](#)) from your foe, and that foe can't observe you attempting to hide. If you duck behind a barrel to hide from a foe, your attempt to hide has a chance of succeeding only if your foe doesn't notice you doing so. If you are being chased by a hungry dragon, you can hide only if you first move into a place where the dragon can't observe you, such as turning a sharp corner into a tunnel full of giant stalagmites before the dragon does. You then make your hide attempt.

Most often, you use the Hide maneuver to hide during combat (see [Maneuvers](#)). If you do so while you have cover or concealment from a creature who isn't observing you, you are automatically hidden from them unless the Director deems otherwise. If you hide outside of combat, the Director might ask you to make a test using the Hide skill.

If you are hidden from another creature, you gain an edge on attacks made against them, and the creature can't target you with attacks. You are no longer hidden from a creature if you don't have cover or concealment from them. If you use an ability, interact with an enemy creature, move without sneaking, or otherwise make noise or reveal yourself while hidden, you are no longer hidden once the thing you're doing resolves. For instance, if you are hidden and then make an attack, you resolve the attack first, then are no longer hidden.

SEARCHING FOR HIDDEN CREATURES

You can search for creatures who are hidden from you as long as those creatures are within 10 squares of you and you have line of effect to them. To do so, you make an Intuition test as a maneuver and assess the result:

- 11 or lower: You find any hidden creatures with an Agility of 0 or lower and who don't have the Hide skill.
- 12–16: You find any hidden creatures who don't have the Hide skill.
- 17 or more: You find all hidden creatures.

As part of this maneuver, you can point out any creatures you find to allies within 10 squares of you, making those creatures no longer hidden from those allies.

SNEAK

While you are hidden from another creature and you want to move, you can attempt to sneak in order to remain hidden. While sneaking, your speed is halved, and you must end your move with cover or concealment from the creatures you are hidden from. If you do so, you can make an Agility test with a difficulty set by the Director, remaining hidden if you succeed. This test can use another characteristic at the Director's discretion.

LANGUAGES

When you create your hero, you'll be able to select the languages they know. The following section details the

languages of Orden, the baseline world of the game, but the Director can use these languages in their own campaign world or can swap this list with their own list of languages.

If your hero knows a language, they can speak, read, write, and understand it.

(Playtest note: The full list of languages for the game isn't included here. More is coming.)

CAELIAN EMPIRE

The Caelian Empire dominated five of the seven regions of Orden three thousand years ago. During the height of this most recent human empire, all humans (including folks from Vanigar in the far north, but not folks from the islands of Ix) learned to speak the Caelian tongue. For many, especially the noble classes and the well-to-do, Caelian effectively replaced their native language.

Some thirteen hundred years after the fall of the Caelian Empire, the languages of the different regions of the empire are enjoying a resurgence. Still, the Caelian tongue is spoken by most humans in most regions to one extent or another.

Most people in Orden can speak and understand some Caelian, simply because the empire was so powerful and so widespread. Anyone trading with the empire or living near its borders or under its influence eventually learned to speak Caelian, including dwarves, elves, orcs, lizardfolk, and goblins. If you speak more than one language in Orden, your second language is almost certainly Caelian. As a result, that language of empire is now colloquially referred to as “the common tongue”—the language that most folk of Orden have in common.

EXTANT SPOKEN LANGUAGES

Folks have been speaking and writing in Orden for at least thirty thousand years, but most of those languages are now dead. Many have been forgotten. Others were spoken by peoples who never developed writing, preventing those languages from being preserved. And many languages that were preserved in writing left no related descendants, so that no one knows what sounds that writing represented.

The languages on the Vasloria Languages by Ancestry table are the most common languages in that region, actively spoken by significant populations of people. Most languages are associated with a specific ancestry and its culture, but being a member of an ancestry doesn't automatically make you part of the associated culture the language is tied to. For example, if your orc hero was raised in a culture of elves, you probably speak one of the elven languages, and might never have learned Kalliak.

Most languages have colloquial or casual names. For instance, many people in Orden call Kalliak “Orcish” and Hyrallic “Elvish,” but any sage knows there are lots of orcish and elven languages, just as there are multiple human languages.

VASLORIA LANGUAGES BY ANCESTRY

Ancestry	Language	Notes
Angulotls	Filliatic	Offshoot of Cyllinric
Demons	Proto-Ctholl	
Devils	Anjal	Language of contract law
Dwarves	Zaliac	Language of engineering
Dragons	Xakalliac	
Dragons, elder	The First Language	Language of magic
Elves, wode	Yllyric	Language of druids
Elves, high	Hyrallic	Language of interspecies diplomacy, the common language of the elves
Fae creatures	Khelt	Offshoot of Kheltivari
Giants	Kuric	
Gnolls	Anjal	
Gnomes	Variac	
Goblins	Szetch	
Kobolds	Kethaic	Patois of Xakalliac and Caelian
Lizardfolk	Khamish	
Ogres	Kuric	
Olothec	Urollialic	
Orcs	Kalliak	Offshoot of Zaliac
Overminds	Za'hariax	
Time raiders	Voll	
Trolls	Variac	Common language of the World Below
Voiceless talkers	Variac	
	Mindspeech	A symbolic language shared among native telepaths.
Everyone	Caelian	Common tongue

VASLORIA HUMAN LANGUAGES

Region	Language
The Gol	Uvalic
Higara	Higaran
Ix	Oaxuatl
Khemhara	Khemharic
Koursir	Khoursirian
Phaedros	Phaedran
Rioja	Riojan
Vanigar	Vaniric
Vasloria	Vaslorian

LANGUAGE USAGE

Hyrallic is the primary language of the high elves in Orden. Although young for an elven language, Hyrallic is older than almost all other modern cultural languages, save those of the dwarves. As a result, while anyone who lives near or trades with a human culture probably speaks at least a little Caelian, most nobles across all ancestries make sure their children or offspring speak Hyrallic. Caelian is new from many cultures' point of view, while Hyrallic as a language for diplomacy is considered cultured and traditional.

Yllyric is the cultural language of wode elves, and also the common language among those who defend and protect the natural forests of Orden.

Within any document concerning the workings of machines, masonry, or geology, you are likely to find a healthy supply of jargon using **Zaliac**, the most popular dwarven language. Even when such texts aren't fully written in Zaliac, they use a lot of dwarven language when describing esoteric, complex ideas.

Just as Zaliac is used in engineering, contract law isn't written purely in **Anjal**, the dominant language of the Seven Cities of Hell. But a lot of the legal jargon in any contract, as well as some of the language of trial courts, features many Anjal words. People are sticklers for detail in the Seven Cities, and this makes their language popular among lawyers.

In the same way that intelligent creatures in Orden who live near or trade with other cultures use Caelian as a common language, the denizens of the World Below, the Dark Under All, often speak **Variac**, the language of the voiceless talkers.

DEAD LANGUAGES

For an adventuring hero with an ambition to create great works or unlock deep lore, it can be useful to be able to read ancient writing. Much deep lore is attested only in ancient tomes and scrolls written in languages that no modern culture uses.

Most of these ancient writings were written by people who expected other people to read it. The lore might have been kept secret by not sharing it with anyone outside the college or cult whose members originally wrote it, but the actual writing was not intended to be difficult to read or understand. It wasn't written in code—just in a language that people stopped speaking long ago.

Sages can reconstruct many of these languages by learning which modern languages descended from them, then comparing them to related languages from the same time period that might have survived. Translating such ancient languages has been extremely useful for the purposes of crafting and research.

The Dead Languages table shows some of the dead languages of Orden, and the modern languages related to those ancient languages.

DEAD LANGUAGES

Language	Related Languages	Common Topics
Kheltivari	Yllyric, Cyllinric	Using a wode to travel through time
Khamish	Khoursirian	Beast magic
Old Sky Elf	Hyralllic	Flying castles
Old Sun Elf	Hyralllic, Yllyric	Liannar, the Sunmetal
Hobgoblin	Anjal	Zodiakol, the Bloodmetal
Old Star Elf	Hyralllic, Yllyric	Rovion, the Starmetal
Steel Dwarf	Zaliac	Valiar, the Truemetal
Old Variac	Variac	Kollar, the Sinmetal

RENOWN

As you accomplish heroic deeds, your fame allows you to influence NPCs and attract followers. Your infamy among enemies also grows, and their hatred and fear of you can cause foes to lash out during negotiations (see [Negotiation](#)). Every hero has a Renown score that represents how they can use their reputation to influence others. The higher the score, the greater your impact with those who know of your legend.

At the start of character creation, your Renown is 0. Some careers can increase your initial Renown score (see [Careers](#)).

INCREASING RENOWN

Renown typically increases at the end of an adventure, often after the acknowledgement of a powerful NPC that you helped save them, their family, their home, or their organization. That NPC and anyone else who witnessed your heroics can tell the tale, and from there, your legend grows.

FOR THE DIRECTOR: AWARDED RENOWN

In general, a hero gains 1 Renown each time they complete an adventure. If you want the characters to be less famous than in a standard heroic tale, you can adjust this to give out Renown only after every other adventure, or only when the heroes level up. Alternatively, you can award more Renown after each adventure if you want the heroes to become power players in the world more quickly.

INFLUENCE NEGOTIATION

Renown changes the way NPCs respond to heroes during negotiations. For more information, see [Negotiation](#).

ATTRACT FOLLOWERS

You can also use your Renown score to attract and employ followers who perform different duties or favors for you. The Renown Followers table shows how many followers a hero can have at one time based on Renown. You can always let go of a follower in your employ to hire a new one.

You can recruit as many new followers as your Renown allows as a respite activity, provided you are in a place or have a means of communication that allows you to recruit such followers.

RENOWN AND FOLLOWERS

Renown	Number of Followers
3	1
6	2
9	3
12	4

STRONGHOLD

Many followers stay at a stronghold, which is a home base you designate and can change. Your stronghold is typically a location shared by your fellow heroes. It could be a few rooms at an inn in a sleepy village, an old castle you

claimed after clearing it of monsters, or a fleet of sailing ships.

FOLLOWER TYPES

When you attract a new follower, you decide on their name and ancestry, and choose what role they play in their service to you.

(Playtest note: More types of followers are coming.)

ARTISAN

Artisans are crafting experts who can contribute to your research and crafting projects (see [Research and Crafting](#)). *(Playtest note: The Research and Crafting section is still to come.)* An artisan can contribute one project roll per day to a project you choose while they remain at your stronghold, provided they have access to the necessary materials.

When you recruit an artisan, choose four skills from the crafting skill group that they know. An artisan has a Might or Agility score of 1 (your choice), a Reason score of 1, and a 0 in all other characteristics. They know Caelian and two other languages of your choice.

SAGE

Sages are research experts who can contribute to your research and crafting projects. A sage can contribute one project roll per day to a project you choose while they remain at your stronghold, provided they have access to the necessary materials.

When you recruit a sage, choose four skills from the lore skill group that they know. A sage has a Reason and Intuition score of 1, and a 0 in all other characteristics. They know Caelian and two other languages of your choice.

SPECIFIC USES FOR RENOWN

The Director can use Renown as a tool that determines how much access heroes have to exclusive places in the campaign's world, or how much power they wield in organizations of which they are members. The rules for using Renown in such ways is in the [For the Director](#) section. *(Playtest note: This section is yet to come.)*

SUPERNATURAL AND MUNDANE

The word supernatural is used to describe abilities, creatures, and objects that are magical or psionic in nature. The word mundane is used to describe attacks, creatures, and objects that aren't magical or psionic.

SUFFOCATING

During combat or under similarly stressful conditions, you can hold your breath for a number of rounds equal to your Might score (minimum 1 round). At the end of each round after that, you take 1d6 damage while holding your breath.

Out of combat, you can hold your breath for a number of minutes equal to your Might score. Being unable to

breathe after that time counts as a stressful condition, causing you to run out of air as above.

ADVENTURING GEAR

This isn't a game about tracking gear, so you don't need to list every piece of equipment you own on your character sheet. The game assumes that heroes generally have enough to eat and drink, so the rules don't expect you to track food and water either.

If your character has a skill that implicitly requires gear, such as lockpicks for the Pick Lock skill or basic alchemy supplies for use with the Alchemy skill, then you have that gear. Likewise, your character is assumed to have standard useful adventuring gear, including a torch, a rope, and a backpack at minimum.

At the Director's discretion, you might lose certain gear in the course of an adventure, or your gear could break. If this happens, you might not be able to perform certain tasks as effectively without that gear.

TORCHES

A torch sheds light for 10 squares in every direction, and you can light a torch as a free maneuver. Just as you don't need to track every ration or arrow you use, you don't need to track how long a torch lasts.

ROPE

A rope is 10 squares long. A creature able to use an anchored rope to climb can do so without needing to make a test unless the Director deems otherwise.

WEALTH

This game also isn't about accumulating and counting every piece of copper you acquire. Instead of tracking a bank account, the amount of stuff your hero can purchase is based on their level. As you accomplish more deeds, you acquire more treasure and rewards from grateful NPCs that allow you to be an even more effective hero.

The Hero Wealth table shows the types of items, gear, services, property, and more that you can purchase at various levels in the game. The table shows both the purchases that heroes can acquire individually, and that a party can acquire when the characters pool their resources together as a group.

This isn't an exhaustive list, but you and the Director can use the table to judge what your character can and can't purchase. For instance, the price of an ox isn't on this list, but you can reasonably assume that if you can buy a horse, you can probably afford an ox as well. (Don't @ us, farm nerds.) And if you can't afford something you want, fear not! You might still be able to acquire a specific good or service through negotiation, or by trading your heroic services instead of spending cash. Treasures such as magic swords and psionic crowns are rare, and typically can't be purchased. Instead, they're found on adventures, traded for other treasures, given as rewards by NPCs, or crafted by the characters.

HERO WEALTH

Level	Individual	Group
1st–2nd	Mundane clothing, gear, armor, implements, and weapons; meals or drinks at a common tavern; stay at a common inn; passage on a boat	Horse and cart; dinner at a fine tavern; stay at a fine inn
3rd–4th	Horse and cart; dinner at a fine tavern; stay at a fine inn	Catapult; small house
5th–6th	Catapult; small house	Library; tavern; manor home; sailing boat
7th–8th	Library; tavern; manor home; sailing boat	Church; keep; wizard tower
9th–10th	Church; keep; wizard tower	Castle; shipyard

ABILITIES

Your class, kit, ancestry, titles, and other heroic options give you access to abilities that make your hero stand out. Abilities are special actions, maneuvers, and more that allow you to affect creatures, objects, and the environment.

Abilities are presented in a format that breaks out specific entries for keywords, time, distance, target, and effect. If an ability is an attack, it also includes a damage entry.

NAME AND STORY TEXT

Each ability has an evocative name that sets up what it does in the game, followed by a line or two of flavor text that provides a sense of how the use of the ability might appear if described in an action scene in a story.

The name and story text for abilities sometimes makes reference to specific ways in which the ability is used—particularly combat abilities whose names imply specific types of weapons or tactics. However, that narrative flavor has no effect on how an ability can be used. For example, the fury’s Impaling Strike ability allows you to grab a target, setting up the idea of harpooning your monstrous foe with a sword, then wrenching them in close before pulling your weapon free. But you can use that ability with an axe, a mace, a hammer, or any other weapon.

RESOURCE COST

Some abilities have a Heroic Resource cost to use them. When you use one of these abilities, you spend your Heroic Resource, then activate the ability.

ABILITY KEYWORDS

Each ability has a “Keyword” entry with one or more keywords that explain how the ability functions.

AREA

Abilities with the Area keyword create an area of effect. Many area abilities also deal damage, but such abilities are not attacks. See [Area Abilities](#) for more information.

ATTACK

Abilities with the Attack keyword (referred to simply as “attacks”) deal damage to or impose a harmful effect on other creatures.

CHARGE

Abilities with the Charge keyword can be used with the Charge action in place of a melee free strike (see [Charge](#) in [Actions](#) in [Combat](#)).

MAGIC

Magic-keyword abilities are used by creatures who can cast spells, have innate magical features, or wield magic items. These abilities do magical things such as create rays of fire, open swirling portals, or summon creatures.

MELEE

Abilities with the Melee keyword can be used only over very short distances, typically within a creature’s reach, because they require you to touch someone or something with your body, a weapon, or an implement.

PSIONIC

Psionic-keyword abilities are used by creatures who can manifest psionic powers, have innate psionic features, or wield psionic items. These abilities might create blasts of psychic energy, move objects with telekinesis, or slow down time with chronopathy.

RANGED

Abilities with the Ranged keyword can be used to affect creatures who are too far away to touch.

RESISTANCE

Abilities with the Resistance keyword require the target to make a resistance roll to lessen or avoid their effect.

(Playtest note: Only monsters and villains have Resistance-keyword abilities right now.)

WEAPON

The Weapon keyword is used in attacks that are made with blades, bows, and other such items. Weapon abilities also include attacks creatures make with their own bodies, such as punches, kicks, bites, tail slaps, and more. Your kit determines the types of weapons you wield and use with weapon abilities (see [Kits](#)).

IT’S NOT ALL ATTACKS!

The Attack keyword and phrases like “makes an attack” are reserved for abilities that have a creature specifically targeting other creatures or objects (not an area), and dealing harm to them by making a power roll. Other abilities that target areas of effect, or that require the target to make a resistance roll instead of having the creature using the ability making the roll, are not attacks. They instead use the Area and Resistance keywords, respectively. That means if a feature distinctly interacts with an attack (for instance, the conduit’s Holy Infusion triggered action), that feature has no effect on abilities with the Area or Resistance keyword.

TYPE

Each ability has a “Type” entry that describes how long it takes to execute the ability. For instance, if you use an ability that has “Action” as its type entry, you must use your action to activate the ability. Most abilities require you to use an action, a maneuver, a triggered action, a free maneuver, or a free triggered action (see [Combat](#) for more information).

If an ability takes 1 minute or longer to use, you can’t use it in combat.

TRIGGER

If an ability requires a triggered action or a free triggered action to use, a “Trigger” entry is part of the ability. For example, the trigger for the tactician’s Parry ability is: “A creature makes a Weapon attack against the target.”

DISTANCE

An ability’s “Distance” entry indicates how close you need to be to a creature or object to affect that target with the ability.

MELEE

Abilities with a distance of “Reach X” require you to touch a creature with your body, a weapon, or an implement. X is the distance in squares at which you can physically make contact with another creature or object targeted by the ability. For instance, a distance of “Reach 2” can be used to target creatures or objects within 2 squares of you.

RANGED

Abilities with a distance noted as “Ranged” can be used to target creatures who are more than a touch away. Ranged distances are presented as “Ranged X,” with X being the number of squares away a creature or object can be while still allowing you to target them with the ability. For instance, a distance of “Ranged 5” can be used to target creatures or objects within 5 squares of you.

If you make a ranged attack while an enemy is adjacent to you, you have a bane on the attack’s power roll.

MELEE OR RANGED

Some abilities have a melee distance and a ranged distance. When you use such an ability, you choose whether to use it as a melee or a ranged ability. The ability never has both the Melee and Ranged keywords at the same time. For example, if you have the Cloak and Dagger kit, which has a weapon damage bonus to melee and ranged abilities, only one bonus at a time applies to an ability with the Melee or Ranged keywords.

AREA ABILITIES

Area abilities cover an area, creating an effect within that area that lets you target multiple creatures or objects at once. When an ability allows you to create an area of effect, you are sometimes given a distance, noted as “within X,” that describes how many squares away from you the area can be. If an area ability doesn’t originate from you, then at least 1 square of the area of effect must be within that distance and your line of effect. This square is referred to as the origin square of the area of effect. The area of effect can spread from the origin square however you choose, as long as the area of effect conforms to the shape and arrangement rules of that particular area.

Unless otherwise noted, area abilities don’t pass through solid barriers such as walls or ceilings, or spread around corners. These obstructions stop areas from spreading.

As long as you have line of effect and distance to the origin square, you can place an area ability to include one or more squares where you don’t have line of effect (see [Line of Effect](#) below).

An area ability might use any of the following areas of effect:

Aura: When an ability creates an aura, it is expressed as “X aura.” Aura areas always originate from you and move with you for the duration of the ability that created them. A creature must be within X squares of you to be targeted by an aura ability.

Burst: When an ability creates a burst area, it is expressed as “X burst.” Burst areas always originate from you. A creature must be within X squares of you to be targeted with a burst ability.

Cube: When an ability affects a cubic area, it is expressed as “X cube.” X is the length of all the area’s sides.

Line: When an ability affects a linear area, it is expressed as “A × B line.” This means that A equals the line’s length in squares, while B equals the line’s width and height in squares.

Wall: When an ability creates a wall, it is expressed as “X wall,” where X equals how many squares are used to make the wall. When you place a wall, you can build it one square at a time, but each square must share at least one side (not just a corner) with another square of the wall. You can stack squares on top of each other to make the wall higher. Unless otherwise stated, a wall can’t be placed in occupied squares, and a wall blocks line of effect.

Special: Some abilities create a unique area of effect. The distance entry of such abilities specifies how the area is created.



In the diagram above, the creature marked “P” uses an ability with a distance of “3 cube within 1.” They want to target their enemy, marked “E,” but they can’t because the area can’t spread around corners or move through the wall.



In the diagram above, P creature moves to a new position, changing the origin square of the ability and allowing them to target E.

SELF

If an ability has a distance of “Self,” that ability originates from or affects only you. The ability’s description specifies how it works.

TARGET

The “Target” entry of an ability notes the number of creatures or objects who can be targeted by that ability.

CREATURE

If an ability targets one or more creatures, you can have it target any creature within the ability’s distance. You aren’t an eligible creature target for your own abilities unless those abilities also have “self” as a target (see below).

OBJECT

If an ability targets one or more objects, you can have it target any object within the ability’s distance. Unless otherwise noted, objects have poison and psychic immunity.

When an ability can target creatures and objects, the ability can damage objects. However, unless otherwise noted or if the Director decides otherwise, objects are immune to an ability’s other effects.

ENEMY

If an ability targets one or more enemies, you can use the ability to target only creatures who are hostile to you. Typically, you decide who counts as an enemy, though the Director has the final say.

ALLY

If an ability targets one or more allies, you can use the ability to target only creatures who are friendly to you. Typically, you decide who counts as an ally, though the Director has the final say. You aren’t an eligible ally target for your own abilities unless those abilities also have “self” as a target.

SELF

If an ability targets “self,” then you are a valid target for the ability.

ALL

If an ability doesn’t provide a number of targets but instead says it applies to all creatures, objects, enemies, or allies, then all eligible targets are affected.

ABILITY POWER ROLL

If an ability requires a power roll, it has a “Power Roll” entry that tells you which characteristic to add to the 2d10 roll you make when you activate the ability.

Unlike power rolls made as tests, ability power rolls always do something useful when you make them. You’re just rolling to see the impact of the ability, including damage and any effects based on the tier result of the power roll. For instance, the fury’s Brutal Slam ability is a melee attack that targets a creature within reach, and which has the following effects:

Tier 1 (11 or lower): The attack deals 3 damage and pushes the target back 1 square.

Tier 2 (12–16): The attack deals 8 damage and pushes the target back 2 squares.

Tier 3 (17 or more): The attack deals 12 damage and pushes the target back 4 squares.

ABILITIES WITH DAMAGE AND EFFECTS

Both attacks and area abilities deal damage and often have an additional effect on their target. The amount of damage and the strength of the effect are determined by the power roll.

To keep things quick and easy to read at the table, damage and effects are separated in a power roll entry with a semicolon, with effects abbreviated whenever possible. An effect determined by the power roll result always applies to the target unless otherwise specified. For instance, the Brutal Slam ability described above has the following power roll setup:

Power Roll + Might:

- 11 or lower: **3 damage; push 1**
- 12–16: **8 damage; push 2**
- 17+: **12 damage; push 4**

Unless otherwise indicated, any effects that are determined by a power roll result occur after the power roll’s damage has been dealt to all targets.

CRITICAL HIT

When you make a power roll as part of an attack or action and the total of the roll is 19 or 20 before adding your characteristic (a natural 19 or natural 20), you score a critical hit. This allows you to immediately take an additional action after resolving the power roll, whether or not it’s your turn and even if you are dazed (see [Conditions](#)).

“DURING THE MOVE”

Certain ability effects allow you to move and affect other creatures or objects during that move, such as the shadow’s Blade Dance ability. For such abilities, the move begins in the space you first leave when you begin the move, and ends in the last space you move into.

ROLL AGAINST MULTIPLE CREATURES

When an ability targets multiple creatures, you make one power roll and apply the result to all the creatures you target. If you have edges or banes against some but not all of your targets, you might apply a different tier of result to individual targets.

For example, if you target three creatures with an attack ability and your result is 11, each of the targets should be affected by the tier 1 result of the ability. However, if you gain an edge on attacks against one of the targets to add 2 to the power roll, your result against that target is 13 and that target is affected by the tier 2 result of the ability.

RESISTANCE ROLLS

Some abilities that are used by the heroes’ foes have the target of the ability make a resistance roll instead of the creature using the ability making a power roll. These abilities have the Resistance keyword, indicating that the target rolls to see how well they can resist the ability. For instance, the goblin cursespitter’s Eye of Surlach ability forces a target to make an Intuition resistance roll:

Target Resists + Intuition:

- 11 or lower: **6 corruption damage; weakened (INU ends)**
- 12–16: **5 corruption damage; weakened (EoT)**
- 17+: **2 corruption damage**

Because a resistance roll measures how well a target shakes off an ability’s damage and effects, the higher the tier result of the roll, the weaker the ability’s damage and effects.

EFFECT

Many abilities that require power rolls also have effect entries describing additional effects or rules for how the ability is used. If an ability doesn’t require a power roll, it has an effect entry that describes how it works.

SPEND RESOURCE

Some abilities have a “Spend X [Heroic Resource]” entry. These are similar to effect entries, except they cost Heroic Resources to use. You must spend X of your Heroic Resource to activate the effect. If the entry reads “Spend [Heroic Resource]” with no number, then you can spend as much of your Heroic Resource as you like to increase the effect’s impact, as described in the entry’s details.

STACKING UNIQUE EFFECTS

The unique effects of different abilities are combined if their durations and targets overlap. However, the effects of the same ability used multiple times don’t add together.

Instead, the most impactful result—such as the highest bonus—from each use of the ability applies. The most recent ability applies for determining duration.

Different effects that impose the same condition (see [Conditions](#)) don’t stack to impose the condition twice. For example, if a hero is targeted by numerous creatures whose abilities can halve a target’s recovery value, the hero’s recovery value is only halved once.

ENDING EFFECTS

When a creature suffers a lasting effect, whatever ability, hazard, or other mechanic imposed the effect specifies how long the effect lasts. Unless otherwise noted, all effects and conditions (see [Conditions](#)) that are imposed on you during a combat encounter end when the encounter is over if you want them to.

EoT

If an effect ends with “(EoT)” at the end of its description, a creature suffers the effect until the end of their next turn.

RESISTANCE ROLLS AND EFFECTS

If an effect ends with “([CHARACTERISTIC] resistance ends)” at the end of its description, then a creature suffering the effect can make a resistance roll at the end of your turn to remove the effect. Unless otherwise specified, a resistance roll to end an effect is set up as follows:

Power Roll + [Specified Characteristic]:

- 11 or lower: The effect persists
- 12–16: The effect ends at the end of your next turn
- 17+: The effect ends immediately

Heroes’ abilities don’t apply effects that require resistance rolls, to prevent the Director from doing a lot of tracking and rolling.

EoE

If an effect ends with “(EoE)” at the end of its description, a creature suffers the effect until the end of the encounter. In general, enemies’ abilities don’t apply end-of-encounter effects to heroes, since heroes should always have a chance to get back in the fight!

Boss creatures have the End Effect trait, which allows them to end EoE effects at the end of their turn in exchange for taking damage.

LINE OF EFFECT

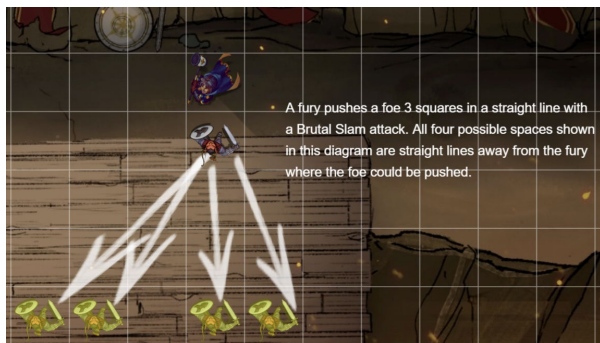
To target a creature or object with an ability, including attacking the creature or object, you must have line of effect to that creature or object. If a solid object, such as a wall or pillar, completely blocks the creature from you, then you don’t have line of effect to them. If you’re not sure if you have line of effect to a creature, imagine drawing a straight line from any corner of the space you occupy on the map to any corner of a space the creature occupies. If you can do this with at least one corner connecting to another with no obstruction in between, you have line of effect to the creature.

At the Director's discretion, flimsy or fragile obstructions such as a glass window or linen curtains don't block line of effect, and might be automatically broken or torn by attacks made through them.

If you want to create an area of effect in a specific area, you must have line of effect to at least one of the squares in that area. See [Area Abilities](#).

STRAIGHT LINE

Whenever your character moves or when you or another creature are force moved, that movement is typically in a straight line. Abilities that allow you to move or to forcibly move another creature often talk about moving straight toward or away from another creature or an object. Although a line of travel must be straight, it doesn't have to travel a straight line of squares on the grid.



CONDITIONS

Some abilities and other effects apply specific negative effects called conditions to a creature. The following conditions show up regularly in the game and are included on your character sheet. (*Playtest note: They are not included on your character sheet yet.*)

BLEEDING

While you are bleeding, you can't regain Stamina.

DAZED

While you are dazed, you can do only one thing on your turn: use a maneuver, use an action, or take a move action. You also can't use triggered actions, free triggered actions, or free maneuvers.

FRIGHTENED

If you are frightened, attacks you make against the source of your fear take a bane. If that source is a creature, their attacks against you gain an edge. You can't willingly move closer to the source of your fear if you know the location of that source. If you gain the frightened condition from one source while already frightened by a different source, the new condition replaces the old one.

GRABBED

While you are grabbed, your speed is 0, you can't be force moved, you can't use the Knockback maneuver, and you take a bane on attacks that don't target the creature

grabbing you. If the creature grabbing you moves, they bring you with them. If the creature's size is equal to or less than yours, their speed is halved while they have you grabbed.

The creature grabbing you can use a maneuver to move you into an unoccupied space adjacent to them.

The creature grabbing you can end the grab at any time (no action required). You can also attempt to escape being grabbed (see [Escape Grab](#) in [Combat](#)). If you teleport or if the creature grabbing you is force moved to a space that isn't adjacent to you, you are no longer grabbed.

PRONE

While you are prone, you are flat on the ground, attacks you make take a bane, and melee attacks made against you gain an edge. You must crawl to move along the ground, which costs you 1 additional square of movement for every square you crawl. You can't climb, jump, swim, or fly while prone. If you are climbing, flying, or jumping while you are knocked prone, you fall.

While prone, you can stand up as a maneuver (see [Maneuvers](#) in [Combat](#)), unless the ability or effect that imposed the condition says otherwise. You can use a maneuver to make an adjacent prone creature stand up.

RESTRAINED

While you are restrained, your speed is 0 and you can't be force moved. Your attacks take a bane, attacks and damaging area powers against you gain an edge, and you have a bane on Might and Agility resistance rolls.

If you teleport while restrained, the condition ends.

SLOWED

While you are slowed, your speed is 2 unless it is already lower.

TAUNTED

If you are taunted, you have a double bane on attacks that don't include the creature who taunted you. If you gain the taunted condition from one creature while already taunted by a different creature, the new condition replaces the old one.

WEAKENED

While you are weakened, all your ability power rolls and tests (but not resistance rolls) take a bane.

COMBAT

When the heroes face a problem that can be solved only with action, or when they come up against creatures who want to harm them, it's time to throw down!

SET THE MAP

When combat begins, the Director should position miniatures or tokens on a gridded map to represent the environment, the heroes, their foes, and any other creatures in the battle.

HOW BIG IS A SQUARE?

It's helpful to know how big a square is for abilities that heroes and NPCs can use outside of combat. A single square is 5 feet on all sides. The Director can change this measurement to 2 meters, 1 meter, or any other measurement you prefer, as long as that scale stays consistent throughout your game.

SIZE AND SPACE

A creature's size indicates how many squares they occupy during combat, which defines the creature's space. If a creature's size is 1, they occupy a space of 1 square. If a creature is larger than 1 square, their size equals the number of squares they take up in length, width, and height. For example, a horse has a size of 2, which means that during combat, they occupy a space that is 2 squares long, 2 squares wide, and 2 squares high. You could also think of that space as a cube that is 2 squares on all sides.

If a creature is a size 1, their size value includes the letter T, S, M, or L, abbreviations of tiny, small, medium, and large respectively. Since the minimal amount of space a creature can take up during combat is 1, this letter indicates the difference between tiny pixies, small polders, medium humans, and large hakaan, each of which occupy a space 1 square in combat. These sizes in order from smallest to largest are 1T, 1S, 1M, and 1L.

Objects can also have a size rating. If an object has an O (an abbreviation for oblong) next to its size, it indicates that the object's size isn't the number of squares the object occupies, but rather it's relative mass and weight to a creature of equivalent size. If an ability or feature allows you to interact with objects of a certain size that rule includes all objects of that size, oblong or otherwise.

The Creature and Object Sizes table shows examples sizes of creatures and objects up to size 5, but there is no limit to what a creature or object's size could be.

CREATURE AND OBJECT SIZES

Size	Example Creature	Example Object
1T	Pixie	Potato
1S	Polder	Heavy armor
1M	Human	Wardrobe
1L	Hakaan	Anvil
2	Ogre	Carriage
3	Treant	Sailboat
4	Ancient Dragon	Galley
5	The Kraken	Castle

SIDES

Every combat encounter is a conflict between two sides. The heroes and any of their allies are one side, controlled by the players. Any creatures who oppose the heroes are the other side, controlled by the Director. All creatures who oppose the heroes are on the same side, even if those creatures also oppose each other. For example, if the heroes are battling a group of bandits when a kingfissure worm suddenly bursts into the fray to devour player characters and brigands alike, the worm is still on the side of the bandits for the purpose of the game's combat rules.

NPC ALLIES

If an NPC ally fights alongside the heroes, the Director should give the players the ally's stat block and let them control the NPC during combat. The Director has enough to worry about. As well, any missteps, mistakes, or triumphs the ally makes will be thanks to the decisions of the players and not the Director, which can make the outcome of the battle more satisfying for the players.

COMBAT ROUND

Combat takes place over a series of rounds. During a round, each creature in the battle takes a turn. Once every creature has taken a turn, a new round begins.

DETERMINE SURPRISE

When battle begins, the Director determines which creatures, if any, are caught off guard. Any creature who isn't ready for combat at the start of an encounter is surprised until the end of the first round of combat. A surprised creature can't take triggered or free triggered actions, attacks and damaging area powers rolled against them gain an edge, and they have a bane on resistance rolls.

For example, if the heroes sneak up unnoticed on a camp of marauders and attack, each marauder is surprised. Likewise, if the heroes fail to notice that all the cloaked figures in a tavern are actually brain-devouring zombies, then the heroes are surprised. If one of the heroes notices the disguised undead before the zombies attack but has no opportunity to warn their allies, that hero isn't surprised but the rest of the characters are.

DETERMINE WHO GOES FIRST

Sometimes figuring out who gets to take the first turn in combat is automatic. If all the creatures on one side are surprised, then a creature on the other side gets to go first. But if both sides have creatures who aren't surprised, the Director or a player they choose rolls 1d10. On a result of 6 or greater, the heroes' side acts first. Otherwise the other side acts first.

CREATURES TAKE TURNS

Whichever side goes first chooses a creature (or sometimes a group of creatures on the Director's side) to act at the start of combat. Whenever the rules talk about a creature acting in combat, that creature gets to take their turn. When that turn is over, the other side chooses a

creature to act. Play continues back and forth this way as each creature takes their turn.

Unless an ability or special rule allows them to do so, any creature who has taken a turn during a round can't act again until a new round begins. To help track which creatures have already acted in the current round, each creature can have a coin, token, or card they flip over on the table, or some kind of flag they set on their virtual tabletop token, once they've taken a turn. That way, all the players know who has already acted and who hasn't.

In many encounters, a point comes when one side has creatures who haven't acted yet but all the creatures on the other side have. The creatures who have yet to act get to take their turns in any order they choose, without turns in between from the other side. For example, consider four heroes taking on six enemies. When all four heroes have taken their turns and four of the enemies have taken theirs, the two enemies who are left take their turns one after the other to end the round.

Once all creatures on both sides of a battle have acted, the round ends and a new one begins. The side whose members acted first during the starting round of combat acts first in all subsequent rounds.

DETERMINING WHO ACTS NEXT

When it comes to the heroes' side, the choice of who should act next is intended to give players the opportunity to comment, strategize, and plan. Some tables, in some encounters, might find that the choice of who should act next isn't obvious, leading to debate. That's fine. Deliberating about what the group should do next is classic roleplaying.

In general, though, most groups find that it's usually only one or two players in a given round who think it best if they act next. And as soon as those players explain why they want to act next and what they plan on doing, the issue is quickly resolved.

ARGUMENT TIMER

If the players do end up arguing in circles about what to do next, the Director can place a timer on the discussion. Usually, giving the players a warning and 30 seconds to decide who goes next does the trick. If they can't choose by the end of that time, the Director chooses a hero to act.

ALTERNATIVE INITIATIVE

If planning everyone's turn order isn't fun for your group, you can leave it to the dice instead. At the start of combat, have each hero, enemy, and group of enemies make an Agility test, then record the results. When it's time for someone on the heroes' side to act, the hero with the highest result goes first. On the next hero turn, the hero with the second-highest result takes their turn, and so on. The Director-controlled creatures act the same way. Creatures on the same side should reroll tied Agility tests to determine who among the tied creatures acts before the others.

At the Director's discretion, a hero can swap their turn in the initiative order with another willing hero at the start of a new round of combat. This allows certain abilities that interact with the core initiative system, such as the shadow's Hesitation is Weakness ability, to better work with this alternative system.

ENEMIES ACT IN GROUPS

Director-controlled creatures act in groups, with information for building groups found in the *Bestiary*. When a group of enemies acts, the Director chooses a single creature or minion squad to take a turn. Once that turn is over, the Director chooses another creature in that group to take a turn, continuing until all members of the group have taken their turn.

END OF ROUND

Once all creatures on both sides of a battle have acted, the round ends and a new round begins.

TAKING A TURN

Each creature in combat—whether hero, adversary, or something in between—gets to take a move action, a maneuver, and an action on their turn. Each combatant can perform their maneuver and action in any order, and can break up the movement granted by their move action before, after, or between their maneuver and action however they like. You can also turn your action into a move action or a maneuver, so that your turn can alternatively consist of two move actions and a maneuver; or two maneuvers and a move action.

The Movement section breaks down how your move action works, while the Maneuvers and Actions sections break down the baseline maneuvers and actions your character can undertake. For any activities not specifically covered in those rules, such as cutting down a chandelier to drop on enemies, the Director decides whether such an activity is a maneuver or an action.

TRIGGERED ACTIONS AND FREE TRIGGERED ACTIONS

Your hero might have one or more unique triggered actions, each of which has a specified trigger that allows the action to be used. You can use one triggered action per round, either on your turn or another creature's turn, but only when the action's trigger occurs. For instance, a fury hero can use the Relentless Toss triggered action to force move a target, but only after an enemy has first tried to force move the fury or one of their allies.

A free triggered action follows the same rules as a triggered action, but it doesn't count against your limit of one triggered action per round. For instance, a shadow hero can use their Hesitation is Weakness ability to take their turn in response to the trigger of another hero ending their turn. But because that ability is a free triggered action, the shadow can still use their In All This Confusion triggered action if attacked by an enemy.

If multiple triggered actions occur in response to the same trigger, any heroes and other player-controlled creatures taking a triggered action or a free triggered action decide among themselves which of those triggered actions are resolved first. Then the Director decides the same for creatures they control.

Any effect that prevents you from making triggered actions also prevents you from making free triggered actions.

FREE MANEUVERS

Boring stuff like opening an unlocked door, picking up an arrow from the ground, giving an object to an adjacent ally, or drawing a weapon doesn't require a maneuver or an action. Rather, you can undertake such straightforward activities as free maneuvers on your turn. A free maneuver follows the same rules as a regular maneuver, but you can typically take as many free maneuvers as you like.

At the Director's discretion, circumstances could make something that is typically boring more impactful and exciting. For instance, if you need to pick a magic arrow up off the ground during a violent earthquake, what would otherwise be a free maneuver could require a maneuver or an action to accomplish.

Likewise, the nature of an activity might make it too complicated for a free maneuver. For example, picking up the body of an unconscious talent ally to carry them to safety can probably be done as a free maneuver. But if your Might is lacking and you need to pick up a tactician ally decked out in the Shining Armor kit, the Director might determine that you need to use a regular maneuver to hoist their armored form over your shoulders.

Any effect that prevents you from making maneuvers also prevents you from making free maneuvers.

NO-ACTION ACTIVITIES

Free maneuvers cover most of the simple activities you might want to undertake on your turn. When it isn't your turn, you can typically undertake even simpler activities requiring no action with the Director's approval. For instance, shouting out a warning to an ally or dropping an item so another creature can pick it up require no action.

The Director can limit what kinds of no-action activities you can attempt when it isn't your turn. For instance, shouting out a warning about an unseen foe to an ally on the ally's or the foe's turn requires no action. But the Director might stop you from giving that ally complex tactical advice, saying that doing so instead requires a free maneuver on your turn.

MOVEMENT

During combat, creatures can employ multiple mechanics that allow them to move around the battlefield. The most common of those mechanics is to use your move action on your turn, but abilities granted by your class, equipment, ancestry, title, or other options might allow you other ways to move.

Your hero starts with a speed based on their ancestry—usually 5. This represents the maximum number of squares you can move when you take the move action or when another effect allows you to move. Your speed can be increased by your kit and other game options.

All squares adjacent to your character cost 1 movement to move into. No, there is no Pythagorean theorem on the grid. It's a game, don't overthink it.

You can move freely through an allied creature's space. You can move through an enemy creature's space, but it counts as difficult terrain (see [Difficult Terrain](#)). You can't stop moving in any other creature's space, including

making an attack or using an action or maneuver while in that space and then continuing your move.

A creature can break up their movement granted by their move action with their maneuver and action however they wish.

CAN'T EXCEED SPEED

A single move or other effect can never allow a creature to move more squares than their speed, unless the effect specifically states otherwise. For example, a creature with a speed of 5 might have that speed halved to 2. If an ally then targets them with an effect that allows them to move up to 3 squares, the creature can move only 2 squares because that's their current speed.

SHIFTING

Whenever you use your move action or when another effect allows you to move, you can instead shift to use up to half the maximum squares of movement the effect allows. Whenever you shift, creatures can't make opportunity attacks against you during your movement (see [Free Strikes](#)).

Certain effects might also allow you to shift a specific number of squares, including many effects that let you shift up to your speed.

MOVEMENT TYPES

Creatures in the game can use eight types of movement: walk, burrow, climb, swim, jump, crawl, fly, and teleport.

WALK

Walking is the most common movement type, whether it refers to ambulating on legs, slithering, or some other default method of movement. Unless specified otherwise, all creatures can move over solid horizontal ground without any problem.

BURROW

A creature with "burrow" in their speed entry can move through dirt vertically or horizontally, and either has the means to breathe while doing so or doesn't require air to live. Such creatures can't move through more solid ground, such as stone, unless their stat block says otherwise.

CLIMB OR SWIM

If a creature's speed entry includes the word "climb," they can climb across vertical and horizontal surfaces at full speed. Likewise, if a creature has "swim" in their speed entry, they can swim in liquid at full speed.

Creatures without those types of movement can still climb or swim when a rule allows them to move, but each square of climbing or swimming costs 2 squares of movement. If a surface is difficult to climb (for instance, a sheer cliff or ice-covered wall) or a liquid is hard to swim through (a raging river or whirlpool), the Director can call for a Might test. On a failure, a creature can't climb or swim but wastes no movement in the attempt. The Director can also impose other consequences to failure, such as being caught in the spinning current of a whirlpool.

CLIMBING OTHER CREATURES

You can attempt to climb a creature whose size is greater than yours. If the creature is willing, you can climb them without any trouble. If the creature is unwilling, you make the following test:

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- *11 or lower:* You fail to climb the creature, and they can make a free strike against you.
- *12–16:* You fail to climb the creature.
- *17+:* You climb the creature.

While you climb or ride a creature, you gain an edge to melee attacks against them. The creature can use a maneuver to attempt to knock you off. If you are knocked off a creature, you must make the following test:

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- *11 or lower:* You fall off the creature into an unoccupied adjacent space of your choice, taking falling damage and landing prone as usual (see [Falling](#) in [Adventuring](#)).
- *12–16:* You slide down the creature into an unoccupied adjacent space of your choice and don't land prone.
- *17+:* You continue to hold on to the creature.

If you are knocked prone while climbing or riding a creature, you fall and land prone in an adjacent space of your choice, taking damage as usual from the fall.

JUMP

When an effect allows you to move, you can long jump a number of squares up to your Might or Agility score (your choice; minimum 1 square) without a test as part of that movement. If you move at least 2 squares in a straight line immediately before your jump, you can long jump 1 additional square.

If you want to jump even farther than your initial jump allows, make an easy Might test. On a success, you jump 1 additional square, or 2 additional squares if you get a success with a reward.

The height of your jump is 1 square. If you move at least 2 squares in a straight line immediately before your jump, you can jump 1 square higher.

You can't jump farther or higher than the distance of the effect that allows you to move.

CRAWL

If you are prone (see [Conditions](#)), you can remain prone and crawl on the ground. Doing so costs you 1 additional square of movement for every square you crawl. If you intentionally want to crawl, you can fall prone as a free maneuver on your turn. While voluntarily prone, you can choose to stand as a free maneuver.

FLY

A creature who can fly can move through the air vertically or horizontally at full speed. Such creatures can also hover in midair. If a flying creature is knocked prone or has their speed reduced to 0, they fall (see [Falling](#)).

TELEPORT

When you teleport, you move from one space to another space instantaneously. The following rules apply to teleporting:

- Teleporting doesn't provoke opportunity attacks.
- When you teleport, you bypass any obstacles between the space you leave and your destination space.
- The creature teleporting you must have line of effect from the space you leave and to your destination space.
- Your destination space can't be occupied by another creature or object.
- You don't spend your movement when you teleport. Instead, the effect that lets you teleport tells you how far you can teleport.
- If you teleport while prone, you can be standing when you reach your destination space provided you are able to stand. If another creature teleports you, it is up to them if you remain prone or stand, provided you are able.
- If you teleport while affected by the grabbed or restrained conditions, those conditions end for you.

DIFFICULT TERRAIN

Areas of thick underbrush, rubble, spiderwebs, or other obstacles to movement create difficult terrain. It costs 1 additional square of movement to enter a square of difficult terrain.

HIGH GROUND

When you make an attack against a creature or object and you occupy a space that is fully above the space the target takes up, with the bottom of your space higher than the top of the target's space, you gain an edge on the power roll against that target.

FORCED MOVEMENT

Some actions and maneuvers allow you to push, pull, or slide another creature a specific distance across the battlefield. Collectively, these types of movement are called forced movement:

Push X: You move the target up to X squares away from you in a straight line, without moving them vertically.

Pull X: You move the target up to X squares toward you in a straight line, without moving them vertically. Each square you move the creature must bring them closer to you.

Slide X: You move the target up to X squares in any direction, except for vertically.

When you force move a target, you can always move that target fewer squares than the number indicated. For example, when the conduit gets a tier 3 "push 5" result with their Thunder of the Divine ability, they can push targets any distance up to 5 squares, including choosing to not move certain targets at all.

Forced movement ignores difficult terrain and never provokes opportunity attacks. When you force move a target into damaging terrain or into terrain that produces an effect, they are affected as if they had moved into it willingly.

VERTICAL

If a forced movement effect has the word "vertical" in front of it, then the forced movement can move a target up or down in addition to horizontally. For example, if a forced

movement effect says “vertical push 5,” then the creature targeted by the effect can be pushed up to 5 squares in any direction, as long as the forced movement is a straight line.

If a creature who can’t fly is left in midair at the end of a vertical forced move, they fall.

Though you can’t push, pull, or slide a creature unless that forced movement specifies “vertical,” you can move them along a slope. For a creature to be force moved along a slope, each square of the slope can be no more than 1 square higher or lower than the previous square.

SLAMMING INTO CREATURES

When you force move a creature into another creature, the movement ends and both creatures take 1 damage for each square remaining in the first creature’s forced movement. You can also force move an object into a creature. The object’s movement ends and the creature takes 1 damage for each square remaining in the object’s forced movement.

It is possible to move a creature or object of a larger size into several creatures of a smaller size at the same time. When this happens, all creatures in the collision take damage once.

If a creature is killed by damage from an attack or effect that force moves them, the second creature still takes damage unless the Director deems otherwise.

You can force move another creature into yourself with a pull or a slide.

TRACKING OBJECT FORCED-MOVEMENT DAMAGE

At the Director’s discretion, mundane objects that are force moved into creatures or other objects take damage as if they were creatures. Sturdy objects can take damage as follows:

- For each square a wood object occupies, it can take 3 damage before it is destroyed.
- For each square a stone object occupies, it can take 6 damage before it is destroyed.
- For each square a metal object occupies, it can take 9 damage before it is destroyed.

More fragile objects are destroyed after taking any damage.

SLAMMING INTO OBJECTS

When you force move a creature into a stationary object that is their size or larger and the object doesn’t break (see below), the movement ends and the creature takes 1 damage for each square remaining in their forced movement.

If you force move a creature downward into an object that doesn’t break (including the ground), they also take falling damage.

HURLING THROUGH OBJECTS

When you move a creature into a mundane object, the object can break depending on how many squares of forced movement remain:

- It costs 1 remaining square of forced movement to destroy 1 square of glass. The creature moved takes 1 damage.

- It costs 3 remaining squares of forced movement to destroy 1 square of wood. The creature moved takes 3 damage.
- It costs 6 remaining squares of forced movement to destroy 1 square of stone. The creature moved takes 6 damage.
- It costs 9 remaining squares of forced movement to destroy 1 square of metal. The creature moved takes 9 damage.

If any forced movement remains after the object is destroyed, you can continue to move the creature who destroyed the object.

FORCED INTO A FALL

If you can’t fly and are force moved across an open space that would cause you to fall, such as being pushed over the edge of a cliff, you continue moving the total distance you were moved first. If you are still in a position to fall when your move ends, you fall.

FOR THE DIRECTOR: USE TACTICAL MAPS

This is a tactical game. To get the most out of the rules for movement, difficult terrain, and falling, you should use encounter maps with interesting environmental features. You might have ledges, pits of acid, walls of fire, mechanical traps, columns, giant webs, magical hazards, and the like for creatures to be thrown into, thrown off of, or thrown through. You’ll want most of your battles to take place in environments with plenty of space to move around, avoiding a lot of long corridors that are 1 square wide.

STABILITY

Each creature has a stability that allows them to resist forced movement. When a creature is forced moved, they can reduce the movement up to a number of squares equal to their stability. Heroes start with a stability of 0 that can be increased through kit and ancestry options.

MANEUVERS

A maneuver typically involves less focus and exertion than an action. It can be an opportunity to move other creatures, drink a potion, or undertake similar activities.

Sometimes you might not have anything you can do with your maneuver. That’s totally fine! Often, the best thing to do on your turn is take an action and move on.

AID ATTACK

Choose an enemy adjacent to you. The next attack an ally makes against that creature before the start of your next turn has an edge.

DRINK POTION

You can use this maneuver to drink a potion yourself or to administer a potion to an adjacent creature.

ESCAPE GRAB

While you are grabbed by another creature (see [Grab](#) below), you can attempt to escape by making a resistance

roll. You take a bane on the roll if the creature's size is larger than yours.

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- *11 or lower:* You fail to escape the grab.
- *12–16:* You can escape the grab, but if you do, the creature grabbing you can make a melee free strike against you before you are no longer grabbed.
- *17+:* You are no longer grabbed.

GRAB

You attempt to grab a creature using the following ability:

GRAB

Keywords: Melee

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Reach 1

Target: 1 creature the same size or smaller than you

Power Roll + Might:

- *11 or lower:* **No effect**
- *12–16:* **You can grab the target, but if you do, they can make a melee free strike against you right before they become grabbed by you.**
- *17+:* **The target is grabbed by you.**

Effect: You gain an edge on the power roll if the creature's size is smaller than yours. You can grab only one creature at a time this way.

HIDE

Using the Hide maneuver, you attempt to hide from other creatures who aren't observing you while you have cover or concealment (see [Hide and Sneak](#)).

KNOCKBACK

You attempt to shove an adjacent creature using the following ability:

KNOCKBACK

Keywords: Melee

Type: Maneuver

Distance: Reach 1

Target: 1 creature the same size or smaller than you

Power Roll + Might:

- *11 or lower:* **Push 1**
- *12–16:* **Push 2**
- *17+:* **Push 3**

Effect: You gain an edge on the power roll if the creature's size is smaller than yours.

MAKE OR ASSIST A TEST

Many tests are maneuvers if made in combat. Searching a chest with a Reason test, picking a door's lock with an Agility test, or lifting a portcullis with a Might test would all be maneuvers. Assisting a test is also a maneuver in combat.

Complex or time-consuming tests might require an action if made in combat—or could take so long that they can't be made during combat at all. Other tests that take no time at all, such as a Reason test to recall lore about mummies, are usually free maneuvers in combat. The Director has the final say regarding which tests can be made as maneuvers.

SEARCH FOR HIDDEN CREATURES

You can use this maneuver to attempt to search for creatures hidden from you (see [Hide and Sneak](#)).

STAND UP

You can use this maneuver to stand up if you are prone, ending that condition. Alternatively, you can use this maneuver to make an adjacent prone creature stand up.

ACTIONS

When you take an action on your turn, you most often do so to use a unique ability defined on your character sheet (see [Abilities](#)). These abilities are the most unique, flavorful, and impactful things you can do with your action.

You can also use your action to catch your breath, help another creature regain Stamina, charge into battle, defend yourself, or make a free strike.

CATCH BREATH

By using the Catch Breath action, you spend a Recovery and heal an amount equal to your recovery value. In addition, you also gain the benefit of the Defend action.

If you are dying (see [Dying and Death](#) in [Stamina](#)), you can't take the Catch Breath action, but other creatures can help you spend recoveries.

CHARGE

When you take the Charge action, you move up to your speed in a straight line, then make a melee free strike (see [Free Strikes](#)) against a creature when you end your move. You can't shift when you charge.

DEFEND

When you take the Defend action, all attacks against you have a double bane until the end of your next turn. You gain no benefit from this action while another creature is taunted by you (see [Conditions](#)).

FREE STRIKE

You can use this action to make a free strike (see [Free Strikes](#)). Most of the time, you'll want to use the more impactful actions found on your character sheet, just as the director will use the actions in a creature's stat block, but free strikes are always available for when all else fails. For instance, a fury who has no other options for ranged attacks might use the Ranged Weapon Free Strike attack with an improvised weapon when battling a flying creature.

HEAL

You use your action to employ medicine or inspiring words to make an adjacent creature feel better and stay in the fight. The creature can spend a Recovery to regain Stamina, or can make a resistance roll against a "(resistance ends)" effect they are suffering.

FREE STRIKES

Every creature can make a **free strike** as an action on their turn, though doing so typically isn't the most effective choice. Most of the time, you'll use free strikes when the rules call for it. Specific rules let you use free strikes as part of an action that allows you to also do something else impactful, such as how the Charge action lets you move and use a melee free strike in one action (see [Charge](#) above).

Many rules and abilities allow heroes to make free strikes when it isn't their turn, such as the tactician's Overwatch ability. As well, all characters can make an opportunity attack free strike.

OPPORTUNITY ATTACKS

Whenever a creature within the reach of your melee free strike moves out of it without shifting, you can take advantage of their movement to quickly make a melee free strike against them as a free triggered action. This is called an opportunity attack.

If you have a bane or double bane on the power roll against the creature, you can't make the free strike.

STANDARD FREE STRIKES

Every hero has two standard free strikes available to them. Your class might give you additional free strike options, and your kit can improve the standard options (see [Kits](#)).

A melee weapon free strike is a melee attack made with an unarmed strike or an improvised weapon. A ranged weapon free strike is a ranged attack made with an improvised weapon. At the Director's discretion, the damage type of an improvised weapon can change based on the object used. For example, if you use a burning torch as an improvised weapon, it could deal fire damage.

MELEE WEAPON FREE STRIKE

Keywords: Attack, Melee, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Reach 1 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

- 11 or lower: **2 damage**
- 12–16: **6 damage**
- 17+: **9 damage**

RANGED WEAPON FREE STRIKE

Keywords: Attack, Ranged, Weapon **Type:** Action
Distance: Ranged 5 **Target:** 1 creature or object

Power Roll + Might or Agility:

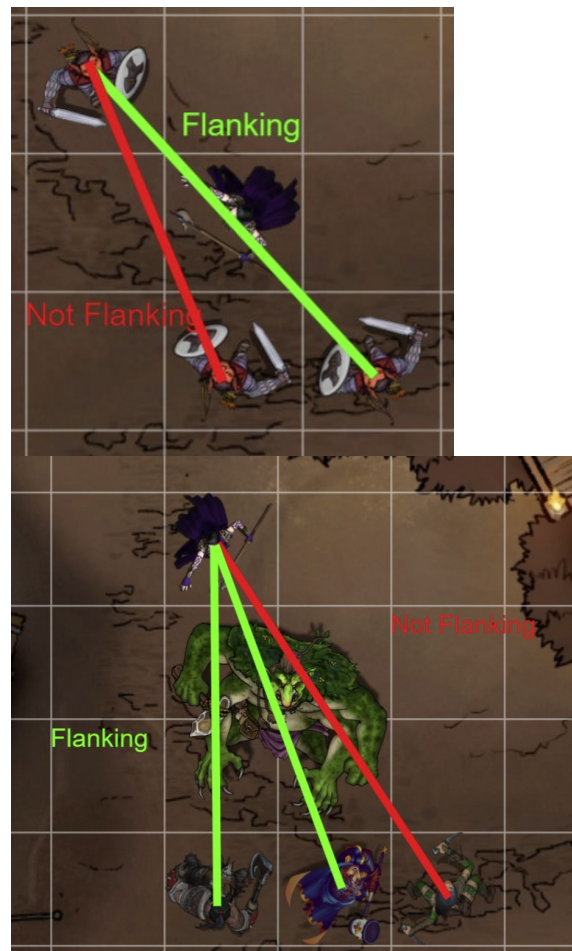
- 11 or lower: **2 damage**
- 12–16: **5 damage**
- 17+: **8 damage**

FLANKING

When you and at least one ally are adjacent to the same enemy and on completely opposite sides of the enemy, you are flanking that enemy. While flanking an enemy, you gain an edge on melee attacks against them.

If you're unsure whether your hero and an ally are flanking a foe, imagine a line extending from the center of your space to your ally's space. If that line passes through opposite sides or corners of the enemy's space, then you and your ally are flanking the enemy.

You must have line of effect to the enemy and be able to take triggered actions in order to gain or grant the flanking benefit.





COVER

When you have line of effect to a creature or object but that target has at least half their form blocked by a solid obstruction such as a tree, wall, or overturned table, the target has cover. You take a bane on attacks and area abilities that deal damage against creatures or objects that have cover from you.

CONCEALMENT

Darkness, fog, invisibility magic, and any other effect that fully obscures a creature but doesn't protect their body grants that creature concealment. You can target a creature who has concealment with attacks, provided they aren't hidden (see [Hide and Sneak](#) in [Adventuring](#)). However, attacks against such creatures take a bane. Even if you have line of effect to a creature, they have concealment from you if you can't see them.

INVISIBLE CREATURES

Invisible creatures always have concealment from other creatures. If an invisible creature isn't hidden, they can still be targeted with abilities, though attacks against them take a bane. The test made to find a hidden creature who is invisible takes a bane.

DAMAGE

Whenever you take damage, you reduce your Stamina by an amount equal to the damage taken.

DAMAGE TYPES

Typical damage, such as that caused by weapons, falling, traps, and monstrous claws, has no type associated with it. That's because for most creatures, there's no difference in the amount of harm caused by being run through with a pike, dropped from a height onto a stone floor, slashed by a pendulum scythe, or skewered on a minotaur's horns.

However, when it comes to elemental and magical damage sources, some creatures might have an immunity or weakness to that damage. As such, attacks and effects note when they deal any of the following damage types: acid, cold, corruption, fire, holy, lightning, poison, psychic, or sonic.

DAMAGE IMMUNITY

Damage immunity means that a creature can ignore some or all of the damage they would usually take from certain attacks or effects.

Damage immunity might have a damage type associated with it, expressed as "[damage type] immunity." Alternatively, damage immunity might apply to any powers that deal damage with the Weapon, Magic, or Psionic keyword. Damage immunity of either kind often has a value associated with it, so that one creature's stat block notes "fire immunity 5," while another creature has "Magic immunity 5."

Whenever a target with damage immunity takes damage of the indicated type or from a power with the indicated keyword, they reduce the damage by the value of the immunity (to a minimum of 0 damage). If the value of the immunity is "all," then the target takes no damage of the indicated type or from those powers.

Certain creatures also have forced move damage immunity. Whenever they take damage from forced movement, that damage is reduced by a number equal to their immunity.

Damage immunity should be the last thing applied when calculating damage. For instance, if your hero has Weapon immunity 5 and takes 8 damage from a weapon attack, you would take 3 damage. If a tactician first halved the damage you take with the Parry triggered action, you would take 4 damage from the attack before immunity is applied, with immunity then reducing the damage to 0.

If multiple damage immunities apply to a source of damage, only the immunity with the highest value applies.

DAMAGE WEAKNESS

Damage weakness works like damage immunity, except that creatures take extra damage whenever they take damage of the indicated type, or from a source with the indicated keyword. For instance, if a creature has fire weakness 5 and is dealt 10 fire damage, they take 15 fire damage instead.

A creature who has "damage weakness X" with no specific type or keyword indicated has weakness of the indicated amount when they take damage of any type.

If you have both damage immunity and weakness applied to a source of damage, apply both. First apply weakness, then immunities.

STAMINA

Your hero's survivability is represented by your **Stamina**. Think of Stamina as a combination of a creature's physical vitality and their overall energy for dodging and resisting incoming blows, spells, and other violence. It's not that every instance of damage deals a bleeding wound to you, but that each one chips away at your ability to fight effectively. An attack might make you sweat as you leap

back to avoid an arrow, while another might just graze your elbow with a dagger nick, leaving a dull, distracting pain. Eventually, though, this draining of energy leaves you open for bigger blows that can truly harm your body—or possibly kill you.

After any damage you take is reduced by damage immunity or other effects, your Stamina is reduced by an amount equal to the remaining damage. Some effects can also reduce your Stamina maximum, limiting the amount of Stamina you can regain.

RECOVERIES AND RECOVERY VALUE

Each hero has a number of Recoveries determined by their class. A hero also has a recovery value that equals one-third of their Stamina, rounded down. When you use the Catch Breath action (see [Actions](#)), you spend a Recovery and regain Stamina equal to your recovery value. Outside of combat, you can spend as many Recoveries as you have remaining. Some abilities, items, and other effects allow you to spend a Recovery to regain Stamina equal to your recovery value plus a little extra (as described by the effect), or to regain Stamina without spending a Recovery.

WINDING

Your winded value equals half your Stamina maximum. When your Stamina is equal to or less than your winded value, you are winded. Although being winded has no effects on its own, certain ancestry, class, item, and title abilities affect winded creatures.

You can tell when other creatures are winded and vice versa.

DYING AND DEATH

When your Stamina is 0 or lower, you are dying. While dying, you can't take the Catch Breath action in combat, and whenever you make a test using Might or Agility, make an attack, or use an action, maneuver, or a triggered action, you lose 1d6 Stamina after the action, maneuver, or triggered action is resolved. This Stamina loss can't be prevented in any way. While you are dying, your allies can help you spend recoveries in combat, and you can spend Recoveries out of combat as usual.

While your Stamina is lower than 0, if it reaches the negative of your winded value, you die. When you die, you can't be brought back to life without the use of a special powerful item such as a Scroll of Resurrection.

DIRECTOR-CONTROLLED CREATURES

Director-controlled creatures die when their Stamina drops to 0.

NO RECOVERIES

Director-controlled creatures don't have Recoveries or a recovery value. Any such creatures who regain Stamina during a battle do so via a special item or an ability in their stat block. However, there are times when a hero might wish to use an ability that allows another creature to spend a Recovery or to regain Stamina equal to their recovery value on an injured NPC. In such cases, a

Director-controlled creature regains Stamina equal to one-third their Stamina maximum.

KNOCKING CREATURES OUT

If you damage a creature with an attack that would kill them, you can choose to instead knock them unconscious. If a creature takes damage while unconscious in this way, they die.

Director-controlled creatures remain unconscious for 1 hour if no one does anything to end that condition. They then gain 1 Stamina and their unconsciousness ends.

Heroes remain unconscious for 1 hour if no one does anything to end that condition. After 1 hour, they can spend a Recovery and end their unconsciousness. If the hero has no Recoveries left, they can't wake up until they complete a respite.

UNCONSCIOUS

While you are unconscious, you can't take actions, maneuvers, triggered actions, free triggered actions, or free maneuvers; your speed is 0; you are unaware of your surroundings; and you are prone. Attacks against you have a double edge. If you wake up from being unconscious, you can stand up from prone as a free maneuver.

TEMPORARY STAMINA

Some abilities, treasures, and other effects grant a creature temporary Stamina. Temporary Stamina shouldn't be included in a creature's Stamina total when figuring out a creature's recovery value or winded value. If you have temporary Stamina while winded, dying, or dead, the temporary Stamina doesn't change those states.

Whenever you take damage while you have temporary Stamina, the temporary Stamina decreases first, and any leftover damage is applied to your Stamina as usual. For instance, if you have 10 temporary Stamina and take 16 damage, you lose the temporary Stamina and then lose another 6 Stamina.

There is no maximum to how much temporary Stamina you can have. Regaining Stamina can't restore temporary Stamina. If you have temporary Stamina and then gain more temporary Stamina, you get whichever amount of temporary Stamina is greater, rather than adding the two pools together. For instance, if an ability grants you 10 temporary Stamina when you already have 5, you have 10 temporary Stamina, not 15.

Unless otherwise indicated, temporary Stamina disappears when you finish a Respite.

OBJECT STAMINA

Mundane objects in the game have Stamina based on the material they're made of. When an object's Stamina is reduced to 0, the object is destroyed. Objects have damage immunity all to poison and psychic damage. Objects made of common materials have stamina as follows:

- A size 1 object or 1 square of a larger object made of glass has 1 Stamina.

- A size 1 object or 1 square of a larger object made of wood has 3 Stamina.
- A size 1 object or 1 square of a larger object made of stone has 6 Stamina.
- A size 1 object or 1 square of a larger object made of metal has 9 Stamina.

The Director can decide that a well-made or poorly made object has more or less Stamina. Destroying a supernatural object often (but not always) requires a specific quest, such as throwing a magic ring back into the volcano where it was forged.

UNDERWATER COMBAT

If a creature is fully submerged in water, they have fire immunity 5 and lightning weakness 5. If their speed doesn't have the Swim keyword, all their power rolls take a bane.

MOUNTED COMBAT

A willing allied creature with the Mount role (see [Creature Roles](#) in the *Bestiary*) can serve as your mount as long as their size is greater than yours. You can climb onto your mount freely (see [Climbing Other Creatures](#)). You can then use your maneuver on your turn to allow your mount to take a move action instead of you. The mount can benefit from this extra move action only once per round.

If a creature riding a mount is force moved, they are knocked off the mount, and must make a test to determine how they land (see [Climbing Other Creatures](#)). If a mount is force moved, they carry any riders with them.

END OF COMBAT

At the end of combat, the Director determines if the heroes each gain a Victory (see [Victories](#)). Any effect or condition affecting you that you suffered during combat (except for being winded, unconscious, or dying) ends if you want it to.

HOW COMBAT ENDS

The Director determines when a combat encounter is over. While some battles—especially showdowns with important villains—can be about a fight to the bitter end, many other encounters can become a slog if the heroes need to fight until every last enemy's Stamina is reduced to 0.

To avoid a battle dragging, the Director can set objectives when they build the encounter. Once the heroes achieve those objectives, or if it becomes clear that they can win the fight with minimal effort, the Director can end the encounter. They might do so by calling "Cut!" like a film director, or can use some other phrase or indicator.

When the Director ends combat this way, the players typically choose how the battle ends by narrating a dramatic finish. Or in rarer cases when the heroes achieve a major objective that sets off a story-defining event, the Director narrates the end of the battle with a positive outcome for the players, called an event ending (see below).

FLEEING FOES

If you've played an RPG like this one before, odds are you've had an encounter where you didn't chase down every last fleeing foe—and then one such foe grabbed another bunch of evil buddies and came back to ambush you. It takes only one experience like this to create players who promise, "No survivors. No mercy!" whenever foes break ranks. Chasing down every last foe can be fun once in a while, but it can easily turn a tactical encounter into a slog.

Luckily, this is a heroic game. Although the Director can surprise the players with dramatic reveals and twisty-turny stories, "Gotcha!" moments that make players suspicious of every fleeing bandit shouldn't be part of those stories. If a bandit is fleeing an encounter, they're running away to rethink their life. If they're going for help, the players should get some sense of that—for example, the bandit screaming at the top of their lungs as they run toward their leader's tent. That way, the players can process what's happening, and will understand that stopping that fleeing bandit is part of the challenge of the encounter.

OBJECTIVE ENDINGS

While planning a combat encounter, the Director can set one or more objectives the heroes can achieve to end the encounter without dropping every last foe. Some broad categories of objectives are described in this section, but the Director should feel free to create their own. As well, Directors can always end combat anytime it becomes clear that the heroes are going to win an encounter with minimal effort, even if they haven't achieved all the objectives.

DIMINISH NUMBERS

Sometimes the heroes simply defeat enough of their enemies that the rest don't stand a chance. For example, the Director might decide that an encounter ends when the heroes have no nonminion enemies remaining, when the heroes outnumber their foes, or when the number of remaining enemies is half of what it was at the start of the encounter.

The Director can also use the following guideline to determine when it's time to call "Cut!" if one of the encounter's objectives is for the heroes to diminish their foes. At the end of a round of combat with no living solo or boss creatures (see the *Bestiary*), the Director should add up the levels of all the enemies who oppose the heroes. Minions count as 1/5 of their listed level for this purpose. Then the Director adds the levels of all the remaining heroes who aren't dying together. If the combined level of the heroes is twice or more than the combined level of their enemies, the Director should end combat.

DEFEAT SPECIFIC FOE

A combat encounter might include one or more of the heroes' enemies commanding the rest, such as a hobgoblin captain leading a group of mercenaries, or one or more particularly powerful foes among a group of weaker ones, such as a pair of tusker demons in a gnoll war band. Because these enemies are the stars of the encounter, if only weak foes are left once the stars are gone, the battle loses its challenge and it's time to wrap it up. Under such circumstances, the Director can end the combat once those special creatures are defeated.

GET THE THING!

Classic heroic fantasy is full of important objects that the heroes must protect from the forces of evil: magic rings, royal birth certificates, dragon eggs, and the like. Heroes often find themselves at violent odds with their enemies as they race to collect a valuable or important item from a guarded temple or castle, or when they need to steal the item from a group of enemies already in possession of it. Objectives in this category work well when paired with other objectives. For instance, the heroes must steal a ledger containing a record of criminal activity from an overmind and her lackeys. However, even if they obtain the ledger, the battle won't be over until they also defeat the overmind, who won't let the book go without a fight!

DESTROY THE THING!

Combat doesn't always have to be about destroying your enemies. Sometimes it's about destroying their stuff! Burning a pirate captain's vessel, closing a portal to the Abyssal Wasteland before it lets in an army of demons, or shutting down a massive kobold trap made of spinning blades could so hamper the heroes' foes that the battle is no longer worth fighting once the damage is done.

SAVE ANOTHER

No one earns the mantle of hero without saving a few lives. If the heroes rescue a powerful ally from the clutches of their foes during combat, the added strength of that ally might be enough to make the remainder of the encounter trivial. When you and your allies save a griffon from a crew of poachers, the hunters become the ... well, you know the rest.

HOLD THEM OFF

Sometimes the heroes just need to buy time. They might need to battle a conquering tyrant's army to allow innocent villagers time to escape. They might need to hold off wave after wave of zombies while a group of priests completes a ritual to lay the undead to rest for good. To achieve this objective, the heroes need to stay alive and protect a particular position for a number of rounds determined by the Director.

STOP THE ACTION

Sometimes combat is complicated by the fact that the heroes need to stop the villainous actions of their foes. It's not enough to simply defeat the warriors in a cult. The heroes must also stop the zealots' archdevil-summoning ritual! Or it might be that the heroes need to interrupt a wedding and make sure an evil mage doesn't marry the heir to the throne. Despite combat, the mage forces the ceremony to continue! Objectives in this category often have a timer associated with them. If the heroes don't achieve the objective in a certain number of rounds, the conditions of the battle should change. For instance, if the cultists summon the archdevil, defeating the devil suddenly becomes the heroes' new objective!

MAKING OBJECTIVES KNOWN

Encounters work best if the players have a good idea of what they are working toward. The Director doesn't need to state objectives outright to the players at the start of the battle, though they can if they like. Not all groups want to start combat with the Director saying, "Your objectives are to break the

eldritch machine and destroy the vampire lord," because doing so might take the players out of the game's narrative.

In many combat encounters, the objectives are obvious. For instance, in a battle against a necromancer controlling a horde of undead minions, the players probably don't need to be told that defeating the necromancer ends the encounter when that's an easy assumption. In an encounter against cultists performing a world-ending ritual, the heroes can guess that stopping the ritual is one of their objectives. In fact, they probably went on this adventure to specifically achieve that objective. They're not there for karaoke at the end of existence!

Not all objectives are so clear, however. In a battle against a goblin cursespitter, a kobold legionary, and three human knaves guarding the entrance to a bandit fortress, it can be difficult to know what the exact objective of the encounter is, beyond "Defeat them all!" The objective could be to simply diminish the enemy forces, but it could also be the case that the cursespitter leads the group, so that defeating the goblin causes the other forces to fall apart. In such a case, it helps if the Director provides at least a hint of that setup at the start of the battle. The cursespitter could clearly issue orders and even call the other bandits cowards, demanding that they not "run away like last time!"

COMPLETE THE ACTION

The opposite of "Stop the Action," this objective ending sees the characters charged with initiating an event, performing a ritual, and so forth. For instance, if the heroes are attempting to launch an airship while repelling a time raider boarding party, the encounter could be over the moment the heroes manage to activate the vessel and take off with just a few time raiders actually aboard.

OBJECTIVES AND ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY

Objectives can modify an encounter's difficulty by extending the scope of success beyond grinding every enemy down to 0 Stamina. When the heroes are challenged to defeat specific foes or take other actions while trying not to die, those objectives can make an encounter easier than the encounter rules would usually dictate. As such, the Director should feel free to turn up the heat a bit.

(Playtest note: More specific advice on this topic is to come as the encounter-building system is developed.)

DRAMATIC FINISH

If the heroes are able to end a fight with a dramatic finish, the Director assigns each hero one or more of their remaining enemies, then asks that hero's player to describe how the hero neutralizes that enemy. The hero might deliver a killing blow, knock their foe out, or let the enemy flee with their tail between their legs (literally or figuratively). If the fight has more heroes than Director-controlled enemies, the Director can assign more than one hero to an enemy, then ask the players how their characters work together to bring that enemy down. After everyone gives a description, the battle ends.

EVENT ENDING

If the Director calls the end of combat when a specific objective in an encounter is achieved, the event ending creates a big narrative finish. The Director can pick a

narrative trigger for an event ending before an encounter begins, or can come up with one on the fly if that makes more sense.

Event endings can cover big scenarios such as the characters destroying a dam to unleash a river upon their enemies, or completing a ritual that causes all the demons they've been battling to be sent back to the Abyssal Wasteland, accompanied by visual details. For example, if the heroes are battling a necromancer who controls a horde of zombies, the undead might all crumble to dust when the necromancer is defeated. If the heroes destroy an eldritch machine sapping the land of its natural energy, the shockwave from the device's destruction could vaporize the cultists attempting to protect it.

LAST-STAND STAMINA

For players who like to always duke it out to the bitter end rather than ending combat early, the Director can use this optional rule to help bring things to a quicker conclusion. When it's clear that the heroes are going to win a battle, their enemies are overcome with fear, despair, and panic. In this weakened state, each enemy's Stamina drops to 1, and each minion has a damage threshold of 1. The heroes can then make short work of any remaining foes, getting the satisfaction of total annihilation via dice rolls.

NEGOTIATION

Negotiation gives the heroes a chance to get what they want without combat ... or at least without further combat! You might negotiate with a king to obtain military support against an incursion of demons in a neighboring country. You could enter into talks with a bandit leader to convince her to stop attacking merchant caravans on the road, and instead target nobles loyal to a tyrant. You might attempt to convince an archmage to allow you access to their secret library so you can research the location of a dragon-slaying axe. Negotiation covers all these scenarios and more.

Think of negotiation as something like learning a new system for combat, exploration, or investigation in an RPG. This set of rules provides a framework for roleplaying. The negotiation rules are meant to be read by players and Directors, so that both understand the rules of negotiation. If a player hasn't read these rules, the Director and other players who have can explain them to that player during their first negotiation.

WHEN TO NEGOTIATE

In order for a negotiation to occur, an NPC must have an interest in negotiating with the heroes—but must also have a reason to not simply jump on board with whatever the heroes propose. Negotiations happen only when an NPC has that internal tension between interest and reluctance. For example, if the characters ask a king to send his army into a neighboring kingdom to battle a demon incursion, the king needs to be conflicted. He wants to stop the incursion, but he doesn't want to risk the lives of his soldiers defending a foreign nation while leaving their own people unprotected. If the heroes want the help of the king's army, they need to negotiate.

Heroes aren't expected to use the negotiation rules every time one character tries to convince an NPC to see things their way. For instance, if a hero wants information about a cult leader from a captured cultist, a single Presence test using the Lie skill or a Might test using Intimidate is likely all that's needed. A character who wants to flirt with the local alchemist to obtain a free Healing Potion likely just needs to make a Presence test using the Flirt skill.

By contrast, negotiations typically involve all the heroes interacting with one or more important named NPCs who can provide information, items, or services that dramatically change the course of an adventure. Often, this involves the heroes seeking an item of great power, a retainer or companion, the services of an influential organization or nation, or a plot-twist-worthy piece of information. Convincing a lich to lend the party the legendary *Codex Mortis*, trying to convince a dragon to halt an attack on a wizard's tower, or talking the leaders of an enemy army into standing down means that a negotiation is in order.

To negotiate successfully, the heroes must make persuasive arguments to convince NPCs to do what they want. "Do it or we kill you" is a threat that might well accompany a single Might test using the Intimidate skill, but it's not a negotiating tactic.

LIMITS OF NEGOTIATION

Some players might instinctively feel that the negotiation rules should give them something akin to mind-control superpowers. They're not used to imagining NPCs complexly, and might attempt to negotiate in situations where negotiation is either completely unreasonable or literally impossible. No matter how persuasive or well-spoken a hero is, there's no argument to be made that might convince the vile Lord Syuul to give up his pursuit of evil and become a gardener. A negotiation typically can't convince a queen to hand over her crown to the heroes and name them the new rulers of the land, or inspire a dragon to fork over every piece of treasure in their hoard. Negotiations only work when the heroes ask for something from an NPC that the NPC is willing to seriously consider giving them.

Negotiation is not a process that changes an NPC's character. Rather, the heroes are trying to make an NPC understand how behaving differently would be *in* character. You might well be able to get the hitherto loyal lieutenant of an evil boss to reconsider the error of their ways. That's a classic dramatic trope. But even then, you're not changing their character—you're convincing them that their current evil ways are out of character. "Is this who you are? Is this how you want to be remembered?!"

If some players want to use the negotiation system as a means to an end by having their characters say, "Just do what we tell you, or else!", you can remind them that that's not how most people, including NPCs, work. Any heroes who open with that attitude are likely to lose the negotiation before it begins.

THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE

In the real world, negotiations rarely come with a threat of immediate violence. Ambassadors don't usually get into fistfights. But this is a heroic fantasy RPG, featuring heroes who are armed to the teeth and able to alter reality with their minds. The threat of violence is already implied. Everyone involved knows that the characters could draw steel at any moment.

The Director typically assumes that the underlying potential for events to turn violent is already factored into every negotiation. However, if the heroes decide to bring that threat to the forefront, then they've exited the realm of negotiation and have entered into a different type of relationship—and it's probably time to determine initiative.

Negotiation is about persuading someone to help you willingly because you've convinced them that meeting your objectives is a good idea. Working with you is wise or logical, or might make them look good. A hero can absolutely threaten someone with violence and force them to do what they want, but this is an incredibly temporary state. A threatened NPC isn't willingly doing what they've been asked. They're doing it on threat of violence, and will comply only while that threat is evident—after which, they'll likely go back to their previous behavior as soon as they think they can get away with it.

NEWGOTIATION

If you've never played a game with a dedicated negotiation system like this, you might need to run it once or twice before you master it, similar to learning any new subsystem in an RPG. The new rules you'll learn are all dedicated to facilitating roleplaying by allowing the heroes to beseech an NPC for aid, and only involve rolling dice when the heroes don't directly appeal to that NPC's motivations.

NEGOTIATION STATS

During negotiation, the Director assigns NPCs four temporary statistics—interest, patience, motivations, and pitfalls. The heroes can strike a favorable deal if they maximize an NPC's interest by making arguments that invoke the NPC's motivations and avoid their pitfalls—but they have to do all that before the NPC's patience wears out.

INTEREST

An NPC's interest represents how eager they are to make a deal with the heroes. Interest is graded on a scale of 0 (no interest) to 5 (the most possible interest). When a negotiation begins, an NPC's interest is between 1 and 4. If the NPC's interest goes to 5, they make a final offer and the negotiation ends (see [Keep Going or Stop](#), below). If the NPC's interest drops to 0, they end a negotiation without offering the heroes any deal.

Interest increases and decreases during the negotiation based on the arguments the heroes make.

PATIENCE

An NPC's patience represents how much time and effort they're willing to devote to a negotiation. Patience is graded on a scale of 0 to 5, with each NPC starting a negotiation with their patience higher than 0. If an NPC's patience reaches 0, the NPC makes a final offer and negotiation ends (see [Keep Going or Stop](#)).

Patience can decrease each time the heroes make an argument during a negotiation.

LANGUAGE AND PATIENCE

If at least one hero negotiating with an NPC speaks the NPC's native language (not including Caelian), then the NPC's patience increases by 1 at the start of the negotiation (to a maximum of 5). If three or more heroes negotiating with an NPC speak the NPC's native language, the NPC's patience increases by 2 (to a maximum of 5).

FOR THE DIRECTOR: SHARING INTEREST AND PATIENCE

It's up to you as the Director to decide whether to share an NPC's interest or patience during a negotiation. Sometimes sharing this information can make an encounter more dramatic, with the players watching their progress rise and fall in real time. Other groups might find negotiation more fun, dramatic, and immersive if those exact numbers are hidden from the players.

In playtesting, some groups loved seeing these statistics and some groups didn't, just as some groups like knowing the Stamina of every creature in a battle and others prefer to keep that information secret. Talk to your group about what they'd prefer.

MOTIVATIONS

Each NPC has at least two motivations the heroes can appeal to with their arguments. Arguments that appeal to an NPC's motivation require an easier power roll to increase the NPC's interest. Arguments that don't appeal to a motivation require a more difficult power roll. See [Making Arguments](#) for more information.

Each motivation can be successfully appealed to only once during a negotiation. To successfully appeal to a motivation, the heroes must use the motivation in an argument without mentioning one of the NPC's pitfalls or being caught in a lie.

PITFALLS

Pitfalls are motivations that spark ire, discomfort, shame, fear, or some other negative response in an NPC. Using a pitfall in an argument causes an NPC's interest and patience to wane. Each NPC has at least one pitfall, and many have two or more.

Pitfalls and motivations are two sides of the same concept. They're presented below as a single list, so that what might be a motivation for one NPC is a pitfall for another. Whenever the heroes make an argument, they risk stumbling into one of an NPC's pitfalls unless they do their research beforehand or read the NPC well.

LIST OF MOTIVATIONS AND PITFALLS

An NPC can have any of the following twelve motivations or pitfalls.

BENEVOLENCE

An NPC with the benevolence motivation believes in sharing what they have with others. However, an NPC involved in a negotiation must be limited in their benevolence, so that they don't just give the heroes what they need.

Sometimes an NPC's benevolence might extend only to a specific group of people, so that a benevolent pirate captain might share their plunder freely with the rest of their crew—but they're still plundering! Other times, an NPC's charity might be limited by the fact that they don't have much to give. A benevolent NPC might be hesitant to give the heroes help because they believe their limited resources are more necessary or could do more good somewhere else.

An NPC with the benevolence pitfall has a cynical view of the world, believing that no creature has a right to anything just by being alive. The idea of helping others because it's the right thing to do is a preposterous, immature, or inexperienced idea to be laughed off or snuffed out.

Arguments that appeal to a benevolence motivation contend that if the NPC strikes a deal with the heroes, the people the NPC cares about will benefit from the deal. Example arguments include the following:

- "If you lend us the Sword of Agathor, we can make Capital safer for your guild by using it to lay your enemies low."

- “If you can teleport us into the dragon’s cave, we’ll give you half the wyrm’s hoard once we cut off the creature’s head. That could benefit generations of students at your academy!”

DISCOVERY

An NPC with the discovery motivation wants to learn new lore, explore forgotten places, break ground with new experiments, or uncover artifacts lost to time. Their curiosity and quest for knowledge might be driven by a specific goal, such as seeking the cure for a rare disease or a portal to a specific far-off world. Or it could be that they are a naturally inquisitive person who just wants to understand all they can about the timescape.

An NPC with the discovery pitfall has no interest in finding new places, peoples, or ideas. It might be that the unknown scares them or makes them so uncomfortable that they’d rather remain ignorant. Alternatively, a previous pursuit of discovery might have turned out poorly for them.

Arguments that appeal to a discovery motivation contend that striking a deal with the heroes will allow the NPC to gain new knowledge or acquire unique property. Example arguments include the following:

- “Allow us to use your cipher to translate the only copy of the *Codex Mortis*, and then we’ll let you read the book when we’re done.”
- “We know the journey to Decant Isle is dangerous, but we’re going into uncharted territory. We thought that your crew of sailors might want to be among the few mortals to lay eyes on the place.”

FREEDOM

An NPC with the freedom motivation wants no authority above them and desires no authority over others. They might already have personal freedom and wish to maintain that status quo, or they might wish to liberate themselves or others from someone else’s authority.

An NPC with the freedom pitfall believes that a world without authority is one in turmoil and chaos. They might even believe that they are the right person to rule, and that their ideals should be the ones that become the law of the land.

Arguments that appeal to a freedom motivation contend that helping the heroes will maintain or grant freedom to the NPC or other people. Example arguments include the following:

- “I know you want to see the queen’s authority revoked forever. She has no heirs. Give us the key to her study so that we can prove her corruption and give you a chance to topple the monarchy henceforth.”
- “If you promise to give us ten vials of Assassin’s Kiss, we’ll see to it that the baron’s prison is emptied.”

GREED

An NPC with the greed motivation desires wealth and resources above almost anything else. Sometimes these NPCs are misers, much like wyrms who hoard coins and gems but never spend or donate them. Others flaunt their wealth, viewing it as a sign of their station in life.

Greed-driven NPCs might share their wealth with a select group of people they love, such as a noble lord who indulges his children’s every desire. Some NPCs might be greedy for resources other than money, such as a demon who wants to collect and devour souls, or a troll lord who hungers endlessly for the flesh of others.

An NPC with the greed pitfall has no interest in accumulating wealth or other resources, and becomes offended if anyone tries to buy their participation. They hold their ideals above material desires.

Arguments that appeal to a greed motivation contend that helping the heroes will increase the NPC’s wealth or assets. Example arguments include the following:

- “You should help us battle the overmind. Xorranox’s wealth is legendary, and we’ll see to it that you get your fair share.”
- “Give us a week to do research among your private collection of books, and we’ll give you another ten unique tomes we found in an ancient star elf sanctuary.”

HIGHER AUTHORITY

An NPC with the higher authority motivation remains staunchly loyal to a person or force they perceive as more important than themselves. This higher authority could be an organization, a deity or being of great power, a formal leader such as a noble or monarch, a mystical presence or force the NPC might not fully understand, or a person the NPC sees as an informal authority figure (an older sibling, a personal hero, and so forth).

An NPC with the higher authority pitfall scoffs at the idea of serving another. The NPC might not believe that all people should be free, but they certainly believe that they personally shouldn’t have to answer to anyone.

Arguments that appeal to a higher authority motivation contend that it’s in the interest of the higher authority for the NPC to strike a deal with the heroes. A hero might even tell the NPC that if the higher authority were in the NPC’s position, they would take the deal. Example arguments include the following:

- “All great creations honor your god, Malus. If you teach me to forge the Hammer of Azdul, that will be a great honor to bestow upon your god.”
- “You know what Jarith the Bold would do? He’d guide us through the vast wasteland of the desert to reach the tower. Will you be our Jarith?”

JUSTICE

An NPC with the justice motivation wants to see the righteous rewarded and the wicked punished, however subjective their sense of who or what is good and evil. A priest who venerates a god of nature might believe that all who protect plants and animals are righteous, and that who harvest natural resources as miners and lumberjacks do must die. Having a justice motivation doesn’t necessarily make an NPC a kind or charitable person.

An NPC with the justice pitfall doesn’t believe that the timescape is an inherently just place, and has no interest in making it one. The world is eternal conflict, there is no such thing as justice, and anyone who thinks otherwise is a naive fool.

Arguments that appeal to a justice motivation position the heroes on the good side of an NPC's sense of right and wrong. Example arguments include the following:

- “You despise those who steal from nature. Allow us peacefully into your wode so we may bottle the Blessed Spring's water. We're going to use it to stop an army from felling every tree and tearing up the earth wherever they go.”
- “You think nobles are lazy barons who get rich off the backs of peasants. We want to dethrone Lord Saxton. Lend us your crew of thieves, and we'll see to it that when Saxton falls, the people can choose their own leaders.”

LEGACY

An NPC with the legacy motivation desires fame while alive and acclaim that lasts long after their death. They hope others will know and remember their deeds, great or terrible. Some of these NPCs might even seek immortality through deification or undeath, so that the eventual shedding of their mortal coil doesn't prevent them from continuing to make history.

An NPC with a legacy pitfall cares nothing about leaving a personal mark on the world. To them, such vain thinking is nothing but a waste of time.

Arguments that appeal to a legacy motivation contend that striking a deal with the heroes increases the likelihood that people will talk about the NPC for centuries to come. Example arguments include the following:

- “If you give us the vizier's itinerary, I'll compose a song about your bravery in defying him, then sing it in every tavern from here to Ix!”
- “Yes, losing the battle is a possibility. If we do, the gnolls will still come for you eventually. But if we crush our foes, imagine the honors, the histories, the poems, the statues—all of it created for you because your siege engines turned the tide.”

PEACE

An NPC with the peace motivation wants calm in their life. Under typical circumstances, they want to be left alone to run their business, farm, kingdom, criminal empire, or whatever small slice of the timescape is theirs. Some such NPCs don't have peace and need help obtaining it, while others want their peaceful status quo to be maintained.

An NPC with the peace pitfall hates being bored. They want excitement, drama, and danger in their life. For them, there's nothing worse than the status quo.

Arguments that appeal to a peace motivation contend that helping the heroes will earn the NPC some peace, at least for a little while. Example arguments include the following:

- “You have a good thing going here. A little burgling of nobles, some alcohol smuggling, and some illegal gambling dens. No one's getting hurt, but Constable Cofax is closing in on you. We could redirect him toward some real danger to the community, if you can help us set a trap for the Watchmaker.”
- “I know you don't sell to outsiders, but we need that helm. I'm going to use it to turn back a group of

hobgoblins marching this way. They're not going to be as friendly as us.”

POWER

An NPC with the power motivation covets the authority of others. They want to increase their influence, no matter how great it already is, and maintain their domain. They might seek power through conquering others, the collection of artifacts, or through the infusion of supernatural rituals—though why choose one method when all three together achieve the best results? Some such NPCs are world-traversing tyrants, but the petty administrators of village organizations and shrines can covet power just as hungrily.

An NPC with the power pitfall has no interest in authority for themselves. They might respect the authority of others, but they hate the thought of ruling over other people and roundly reject any suggestion of the idea.

Arguments that appeal to a power motivation contend that working with the heroes will increase or protect the NPC's power. Example arguments include the following:

- “Everyone knows you should be running the watch, Percy. The old lady's retiring, and our friend Baron Kuglar is naming the replacement. Now, you let us into the restricted armory, and we'll put in a good word.”
- “We know he's your brother, Your Highness, but he's older—first in line for the throne. If you help us prove he's in a cult, you become the favorite son.”

NPCs CHANGE OVER TIME

Just like the heroes, NPCs in negotiations are complex individuals who can change over time. It's possible that the heroes might have to negotiate with the same NPC for several different favors during the course of a campaign, over which time the NPC's motivations and pitfalls might change. If the heroes turn a bandit captain with the greed and power motivations into a temporary ally, that criminal might learn from them, changing their ways to rob only those who exploit the poor and giving those earnings to people in need. The next time the heroes negotiate with the bandit captain, they have the benevolence and protection motivations.

PROTECTION

An NPC with the protection motivation has land, people, information, items, or an organization they want protected above all else. Keeping their charge safe is a duty they hold dear, and aiding in that protection earns their favor. Most people have friends or family they wish to protect, but an NPC with the protection motivation believes in doing so above all else.

An NPC with the protection pitfall is happy to leave others to fend for themselves. They don't believe that it's their responsibility to protect anyone other than themselves, and might be outright disgusted at the thought of risking themselves or their property to protect others.

Arguments that appeal to a protection motivation contend that helping the heroes allows an NPC to better protect their charge. Example arguments include the following:

- “Dead soldiers grow the necromancer's ranks. Total annihilation is the only way to defeat her. March with us now, while her army is small, and we'll defeat her. Or

you could gamble that someone else tries, fails, and suddenly she's at the border, ready to overrun your kingdom with an army tenfold larger than what it is now."

- "I see your grandchild is hell-bent on joining the service. I happen to have a magic suit of armor that could help them ward off the blows of monsters and ruffians. I'd be happy to give it to you, in exchange for borrowing your griffons for a few days. After all, I won't need the armor if I can simply fly over the marsh's monsters."

REVELRY

An NPC with the revelry motivation just wants to have fun. They enjoy socializing at parties, thrill-seeking, or indulging in other hedonistic activities. Getting pleasure out of life while spending time with people they like is paramount to such NPCs.

An NPC with the revelry pitfall sees social encounters and hedonism as a waste of time. They take pleasure only in work or in building their own skills and character. Others who suggest immature debauchery are not worth their time.

Arguments that appeal to the revelry motivation contend that striking a deal with the heroes will allow the NPC to get back to reveling sooner, longer, or harder. Example arguments include the following:

- "How would you like to have the most exclusive songs for your exclusive birthday celebration next week? I'll write you a whole original set list, free of charge ... provided you extend me and my band here an invitation."
- "I know you don't want to forge five Chronokinesis Crowns. How's this instead? You do that for me, and I'll give you the fourteen kegs of whiskey we found in a steel-dwarf ruin. This stuff is old, unique, and forget-your-first-name potent. You can crack a keg with your friends to celebrate a job well done."

VENGEANCE

An NPC with the vengeance motivation wants to harm another who has hurt them. Their desire for revenge could be proportional to the harm that was inflicted upon them, or they might wish to pay back their pain with interest. In some cases, a desire for vengeance can be satisfied only by the death of another, but an NPC might wish to pay back their own suffering with embarrassment, career failure, or some other less permanent pain.

An NPC with the vengeance pitfall believes that revenge solves nothing. They might have gained this belief first hand, or they might simply not have the ambition to seek revenge—and they take a dim view of others who do.

Arguments that appeal to the vengeance motivation contend that the NPC can gain payback for their pain by helping the heroes. Example arguments include the following:

- "The servants of Ajax killed your sister as she scoured the city for his cults. The Black Iron Pact works for the Overlord. Give us her diaries, and we might uncover the pact's hideaway and deal a great blow to your hated foes."

- "That prankster Huckable made your trousers tear at the last council meeting. Don't you want to pay him back? We can arrange a delicious prank at the next gathering, but we need you to guarantee the safety of the orc refugees."

OPENING A NEGOTIATION

A negotiation begins when the heroes ask something of an NPC and the Director deems that the circumstances require a negotiation. Those circumstances always involve the heroes requiring assistance that could change the course of the adventure, and having the NPC conflicted about working with them.

STOP COMBAT, START NEGOTIATION

If a hero wants to halt hostilities to negotiate with the other side, they can use a maneuver to make a hard Presence test (or another applicable test, as the Director determines) in an attempt to stop combat and start a negotiation. The test has a chance of success only if the Director believes the other side is willing and capable of negotiating. A foe who has the upper hand, who hates the heroes beyond measure, or who lacks sapience is unlikely to negotiate.

STARTING STATS

An NPC's starting negotiation stats depend on their attitude toward the heroes, as shown on the Negotiation Starting Attitudes table, and can be adjusted by the Director as they see fit. A naturally irascible NPC might have lower patience, while a hostile NPC with a greater-than-expected stake in the negotiation topic might have a higher-than-typical interest.

NEGOTIATION STARTING ATTITUDES

Attitude	Description	Interest	Patience
Hostile	Openly opposed to the heroes. Barely willing to listen.	1	2
Suspicious	Doubts the heroes' motives, but is willing to listen.	2	2
Neutral	Doesn't feel one way or the other. Would probably rather be somewhere else, but doesn't want to be rude.	2	3
Open	Willing to listen, willing to help, as long as the heroes aren't asking too much.	3	3
Friendly	The heroes seem like the NPC's people. The NPC is willing to give them the benefit of the doubt.	3	4
Trusting	The NPC has reason to take the heroes at their word, and will help if the characters don't screw this up.	3	5

UNCOVERING MOTIVATIONS

If a hero wishes to figure out an NPC's motivations, they can begin by simply asking, "What do you want out of this deal?" In response, the NPC can willingly hint at or reveal one of their motivations, usually by asking for something. For instance, a monarch NPC with the greed motivation and a penchant for collecting rare animals might suggest that the heroes retrieving a griffon egg would earn the monarch's gratitude. The Director can also decide that during the natural course of the negotiation, the NPC might offer up similar suggestions without the heroes asking, provided the NPC already has an interest of at least 3.

If an NPC isn't as forthcoming, or if the heroes want to learn one of the NPC's pitfalls, a hero can make a Reason, Intuition, or Presence test while interacting with the NPC during the negotiation, based on the tactics used to draw out the NPC. The test has the following outcomes:

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- *11 or lower:* The hero learns no information regarding the NPC's motivations or pitfalls, and the NPC realizes the hero is trying to read them and becomes annoyed. As a consequence, the NPC's patience is reduced by 1.
- *12–16:* The hero learns no information regarding the NPC's motivations or pitfalls.
- *17+:* The hero learns one of the NPC's motivations or pitfalls (their choice).

After this test is made, the heroes can't make another test to determine the same NPC's motivations or pitfalls until they make an argument to the NPC or the negotiation ends.

OUTSIDE OF NEGOTIATION

While the heroes can discover an NPC's motivations or pitfalls through tests made during negotiation, they can employ other methods of investigating motivations or pitfalls before negotiation. Research or a little reconnaissance (for instance, reading the NPC's diary or talking to their closest friends), can reveal quite a bit about a person!

MAKING ARGUMENTS

As part of their initial request to an NPC in a negotiation, a hero makes an argument as to why the NPC should give the heroes what they want. The hero might offer to do something in exchange as part of their argument, such as clear bandits from a forest, hand over a piece of treasure, or slay a dragon for the NPC. Or instead of offering something, the hero could attempt to convince the NPC that it's in their own best interest to help—or even that it's a moral imperative. For example, a hero could appeal to a knight's sense of duty, the potential wealth a mercenary could make, or the final wish of a queen's dearly departed grandmother as part of an argument. NPCs who admire the heroes are more likely to respond to compliments and buttering up, while those who fear the heroes are more likely to respond to intimidation and awe.

Arguments need a justification as to why they're true. "Helping us defeat Lord Saxton is good for you in the long run," is half of an argument, so that the hero also needs to

explain why this is the case. "Helping us defeat Lord Saxton is good for you in the long run, because we know he's coming for your kingdom after Bedegar falls!" If a hero makes half an argument, the NPC might follow up with questions such as, "Why do you say that?" or "What makes you think that's true?" to get the full argument from the hero.

One hero makes an argument to an NPC, but the players can discuss the details of the argument out of character beforehand. It's up to the group to decide how much discussion to have before making an argument, and to decide what argument the players think will best sway the NPC.

This is a good topic for discussion before a group actually gets into a negotiation, so everyone knows the other players' thoughts. Some groups have the most fun without any around-the-table discussion, while others prefer being able to strategize as often as possible.

APPEAL TO MOTIVATION

If an argument doesn't include a pitfall and appeals to one of the NPC's motivations that hasn't already been appealed to, the hero making the argument can make an easy test to attempt to sway the NPC with the argument. Depending on the argument, this can be a Reason, Intuition, or Presence test using any applicable skill—most commonly a skill from the interpersonal skill group. The test has the following outcomes.

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- *11 or lower:* The NPC's patience decreases by 1.
- *12–16:* The NPC's interest increases by 1, and their patience decreases by 1.
- *17+:* The NPC's interest increases by 1, and their patience doesn't change.

At the Director's discretion, a particularly well-roleplayed or well-reasoned argument automatically counts as a tier 3 result without a test. Good roleplaying should be rewarded!

If the heroes attempt to appeal to a motivation that's already been appealed to, the NPC's interest remains the same and their patience decreases by 1.

NO MOTIVATION OR PITFALL

If an argument doesn't include one of the NPC's motivations or pitfalls, the hero who makes the argument must make a more difficult test to appeal to the NPC. The test has the following outcomes.

Power Roll + Reason, Intuition, or Presence:

- *11 or lower:* The NPC's patience decreases by 1, and their interest decreases by 1.
- *12–16:* The NPC's patience decreases by 1.
- *17+:* The NPC's interest increases by 1, and their patience decreases by 1. (On a natural 19 or 20, the NPC's patience remains the same.)

If the heroes try to use the same argument without a pitfall or motivation twice, the test automatically gets a tier 1 result.

EVERYONE CAN PARTICIPATE

Since Reason and Intuition with creatively applied skills can be used to make arguments, all heroes can actively participate in the process of negotiation. The hero with the highest Presence who has the Persuade skill doesn't automatically have to be the one who makes all the tests.

CAUGHT IN A LIE

If a hero lies to an NPC with an argument that fails to increase the NPC's interest, the Director can decide that the NPC catches the lie and is offended by it. The NPC's interest decreases by 1, in addition to any decrease imposed by the failure.

PITFALL USED

If an argument uses one of the NPC's pitfalls, it automatically fails and the NPC's interest and patience each decrease by 1. The NPC might also warn the heroes not to treat them in such a way again.

RENOWN AND NEGOTIATION

During a negotiation, an NPC has an **Impression score** that determines the amount of Renown needed to influence them (see [Renown](#)). This score only matters if the NPC knows of the heroes. A dragon who slumbered away the last hundred years and was just woken up to negotiate can't be influenced by a hero's Renown. (By the way, it's a terrible idea to wake a dragon, even if they do know you're famous.) If the NPC does know of the hero and has an Impression that is equal to or lower than the hero's Renown, the NPC can be influenced by that hero.

The higher an NPC's Impression, the harder they are to influence with Renown. A small-time brigand has a lower Impression score than a monarch who meets with powerful and famous people all the time. The NPCs and Impression table provides examples of different archetypical NPC Impression scores. If a creature has a level, then their Impression equals their level unless the Director deems otherwise.

NPCs and IMPRESSION

Impression	Example NPC
1	Brigand leader, commoner, shop owner
2	Knight, local guildmaster, professor
3	Cult leader, locally known mage, noble lord
4	Assassin, baron, locally famous entertainer
5	Watch captain in a large city, high priest, viscount
6	Count, warlord
7	Marquis, world-renowned entertainer
8	Duke, spymaster
9	Archmage, prince
10	Demon lord, monarch
11	Archdevil, archfey, demigod
12	Deity, titan

FAME OR INFAMY?

If a hero has enough Renown to influence an NPC during negotiation, the Director decides if they are famous or infamous to the NPC. If the NPC appreciates a character's deeds and views them as a hero who makes the world a

better place, that hero is famous to them. If the NPC believes the hero's accomplishments make the world worse and views them as an enemy, the hero is infamous to the NPC.

INFLUENCING TESTS

If a hero is famous to an NPC, they gain an edge on tests when making arguments to which the Flirt, Lead, or Persuade skill could be applied. If they are infamous to the NPC, they gain an edge on tests when making arguments to which the Brag, Interrogate, or Intimidate skill could be applied. A hero gains this edge even if they don't have the appropriate skill.

NPC RESPONSE AND OFFER

After a hero makes an argument, the NPC responds in one of three ways:

- An NPC responds positively if the heroes increase the NPC's interest. "That's an excellent point." "You've given me much to consider." "Fair enough." "Makes sense to me."
- An NPC responds negatively if the heroes decrease their interest. "I don't buy that." "Poppycock!" "I hear you, but I disagree." "That's not going to sway me."
- An NPC responds with impatience if the heroes fail to increase or decrease their interest. "I've heard that before." "Are you going to offer me anything real?" "This debate is tiresome." "BORING!"

Unless the NPC is deceitful, it should be clear to the heroes if their argument helped convince the NPC, if they need to take a new approach, or if the argument actually did more harm than good.

The initial response should come with an offer (or a refusal to make an offer) based on the NPC's current interest. If a hero's argument reduces an NPC's patience to 0, the NPC lets the heroes know that this is their final offer.

FOR THE DIRECTOR: REASONS FOR DECEPTION

Under certain circumstances, an NPC might not want to show the heroes how well their arguments are working. For example, if an NPC's interest has dropped so low that they now intend to harm the heroes, the NPC might falsely agree to what the heroes ask for as part of a trap. Likewise, a greedy NPC might try to keep their enthusiasm for a deal concealed while their interest is high to obtain more money or favors from the heroes. If a hero thinks an NPC is attempting to fool them, they can make an Intuition test. On a success, the hero learns their true standing with the NPC.

INTEREST 5 ("YES, AND ...")

If the NPC's interest is 5, they offer everything the heroes initially asked for—and then sweeten the deal. This result is the best possible outcome for the heroes. If they offered to perform any services or make payments as part of the deal, the NPC might waive those obligations, allowing the heroes to get what they want for free. Alternatively, the NPC might hold the heroes to any offers they made and instead offer an extra service or item on top of what was asked for.

For example, if the heroes asked the boss of a thieves guild for that organization's help in standing against Lord Saxton, the guildmaster might pledge to send a unit of elite assassins to aid in the battle against that tyrannical noble, and then offer the heroes a quiver filled with explosive arrows to give them an additional advantage in the fight.

The NPC should let the heroes know that this is the best offer they can make.

INTEREST 4 ("YES.")

If the NPC's interest is 4, they offer the heroes everything they asked for but won't sweeten the deal. The NPC also accepts anything the heroes have offered as part of the deal with this result.

For example, if the heroes offered to help spring a guild thief from prison in exchange for the thieves guild's elite assassins standing against Lord Saxton, the guildmaster agrees to those terms without attempting to adjust anything. This likely ends the negotiation, but it's possible that the heroes could push for a little more, provided the NPC has the patience for another argument. A Director could prompt the heroes to push for more by having the NPC ask a leading question, such as, "Is there anything else?" or "What else do you want from me?"

INTEREST 3 ("YES, BUT ...")

If the NPC's interest is 3, they offer the heroes what they want in exchange for everything the heroes offered ... then they ask for a little extra, such as a favor or a payment from the characters. If the heroes offered to free a thieves guild member from prison in exchange for the service of the organization's assassins, the guildmaster might ask them to free an additional prisoner, or to grant the prisoner they rescue a sum of cash or a magic weapon.

INTEREST 2 ("NO, BUT ...")

If the NPC's interest is 2, the NPC can't give the heroes what they want. However, they are willing to offer other less impactful goods or services in exchange for whatever the heroes have promised. The guildmaster might not be willing to spare any troops to fight Lord Saxton, but could instead offer the latest spy reports on Saxton's movements in exchange for the jailbreak.

INTEREST 1 ("NO.")

If the NPC's interest is 1, they outright reject the heroes' idea without a counteroffer. If the NPC still has patience, they might press the heroes for a better deal, saying something like, "Why should we risk our necks to help you fight Lord Saxton? What's really in it for the thieves guild, other than a short, brutal end when you inevitably fail?"

INTEREST 0 ("NO, AND ...")

If an NPC's interest is 0, they offer nothing, refuse to negotiate further, and seek to harm the heroes. The NPC might attack immediately, or they could take a different approach, perhaps spreading malicious rumors about the characters, sending assassins after them, or otherwise making their lives difficult. If the heroes don't want to be

at odds with the NPC, they'll need to offer an valuable gift or undertake a quest just to make amends.

It is impossible to continue a negotiation when an NPC's interest drops to 0.

FOR THE DIRECTOR: CREATING RESPONSES AND OFFERS

When you're preparing a negotiation, think of at least two specific asks that the NPC could make of the heroes. Then you're prepared if the heroes ask what they can do for the NPC and you want to give a response, or if the NPC's interest becomes 3. These asks could be specific items the heroes have or can obtain (such as a magic sword or psionic crystal), or they might be favors in the form of adventuring (such as slaying a dragon or rescuing a village from a siege).

You should also have at least two specific ways the NPC can help the heroes beyond what they're asking for. These can be used if the NPC's interest becomes 2, to give the heroes something that can help them that isn't what they asked for. They can also be used if the NPC's interest rises to 5, to give the heroes something extra in addition to what they asked for. This help could take the form of treasures or the assistance of a companion or retainer. It might be hidden information that the heroes don't yet know, and which can help them with their overall goal. Or perhaps it's a less impactful version of what the heroes initially asked for. If the heroes ask an ancient dragon for help storming a castle, the dragon might offer the services of their younger, less powerful offspring instead of their own assistance ... or in addition to it!

KEEP GOING OR STOP

If an NPC still has patience after making an offer and their interest is between 1 and 4, the heroes can make another argument to attempt to improve the deal. Alternatively, they can accept the offer and end the negotiation. Let the players drive this decision. You can always have an NPC show they have patience remaining by asking, "Is there anything else?"

If the NPC's patience is 0 or their interest is 5, then the offer the NPC makes is their final offer to the characters. The heroes can accept the offer or not, but either way, the negotiation ends.

If the NPC's interest is 0, the NPC ends the negotiation without accepting a deal.

The heroes can walk away from a negotiation without accepting a deal at any time.

SAMPLE NEGOTIATION

After killing the true lord of Bedegar, the tyrannical Lord Saxton took over the barony's capital, and is presently gathering forces of his own to march on the rest of Bedegar's settlements. The heroes recently saved Edmund, the true heir to Bedegar's throne, and are now gathering forces to build an army that can stand against Saxton and defeat the tyrant.

The heroes are engaging in a negotiation with Zola Honeycut, the human guildmaster of the Clock—a thieves' guild whose headquarters is located in Bedegar's capital. The guild openly opposed Saxton when he first seized power, but the tyrant was quick to crack down on all known members of the Clock, forcing them into hiding or hanging them as a warning to others. The heroes' hope is

that they can convince Zola to support their armed resistance.

ZOLA'S NEGOTIATION STATS

Zola is neutral toward the heroes when the negotiation begins. She knows them only by reputation, though she understands that they too believe Saxton is a tyrant who must be stopped. However, standing up to that tyrant has cost her people dearly, and she's not sure she's ready to rejoin the fight. One wrong move could spell the end of the Clock!

ZOLA HONEYCUT NEGOTIATION STATS

Interest: 2 • Patience: 3 • Impression: 3

Motivations

- **Benevolence:** Zola's name, Honeycut, comes from the fact that she always gives her fellow thieves a bigger cut than her own on jobs.
- **Protection:** The members of the Clock are the only family Zola's ever known. The guild's motto is "The Clock is always ticking," because they're always planning the next job and their ever-richer future. Zola doesn't want to be the guild's last master.

Pitfall

- **Higher Authority:** Zola has no interest in serving anyone other than herself, and she scoffs at the suggestion of taking orders.
- **Revelry:** Zola is all business and has no time for frivolity, especially while living under Saxton's threat.

ROLEPLAYING ZOLA

Zola is glad that people are finally opposing Lord Saxton, but is angry that no one rose up with the Clock months ago when the tyrant first staged his coup. She's passionate about protecting her people, quick to call out dangerous plans in arguments she doesn't like, and fast to praise statements she agrees with. She's not afraid to speak her mind to the heroes, knowing that they share her desire to see Saxton gone. She's just not sure she can risk more of her found family in the current fight.

NEGOTIATION IN ACTION

Here's how the negotiation with Zola might play out. In this scenario, Alyssa is playing Jorn the tactician, Grace is playing Val the conduit, James is playing Korvo the shadow, and Matt is playing Linn the talent. All the heroes have a Renown of 2 except for Jorn, who has a Renown of 3 and is therefore famous to Zola.

Director: *The windows are boarded up, allowing no light to enter the seemingly abandoned Goat's Eye tavern. The whole place smells of charred wood, evidence of the fire that burned most of the building's interior three years ago. As the door shuts behind you, light from a hooded lantern on the opposite side of the tavern suddenly fills the room. Amid the blackened walls and pillars, you see that six burly ruffians flank your group on both sides. The human holding the lantern smiles. "Welcome. I'm Zola. Willoughby told me you were coming. Have a seat." She motions to a few crates arranged in a circle around a wide barrel.*

James (playing Korvo): *I have a seat and say, "Korvo at your service, Ms. Honeycut. And these here are the finest companions a polder could ask for: Linn, Jorn, and Val."*

Director: *Zola nods to each of you in turn, then says, "You'll excuse me if I dispense with more pleasantries. These days, no place is safe for the Clock. We keep moving. So tell me, what are you here for?"*

Alyssa (playing Jorn): *"We're building an army to take down Saxton once and for all."*

Director: *Zola gives a mirthless chuckle as she shakes her head. "Oh is that all? I have to tell you, I don't think the four of you stand much of a chance. Unless you're hiding a legion or two of dwarves in your pockets. Yes, you have Jorn the Mighty with you, but you'll need more than one famous warrior to win the day."*

Alyssa: *Ah! So she has heard of me at least! Thanks, Renown.*

Grace (playing Val): *"We don't. But we do have Lord Edmund—the true heir to the Bedegar throne."*

Director: *Zola nods, impressed. "I'm glad the boy is safe, but that's all he is—a boy, not an army."*

Matt (playing Linn): *"He's a boy people will rally around. We have no army, but that's why we're here. We're planning on changing that. Can you spare any soldiers for our cause?"*

The negotiation officially starts. The heroes have stated what they want from Zola. The Director begins by prompting them to make an argument.

Director: *Zola leans back on her crate. "There it is. The Clock has sacrificed much against Saxton. Why should we risk more to help? No one was here to help us months ago when we stood up to tyranny."*

Alyssa: *I nod along as Zola speaks, listening before I say, "We didn't hear of your struggle until after Saxton had already hanged many of your brave people. We're here now. How can we help?"*

Before making an argument, Jorn is attempting to learn what Zola's motivations are by simply asking. The Director decides to reveal one of Zola's motivations: protection.

Director: *"If I were to make a deal with you, and that's a big 'if,' I'd need assurances that you can end this. Proof would be even better. The protection of my people is my top priority. We can earn freedom from Saxton once we regain our strength."*

James: *Aha! I got this, folks. I stand atop my crate and say, "Well, we can surely offer that, Ms. Honeycut. We have convinced Lord Edmund to grant amnesty to any who swear to serve him." I'd like to roll a Presence test to convince her.*

Director: *Hold it there, champ. Zola's eyes narrow as you speak, and she holds up a hand to cut you off. "I will not swear to serve any ruler, no matter how benevolent. I'll consider being a partner, but even that outlook is grim if you tell me again that I need to bend the knee."*

Korvo inadvertently made an argument using a pitfall by appealing to a higher authority. The Director notes that Zola's interest drops to 1 and her patience drops to 2. Zola gave a pretty firm "No" response here, which is what an NPC with an interest of 1 would say. However, the Director phrased Zola's response in such a way that the heroes

know they can keep making arguments if they wish, since her patience hasn't run out.

James: *Sorry! I thought that'd work. Seems like higher authority is a pitfall for her.*

Grace: *Let's try to avoid any others. Val says, "We're sorry, Zola. We don't want to do anything else to offend you." I'd like to make an Intuition test and use my Read Person skill to gauge her reaction to see if I can discern any other pitfalls.*

Director: *Cool. Hard difficulty.*

Grace: *I got a 17! Success.*

Director: *Zola sits back, chuckling. "There's two things I can't stand—anyone telling me to kiss a ring and merry fools who would rather go drinking than fight for their freedom. Luckily, you're not the latter." You can tell that revelry also won't go over well with Zola.*

The heroes now know both of Zola's pitfalls: higher authority and revelry.

Linn: *Linn is going to say, "We're recruiting more than just the Clock. We have a good chance of recruiting the elves of the wode and the orcs of Forest Rend, and we're already training the people of Gravesford to put up a fight. If we strike before Saxton can fully build his forces, we all stand a better chance of survival. If you don't stand with us, Saxton will still come for you. He's already coming for you. The Clock stands less of a chance alone."*

Director: *I think that's a Reason test, since you're using logic to point out that you have a better chance together than on your own. It's easy too, since you're appealing to one of her motivations.*

Linn: *Great! Can I use Lead here, since I'm demonstrating our ability to bring people together?*

Director: *I'll allow it.*

Linn: *That's a 14!*

Because Linn appealed to a motivation, Zola's interest increases to 2, and her patience remains at 2. The Director gives a "No, but ..." response based on Zola's interest. At this point, the heroes haven't promised anything, so she offers them something for free. The Director makes it clear in Zola's response that the negotiation can still continue if that's what the players want.

Director: *Zola nods along as you speak. "You're correct, but I'm not sure I can spare the people. I'll tell you what I can do. I have spies watching Saxton still. I can give you information about his troops' movements. Will that suffice?"*

Alyssa: *I don't think so, right?*

James: *No. We need an army.*

Matt: *Yeah, let's push it.*

Grace: *Agreed.*

Alyssa: *I wonder if we can try to figure out another one of her motivations.*

James: *Is there anything I know about Zola's reputation? I have the Criminal Underworld skill.*

Director: *Make a hard Reason test.*

James: *That's an 18! Success!*

Director: *Korvo would know that Zola got the name Honeycut because she's generous with the guild's earnings. She gives all her fellow thieves a nice cut of every job.*

Korvo's success has revealed Zola's benevolence motivation.

James: *Brilliant! I think I probably would've shared that with the group before this.*

Director: *Yeah, that makes sense.*

Alyssa: *Great. I'll say, "It would be worthwhile in other ways for your crew if you joined our side."*

Director: *Zola's interest is piqued. "What makes you say that?"*

Alyssa: *"Even before his coup, Saxton had a considerable amount of wealth. If he's deposed, those riches need to go somewhere. The Clock will get a cut—a honey of a cut, you might say. Edmund has also promised to share his family's fortune with any who stand with him against Saxton ... after the young lord reclaims the throne, that is."*

Director: *You're appealing to one of her motivations, so make an easy Presence test.*

Alyssa: *Can I use my Persuade skill too?*

Director: *Absolutely. And you gain an edge because you're famous to her.*

Alyssa: *I got a 12!*

Because Jorn appealed to a motivation, Zola's interest increases to 3, and her patience is reduced to 1. The Director gives a "Yes, but ..." response while making it clear that the negotiation can still continue.

Director: *Zola contemplates this for a moment. She nods, "I'm starting to see the benefits. I think I can spare some folks to help you, but you have to help them first. See, my best warriors are locked up in Bedegar Keep. They're supposed to be hanged in two days. If you free them, I'll see to it they stand with you against Saxton. We were making a plan to free them ourselves, but could frankly use the help."*

Grace: *We could push the Clock to do it themselves, but I can't see Val turning her back on people in need.*

James: *Hear, hear. I'm done pushing my luck on this one.*

Matt: *It'll mean less time to recruit the other troops, so we'd better work quickly.*

Alyssa: *Then we're in agreement. I offer a handshake to Zola. "You've got yourself a deal."*

The negotiation ends! The heroes could have pushed for a better deal, but they're satisfied with the offer from Zola, so they accept her terms.