



Ultimate Relationships

By Mark Seifter





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WHAT YOU WILL FIND INSIDE ULTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

A good RPG campaign, like any good story, needs conflict and antagonists to lend it immediacy and drama. But a campaign with pure conflicts, without allies, family, romances, and other connections to friendly characters, quickly grows stale. Much like Shakespeare's comedic drunken porter scene in *Macbeth* released tension intentionally to strengthen the impact of the revelation of Duncan's murder just after, so too can points of lower intensity spent with friendly NPCs increase the impact of the game's dramatic high points. And sometimes, the relationships themselves can provide their own high points, their own drama, and powerful transformations that make a character more than just a set of statistics or an unrealistically uncaring avatar. This book contains a system for relationships that provides a meaningful progression and story for each NPC, secrets to uncover as the relationship progresses, and hurdles for the PC and the NPC to overcome together. Unlike other relationship systems that bottleneck on certain skills, often Diplomacy, *Ultimate Relationships* allows everyone to progress and reveal the NPC's story at their own rate; it just might take some characters longer than others. Much like the strong traditions of literature and television series about journeys, the physical journey is also a metaphor for the inner journey that each character takes along the way, progressing into someone different than they were at the beginning. With *Ultimate Relationships*, your PCs can join each NPC along his or her own personal journey. With their lives and fates intertwined, your game will never be the same.

The Legendary Games tradition is to combine rich story and background, innovative layout, beautiful aesthetics, and excellence in design that is second to none. This product is the latest in that tradition, and we hope you enjoy using it as much as we enjoyed making it. Game on!

- Jason Nelson





INTRODUCTION

Building relationships with NPCs can be done organically in the course of any role-playing game, with the players and GM honing their individual improvisational skills to play off one another in an ongoing give and take. This can work well if the players and GM are naturally inclined to that kind of riffing and if everyone at the table is on board with spontaneous diversions into roleplay as the opportunity arises. However, players are not their characters and vice versa, and just as playing a mighty sword-swinger doesn't require the player to take fencing lessons so too being able to develop relationships with NPCs shouldn't fall solely on the social agility of the player, or on the chance encounter when the GM and players both happen to hit the same spark at the same time with a particular interaction.

This book provides you a system for weaving PC-NPC relationships intentionally and purposefully into your campaign, so that rather than trying to

catch lightning in a bottle you can both plan and prepare to facilitate PCs and NPCs being able to build meaningful connections. It allows you to create NPCs that are more than just information dispensers, quest-givers, or obstacles to be overcome. They can become real characters with personalities of their own, giving opportunities for PC and NPC alike to become more than just numbers on a page.

Whether it's romance, rivalry, revenge, friendship, faith, flirtation, or any other point of connection, you can use these rules to create a variety of relationship opportunities in the campaign. Not every player will invest in building relationships and that's perfectly okay; everyone has fun in the game in their own way. For many players, though, you can use these rules to create a far richer, more vibrant, and more engaging fantasy world and fantasy campaign where they can build their character's story in new and exciting ways beyond dragging home the trophies of their latest adventure to sleep and then head back to the dungeon.

RELATIONSHIP RULES

Relationship Ranks

Each character begins play at rank 0 with most NPCs. A PC can rise from ranks 1 through 10, learning more about that NPC's personality, goals, troubles, and secrets. **Rank 1** represents establishing a relationship, and **Rank 4**, **Rank 7**, and **Rank 10** are significant ranks that each represent a major breakthrough. To advance through relationship ranks, a PC must gain enough Camaraderie Points to achieve the next rank and then succeed at ranking up. The table below describes the Camaraderie Points required to rank up based on the point in the campaign when the character became a significant NPC.

Camaraderie Points

PCs can gain camaraderie points in several ways. First, when a PC performs a significant action aligned with the NPC's interest, that PC gains a number of camaraderie points (typically 1 or 2). Second, whenever a PC levels up, the player can assign 2 camaraderie points each to an NPC they have encountered, whether in the course of an ongoing home campaign or a chapter of a published adventure path or series, to represent the PC spending extra time with that NPC (for example, a PC in adventure 3 could assign 2 camaraderie points each to one NPC from adventure 1, another NPC from adventure 2, or another from adventure 3). At the GM's discretion, an NPC might not be available as a choice if that NPC was unavailable for the entirety of the level (for example, if that NPC was in a coma or kidnapped). Lastly, once per milestone, each PC can attempt to gain favor with each NPC available by spending a bit of time with them, offering a gift, a story, a witticism, or anything else the player can think of. In addition to the three standard ways of gaining Camaraderie Points, the GM should feel free to award or subtract Camaraderie Points whenever she feels it is appropriate based on a

PC's actions or decisions. For instance, a PC who raised undead would likely meet with disapproval from good NPCs and lose Camaraderie Points. That same PC might gain Camaraderie Points with a cynical harpy NPC who was amused by the efficient use of the bodies. If a PC ever gains more than enough Camaraderie Points to rank up, the extra Camaraderie Points never apply to future ranks. Instead, they grant a bonus equal to double the number of points to all checks made while ranking up.

RANK	EARLY CAMPAIGN	MIDDLE CAMPAIGN	LATE CAMPAIGN
RANK 1	0	0	0
RANK 2	2	2	1
RANK 3	4	3	2
RANK 4	6	4	2
RANK 5	4	3	2
RANK 6	6	4	2
RANK 7	8	6	3
RANK 8	6	4	2
RANK 9	8	6	3
RANK 10	10	7	4

Ranking Up

Once a PC is ready to rank up with an NPC, they can choose to engage in a rank-up conversation with that NPC once per milestone. These conversations can be as short or long as the GM prefers, ranging from simply rolling some dice to lengthy conversations about the NPC's ongoing story. The friendly relationships presented in this book each include a topic description to help guide you in roleplaying each of the ten rank-ups for each NPC. Each rank-up also requires a certain check to succeed at ranking up, possibly more than one. Significant breakthroughs often require three or more successes to complete.



As usual, if you roleplay the rank-up conversation, award circumstance bonuses or penalties based on the way the PC interacts with the NPC and remember to apply any excess Camaraderie Points as an additional bonus to all checks made while ranking up.

Success: If a PC succeeds at all of the required checks, the PC immediately gains a rank with that NPC, potentially gaining experience points or new abilities. No matter how many excess Camaraderie Points the PC had acquired before success, they do not affect the number of points required to reach the next rank. For example, if a particularly unlucky PC fails to rank up to 5 with an NPC several times, gathering 6 excess Camaraderie Points, when the PC finally succeeds, those extra points disappear, and the PC still needs 6 more Camaraderie Points to reach **Rank 6**.

Failure: If a PC fails to rank up, they need not despair. The act of attempting to rank up provides two Camaraderie Points (and since these are always in excess of the number needed to rank up, they provide a +2 bonus on all future attempts). These points stack, so eventually a persistent enough PC will succeed. If a rank up requires multiple checks in a progression, and you fail a later check, you can start from the check you failed instead of the first check (unless stated otherwise specifically). For instance, if you needed an Insight check to figure out that something is bothering the NPC followed by a Persuasion check to get them to talk about it, and you make the Insight and fail the Persuasion, you can start with the Persuasion next time.

Creating Your Own Relationship Links

When making your own new Relationship Links and when using this book, the base DC for a check to reach a certain rank is generally $10 +$ the rank in question for skill checks and saving throws. Feel free to mix up this base DC in your own Relationship Links by increasing or decreasing the base DC at certain levels (or across the board) when you feel it is appropriate. For instance, an NPC might be easy to get along with on a superficial level (-3 to all DCs for early ranks) but extremely guarded with her inner thoughts ($+3$ to all DCs for later ranks).

Affinities: Some NPCs have particularly good or bad affinities with certain PCs. Affinities range from Great to Terrible (see Table 2). Most NPCs have Average affinity for any given PC. However, if the PC has selected a background tied to an NPC or if the PC has the same card as the NPC, the PC automatically has one step better affinity with that NPC (or two steps better if both are true). Otherwise, if an NPC is attracted to the PC,



is related to the PC, or any other reason that leads to a particular affinity, the GM can decide that the NPC and PC have a better than Average affinity, and if the NPC and PC are strongly at odds in ethos or worldview, the GM can decide that the NPC and PC have worse than Average affinity.

Because affinities only change the number of Camaraderie Points required for each rank, the GM can fluidly change affinities if the PCs and NPCs evolve to be better or worse suited to each other. If a PC ever has more than enough Camaraderie Points to rank up due to affinity, as usual these extra points provide an additional bonus to all checks made to rank up.

**Table 2:
Effects of Affinity**

Affinity	Effect
Terrible	2 extra Camaraderie Points required for each rank, -3 to all checks to rank up
Bad	1 extra Camaraderie Point required for each rank, -1 to all checks to rank up
Average	No Effect
Good	1 fewer Camaraderie Point required for each rank, +1 to all checks to rank up
Great	2 fewer Camaraderie Points required for each rank, +3 to all checks to rank up

MILESTONES

Milestones and Downtime

If you are using the downtime system, a PC can spend one downtime day interacting with a single NPC to make a single attempt to gain camaraderie points as if a milestone had passed. These downtime days cannot be used to rank up with the NPC.

Setting the pace for milestones allows you to decide how often you want to include relationship elements in the context of your greater storyline. In general, it is best to have at least one or two milestones each level; if you are playing an extended adventure path, plan for at least 5 milestones in each adventure chapter, with a maximum that is often significantly more but depends on the scope of that adventure. For instance, a book about a long arctic journey might have more milestones than a book with a tense but quickly-building feud with a guild of assassins. Each milestone gives a chance to rank up if the PC is ready as well as a chance to mingle with the NPC and possibly gain Camaraderie Points.

To gain Camaraderie Points at a milestone, the PC should describe how they are interacting with the NPC, for instance a gift they are giving, a joke they are telling, or an activity they are performing. The GM decides how well the interaction suits that particular NPC, from Terrible/Perfunctory (either something generic or unsuited for the NPC) to Perfect (something that is an amazing match for the NPC, like a star chart for a Mystic Seer). Sample relationships contain tips about what sorts of interactions and gifts they prefer. Remember that Perfunctory is the worst category of gift, so a PC who doesn't stop to think about the NPCs or pay attention to what they like and instead buys the same gift for everyone will likely be working with a Perfunctory or Poor gift.

Craftsmanship: Sometimes, craftsmanship is important. Whether a PC is reciting a haiku or inscribing intricate calligraphy, the quality of the gift depends on the level of performance or craftsmanship. In general, anything worse than a DC 5 performance or craft is an automatic failure, 6-8 is two categories worse than normal, 9-12 is one category worse than normal, 13-16 is standard, 16-19 is one category better than normal, and 20+ is two categories better. For instance, the Destined Empress loves adventure



stories (a Good gift for her), so one of the PCs decides to orate a tale of his prowess fighting goblins. Unfortunately, he only manages a 6 on that Perform check, little better than a beggar on a street corner. The Destined Empress is still impressed that he tried, so the gift counts as Poor (two steps worse than Good). Meanwhile, another PC attempts to craft a gruesome ale mug from the skull of his fallen opponent to show the Destined Empress that no one should dare kidnap her again. Normally this would be a terrible gift for her, but somehow, he manages a 21 on the craft, creating one of the finest skull mugs in the lands. Thus, it counts as an Average gift (two steps better than Terrible).

Repetition: If you feel that a PC is just doing the same thing over and over again, perhaps simply attempting to use their best skill because it has the highest bonus, feel free to count the interaction or gift as one category worse after some amount of repetition, two categories worse after more repetition, and so on. If this brings the quality below Terrible/Perfunctory, levy a -3 penalty for each quality level below. If the PC comes up with a good rationale for using the same skill, then do not levy this penalty. As an example of a good rationale, suppose one of the PCs wishes to become the personal painter to the Destined Empress, although he begins with no painting talent. He starts by giving the Destined Empress a framed copy of the best painting he has ever made (DC 15), and then later, as he improves, he also gives her paintings of higher and high quality (perhaps DC 20, DC 30, and DC 40). Since each of these paintings represents a progression in the painter's journey to becoming a master painter, you might decide as a GM that this would not count as repetitive.

Once you have determined the quality of the gift or interaction given the NPC's preferences and the other factors above, the PC should roll a check to determine how well the NPC receives this interaction or gift. These checks are usually Charisma (Persuasion) checks, but in some cases other skill checks would be appropriate. The DC



of the check and its results are listed in Table 3. As with rank ups, whenever it is an advantage for the PC, allow them to roll a untrained ability check at the standard reduced DC (lower by an amount equal to the next rank).

Table 3: Quality of Interactions and Gifts	
Quality	Effect
Terrible/ Perfunctory	DC 20+next rank gains 1 CP, succeed by 10 for 2 CP
Poor	DC 15+next rank gains 1 CP, succeed by 10 for 2 CP
Average	DC 10+next rank gains 1 CP, succeed by 5 for 2 CP
Good	DC 5+next rank gains 1 CP, succeed by 5 for 2 CP
Perfect	Automatically gain 1 CP. DC 5+next rank gains 2 CP, succeed by 10 for 3 CP

Rivalries

Misaligned relationships, or rivalries, are a common trope in fantasy tales involving heroes from different backgrounds and clashing values. A rivalry works similarly to a friendly relationship except that Rivalry Points are earned through actions that challenge the NPC's competence or taunt the NPC in some way. Rivalries generally rank up by a show of competence rather than a specific rank-up event, as NPCs are unlikely to share their secrets and weaknesses with their rivals. Breakthroughs for a rivalry should always involve a significant competition between the two rivals, whether it's a wrestling contest, a cook-off, or a duel to unconsciousness. Affinities are typically reversed for rivalries, so for instance, even if they are on the same side, a necromancer and a sun priestess would not make easy friends, but they could make strong rivals.

Character Traits

A PC with a Bond or Background related to an NPC gains several advantages at establishing a friendly relationship with their chosen NPC. PCs automatically start at Rank 2 with their chosen NPC with an automatic two Camaraderie Points towards Rank 3. Furthermore, the PC has one better affinity with that NPC (so usually Good affinity). GMs and players should work together to ensure that the PCs have the opportunity to choose a suitable NPC for the PC to have a friendly relationship with.

Automatic Rank-Ups

Certain relationships exist between PCs and NPCs that are either abstract or take place from afar, such as a rivalry between the PCs and the villain they have heard of but never met. In these cases, the relationship will rank up when the PCs perform major actions in or against the interests of these NPCs.

THE BENEFITS OF BUILDING A RELATIONSHIP

In addition to the innate benefit of getting to know the NPCs better and take part in their ongoing story, this book presents mechanical perks from developing connections to NPCs that can enrich the game and encourage some of the more hesitant roleplayers as their characters "rank up" by building their relationship with an NPC.

Experience: One simple way to reward PCs for engaging is to give an experience value to ranking up. The GM should choose whether to divide this experience evenly among all PCs to keep it balanced or to give Relationship XP to individual PCs to reward engagement. In either case, the NPC should earn an equal amount of experience as well for the advancing relationship—this will naturally keep the PCs' favorite NPCs a little higher in level than the rest, ready to bring along for adventures.

Boons: Each NPC has a particular set of boons that they grant to PCs who reach certain ranks with them, tied to the NPC's abilities and personality. When designing your own boons, use the existing boons as guides for balance.

Participation: Sometimes the players want to bring along NPCs to help them on their adventures. Each NPC in this book has a rank at which they will usually agree to come along as well as a rank at which they will agree to become a cohort or henchperson for that PC (typically ranks 4 and 7). If an NPC comes along but is not a cohort, they will typically receive a share of experience and treasure. If the PCs routinely bring along plenty of NPCs, it may be a good idea to increase the challenge level of the opposition (by strengthening enemies, adding additional foes and so forth).

Romance: Each NPC has a certain rank above which they might be receptive to romance, although NPCs have different ideas about intimacy and relationships. Entering a long-term relationship generally improves your affinity by one step, while breaking up typically removes that benefit and reduces your affinity by an additional step.

Redemption: The Relationship system in this book represents a great way to measure the long-term process of redemption so that it feels like a challenging and gradual process. Several evil NPCs who have a good chance of joining the caravan are listed with redemption paths.

**Table 4:
Relationship XP**

Rank Achieved	XP REWARD
1	135
2	67
3	135
4	800 (800 extra for first Rank 4 breakthrough)
5	400
6	800
7	4800 (4800 extra for first Rank 7 breakthrough)
8	2400
9	4800
10	28800 (28800 extra for first Rank 10 breakthrough)

SAMPLE RELATIONSHIPS

The following sample relationships are presented as potential NPCs that the heroes might encounter in their travels. They could be used singly, but several of them also have built-in relationship ties that can connect them to other NPCs as PCs navigate and build their relationships with several NPCs at a time. This narrative connection between NPCs can be as loose or as tight as desired, from simply people who know and are friendly to each other to people with secret pasts and paths to destiny. This collection of sample relationships also can connect to an ongoing metanarrative; in this case, with one NPC being a long-lost heir to a faraway empire who, having just discovered her true identity, gathers several other NPCs as allies to help her travel there from their shared home in Sandtown and secure her birthright. Other NPCs might be met along the way and could be allies or enemies, and the PCs themselves can find their own roles and create their own story as they meet these NPCs and perhaps even accompany on a grand journey across the wide expanse of the world.

The NPCs provided here do not have game statistics,

character classes or races, or even proper names, as this product focuses more on their personalities and the roles they might take in how they interact with the PCs. You can easily use characters of any type to fill these roles, and certainly can switch their gender or any other personal or game mechanical details if it makes more sense for how they would fit with the characters in your campaign.

THE CARAVAN MASTER

Description: The Caravan Master's relationship link is strongly focused on the mercantile aspects of the caravan he operates, with PCs serving initially as simple hirelings, guards, or guides but developing into a lasting bond. As he grows closer to the PC, he becomes willing to talk about his aborted adventuring career and his brother who perished, his dead parents and his brother lost to organized crime, and his attraction to the Destined Empress.

Preferred Gifts and Interactions: The Caravan Master is a fan of rich food and good company. He also appreciates those who help him appraise items and sort out the mercantile interests of the caravan.

Affinity Notes: The Caravan Master might have positive affinity for honest Wanderer merchants like himself or clergy of the goddess of love like his late brother. He will almost certainly have negative affinity for active members of a Wanderer organized crime family, though he has empathy for those wishing to escape such a life.

Joining the Caravan: The Caravan Master owns the caravan and automatically joins when the PCs gain access to the caravan.

Staying with the Caravan: Since he owns the caravan and is fiercely loyal to the Destined Empress, the Caravan Master will always stay with the caravan.

Participation: The Caravan Master will join the PCs in active adventuring duty after any PC gets a breakthrough at **Rank 4** and soothes his lingering fears. The exception is if the Destined Empress is kidnapped, in which case he will always agree to come. The Caravan Master will agree to become a cohort or henchperson to a PC only after he is at **Rank 7** with that PC.

Romance: The Caravan Master can be romanced after at least one PC has made a breakthrough to Rank 7 and helped him deal with his lingering feelings for the Destined Empress (unless they convinced him to pursue





the Destined Empress instead). Once this has happened, any PC of Rank 5 or above can begin a long-term relationship with him, although he takes it slowly.

BOONS

Caravan Master's Confidante (Rank 7)—You are one of the Caravan Master's closest friends, and the two of you have spent countless hours working on the caravan and sharing secrets. He will assist you in all checks to appraise items or to haggle the price of goods (choose one), and you gain a +1 bonus to attack rolls while adjacent to the the Caravan Master.

Caravan Master's Partner (Rank 10)—The Caravan Master trusts you in everything as a full partner in all his future business endeavors. You've learned how to take every opening that the caravan master grants you, and vice versa. You and the Caravan Master may make an opportunity attack against any foe in reach who is hit by an opportunity attack by the other.

RANK-UPS

Rank 1—The Caravan Master introduces himself and gets to know the name of the PC and take their measure. He asks their favorite drink and a few other questions, and he explains about the caravan and the members that have been gathered already.

DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the Caravan Master doesn't feel like he got a chance to know the PC and would like to speak with the PC again.

Rank 2—The Caravan Master is chronicling some of the caravan's recent loot and preparing to appraise it for sale. He invites the PC to join him in appraising, as he discusses more about trading and being in charge of a caravan. He opines that having an eye for valuables is useful to any adventurer, not just to merchants.

DC 12 Intelligence (History). On failure, the Caravan Master tells the PC not to worry if it's difficult at first and invites the PC to practice with him a bit more later.

Rank 3—The Caravan Master is looking through various papers full of information about trade routes and merchant companies, with notes in the Wanderer tongue scribbled all over the margins. If it's during a particularly stressful time, such as when the Destined Empress is in a coma or kidnapped, he explains to the PC that he likes to focus on something he feels like he can control, like mercantile details, in order to take his mind off stressful events and uncertainty. Either way, he invites the PC to come join him in working out the mercantile strategy for the caravan.

DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation). On failure, the Caravan

Master thanks the PC for their help but points out that their ideas have some flaws. He invites them to refine their thoughts and come speak to him later.

Rank 4 (Breakthrough)—The current adventure has stirred up bad memories for the Caravan Master about his brother's death.

DC 15 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC doesn't realize what the Caravan Master is feeling. If successful, they realize that he looks haunted and continue the breakthrough. The Caravan Master isn't able to bring himself to dredge up those memories to the forefront, even though he realizes that talking would be therapeutic. He asks the PC to share drinks with him until he is ready to talk, offering his best brandy, or perhaps the PC's drink of choice.

DC 13 Constitution save. On failure, the PC isn't able to hold their liquor well enough and through enough drinks for the Caravan Master to feel comfortable speaking about it that night. On success, the liquor has loosened the Caravan Master's lips enough that he feels ready to talk about the fateful last adventure of his old party and his brother's death. Before telling the story, he asks the PC to swear not to mention it to anyone, particularly not in the Destined Empress's earshot. By the end, the Caravan Master should make it clear that he quit adventuring before due to that experience, and he is becoming worried about his ability to hold together on the current adventure as well. Emphasize any close calls or character deaths so far. Let the PC try whatever tact they like in helping him get back on track.

DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the Caravan Master is still shaken, and asks to speak with the PC further. On a success, the Caravan Master realizes that the PC is right, and he is able to shake off the shackles of the past and commit more fully to the current adventure. Future PCs use the next version of **Rank 4** instead.

Rank 4—The Caravan Master asks the PC to share drinks with him for a while.

DC 15 Constitution save. On failure, the PC isn't able to hold their liquor very well, and the Caravan Master promises to give them something lighter next time. On success, he tells the PC about his old party's last adventure.

Rank 5—The Caravan Master is studying more about the local culture in the area the caravan is visiting (or will visit next if more appropriate) to figure out what sorts of goods the caravan should buy and sell. He invites the PC to join him and trade tips.

DC 15 Intelligence (History). On failure, he asks the PC to gather more information about the culture and meet back with him to re-strategize.

Rank 6—The Caravan Master considers the route the caravan has taken so far, as well as how far is left to go. He

reflects with the PC about how long the journey has been and how the PCs and NPCs have grown along the way. He toasts the whole team along with the PC and enjoys reflecting along with the PC.

DC 16 Intelligence (History), followed by DC 16 Charisma (Performance) to call to mind special memories from each different location and express them. On failure, the Caravan Master asks the PC to think of a few memories of their own and then come back and do this again some time.

Rank 7 (Breakthrough)—The Caravan Master seems unusually wistful.

DC 17 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC can't figure out why. On success, they realize that he is experiencing an old romantic trouble rising to the surface. The Caravan Master is embarrassed about the fact that the object of his feelings is the Destined Empress, and he is unwilling to talk about it further without a hefty amount of brandy.

DC 15 Constitution save. On failure, the PC is unable to get the Caravan Master drunk enough to talk about it, though they can try again later. On success, he finally blurts out his feelings for the Destined Empress and the way he sublimated them when she fell for his brother but never truly overcame them. He drunkenly lists off the many good qualities of the Destined Empress. The PC must choose to either convince him to finally move on or to go for it and finally tell her how he feels (or maybe some third option that the PC comes up with). Neither is a particularly easy accomplishment, as he has been dealing with these feelings for decades.

DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the Caravan Master remains stuck for the time being, and the PC can try again later (or even switch tacts). Future PCs use the next version of **Rank 7** instead.

Rank 7—The Caravan Master shares drinks with the PC and swaps secrets.

DC 15 Constitution save. On failure, the PC isn't able to hold the liquor well enough to hear some of the Caravan Master's best tales, and he invites them to come back with a fuller stomach.

Rank 8—The Caravan Master expresses worry about the ability of the caravan members to carry out a successful rebellion against the ruling power of the Empire of Dawn. The PC can try to explain their strategy to him.

DC 18 Intelligence or Wisdom check, add proficiency bonus if the PC is proficient in martial weapons. On failure, the Caravan Master requests that the PC work with everyone to think up some better plans if they want to have a chance to succeed.

Rank 9—The Caravan Master has exorcised most of his old demons, but he is still haunted by his older brother's descent into the same organized crime that took his

parents. He discusses the Wanderers and the organized crime families at length with the PC and is willing to listen to candid talk about that topic without becoming upset by the mention. He wonders if there could have been some way to save his older brother from himself and whether there will ever be a way to stop people from racially stereotyping all Wanderers as criminals.

DC 19 Intelligence (History) check to know enough about Wanderer organized crime families to have an in-depth conversation. On failure, he admits that the topic is a difficult one and asks the PC to think about it.

Rank 10 (Breakthrough)—The Caravan Master is now hopeful about the PCs' success and begins looking to the future. He asks the PC if they plan on staying in the Empire of Dawn or on joining him to make even greater profits on the return trip home. He is looking for ingenious plans to increase the caravan's payoffs tenfold or more.

DC 15 Intelligence check, DC 20 Intelligence (History) to help him come up with an ingenious plan. On failure, he asks the PC to keep thinking and get back to him. On success, he grins widely and clasps the PC in a quick hug. If the PC is coming back with him, he assures the PC that they will be full partners and that the sky is the limit for their new merchant guild, sponsored by the Destined Empress. If they are staying behind, he asks them to manage the assets of the new guild that are based in the Empire of Dawn.

THE DESTINED EMPRESS

Description: The Destined Empress's relationship link explores her feelings about her unfortunate family, her disastrous adventuring career, and her fate to rule a faraway empire, referred to here as the Empire of Dawn. PCs who delve deep into this link will be among her closest confidantes, the only ones she can talk to about her extremely conflicting feelings about everything that is happening, her desire to help the people escape from tyranny mixed up with her doubts and desires for her own future.

Preferred Gifts and Interactions: The Destined Empress enjoys artwork and performances created by the PC, particularly tales of adventure and heroics. It's not about learning the facts of the tale for her—even if she already knows what happened, hearing an individual's take on a story tells a lot about how they were feeling and what they find most important.

Affinity Notes: The Destined Empress might have positive affinity for fellow worshipers of the goddess of love, particularly those who are free-spirited, kind, and slightly on the irreverent side like herself. She has little patience for bigots or those whose teachings fly in the face of her own goddess's.

Joining the Caravan: The Destined Empress's desire to discover her past is the reason for the caravan to gather in the first place. She joins when the PCs gain access to the caravan.

Staying with the Caravan: The Destined Empress's fate is intertwined tightly with the PCs. She will always stay with the caravan.

Participation: The Destined Empress will join the PCs in active adventuring duty after any PC gets a breakthrough at **Rank 4** and helps her come to terms with her fate as the Destined Empress. As she realizes that she needs to internalize her role as a leader of many people, she will not become a cohort or henchwoman to one of the PCs except in unusual circumstances, such as if one of the PCs sets herself up as a wise mentor to the Destined Empress, and even then only if that PC is at **Rank 7** or higher with her.

Romance: The Destined Empress can be romanced by a PC who has reached **Rank 7** or higher and who is respectful for her lingering feelings for the Caravan Master's late brother. Realizing that she will soon be bound by restrictions as Empress even if the party manages to succeed at their quest, she takes the first steps of the relationship quickly, but she keeps her heart closely guarded and is slow to admit she is falling deeply in love.

BOONS

Destined Empress's Nakama (Rank 7)—The Destined Empress knows she can count on you no matter what. You become gain proficiency in Persuasion or Performance.

Destined Empress's Pillar (Rank 10)—You are a pillar of support for the Destined Empress through any trial or danger. You can give yourself a d8 inspiration die, as the Bardic Inspiration class feature, but you may only use it on rolls related to serving or protecting the Destined Empress. You may use this ability once per Long Rest.

RANK-UPS

Rank 1—The Destined Empress introduces herself to the PC and chats about the upcoming caravan journey. She asks some simple questions about the PC's backstory and exploits, and she admits nervous excitement at discovering the meaning of the letter from her grandfather.

DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, she doesn't feel that they have "clicked" yet and tries to talk to the PC again later.

Rank 2—The Destined Empress discusses the most recent event in the caravan's journey. She is curious about the PC's role in that event as well as the PC's long-term plans (if this is before recovering the Seal, the PCs won't yet know of the journey to the Empire of Dawn). She talks about her role overseeing her family's glassmaking business and how she more enjoyed being an innkeeper and cooking a variety of different dishes while swapping tales.

DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, she wants to talk to the PC further before trusting them more.

Rank 3—The Destined Empress wants to know more about the PC's beliefs and feelings, so she engages them to swap stories about their adventure so far. She instructs that she already knows the details, so she is more focused on the story than on the facts.

DC 13 Charisma (Performance). On failure, she instructs the PC to focus more on how it felt and less on reciting the facts and to try again later.

Rank 4 (Breakthrough)—This Breakthrough is only available after the Destined Empress awakens from her trance. The Destined Empress is overwhelmed by her fate. She never saw herself as a lofty noble before, and she can't imagine being an empress. She is quietly playing her samisen when the PC finds her, deep in thought.

DC 14 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC is unable to approach subtly and either leaves or disturbs her and she isn't ready to talk. On success, the PC realizes that she needs to talk to someone but wants to work up to it, so they should wait quietly until she finishes playing. Once she is done, the Destined Empress engages the PC in an impassioned conversation about her gnawing doubts and growing fear that she isn't cut out to be an empress. She emphasizes that the people of the Empire of Dawn need her and that she knows that she can't back down for their sakes, but she says that when it's night and she is trying to sleep, she can't stop having doubts and fears that disturb her dreams. She talks about the foolishness of tales of clever tailors or cooks or peasants who become kings by marrying a princess, as the tales always stop when the hero becomes king and never deal with the reality of the fact that a tailor probably makes a terrible king. She invites the PC to prove her wrong with any stories that could convince her that it's possible.

DC 14 Charisma (Performance). On failure, she remains unconvinced and asks the PC to find a better example. Even on a success, she concedes her point and is impressed by the PC's wit, but ultimately she isn't convinced that a story will translate to real life without some more back-and-forth with the PC.

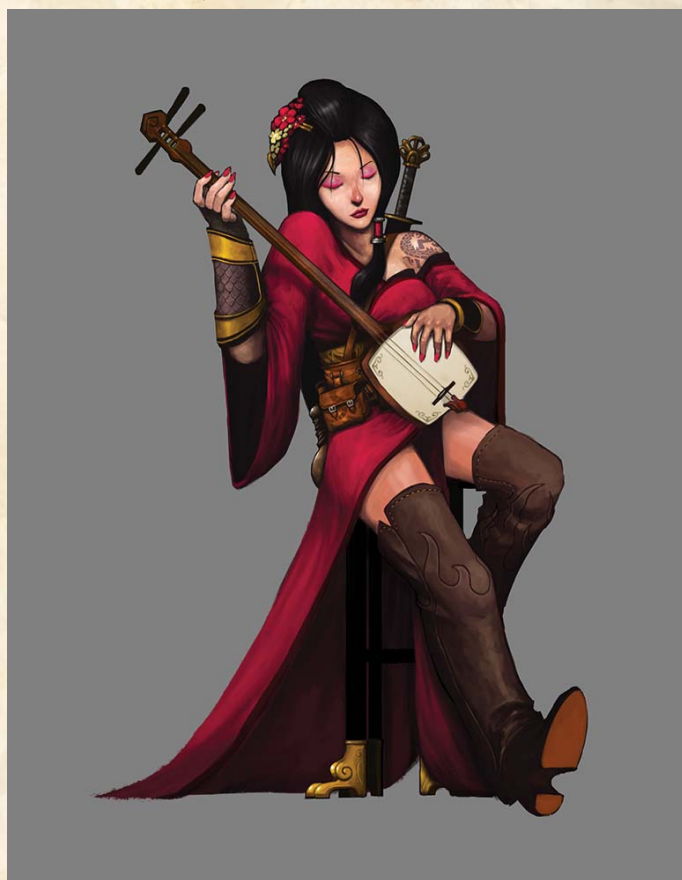
DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the PC is unable to convince her, though she may be willing to listen to further arguments later. On success, the PC has helped the Destined Empress restore her confidence and begin to accept her fate. Future PCs use the next version of Rank 4 instead.

Rank 4—The Destined Empress would like an inspiring performance that tells a tale of good triumphing against an overwhelming force to help keep up morale after the latest events on the caravan's journey and given the ultimate goal to unseat the oni.

DC 14 Charisma (Performance). On failure, she asks the PC to try again at a later date.

Rank 5—The Destined Empress wants to help commemorate a recent event in the caravan's journey, particularly a fallen companion if applicable, and she asks the PC to help her in doing so by brainstorming ideas and then setting to work on the task at hand. She asks the PC to help by crafting something appropriate for the commemoration, reminding them that the Goddess of Love smiles upon the creation of works of beauty. If the PC has a particular crafting skill, she will ask for that. Otherwise, she will ask for something that fits the commemoration best.

DC 15 Dexterity, Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma. Proficiency with appropriate tools applies. On failure, she tells the PC that they should try again later.



Rank 6—The Destined Empress has been reading up on etiquette in the Empire of Dawn, supplemented with what she learned of her grandfather’s teachings through her father in an attempt to learn how to behave appropriately, though she is frustrated at the idea that she might be forced to behave unlike herself and “like an empress”. She makes light of some of the strange customs of the Empire of Dawn (you can look up Japanese etiquette to use as a guideline—gift giving is a good possibility). Nonetheless, she realizes that she will need to be able to at least act the part in public, even if she doesn’t feel like an empress underneath, so she asks if the PC can figure out more etiquette tips and let her know.

DC 16 Intelligence (History). On failure, she asks the PC to help her find more information.

Rank 7 (Breakthrough)—The Destined Empress is playing the samisen alone again in the growing darkness. This time the notes are uncharacteristically atonal and sometimes jumbled.

DC 17 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC is unable to determine the source. On success, the PC realizes that the Destined Empress is experiencing a deep sense of loss and experiencing vivid flashbacks of a moment of tragedy. If confronted about it, she admits to the PC that she has been having nightmares about a disturbing moment from her past, but she doesn’t want to talk about it. Instead, she asks the PC to try to help her stay awake throughout the night by conversing as well as swapping songs and stories.

DC 15 Wisdom save (gains advantage if the PC has a ring of sustenance or some other way of needing very little rest) to stay both awake and focused enough to help the Destined Empress through the night as well. On failure, the Destined Empress or the PC falls asleep, and she experiences more nightmares. On success, as her inhibitions lower from sleep deprivation, she begins to tearfully tell the PC about her nightmarish final adventure and the loss of her beloved, the Caravan Master’s brother, explaining the significance of her tattoo.

DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion, or performance) to help the Destined Empress cheer up and move on. On failure, she smiles sadly and thanks the PC, but she continues to have the flashbacks. On success, the PC’s stirring speech, heartwarming performance, or beautiful creation helps her move past this throwback to her past and finally lay those demons to rest completely. Future PCs use the next version of Rank 7 instead.

Rank 7—The Destined Empress is looking for some inspiration from the PC toward their goal, hoping to use the PC’s words to help inspire the entire caravan.

DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion, or performance). On failure, she asks the PC to work on it more first.

Rank 8—The Destined Empress is looking for some help

practicing the formal nuances of High Court Minkan, and she hopes that the PC can serve as a conversation partner for her, helping them both pick up the subtle nuances of the language in use by the nobility. Her conversation topics will stray towards recent events in the caravan or new updates with other caravan members (particularly those in relationships). Use stilted or archaic language (for instance, Elizabethan English) to emphasize that they are practicing High Court Minkan and ask that the player of the PC does as well.

DC 18 Intelligence (decrease the DC 5 if the character knows an Eastern language, or 10 if they Minkan). On failure, the Destined Empress laughs and says that they both need a lot of practice. If the PC doesn’t have the right languages, she recommends picking them up.

Rank 9—The Destined Empress is cooking a dish in the caravan. As the PC notices, she invites the PC to join her. She explains that soon, she will no longer be able to cook for herself and others, as the empress, so she has been making some of her favorite dishes. She asks if the PC would like to join her and learn her techniques, so that perhaps they can make it for her some time. While they practice, she discusses the recent events in the journey with the PC.

DC 19 Intelligence or Dexterity, proficiency with cook’s utensils applies. On failure, she smiles and asks the PC to continue meeting her for lessons. On success, she grins widely and pronounces the PC a fine protégé and a good friend.

Rank 10 (Breakthrough)—The Destined Empress has reached a crucial turning point, and she is having trouble crossing it alone. The PC finds her staring at the wall intently.

DC 20 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC is unable to determine what is bothering the Destined Empress, and she isn’t able to put it into words either. On success, the PC realizes that much as she was willing to accept her fate to become an empress as an abstract entity, now that it’s getting so close, it has started to become real and present for her, and she’s having a final crisis. If the PC presents this to her, she realizes that this is what has been gnawing at her, and she discusses her feelings at length, relating short tales and fables that express her point through metaphor, such as tales of caged birds withering away or pretenders becoming the mask. She doesn’t lack the courage to save the people of the Empire of Dawn, but she worries that she will lose her identity in the process. At this point, she wonders if the PC has any tales that are more encouraging

DC 20 Charisma (Performance). On failure, she is not encouraged by the tale, pointing out how the analogy breaks for the current situation. On success, she is able to push back against her dread and confront the topic directly. She wonders what part of her is the real her. Will that be lost when she gives up everything to become the

empress? Will she even be the same woman?

DC 20 Intelligence (Religion) allows the PC to discuss philosophically on this topic. On failure, she feels that the PC's assertions don't have the weight of evidence. On success, she begins to take comfort in the evidence that seems to support the PC's case, but she is still having trouble completely convincing herself.

DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the PC has still helped her somewhat, but she is still troubled by her lingering doubts and seeks to speak with the PC further. On success, she finally feels convinced that she can make this sacrifice and change so much while still being able to stay true to herself, with the PC's help. She confesses that the PC is her pillar from whom she draws strength when she feels her resolve shake and she needs to lean on someone. She tells the PC that she would never dream of forcing their choice for what they do when the journey is complete, but she would be honored and grateful if the PC stayed to serve her as a close advisor in her new government.

THE ELVEN PROTECTOR

Description: The Elven Protector's relationship link focuses on the gradually-building bond between the stoic and taciturn ranger and the PC. Although she says little at first, eventually she explores her feelings after



finally vanquishing her mother's killer and discusses the problems with her quasi-relationship with one of the heroes of Sandtown.

Preferred Gifts and Interactions: The Elven Protector loves archery-related gifts the most. She enjoys quiet interactions that allow her time to think and to speak few words, and indeed, even during her rank-ups and interactions, play her as pre-occupied in keeping watch or fletching arrows.

Affinity Notes: The Elven Protector might have positive affinity for elves like herself who are also interested in woodcraft. If there is somehow a goblin in the group, she is guaranteed to have terrible affinity with that PC.

Joining the Caravan: The Elven Protector decided to come along to protect the Destined Empress. She joins when the PCs gain access to the caravan.

Staying with the Caravan: The Elven Protector takes her promise to protect her friend seriously. She will always stay with the caravan.

Participation: The Elven Protector wishes to protect the Destined Empress from harm, so she won't join in active adventuring unless the Destined Empress is also adventuring that day. This changes if a PC chooses her as a cohort or henchwoman, but she will only serve as such for a PC at **Rank 7** or higher with her. She will not become a cohort for a PC in a romantic relationship with her, and if she later develops a romantic relationship with the PC, she will cease being their cohort.

Romance: The Elven Protector is in a long-distance quasi-relationship with a hero of Sandtown, but she is conflicted about the relationship and whether it is going anywhere. In order to enter a romantic relationship with her, a PC must reach **Rank 7** and help her decide what to do about that relationship, choosing to convince her to break it off. Once any PC reaches that breakthrough, any PC at **Rank 7** can try to start a relationship with the Elven Protector.

BOONS

Elven Whisperer (Rank 7)—You have spent enough time with the Elven Protector to understand the quiet intensity of her feelings. You gain proficiency in your choice of Perception or Survival, and you gain a +1 to attack rolls against dragons and goblinoids (such as goblins, hobgoblins and orcs).

Elven Protector's Waterbringer (Rank 10)—You are the one who brings the Elven Protector water as she crosses her spiritual desert, and she has taught you much in return.

Whenever you can see or hear the Elven Protector, you gain the benefits of her Natural Explorer Ranger class feature, if you are in a favored terrain.

RANK-UPS

Rank 1—The Elven Protector is fletching arrows and staring into the night. When the PC approaches her, she hardly says anything at all, letting the PC do most of the talking and replying with few words when appropriate. If the topic of the goblin tribe comes up, she will make it clear that she is impressed that the PCs wiped them out.

DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) and DC 12 Wisdom (Insight). On failing the Persuasion check, the PC didn't make a good impression on the Elven Protector. On succeeding Persuasion but failing Insight, the Elven Protector has taken a liking to the PC but they haven't realized it yet because of her quiet and taciturn manner.

Rank 2—The Elven Protector is once again looking away from the PC, scanning for dangers while working on arrows. When the PC approaches, she engages the PC in few words about the most recent dangers the caravan has faced, praising, advising, or scolding as appropriate based on how the PC acted in the face of those dangers. She still spends much of the time listening to the PC or in silence.

DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) and DC 13 Wisdom (Insight). On failing the Persuasion check, the Elven Protector didn't think that the PC understood her point. On failing the Insight check, the PC didn't realize that this kind of treatment meant that the Elven Protector was feeling closer to the PC.

Rank 3—The Elven Protector continues to scan for dangers and work on arrows as the PC speaks with her. This time, she occasionally turns slightly to look toward the PC as they talk. She focuses on what precautions the PC is taking to protect the Destined Empress and avoid ambushes, although she continues mostly to listen and speak with few words.

DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) and DC 14 Wisdom (Insight). On failing the Persuasion, the Elven Protector is not convinced that the PC is taking sufficient precautions. On failing the Insight, the PC doesn't realize that picking apart the proposed defenses is the Elven Protector's way of helping and that she is feeling closer to the PC.

Rank 4 (Breakthrough)—The Elven Protector seems to be scanning for threats and working on arrows as usual.

DC 15 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC does not determine that anything is unusual and may speak with the Elven Protector if they wish, but they do not advance the breakthrough. On success, the PC realizes that the Elven Protector is feeling upset tonight. If the PC mentions this or takes actions to comfort her, the Elven

Protector at first doesn't want to talk about it and instead tries to quietly steer the conversation towards minutiae of their adventuring work.

DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the PC is unable to convince the Elven Protector to talk about what is upsetting her. On success, she turns to look at the PC directly, instead of scanning for threats. She admits that there is no particular reason for it, but she is feeling strong sorrow and loss over the death of her mother from long ago. She confesses that she was hoping for closure when she tracked down and slew the dragon that took her mother's life, but revenge hasn't softened the pain of losing a loved one. The PC can try to cheer her up, but words alone are not enough to soothe her.

DC 15 Check, Save, or Attack Roll (select an appropriate choice based on what the PC does. For instance, if they go shooting arrows with her, a ranged attack roll would work). On failure, she shakes her head and says that it doesn't help. On success, she thanks the PC for helping her keep her focus and make it through a rough spot. Future PCs use the next version of **Rank 4** instead.

Rank 4—The Elven Protector is scanning for threats and working on arrows, as usual.

DC 15 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC doesn't notice anything out of the ordinary. On success, the PC realizes that she is slightly sad and might appreciate if the PC stands by her side but says nothing. If they do so for a time, she quietly thanks them and tells them that sometimes she feels a bit nostalgic.

Rank 5—The Elven Protector is scanning for threats and working on arrows as usual. This time, however, she turns to the PC and asks if they'd like to join her in fletching. The Elven Protector gives instruction by example, but she is a perfectionist, correcting each arrow in turn: "Too wide at the shaft"; "Now too narrow"; "Too wide again."

DC 15 Dexterity (artisan's tools apply for fletching). On failure, the Elven Protector gives a terse apology "I'm not much of a teacher", but she is willing to try again later. On success, the Elven Protector finally compliments some of the PCs arrows and is happy to have the PC make arrows with her in the future.

Rank 6—The Elven Protector wants to go out on a patrol. Instead of going alone as usual, she asks the PC to join her.

DC 16 Wisdom (Survival). On failure, she gives the PC some pointers to teach them how to track and scout more effectively in the future. On success, she is impressed by the PC and considers whether to talk to the PC about a personal concern.

DC 16 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the Elven Protector delays telling the PC until the patrol is already over. On success, the PC realizes that there is something more and can convince the Elven Protector to talk about it. The

Elven Protector admits that she hates feeling weak or helpless, unable to do anything: “Helpless...useless...I hate it.” She is thinking of the times when the Destined Empress was comatose and kidnapped by assassins (especially if the Elven Protector was also kidnapped), but this also leads into her **Rank 7 Breakthrough** about her relationship.

Rank 7 (Breakthrough)—The Elven Protector is scanning for threats and working on arrows. She invites the PC to join her via a nod of her head, and she watches the PC’s arrow work for a while.

DC 17 Dexterity (artisan’s tools apply for fletching). On failure, she gives the PC some more advanced pointers on crafting. On success, the PC’s skillful fletching reminds her of herself learning archery with her human stepfather, and she decides to talk to the PC about her personal life a bit more. She explains about how she fell in love with a hero of Sandtown, but when she decided to tag along with him on his journey, she discovered that he was always too distracted in his work to pay attention to her. She eventually decided that she couldn’t serve as his cohort if she wanted to have his full respect, so she stayed behind after that, but then he almost died without her by his side and didn’t send her regular updates so she would know he was still alive. Even so, absence helped him pay more attention to her, and she thinks they might be able to stay together, particularly if this journey of hers gives him time to reflect on what it’s like not knowing from the other side. She tells this tale in her typical taciturn fashion, however, particularly terse at the moments that are most painful for her.

DC 17 Wisdom (Insight). Failure means the PC is unable to understand what she is saying from the fragmented tale, causing her to grow frustrated and give up for now. On success, fill in the PC more between the lines of what the Elven Protector actually said and present the story above. The Elven Protector then asks the PC for advice. The PC can choose to either convince the Elven Protector to keep working on the relationship or to break up with him, discussing the situation in detail with her.

DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion) (with disadvantage if the PC is trying to convince her to break up with her boyfriend in order to start a romantic relationship with her). On failure, she still isn’t convinced by the PC’s arguments. On success, she finally decides to do as the PC suggested. If two PCs are simultaneously trying to perform this breakthrough with opposite advice, after this success, give the other PC one additional chance to not only beat DC 17 but surpass the other PC’s result and then the Elven Protector decides based on whoever had the highest check (both PCs still reach **Rank 7** with her). Future PCs use the next version of **Rank 7** instead.

Rank 7—The Elven Protector is scanning for threats and working on arrows. She invites the PC to join her via a

nod of her head, and she watches the PC’s arrow work for a while.

DC 17 Dexterity (artisan’s tools apply for fletching). On failure, she gives the PC some more advanced pointers on crafting. On success, the PC’s skillful fletching reminds her of herself learning archery with her human stepfather, and she talks about him a little with the PC.

Rank 8—The Elven Protector is scanning for threats and fletching arrows as usual. This time, she invites the PC to watch with her.

DC 18 Wisdom (Perception). On failure, the Elven Protector is distracted by the fact that the PC doesn’t seem to be noticing some of the sounds that she is noticing. On success, she feels that the PC is paying sufficient attention that she can take some of her focus off guard duty and look directly at the PC as they talk about the journey.

DC 18 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC doesn’t realize it yet, but the Elven Protector is really coming to rely on the PC. On success, the PC realizes this fact and fully reaches **Rank 8**.

Rank 9—The Elven Protector has been gathering leaves and other samples of plants from the local area to familiarize herself with the new flora. She invites the PC to study with her in order to better determine a variety of details, like which plants are safe to eat and which make noticeable sounds when moving them aside.

DC 19 Intelligence (Nature). On failure, she admits that they both have to keep working on it. On success, the Elven Protector is satisfied that they have fully catalogued the local flora, at least for now.

Rank 10 (Breakthrough)—The Elven Protector is working on arrows and scanning for threats as usual. However, she puts her arrow work down and turns to greet the PC and talk about whatever topic the PC brings up.

DC 20 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the conversation goes well but ultimately does not lead to a breakthrough. On success, the PC realizes that the Elven Protector has some feelings bubbling just under the surface and can work to try to bring them fully out.

DC 20 Charisma (Deception) to talk around the feelings delicately until they come out or *DC 20 Charisma (Performance)* to elicit them via a performance. On failure, the PC either fails to help the Elven Protector bring out her emotions or else is too blunt and causes her to withdraw. On success, she begins to cry for a short time. When she is done, she smiles and tells the PC that she needed that, and that she has never felt comfortable being so vulnerable around anyone before since her mother, not even her romantic partners. She explains that feeling vulnerable and helpless always gives her flashbacks to how she could do nothing against the dragon when it took her mother.

DC 21 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC doesn’t notice

the other deeper layer buried under the first. On success, the PC realizes that the Elven Protector is realizing that she doesn't have to be a perfectionist and rely only on herself to be strong, but she hasn't fully convinced herself of that yet.

DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the PC's arguments aren't enough to overcome the Elven Protector's instincts honed from years of being a loner. On success, the Elven Protector is able to rely more on others, making a terse joke about the Mystic Seer telling her that the Desert card was important to her, wherein a trial can only be overcome by working together. She asks the PC what they plan on doing after defeating the oni and instating the Destined Empress. If the PCs convinced her to work on her relationship with the hero of Sandtown, she talks about her plans to return there, pointing out that they will be able to have a relationship of peers now that both of them have succeeded at an epic journey. If she is in a relationship with a PC, her plans involve staying with her lover. If neither is the case, then she tells the PC that she is still deciding between staying here with the Destined Empress and going back to Sandtown to annihilate all the goblin tribes once and for all.

THE LONELY SPRITE

Description and Overview: The Lonely Sprite is both a sprite^{SRD} and a cleric of Lady Luck who once traveled as the ally of a more powerful human cleric until her companion met an untimely end. Afterwards, she prayed to Lady Luck to show her guidance in her travels and set off on a random path, letting luck and the stars decide. Eventually, she reached the place where she saw a sign and decided to stay, watching and waiting to see why that spot is where she should stay. The Lonely Sprite is an excellent match for any campaign with a Chaotic Good outlook, particularly those involving travel or overthrowing tyranny. The Lonely Sprite's relationship link is focused self-discovery and understanding more of her role in the universe. As she grows closer to the PC, she becomes more willing to talk about her former companion, and her thoughts about destiny and luck.

Preferred Gifts and Interactions: The Lonely Sprite is difficult to influence with gifts and interactions. She prefers unique experiences and tires of repetition more quickly than usual. The one thing she appreciates most of all is something that can lift an oppressive mood and bring optimism and good cheer to others; in her mind, a perfectly-crafted joke can do all of those things, but she dislikes mean-spirited and hurtful jokes.



Affinity Notes: The Lonely Sprite has a positive affinity for clergy of Lady Luck, like herself and her former companion. She has negative affinity for evil characters and particularly for demons and those who worship them. If an adventuring party includes both the Lonely Sprite and the Mute Harpy, this antagonism might lead to interesting interactions between the PCs and NPCs.

Joining the Party: When the party comes across the place where the Lonely Sprite ended her guided flight, she hides and follows them curiously. She is willing to help them if she sees them in trouble, at least while they adventure near her chosen location, and a request via Persuasion (DC 15) can convince her to join the party for at least a short time; she can always fly back if necessary, and, though she's keeping it to herself, she realizes that the party might be why she was guided here.

Staying with the Party: Eventually, the Lonely Sprite will reach a decision point where she has to decide whether she's going to go all-in with the party or part ways and return to the spot her goddess showed her. In general, this should be at a point in the campaign that seems like a point of no return, like just before heading up into trackless arctic regions, deep sea, or similar remote locales. In the unlikely event that a character has reached rank 6 or higher with the Lonely Sprite before this decision point, she automatically stays. To convince the Lonely Sprite to stay otherwise requires a character to make a plea to her

(Charisma (Persuasion) DC 25, or DC 20 if the character is at least rank 4, and DC 17 if they are rank 5). Each character at least at rank 3 with her can make their request separately; characters can't use the help action on this roll.

Advancement: The Lonely Sprite advances as a cleric of Lady Luck. For experience points, if you want her to be a strong option for the party, consider her starting her as a pixie cleric 3. Otherwise, you should consider her as a level or two higher than that.

Participation: The Lonely Sprite, unlike most NPCs, has exploration literally in her blood, so she is generally happy to come with the PCs, even at low relationship ranks. However, she is prone to her own ideas of what might be interesting to see, so until a PC reaches rank 4 with her, there is a 25% chance that she decides to do something else on a given day. The Lonely Sprite will agree to become a cohort or henchwoman to a PC only after she is at Rank 7 with that PC and has expressed her grief over the last time she was a cohort. As a free spirit, she generally prefers not to be a cohort, and even as a cohort, she won't always follow orders from her PC.

Romance: The Lonely Sprite is willing to try anything at least once, and, more surprised that a PC would propose it than shy or dismissive, she would be willing to pursue a romance as early as Rank 4. In her friendships, the Lonely Sprite is extremely loyal, but in her intimate affections, she is still a chaotic and free fey, prone to fits of whimsy and rapid changes of heart. A character romancing her should expect an on-again off-again relationship that flirts between casual and more intimate at times, all the way up to Rank 10, at which point even the Lonely Sprite could become seriously committed.

BOONS

Lonely Sprite's Comrade (Rank 7)—While the Lonely Sprite is quick to make friends, she is slower to truly trust, and you are one of the few in her most trusted circles. You gain proficiency in your choice of Nature or Perform, and you gain advantage on saving throws against other fey.

Lonely Sprite's Lifeline (Rank 10)—The Lonely Sprite owes part of her epiphany to her friendship with you, and she trusts that even if she is destroyed, you will carry on her memory. Twice per day as a reaction, you can gain the effects of *freedom of movement* for 1 round.

RANK-UPS

Rank 1—The Lonely Sprite introduces herself to the PC and asks the PC to tell her more about himself or herself. She is particularly curious about the PC's religious beliefs.

DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the Lonely Sprite becomes distracted, tells the PC that they should speak again later, and flies off.

Rank 2—The Lonely Sprite wants to hear more about the PC, including the PCs' adventures so far. Her goal is to subtly test the PC's personality, good nature, and sense of humor, while also learning what the PC has been up to before meeting her.

DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Performance). On failure, the Lonely Sprite says that she'd like to hear more at a later time.

Rank 3—The Lonely Sprite wants to go trailblazing a bit with the PC, discovering the secrets of the land around them in honor of Lady Luck.

DC 13 Wisdom (Survival). On failure, the Lonely Sprite chuckles good-naturedly at the way the PC is getting turned around and offers to go exploring again later.

Rank 4 (Breakthrough)—The Lonely Sprite is considering the branching paths of luck and possibility that brought her here with the PCs.

DC 14 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC doesn't recognize the Lonely Sprite's contemplative mood. If successful, the PCs realizes that she is pondering the situation deeply with intense introspection, not typical for the usually gregarious Lonely Sprite. If the PC offers to join her or discuss what's on her mind, the Lonely Sprite gives a sad smile and asks the PC what he knows about what sort of creature she is.

DC 14 Intelligence (Nature) and DC 14 Intelligence (Religion). On failure, the PC still might know basic facts, like that she is a pixie, but the Lonely Sprite shakes her head and says it's deeper than that. On a success, the PC realizes that as a servant of Lady Luck, it was very unusual that the Lonely Sprite would have been staying in one place for so long where the PCs found her. The Lonely Sprite nods sadly and explains that she met with a great loss, so she took part in a ritual to Lady Luck where she let the glinting lights of the night stars off her starknife guide her in seemingly random directions, hoping she would find a sign. When she saw the location where the PCs found her, perhaps a beautiful cemetery shrine of Lady Luck fallen into disrepair, she knew it was a sign, and she stayed to re-consecrate the place and wait to see why it might be significant. She admits to the PC that she believes it is possible that the PCs' arrival was what she was waiting for, but she still needs to wait and pray and contemplate to see if that turns out to be so. She welcomes the PC in joining her. Future PCs use the next version of Rank 4 instead.

Rank 4—The Lonely Sprite is curious what the PC thinks about her kind.

DC 14 Intelligence (Nature). On failure, the PC doesn't remember anything much about pixies, and the Lonely Sprite makes a joke involving incorrect facts about humans and suggests the PC learn more about his traveling companions. On success, she smiles and tells the PC that she is learning more about the PC, and the other PCs, as well.

Rank 5—The Lonely Sprite is interested in sharing jokes; particularly, she wants to hear the best one the PC has to offer. She points out that humor is a great way to maintain optimism even in the face of uncertainty, so since Lady Luck is a goddess of eternal optimism, a joke is like a prayer to Lady Luck.

DC 15 Charisma (Performance). On failure, she shakes her head and asks the PC to come up with something better than that. On success, she laughs and claps her hands, sharing a joke of her own in return.

Rank 6—The Lonely Sprite muses over the group's many adventures so far, and she wonders what the PC sees as the driving philosophical force behind the journey.

DC 16 Intelligence (Religion). On failure, the Lonely Sprite asks the PC to keep thinking about it and come back to her later. On success, the PC is able to explain his beliefs or to determine that the Lonely Sprite sees Lady Luck's fingerprints on the group's journeys so far. The Lonely Sprite shares her viewpoint, that the group has been guided by Lady Luck, citing any twists of luck in the group's favor, the journey they have taken together, and any plans that fall in line with Lady Luck's purview (for instance, freeing the Empire of Dawn from tyranny, if assisting the Destined Empress). The Lonely Sprite thinks it's all just too perfect to be merely a coincidence.

Rank 7 (Breakthrough)—The Lonely Sprite seems uncharacteristically quiet.

DC 17 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC can't figure out why. On success, the PC realizes that the Lonely Sprite has grown somber over an extremely weighty topic. If the PC offers to join her, the Lonely Sprite tells the PC that she isn't in the mood for talking right now, but she'd be happy to quietly share a few jokes under the starlight.

DC 16 Charisma (Performance). On failure, the Lonely Sprite forces a smile, thanks the PC, and heads off on her own. On success, the Lonely Sprite is able to feel more comfortable, so she tells the PC all about her previous companion, a priestess of Lady Luck, and their adventures together, culminating in how the priestess was devoured by a plant creature, while the Lonely Sprite could do nothing to stop the plant, even though the plant couldn't grapple her or stop her from flying away. As the priestess was dying, she told the Lonely Sprite to fly away, and not to stay there and perish alongside her friend.

DC 17 Intelligence (Religion). On failure, the Lonely Sprite tells the PC she is glad she was able to tell her story, but the PC doesn't realize the further implications yet, though she might later on. On success, the PC realizes the Lonely Sprite fears that she will die before completing whatever fate Lady Luck has in store for her, and if this happens, she may lose the Lady's favor in the afterlife. The Lonely Sprite nods, sadly, and tells the PC that at that the time, she had been willing to accept that fate if there had been some way to save her companion, but there wasn't one. But now, the Lonely Sprite feels that the PCs' current endeavor is a worthy cause. She knows that with the battles getting deadlier and deadlier, someday, the Lonely Sprite might be felled by an attack and die with fate unfulfilled. She tells the PC that she has come to terms with that, and even if she must be a sacrifice along the journey, she trusts Lady Luck that it will be worth it in the good that their journey will bring for so many others. Future PCs use the next version of Rank 7 instead.

Rank 7—The Lonely Sprite shares more jokes with the PC.

DC 17 Charisma (Performance). On failure, the Lonely Sprite tells the PC to practice his delivery next time.

Rank 8—The Lonely Sprite wants to go flying with the PC, enjoying the rush of the air and the way the sky feels as they chat together. If somehow the PCs have absolutely no means to fly by this point, she offers to help with magic if she can. If that's still not enough for the PC to be able to fly, she is willing to accept a substitute adventure, grudgingly.

DC 18 Dexterity (Acrobatics). On failure, the Lonely Sprite's perfect maneuverability leaves the PC in the dust. She laughs with glee and promises to help teach the PC how to fly. If the PC succeeds, he can see how joyous the Lonely Sprite is when she's flying free, and they can discuss many things together in the sky.

Rank 9—In keeping with the optimism of a priestess of Lady Luck, the Lonely Sprite has at this point decided that the PCs' great adventure will be a success, so she's busy planning several future journeys. She tells the PC that he is welcome to come with her, and she asks for some advice on exciting geographical locations

DC 19 Intelligence (History). On failure, she agrees that the PC's suggestions are interesting, but she says that nothing has really sparked her imagination yet. On success, she is delighted and agrees that the suggested location is a place she just has to go see.

Rank 10 (Breakthrough)—The Lonely Sprite is on the cusp of a major epiphany. While she'd like the PC to join her, she also needs time to think without the words of conversation interrupting her train of thought.

DC 20 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC doesn't realize, and likely either heads off or speaks, disrupting her concentration. On success, the PC realizes that for the

moment, and contrary to normal, the best thing is to sit with the Lonely Sprite and wait, even though the Lonely Sprite herself is not simply sitting but instead pacing through the air. Eventually, she stops pacing and turns to face the PC. She smiles and thanks the PC for waiting for her and asks if the PC expects a joke. Whatever the PC answers, the Lonely Sprite admits that much as a joke might be a good distraction, now is not the time for one just yet. She asks the PC to consider with her the intertwined roles she bears as both a pixie, a creature of nature, and a priestess of Lady Luck. She wonders, between the two of those roles, whether her nature, no matter how free-spirited, was never free for her to choose, and whether she possesses significant individuality to herself, to call her own.

DC 20 Intelligence Religion and DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the PC might still make a response, but it doesn't seem to satisfy the Lonely Sprite. On success, the PC can convince the Lonely Sprite what the fey herself is already beginning to understand; that she has become more than her ordinary pixie sisters but that ultimately,

her fate has always belonged to her. The Lonely Sprite wonders if her friend, the deceased priestess of Lady Luck, will see her again, either in life or afterwards. Joyful, she takes the PC up to fly with her again in the starlight, her spirit feeling as light as the air itself.

Dexterity (Acrobatics) DC 20. On failure, she leaves the PC behind but promises to fly with the PC again later. On success, the two soar through the starlit night and see a shooting star pass above them. The Lonely Sprite smiles and tells the PC that no matter what happens to her, she knows the PC will carry on her memory, and she will do the same for the PC. She promises the PC that if the PC's soul reaches the afterlife, she'll find them and still be their friend.

THE MYSTIC SEER

Description: The Mystic Seer's relationship link explores the ideas of fate, responsibility, and mortality. The Mystic Seer's mother has overshadowed her for much of her life, and she regrets having missed out on the opportunity to explore and adventure during her youth. The Mystic Seer discusses various philosophical and esoteric topics with the PCs throughout the journey, as well as providing enigmatic card readings.

Preferred Gifts and Interactions: The Mystic Seer loves gifts related to travel and exotic locales. She enjoys going on trips to interesting places with the PCs rather than being cooped up in the caravan "like an old lady."

Affinity Notes: A foster mother several times over, the Mystic Seer might have a positive affinity for PCs who are childlike or need a mother figure. She has a negative affinity for those who oppress others and force them to abandon their hopes and dreams.

Joining the Caravan: The Mystic Seer is the caravan's fortune-teller and the foster mother of the Caravan Master. She automatically joins when the PCs gain access to the caravan.

Staying with the Caravan: The Mystic Seer will not be denied her chance at a true journey. She will always stay with the caravan.

Participation: The Mystic Seer will join the PCs in active adventuring duty after any PC gets a breakthrough at **Rank 4**. The Mystic Seer will agree to become a cohort or henchwoman to a PC if she is at **Rank 7** with that PC.

Romance: The Mystic Seer can be romanced at **Rank 6**. She is no stranger to brief flings from her youth, but this time she is looking for something more fulfilling.



BOONS

Prophecy Seeker (Rank 7)—You have explored the ways of the Harrow deck with the Mystic Seer and puzzled over her mother's strange prophecy. You gain proficiency in your choice of Religion or Insight.

Mystic Seer's Light (Rank 10)—You are the light that shines through the Mystic Seer's darkest hour. If you have a campaign trait with the Mystic Seer, double all trait bonuses you receive from the trait. As long as the Mystic Seer is within 30 feet of you, you may reroll a failed saving throw once per day.

RANK-UPS

Rank 1—The Mystic Seer introduces herself and her role in the caravan. She gives a Harrow reading for the PC (consider stacking the deck so that the PC's card shows up in this initial reading).

DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, she surmises that the reading was inconclusive and they must try again later.

Rank 2—The Mystic Seer wonders about the PC's past and how it will influence their future. She explains that the Harrow is a gift from Lady Luck to help each person influence their own futures, rather than a prophecy written in stone. Even on a terrible Harrowing, Lady Luck teaches that those who hold out hope shall find a path.

DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion or Performance). On failure, she tells the PC that they need to consider their past more carefully if they wish to find the best future.

Rank 3—The Mystic Seer shares knowledge of herblore and medicine with the PC, reminding them that skills like those of the healer can mitigate even the most unfortunate of fates and that the future is always open to change. Healing is the art of refusing to accept a dire fate as inevitable.

DC 13 Wisdom (Medicine) (with advantage if PC any healing magic). On failure, she tells the PC that they should practice what she has taught them and speak with her again.

Rank 4 (Breakthrough)—The Mystic Seer has become uncertain of her path. She has learned of the kami and their foes the oni, and the worldview expressed by the battle of these two forces seems to her to run contrary to the teachings of Lady Luck.

DC 14 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC doesn't realize anything is amiss, but on a success, the PC discovers that she is puzzled. She asks the PC to try to read an epic from the Empire of Dawn closely for nuance, offering a comprehend languages spell if they need it.

DC 14 Intelligence (Investigation) (with advantage if the PC knows an ancient language, since the original makes it easier to

understand metaphors than the translation from the spell). On failure, she asks the PC to contemplate the text and come back to her when they understand it better, confessing that she herself doesn't fully understand it either. On success, she admits to the PC that she has been troubled for a long time about the balances of new experiences and responsibilities. She explains how she has put off her own journey because of her responsibilities, but she considers that Lady Luck teaches her faithful to seize the moment and find new experiences. Nonetheless, the oni are shown to be evil specifically for desiring new experiences and eschewing responsibility. She asks the PC if they have any thoughts on the matter and weighs their opinion, particularly looking for answers based on faith or philosophy. She respects an answer from either side of the philosophical spectrum.

DC 13 Intelligence (Religion). On failure, she asks the PC to consider her question carefully and consult the holy book of their deity of choice. On success, the PC's answer has helped the Mystic Seer understand her own situation better. Future PCs uses the next version of **Rank 4** instead.

Rank 4—The Mystic Seer presents the puzzle of experience versus responsibility, as exemplified by the kami and the oni, as well as the teachings of Lady Luck to seize the moment. She asks the PC if they have any thoughts on the matter and weighs their opinion, particularly looking for answers based on faith or philosophy. She respects an answer from either side of the philosophical spectrum.

DC 14 Intelligence (Religion). On failure, she asks the PC to consider her question carefully and consult the holy book of their deity of choice.

Rank 5—Finally able to fully concentrate on the joy of the epic journey to the Empire of Dawn, the Mystic Seer is getting more excited about interesting locations to visit along the way. She has out all of her maps and travelogues out and is interested in comparing her ideas with those of the PC.

DC 15 Intelligence (History). On failure, she asks the PC to go find some more sources and then brainstorm side-trip ideas with her again.

Rank 6—The Mystic Seer is looking carefully at her Harrow deck as the PC arrives. She wonders whether the PC has spent much time considering the significance of the various major and minor cards in her mystic deck, the meanings of each card, and the origins of the suits.

DC 16 Intelligence (Arcana). On failure, she tells the PC to contemplate the deck, particularly whichever card is the PC's card, and come back to her if they have found new insight.

Rank 7—At long last, the Mystic Seer feels she is ready to relieve herself of the final burden her mother placed upon

her. Just before dying, the Mystic Seer's mother spoke a cryptic premonition, and she made the Mystic Seer swear to keep it secret until she knew in her heart that the time was right. She is considering whether to tell the PC.

DC 17 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC is unable to determine why the Mystic Seer is pensive. On success, she admits that there is something she is considering, but she is not convinced whether the time is right. Allow the PC to try any creative means to convince her.

DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion or other appropriate skill). On failure, the Mystic Seer believes that the time is soon, but not just yet. On success, after extracting a promise of secrecy, she reveals the premonition from her mother's deathbed, inviting the PC to speculate at the hidden meaning.

DC 14 Intelligence check. On failure, much of the hidden meaning eludes the PC, and the Mystic Seer suggests that the PC let it percolate. On success, the Mystic Seer agrees that the PC has discovered a part of the meaning and suggests that they keep it in mind going forward. She feels some of her mother's burden lifted. Future PCs use the next version of **Rank 7** instead.

Rank 7—The Mystic Seer reveals the premonition from her mother's deathbed (see sidebar), inviting the PC to speculate at the hidden meaning.

DC 14 Intelligence check. On failure, much of the hidden meaning eludes the PC, and the Mystic Seer suggests that the PC let it percolate. On success, the Mystic Seer agrees that the PC has discovered a part of the meaning and suggests that they keep it in mind going forward.

Rank 8—The Mystic Seer tells the PC more about her mother and wonders what kind of relationship the PC had with their parents. She swaps stories and is particularly interested if the PC ever felt the reach of their parents' shadows.

DC 18 Charisma (Performance) to swap tales. On failure, the Mystic Seer still wants to hear more.

Rank 9—The Mystic Seer has been debating the nature of concepts such as Fate, Prophecy, Luck, and Destiny with the Lonely Sprite (or other appropriate NPCs if she has perished or left the party). She believes that Lady Luck's teachings mean that the future is a blank slate meant to be filled by those with the faith and belief to paint a beautiful future. The others hold slightly nuanced viewpoints on the topic. For instance, some might believe that the future is a mystery with clues and pieces of the puzzle that can be fit together in order to predict what will happen. The Mystic Seer asks the PC what they believe about these heavy topics, asking them to support their ideas with philosophical or religious teachings if they can.

DC 19 Intelligence (Religion). On failure, the Mystic Seer isn't satisfied with the answer, though she respects the PC's

right to hold their opinion. She asks them to fully form their idea and explain it to her again.

Rank 10—The Mystic Seer is concentrating intensely on a Harrowing with no one else around.

DC 20 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC can't tell the importance. On success, the PC realizes that the Mystic Seer seems deeply troubled about something, and she talks frankly to the PC about living in the shadow of her mother, and the dual nature of her own thoughts, at both loving her mother and her foster children, and yet resenting how she lost the best years of her life, unable to pursue her dream. Both parts of her consider the other to be repugnant. How could she think such things about the people she loves? But how too could she ignore the teachings of her goddess and her own heart? She wonders whether the PC has ever been of two minds so strongly and asks for any relevant proverbs or teachings from the PC's own religion..

DC 20 Intelligence (Religion). On failure, she asks the PC to come back if they can find some guidance for her. On success, she seems satisfied with their religious answer, but she asks the PC which path they would have chosen and ultimately whether they believe she has chosen wisely.

DC 20 Charisma (Persuasion) allows the PC to explain their answer in a way that satisfies the Mystic Seer. On failure, she seems unconvinced and retreats to her own thoughts. On success, the Mystic Seer thanks the PC and wonders if her lost youth, too, was all a part of the path of her journey, all necessary to shape her so she would be ready for this adventure.

DC 20 Wisdom (Perception) allows the PC to notice a shooting star passing by overhead, indicating Lady Luck's favor. On failure, the shooting star does not pass overhead, as Lady Luck will only send her sign of favor when it will be noticed. When the PC notices the shooting star, the Mystic Seer recognizes the good omen and takes it as a sign that she has discovered something important about herself, with the PC's help.

THE VIKING SHIELDMAIDEN

Description: The Viking Shieldmaiden is a proud viking warrior who must come to grips with the taste of dishonor and failure. With the PCs' help, she might come out the other side stronger than ever. The Viking Shieldmaiden is extremely competitive, reacts aggressively when she feels she is being disrespected, and often becomes confused when the ins and outs of viking honor aren't as obvious to others as they are to her. However, she is fiercely loyal to her true friends and comrades, and she is never bitter about losing a competition fairly, merely excited to improve and try again.

The Viking Shieldmaiden had participated in successful raids, but she had never led one. That all changed when she found a long-lost scroll indicating a secret entrance to a forgotten dungeon. Her blood-brethren agreed that this was a sign from the Lord in Iron, so they set sail for the dungeon and named her the leader of the raid. Unfortunately, they bit off more than they could chew, and now the rest of her blood-brethren lie dead. At least they died in glorious battle. The Viking Shieldmaiden has been captured by the denizens of the dungeon, where she can only assume she will die dishonorably, alone, and forgotten. Fortunately, the dungeon the Viking Shieldmaiden attacked was the same dungeon the PCs are exploring. They have a chance to save this proud warrior from her chains, but they will have to be careful how they act towards her, as the physical chains are only the beginning.

The Viking Shieldmaiden is an excellent match for any campaign with a dungeon or lost fortification in it where she could have been captured, particularly one headed into viking lands. The Viking Shieldmaiden's relationship link is focused on the PC learning viking honor and culture and helping the Viking Shieldmaiden come to terms with her own honor. Only as she grows much closer to a PC will she become willing to talk about things like her insecurities and doubts.

Preferred Gifts and Interactions: The Viking Shieldmaiden enjoys contests of strength, such as wrestling or duels, and she is also a fan of the telling of epic sagas like the skalds sing as well as of boasting contests. As far as gifts, she enjoys mementos of glorious battles in which she participated, such as the composition of a saga or a bracelet in the shape of a beast she helped defeat carved from one of its bones.

Affinity Notes: The Viking Shieldmaiden has a positive affinity for warriors who fight with strength and honor, by her standards of honor. She has negative affinity for those who employ cowardly tactics such as cursing or hexing

enemies, like enchanters or illusionists, and she absolutely despises the icy witches from her nation's wild lands and their servitors.

Joining the Party: When the party finds the Viking Shieldmaiden, she is badly injured, exhausted, hungry, and stripped of her gear. How the PCs interact with her at first is crucial to her opinion of them. Those who are patronizing or act overly sorry for her she meets with anger, while those who show her respect and quietly allow her to regain her bearings earn her respect in turn. If the PCs haven't antagonized her, after a day to recover, she is willing to assist the PCs, if they have any of the dungeon left to explore. Afterwards, she agrees to join the PCs if they are journeying to her homeland because there is strength in numbers, and she agrees to give them a gift for their assistance upon arrival. Along the way, she offers to help when trouble arises. If the PCs are not headed that way but you want to use the Viking Shieldmaiden anyway, have her offer her blade to the party in exchange for their rescue, instead.

Staying with the Party: After arriving back at her homeland, when the PCs are about to leave it, or when her term of service is over if using that option, the Viking Shieldmaiden leaves the party unless someone has reached at least Rank 4 with her. Such a character can convince her to join the party on a more permanent basis with a DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion) check, though they advantage if they emphasize the honor and glory and the tales that will be told of their battles. They also receive a cumulative +4 bonus for every rank they have reached beyond 4.

Advancement: The Viking Shieldmaiden advances as a barbarian.

Participation: The Viking Shieldmaiden yearns for battle. She will agree to join for adventuring on any day where there is an expectation of battle, and starting at Rank 4, she will come along regardless if the PC requests her aid in an appropriate way, by emphasizing how her assistance would be helpful on that day despite the dearth of battle. The Viking Shieldmaiden is highly skeptical about the idea of becoming a cohort or henchwoman, but a character at Rank 7 with her who possesses formidable viking honor might be able to convince her.

Romance: The Viking Shieldmaiden is no stranger to physical relationships, and she's happy to engage in one with someone strong and honorable who catches her eye as early as Rank 2 or 3. She closes her inner feelings off to almost everyone, however. Only someone at least Rank 7 is in that inner circle, and thus they are the only ones who truly have a chance for a deeper relationship with her.

BOONS

Viking Shieldmaiden's Blood Brother/Sister (Rank 7)—You have not only shown true honor but earned the Viking Shieldmaiden's trust, so she considers you her blood kindred. You gain proficiency in Intimidation or Survival.

Viking Shieldmaiden's Shield (Rank 10)—Much as the Viking Shieldmaiden trusts her physical shield with her life in battle, she trusts you to protect the vulnerable parts of her personality that she won't allow others to see. In turn, she protects you. As long as you are standing adjacent to the Viking Shieldmaiden, she is using a shield, and she is able take actions, you gain a +2 bonus to AC. If you are also using a shield, the Viking Shieldmaiden gains this bonus also.

RANK-UPS

Rank 1—The Viking Shieldmaiden introduces herself more formally to the PC, after their tense meeting in the dungeon where she was imprisoned. She is curious to learn the PC's name and exploits, as well as what sort of warrior the PC is.

DC 11 Charisma (Persuasion).
On failure, the Viking Warrior is suspicious of the PC, though she is willing to give another chance later.

Rank 2—On a day when it won't interfere with adventuring, the Viking Shieldmaiden wants a friendly duel against the PC, using honorable tactics, meaning melee weapons, not cowardly witchcraft, and striking for points, not injury (track damage as usual, but it isn't true injury and goes away at the end of the duel. If the PC wins the duel honorably, she is impressed.



The PC must either win the duel honorably or succeed at a DC 14 attack roll. If the PC wins the duel dishonorably, he loses 2 CP with the Viking Shieldmaiden and the relationship becomes misaligned until he gains 2 CP again. Otherwise, on failure, she is satisfied with the PC's honor and agrees to challenge him again later. On success, she is suitably impressed, especially if the PC won the duel by strength of arms (which grants an extra CP towards rank 3 if the PC is the same level as the Viking Shieldmaiden or lower).

Rank 3—The Viking Shieldmaiden wishes to hear tales of glorious battle and heroism that the PC learned when he was little, in grand oratory or song like the skalds tell them.

DC 13 Charisma (Performance). On failure, the Viking Shieldmaiden asks the PC to tell a better tale next time. **Rank 4 (Breakthrough)**—The Viking Shieldmaiden is performing a viking memorial rite of honor for her fallen comrades.

DC 14 Intelligence (History). On failure, the PC don't recognize exactly what she's doing and may mistake the cultural rite for a religious ceremony. In this case, the Viking Shieldmaiden asks the PC to leave, though the PC has a chance to learn more and try again next time, as usual. On a success, the PCs recognizes the rite for what it is, and if the PC mentions that to her, she invites the PC to stay quietly.

DC 14 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, though the PC stays through the rite, he doesn't recognize anything about the Viking Shieldmaiden's feelings other than her sorrow for the loss. On a success, he realizes that she is afflicted by guilt as well, feeling responsible for her comrades' deaths. The PC can attempt to talk to her about it and convince her that it wasn't all her fault.

DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, she lashes out at the PC for his presumption in telling her what to think and stalks away, though she's willing to talk about it again later. On success, the PC has convinced her not to blame herself so much, though she won't admit it; she gives a bold smile and tells the PC that of course it wasn't her fault.

Future PCs use the next version of Rank 4 instead.

Rank 4—The Viking Shieldmaiden is willing to share some viking customs with the PC.

DC 14 Intelligence (history). On failure, the PC doesn't understand the customs well enough, causing the Viking Shieldmaiden to become exasperated. On success, she nods and tells the PC that he final begins to understand.

Rank 5—The Viking Shieldmaiden challenges the PC to a wrestling contest.

The PC must either successfully grapple the Viking Shieldmaiden while already grappling her before she pins him, or else succeed at a DC 20 check to grapple at any point. On failure, she tells the PC to practice more before challenging her to a rematch. On success, the Viking

Shieldmaiden is impressed, particularly if the PC managed to grapple her and win instead of just succeeding at an impressive check (which grants an extra CP towards rank 6 if the PC is the same level as the Viking Shieldmaiden or lower).

Rank 6—The Viking Shieldmaiden wants to share a viking boasting contest with the PC. Even though, as usual, she is extremely competitive, this time it's as much about hearing the PC boast and instructing in proper viking boasts as it is a competition.

DC 16 Charisma (Performance or Intimidation). On failure, the Viking Shieldmaiden tells the PC to practice some boasts and save up any ideas he develops for their rematch. On success, she is highly amused by the PC's impressive boasts, and tells the PC that he has finally learned to boast like a viking.

Rank 7 (Breakthrough)—The Viking Shieldmaiden challenges the PC to a drinking contest.

DC 17 Constitution save. On failure, the PC either passes out or becomes too drunk to continue the conversation, but the Viking Shieldmaiden might challenge the PC again later. On success, the PC is victorious, and may attempt the next check.

DC 17 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC takes his victory at face value; unlike normal breakthroughs, the PC must go back to the beginning and win another drinking contest with a Fortitude save before trying Sense Motive again. On success, the PC realizes that there was more to the drinking contest than the Viking Shieldmaiden's usual competitive spirit. She was getting tipsy on purpose because she wants to say something that is difficult for her. The PC will need to convince her to continue further, however.

DC 17 Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the Viking Shieldmaiden can't bring herself to continue, and if the PC presses, she angrily denies that she had anything else to say; as above for Sense Motive, the PC must win another drinking contest with a Fortitude save before continuing, though he need not attempt another Sense Motive. On success, the PC manages to help her continue in a manner that is supportive without being patronizing. The Viking Shieldmaiden makes the PC promise to keep her thoughts in the strictest confidence. She then explains that the PC had been correct in the last breakthrough (or if the PC is different from last breakthrough she explains further) and that even though part of her knows that she shouldn't blame herself for the failure of the expedition and the deaths of all her comrades-in-arms, she still does. Contrary to her self-assured and almost arrogant persona, she admits that there's in a voice in her head that tells her that she will always be a failure, that she had been cowardly enough to consider killing herself, and part of why she wanted to be part of the hardest battles against the fierce beasts and enemies the party faces is that it could have granted her a way to do that and still die a glorious death in battle, as the Lord in Iron

demands. She requests that the PC now give her something equal of themselves in return (no skill check required). Afterwards, if the PC doesn't stop her, she cuts their hands to allow the blood to trickle together and declares them blood brothers or blood sisters. At this point, if the PC ever betrays that trust, such as by sharing her secret thoughts, the relationship link becomes permanently misaligned. Future PCs use the next version of Rank 7 instead.

Rank 7—The Viking Shieldmaiden challenges the PC to a drinking contest.

DC 17 Constitution save. On failure, the PC loses, but the Viking Shieldmaiden might challenge the PC again later. On success, the PC is victorious, and the Viking Shieldmaiden tells him that they are well-matched in skill and should become blood brothers or blood sisters. If the PC agrees, she cuts their hands to allow the blood to trickle together. At this point, if the PC ever betrays that trust, the relationship link becomes permanently misaligned.

Rank 8—The Viking Shieldmaiden has decided that the PC needs his own epithet (something like Dragonslayer that describes a deed) to go after his name, to describe his deeds and accomplishments. She urges the PC to help her decide one, then goes on a long list of possible deeds the PC has achieved, along with commentary about how each one would sound after the PC's name, in both Common and Skall.

DC 18 Intelligence (History). On failure, the Viking Shieldmaiden still can't decide on the perfect epithet for the PC and says they should try again later. On success, the Viking Shieldmaiden smiles and nods vigorously at the PC's suggestion, then she beats her hand against her shield like a drum and bellows out a loud announcement of the PC's new epithet.

Rank 9—The Viking Shieldmaiden wants to become closer with the PC, so she shares with the PC some of the most treasured historical tales from her own family's past and asks the PC what he knows about both viking history and the early history of his own family.

DC 19 Intelligence (History). On failure, she asks the PC to see if he can't learn more about at least one of those two topics and tell her what he discovers. On success, she is satisfied that the PC has also shared with her treasured tales from his family's past and is, even if slowly, beginning to master viking history and culture.

Rank 10 (Breakthrough)—The Viking Shieldmaiden is feeling emotional and vulnerable, a rare situation she typically manages to avoid through stubbornness and force of will.

DC 20 Wisdom (Insight). On failure, the PC doesn't realize what she is feeling, and the Viking Shieldmaiden leaves to be alone with her thoughts. On success, the PC realizes what she is feeling, and she allows the PC to talk to her about it. She explains that she wants to move forward, leave her doubts behind, and become a true hero, like in the tales, but that her experiences and journey have made her

question whether such a thing is even possible or whether the heroes of tales aren't all as flawed as anyone else, once you get to know them. She is looking for more than pretty words; she wants a deep and evidenced answer.

DC 20 Intelligence (History) and Charisma (Persuasion). On failure, the PC's answer isn't enough to satisfy the Viking Shieldmaiden, and she tells the PC that they need to talk again later. On success, the PC expresses his belief about the people who become the heroes of tales, based on actual information about some of them. The Viking Shieldmaiden seems satisfied, and if the PC convinces her that heroes really have human flaws, she seems deeply relieved. She admits to the PC that after her crisis, her relationships with him and the other PCs have been the things that have helped her most to move onward. She always tried to wear a tough exterior as a shield, but it wore away at her; she tells the PC that if she and he act as shields for each other, somehow it feels much less taxing than always being her own shield once did. She wonders, once the major threat from the current campaign or adventure path is over, what stories the skalds will tell of her and of the PC. Her curiosity piqued, she requests the PC give her a rendition.

Charisma (Performance) DC 20. On failure, she tells the PC there is still time yet to make their tale. On success, she smiles contentedly and sighs, feeling some of the tension that never left her since before she met the PCs relax away. She asks the PC what he plans to do after the adventure's end, and she tells him that she plans to go off on another adventure, perhaps to slay a linnorm in single combat. She wonders if he will come along with her, so they can continue their journeys together.

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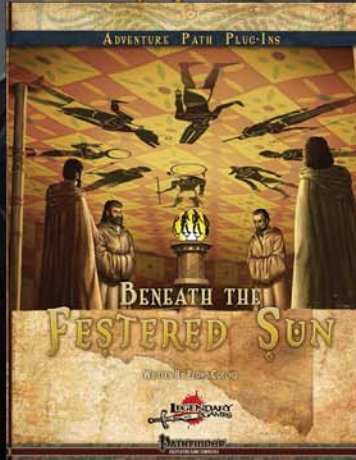
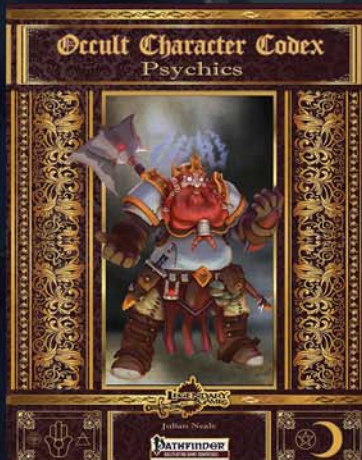
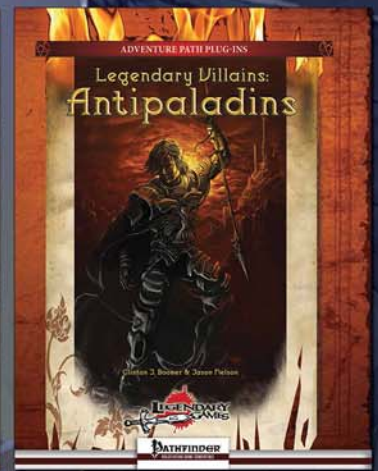
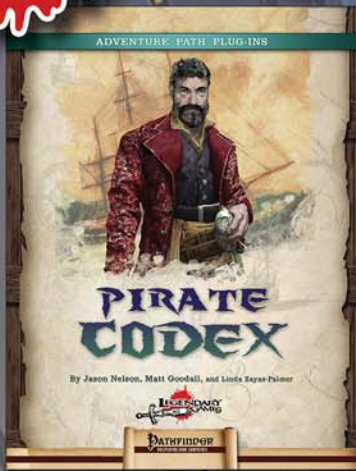
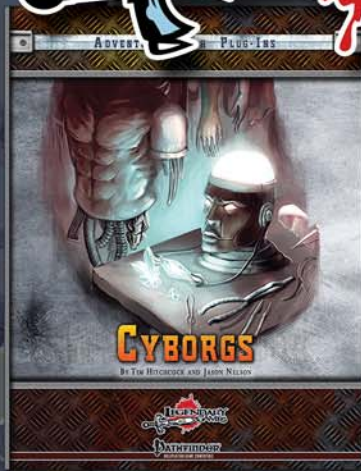
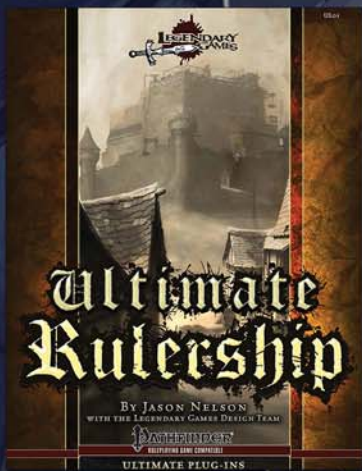
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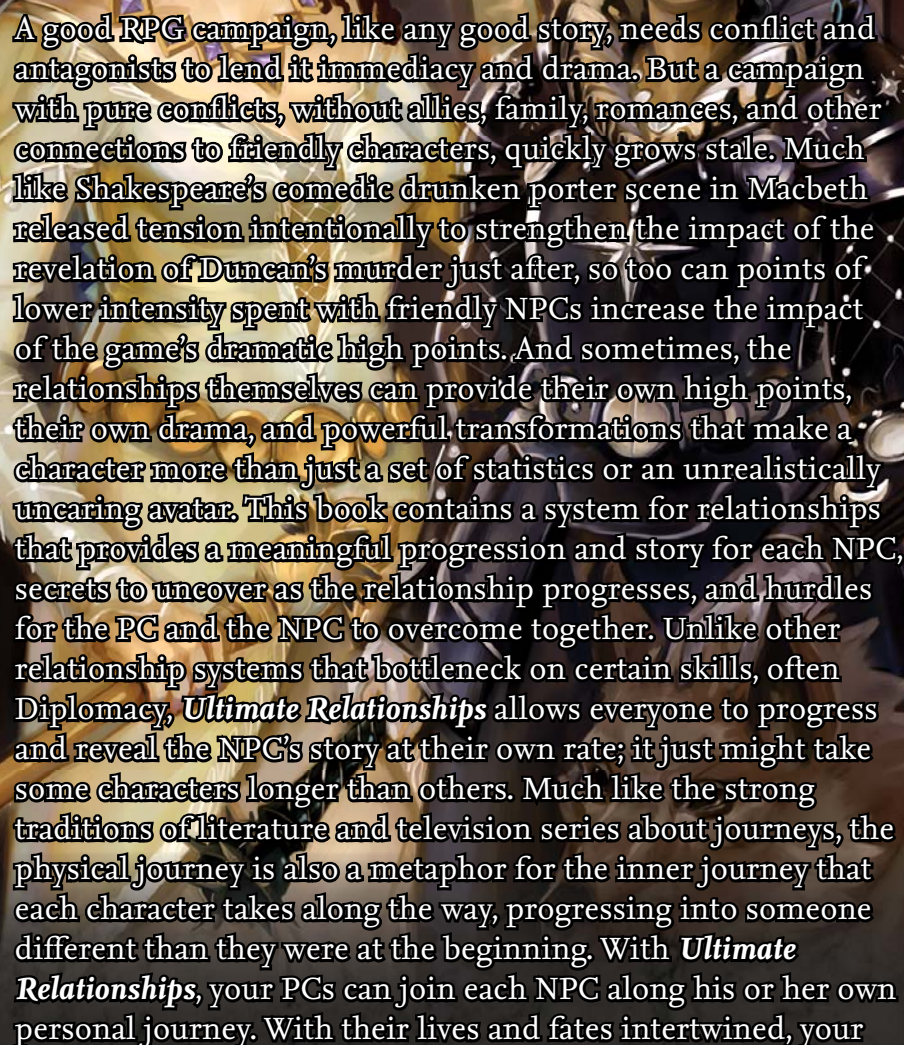
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A good RPG campaign, like any good story, needs conflict and antagonists to lend it immediacy and drama. But a campaign with pure conflicts, without allies, family, romances, and other connections to friendly characters, quickly grows stale. Much like Shakespeare's comedic drunken porter scene in Macbeth released tension intentionally to strengthen the impact of the revelation of Duncan's murder just after, so too can points of lower intensity spent with friendly NPCs increase the impact of the game's dramatic high points. And sometimes, the relationships themselves can provide their own high points, their own drama, and powerful transformations that make a character more than just a set of statistics or an unrealistically uncaring avatar. This book contains a system for relationships that provides a meaningful progression and story for each NPC, secrets to uncover as the relationship progresses, and hurdles for the PC and the NPC to overcome together. Unlike other relationship systems that bottleneck on certain skills, often Diplomacy, *Ultimate Relationships* allows everyone to progress and reveal the NPC's story at their own rate; it just might take some characters longer than others. Much like the strong traditions of literature and television series about journeys, the physical journey is also a metaphor for the inner journey that each character takes along the way, progressing into someone different than they were at the beginning. With *Ultimate Relationships*, your PCs can join each NPC along his or her own personal journey. With their lives and fates intertwined, your game will never be the same.

