

# E·P·I·P·H·A·N·Y

THE LEGENDS OF HYPERBOREA



 BTRC

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# EPIPHANY™

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This space reserved for the usual pithy quote or marginal witticism.



**Y**ou awake from a dream...

*"Who are you? You are not Ylgath the Sage, whom I sought to bring forth from the Metaplanes this day. You are some other Shade, no doubt, and I have erred. Begone with you to your shadow existence, and I shall start anew."*

*"No...wait. All new things are worth looking at, even if useless, for they may stir the mind onto fresh paths at a later date. Come to me, unknown Shade. You resist? Amazing, futile though it may be. What is your name and your place, that I may find you in the ancient records? Strangeness, that one so weak should be able to resist, especially since your odd name strikes no chords and your place is too insignificant to be on the map. Yet you are arrayed in fine clothes, and have the trappings of great wealth about you. And you are still a Shade, and cannot resist enough to keep me from learning what I need before I send you back whence you came."*

*"I see you are from an age of artificers, a past age when metals were common. And you make common use of iron and the heavier essences. Ah, very far in the past then. Your mind is muddled, without the order of a sage or mage, yet I see many images of destruction and war, cataclysmic forces in violent conflict over ideology, territory and wealth. Such advanced machines, but such crude ideas, and so little magic."*

*"It speaks, does it? Who am I?, you ask. It doesn't matter to you, for you will retain nothing but your primal patterns when I release you to the void. But to humor you, I am Xo, Seventeenth Sage in the line of Xorchal, in service to the Illustrious Ozal, his Greatness Lord Protector of Atlantis."*

*"Ah, you know of Atlantis at least, and Mu and Lemuria, those pretenders to Atlantean greatness. What? Stand still, that I may probe that thought you tried to hide. Atlantis a myth? Rubbish. Thousands of years old, long forgotten and sunk beneath the sea? Thousands of years old surely, but the rest? I think not! Show me your thoughts! Show me your life! Show me your Days and your Nights!"*

*"Ahh. My intuition is correct in one sense, but I admit surprise in another. You are born of the savages to the south, and know not greatness when you see it. But you are also a Shade from the future, a rarity only hinted of in the tomes, and distressingly, a future where Atlantean greatness is no more. They say the Future is in flux until it is the Present, when it is Now, and in flux again when it becomes the Past. We shall see."*

*"In the meantime, I shall not release you until I must. Atlantis gone? Southern barbarians running the world? I must summon others to see this lest they think me mad..."*

**A**tlantis. Lemuria. Mu. Legendary kingdoms of magic, all now sunk beneath the sea, and despite our science and technology, they remain hidden, and so confined to the world of myth.

Maybe people just aren't looking in the right place. Maybe they *did* exist in the distant past, in an age of unknown science and magic, but perished in a cataclysm that hid them in a place where we would never look, and have yet to fully explore. When they perished, their magic perished with them, the few survivors becoming legends themselves, until their time, like Atlantis, came to a tragic end.

Epiphany is the game of these lost kingdoms and more, once great lands in the highest Arctic, lit in the summer by the Midnight Sun, and in winter by the Inner Sun of the Hollow Earth. The lost kingdoms now lie drowned beneath perpetual ice, and the Hollow Earth lies in eternal darkness, the Inner Sun extinguished by misfortune unimaginable, their inhabitants long since dust. But great were they in their time, and epic the legends of their heroes. Would that we be remembered as such when our age is legend, untold thousands of years from now...





## The World

"What manner of barbarian are you, to not know the Earth you walk upon has two sides? At each pole of the Earth are the entrances to the hollow Earth, great chasms so far across that you can only perceive the far side on days of exceptional clarity. The southern pole has a similar entrance to the hollow Earth, but one that is much less hospitable, with great sheets of ice leading right up to the southern entrance. The oceans and land of the hollow Earth continue on as they do on the Outer Earth, but with great mountain ranges and turbulent seas on the boundary, making crossing difficult even for experienced Hyperborean guides. The hollow Earth is an untamed place, the barbarous societies living there having as little commerce with us as their unchecked greed permits. Many even live in ignorance of the Outer Earth, thinking that theirs is the only existence, and that we of Hyperborea are unholy things from their superstitious imaginings."

"But for all that, they live and die as other men. The Inner Sun hangs constant in their sky, with the ponderous Inner Moon circling it. They live in intolerable near-constant daylight rather than the more palatable Hyperborean sun, with their Moon eclipsing a given spot for about one day each of our months, and by this regular darkness and the Moon's place in the sky they measure time."

For its danger and lack of proper civilization, the hollow Earth has its wonders. For instance, there are many creatures there unseen in Hyperborea. And their sky is not like ours, for their horizon rises up instead of down, and mountain ranges some great distance away can be seen as though they were in the sky, with the Inner Sun and Moon always directly overhead. This they use to advantage in warfare, for no army can march without being seen afar off, and heliographs allow signaling over distances unimaginable on the Outer Earth.

To the south of Hyperborea lies the Icy Wastes, a region of churning ocean and great blocks of ice where nothing but the hardiest of creatures lives. Far to the south live barbarous tribes, living on sea creatures, and plying the oceans in feeble craft of bone and skin. The few wanderers who have gone further have found more barbarous tribes living in unspeakable squalor. The mightiest of them live in heaps of rough-hewn stone and claim themselves leaders by no means other than killing anyone else who claims the title. Barbaric. Hardly a one of them is born with magic, making them little more than beasts, and they pride themselves on slaying those who show signs of Power. Little they know of true Power, and greatly would they fear even an apprentice of the Arts. The only thing they have of possible worth is their metals. In a past age they would have been of great value, but we use those heavier of the Earth's essences for few things these days."

"No one goes to the South, for there is nothing there of value. Yes, I remember that you are from the South, impertinent Shade."

The world you were born into is Hyperborea, known as a place of legend by the Greeks who will rise as a civilization some thousands of years hence. They thought of Hyperborea as a place north of the North Wind, in a land of eternal sunshine. They, as usual, were only partly right.

Hyperborea is a great land, north of all others, surrounding the northern gateway to the hollow Earth. For six months of the year, you bask in perpetual sunlight from the Outer Sun, and for the other six, you live in unchanging twilight, lit only by the rays escaping from the Inner Sun and reflected upon the clouds of ice high above you.

Hyperborea has been thus for thousands of years, warmed by the Inner Sun, and surrounded by the frozen wastes to the south. Within Hyperborea lie fabled Atlantis, Lemuria and Mu, legendary places now buried where modern folk think not to look, overtaken by some catastrophe which hopefully you will not live long enough to see.





## eography

Due to its placement, hyperborea employs a somewhat unusual system of reference. Anywhere that heads towards the entrance to the hollow Earth is "north", and anywhere that heads away from it is "south". Thus, all directions heading away from the pole are "south", which makes it hard to give directions. Even the position the Outer Sun rises in is always to the south, rather than east or west. Due to the proximity of the magnetic pole, compasses are also useless. To provide for directions and navigation, most people simply use landmarks, but educated people use a system based on sectors and radii, each sector being like the slice of a pie, and the radii being the distance from the center of the entrance to the hollow Earth. Each sector is further subdivided so that accurate placement on the map is possible. In addition, measurements in this way are more accurate near the pole than out at the Icefringes, and since the most important people live near the entrance to the hollow Earth, this is as it should be.

The areas closest to entrance of the hollow Earth are known as the Dyalands, and this region extends about 400 kilometers from the edge of the entrance to the hollow Earth. Within this range there is always reflected light from the Inner Sun, so at no time is there ever a true night within this area. The summers are mild and well lit by both suns, and winters are warm to cool, depending on the locations and path of warm air that exits from the hollow Earth. Naturally, there are hills and mountains that block the light and warmth within these areas, and there are valleys that never see the light of either sun, and are cold and forbidding.

Near the outer edge of hyperborea is the Icefringes, an area of constant light in the summer, and constant dark in the winter. The warmer ocean waters near the coastal areas of the Icefringes help support agriculture and animal husbandry, and the cool temperatures there are balanced by the constant sunlight during the summer. During the winter, the inland temperatures can become bitterly cold, but the coastal regions never go much below freezing. The waters are rich with fish, and all coastal settlements engage in fishing to support part of the population.

Beyond the Icefringes are the Icy Wastes, a great unbroken mass of ice circling hyperborea. It is devoid of life and difficult to traverse. With nothing there of use, few venture there. Beyond the Icy Wastes are said to be other oceans, beyond which are hellishly hot lands peopled by primitive savages.

Between the Icefringes and Dyalands are the Shadowlands. This region covers a great deal of hyperborea, and is not a happy place. It gets no light from the Inner Sun, and little of the warmth of the hollow Earth. The summers are short and cool, and the winters harsh and long. Not many plants grow there, and only the hardiest of animals live there (and they usually migrate out during the winter). The poorest of the hyperborean estates are in the Shadowlands, and life there is hard enough that even escaped fugitives are not pursued into the remoter regions. Exile to the Shadowlands is considered a death sentence for those without resources, and political death for those nobles sent there.

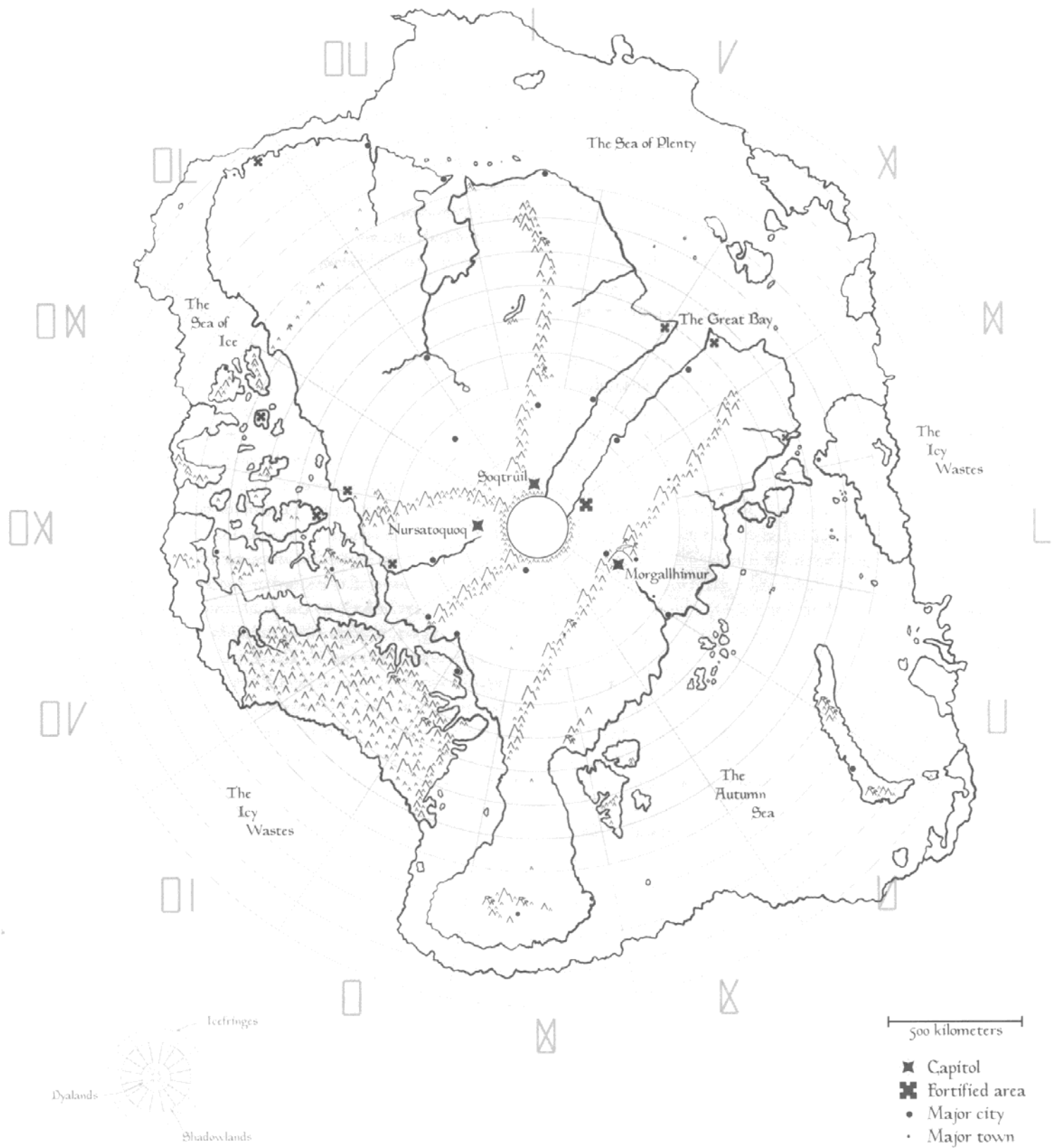
All of hyperborea has a common language, which is either the result of common ancestry or long interrelationships, depending on who you ask. This language is fairly straightforward, and the written form depends on simple combinations of straight lines that can be easily learned and are hard to mangle through local variation.

However, geographic isolation and differing cultures have spawned local languages and variants. These are sometimes richer, more subtle and open to interpretation, and often are learned only by high-status individuals. Atlantis court script is a complex pictographic form that is very suitable for record-keeping, but not particularly useful for poetry or the arts. Mu's elite tongue is an ornate cursive script with accents and marks to indicate the stress placed on certain syllables, which can shade the meaning of the word or sentence they are in. This is used almost exclusively by the dual kings, their private staff and messengers, though other individuals of status are expected to know how to read it. The Lemurians have no special tongue as such, but many local Konnigen and their families have incorporated certain symbols into their written form that may only be used by people of certain status. The harsher Lemurian climate has made them more pragmatic, and they tend to stick with something that works.





# HYPERBOREA





## **A**tlantis

Arguably the oldest of the Hyperborean kingdoms, it is also the largest, proudest and most stagnant as well. Atlantis has been ruled for centuries by its mage-kings, who are highly skilled in all the arts of magery and devious diplomacy. They tend to live absurdly long lifetimes that come to sudden and violent ends when someone more skilled and devious comes along. The otherwise chaotic transitions of power are smoothed by a hereditary bureaucracy that handles the details of income, outgo, intelligence gathering and record-keeping. Emperors may come and go, but bureaucrats are forever. Power and status in higher circles of Atlantean power are measured by your competence and your lineage, both of which are important and necessary. You may come from an important family, and thus be first in line for that important job, but if you get fat and lazy, your more ambitious brother, sister or cousin may stage a bureaucratic coup and oust you from the spot, with full approval other family members. The watch phrase for those in Atlantean politics is "Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer". You need highly skilled subordinates to do your job efficiently, but there is also a decent chance they are scheming against you at the same time. Keep them where you can keep an eye on them, and they are less likely to succeed at these schemes.

The same philosophy holds for just about anyone with more than two levels of status, but less so for the average farmer, tradesman or soldier. The higher-ups may have squabbles, but the average person advances based on what they can do as much as who they know. Without estates and comfortable standards of living, they have to make decisions based on economics rather than lineage. This makes for an effective ceiling of two levels of status for anyone without an important family. His Illustriousness has five or six levels of Status, his potential successors have five, and lesser families or very wealthy independent mages have three or four.

The Atlantean capital of Soqtruil (Navel of the World) is on the rim of the entrance to the hollow Earth and the Great Bay, giving it both land and sea routes into the hollow Earth. The warm air exiting the hollow Earth makes the land around Soqtruil very productive, and the area is highly cultivated, with less arable regions near the mountains more devoted to industrial pursuits, such as solar smelters, hydro-machining and so on. The mountains between Soqtruil and Nursatoquoq form the border with Lemuria, and are garrisoned by both soldiers and mages. Some of this region is still isolated and difficult to reach, with a few villages in remote valleys that are entirely self-sufficient, doing occasional business selling provisions to border forts. Other areas remain deserted because certain Atlantean mages do their work there.

Most of the other highly travelled areas are in the Dyalands, along the warmer waters of the Great Bay, with population dropping as one heads south. Travel is safe and reliable throughout this region, with regularly scheduled conveyance by a number of means. In the Icefringes, people live mainly along the coast, since the warmer ocean water moderates the mostly dark winters this far from the reflected light of the Inner Sun. Most of these remote settlements rely on fishing to support their economies, with a lesser reliance on farming during the short summers. Roads are still good between settlements, since specialized construction mages can do a remarkable amount of work in a short period of time. There are still isolated and mostly uninhabited regions, and while they are on the map as belonging to this or that important personage, the only time they take notice is when the regular taxes from the few settlements there don't come in on time.

The Shadowlands of Atlantis have less traveled roads upon them, and a number of lesser estates that are poorly thought of in the capital. Anyone whose family lineage is from one of these estates will be looked upon with a measure of sympathy or disdain, and not many Soqtruil houses would want their sons or daughters to marry into those lines. Shadowland estates usually get by with low-grade mining, animal husbandry and contracting their peasants and militia out for hire during the long dark winters. Their isolation from politics and their position on largely unwanted land gives them a great deal of independence in managing their own affairs. As long as things are kept out of sight of the high court, no one really cares.





## **P**olitics

*Shade, if we accept your premise that Atlantis is no more in your distant time, then there must have been some great catastrophe. And with all catastrophes, there are survivors. Most certainly there will have been ones from Atlantis, for our skills and resources are greater than our neighbors. Your Southern peoples would have been no match for even refugees of Atlantis, and we would have ruled there even as we do here. Whatever ancient civilizations you call great surely became that way because we made them in our image, their language, culture and means of governance eventually mirroring our own. Yes, your thoughts are transparent. Your pyramid builders, the great cities, the heroes of great power and gods who walked among men. These are certainly **not** the tales and works of those born in the South. Even if this garbled and poorly recorded history gives your tale some credence, the Metaplanes are fickle, and what you consider your present is far more in flux than ours, for yours has yet to happen...*

The politics of Hyperborea are directly related to its geography and geology. All Hyperboreans come from a common past. Language similarities showed they have a single origin, but long separation of some areas has given some remote areas dialects that are significantly harder to understand.

There are three major powers, Atlantis, Lemuria and Mu, separated by geographic features that make convenient boundaries and military choke points. They are surrounded to the south by ice and barren peaks, and beyond that, hordes of barbarians. To the center, the treacherous entrance to the hollow Earth, and *more* barbarians. However, these central barbarians are a bit more accessible, and thus each side tries to gain a foothold with them and poison barbarian relationships with the other nations. Secure trade routes would open up new wealth for the country that managed it, but such is the Byzantine complexity of plots and counter-plots that none have managed it yet. Most of the land is volcanic in nature, and long civilization has made the soil usable for agriculture. Almost all mineral resources are lacking, and the only burnable fuels are oils from plants and animals, and the wood from the great forests that still cover some parts of the continent.

All usable land is under the control of some noble or worthy, who is accountable to the supreme leader of that particular country in one way or the other. Remember that the lands of Hyperborea have a combined area approximately equal to the United States, with a much smaller population and much longer history. There are areas unpopulated for generations, ruins, ancient sites of devastation and places where things best left unknown are best left undisturbed. But none of this means the land is "uncontrolled". *Someone* has probably laid claim to it, even if they have never set foot there and never intend to.

The average person doesn't need to know much about the intricacies of politics and land ownership, because they don't own any. Agriculture is well-developed, but yields are not extraordinarily high, and manual labor is still used for the most part, along with draft animals. A large portion of the population is tenant farmers, working on the land of someone else in exchange for a portion of the crops and a place to live. Better off peasants actually own their farmhouse and a small plot of land, and consider it their most valuable possession, followed by their draft animals. Since this land ownership relies on the goodwill of the local authority, rabble-rousing and calls for reform by the landed peasantry is not very common.

Land can be "owned" by lesser citizens, especially if the owning worthy needs cash in a hurry, but this ownership is tenuous, even if it has been for generations. Most land is leased, and someone gets the rent. The amount of local autonomy any given landholder has is dependent on current political conditions. When central rule is strong, there is relative peace throughout the land. When it is weak, neighboring countries may try to establish military or political beachheads, and antagonistic nobles may use private armies to settle old scores or expand their holdings. They try to do the same when central rule is strong of course, but then they use assassins and intrigue instead. And of course, everyone uses mages to attack, defend, spy and mislead. The ability of a mage to call up the Shade of anything they know well enough means that very important people don't make themselves *known* to those they cannot trust...

Now, note that we said all *usable* land was under control. The further south you go, the less hospitable the territory is, and the more likely that no one wants to live there. The Icefringes and the islands near there are not especially prized as real estate, and those who fall from disfavor but are too powerful or useful to completely eliminate are often sent to these regions. Lower status individuals may be part of a garrison, while higher status individuals may be "requested" to administer these lands on behalf of the supreme leader. Bandits, escaped prisoners and outcasts scratch a poor living from the ground and unwary visitors, and creatures long extinct elsewhere still lurk about. Also, activities the rulers want to do, but don't want to be held accountable for, are often accomplished in such secluded, desolate areas. The most remote penal colonies are usually on islands bordering the Icefringes.

The Shadowlands are even less popular than the Icefringes, and all the stigmas and perils of the Icefringes apply here. The only saving grace for those who have to live here is that it is a lot closer to the Dyalands should you need to make the trip. You would be amazed at the number of Shadowland worthies who find they have pressing business in the Dyalands for most of the long, dark winters.





On the other hand, the closer you get to the entrance of the hollow Earth, the better the climate, and the more constant the light. In summer, the Outer Sun lights the horizon, adding to the warmth, and in winter, the light from the Inner Sun is reflected off the icy clouds that hang forever over the pole, and the warmth of the Inner Sun constantly warms the air that pours from the entrance. The greatest cities and most powerful people live here, with mansions and castles on ridgetops that provide an unparalleled view and optimum weather. And maximum intrigue and opportunities for an untimely death, as well. Those that live here especially know the power of mages. No ruler for centuries has held power without being a powerful mage, or having the support of powerful mages. The greatest of mages can be like a small army, and several working in concert can turn a city to ruins if unopposed. What ruler would not want such power under their control? What ruler would risk antagonizing the people who wield that power?

The power of magic is such that mages are feared, and watched carefully, especially the powerful ones, but at the same time, they are accorded respect, and the powerful mages often find it easier to gain audiences or beg favors, in return for magical assistance in kind. Since the desires of mages bridge the spectrum of humankind, mages often find other mages intolerable, and so mages get swept into political intrigues simply to keep *other* mages from gaining power. Usually the checks and balances keep the situation at a low boil, but every so often, full scale wars erupt, followed by decades of rebuilding and a new-found unwillingness to release such forces again.

## Lemuria

Lemuria is the smallest of the Hyperborean kingdoms, the most rugged, with the greatest amount of contested territory. Lemuria holds only a small slice of the main continent, and that only because of fortuitous geography that gives them a narrow plain bordered on either side by high mountains. The rest of Lemuria is rugged hills and mountains on a large landmass that borders the Icy Wastes, and a great many islands. Most of these islands are Lemurian, but Atlantis claims some just for the sake of causing contention, and even invades a few when they think the Lemurian navy isn't watching. The only reason Atlantis doesn't do this more often is that Lemurian military mages specialize in ship-killing Shades, and Atlantean troops don't like being stranded on hostile islands.

The Lemurian capital of Nursatoquq is on the edge of the entrance to the hollow Earth, and has only a rugged land route to the interior of the world. The warmth of the hollow Earth flows out and down the valley to the sea, and gives the plain ample light and heat to support far more crops than Lemuria actually needs. Industry is less developed, but still impressive in its own right, with ship-building being well advanced. Lemurian ships are actually superior to Atlantean ones (not that Atlanteans would admit it), but the limited access to the Atlantean coastline keeps confrontations to a minimum. The Lemurian Dyalands extend almost all the way to the edge of the Sea of Ice, and the height of some of its mountains keeps parts of the larger landmass in constant daylight. Of course, the low angle of light from both the Inner and Outer Suns means there are also areas in these mountains that *never* see the sun.

Lemuria's government is a result of its position. The terrain is difficult to fight in, and easy to hold, so over the centuries a large number of local Konnigen have established pretty solid territories. Among themselves, they choose the Kon-Konnig, or "king of kings", who rules a council of Car-Konnig, or lesser kings, who in turn rule the local Konnigen in their area. Needless to say, disagreement is common, debates are spirited, and getting money for important projects is like pulling teeth from an ice bear. The Kon-Konnig usually gets his way though, because he knows that no one else really wants the thankless task of running the country while some other relative is back home running their territory. So, while the Kon-Konnig is technically elected by the Car-Konnig every second year, a successful one may rule for decades, sometimes without anyone else even running for the position. The position is not without its advantages, though. Almost all high-level administrative positions are appointed by the Kon-Konnig, and he has great leeway in apportioning funds for certain projects (so long as the Car-Konnig get a share).



Like in Atlantis, Konnigen are usually mages, but with a larger number of hostile creatures and the need for fast reflexes, physical and mental prowess are just as important. Atlantean mages have healthy respect for the conventional aspects of the Lemurian military, but pride makes them forget on occasion.

The average Lemurian is much more self-sufficient and less reliant on urban products than Atlanteans. While there is a smaller variety of goods in most parts of Lemuria, many are locally produced rather than imported from other parts of the country, and modern measuring tools and Konnigen edicts make sure that standardization applies for key military technologies. Lemurians are tougher, and feel less threatened by the perils of the hollow Earth. They are more likely to enter in search of fame and riches, and their home terrain gives them an edge in negotiating the perilous passage through. Their lack of a sea route prevents them from exploiting their successes in any meaningful commercial sense.



## R Religion

For a society with widespread magic, Hyperborea is remarkably free of any kind of religious dogma. Magic has proven that people can exist beyond their bodies, at least as Shades of their former selves. Indeed, it is accepted that once a thing is made, it can never be truly unmade, for its Shade will always exist somewhere. Craftsmen often use this assumed fact to encourage apprentices to learn to take their time and make things they would be proud of forever. Rulers remember this and ban the making of things whose Shades might be used to undermine their power. Meanwhile, philosophers are left to debate free will and the possibilities of multiple dimensions as they wish.

*It is also known that the power of mages can sometimes sunder essence from body, leaving only a spiritual shell behind, which may linger for some centuries. It seems also that bodies without essence can be infused with Spirit, and thus given the semblance of true life. There does seem to be evidence for beings that exist not as Shades, but as permanent denizens of the Metaplane. Some of these are inimical to human life, others seek entrance to our plane, and some are both. Legends also tell of mages beguiled by promises of great power, assisting these beings in their foul plots and schemes, but they have always failed, and mages now know better. As a Master Sage, if anyone was still attempting such nonsense, I would surely know about it."*

Despite this, the lower classes indulge in a fair amount of superstition, and a handful of actual religions exist. The openly practiced ones are peaceful, and usually believe in some supreme power that originated the Earth and the things upon and in it, and see the Metaplanes as some form of the hereafter. The priests may be minor mages who can call forth the Shades of some of the departed whom they have known, and as long as it doesn't disturb the established order of things, it is tolerated. There are also a few secretly practiced religions of less amicable nature, whose adherents are more inclined to violence and illicit use of magic. These range from crackpots who have had delirious visions, to cults that have infiltrated the ranks of power, and have a secret agenda that only a select few know the details of.



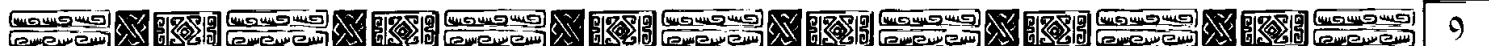


**M**<sub>u</sub>

Mu is intermediate in size between Atlantis and Lemuria, lies on the other side of the Great Bay from Atlantis, and borders Lemuria on one of the mountain ranges that protect it from both of the larger powers. Mu has two large cities near the entrance to the Hollow Earth. Himnlith is the older of the two, named from an ancient time when the entrance to the Hollow Earth was thought to be a supernatural place, and still has a larger than normal percentage of people with a religious bent. The other is Mismuun, not coincidentally across the Great Bay from Soqtrul. Mismuun is not the capital of Mu, but is a military stronghold to offset Atlantean power. The capital of Mu is Morgallhimur, set near the top of a smouldering volcano bridging the mountains that divide the country. There the Mithdei and Nocdei rule jointly, each advising the other in turn. Mu was once two countries, each markedly different and constantly fighting over the land at the mouth of the Great Bay. Those on the side of the Hollow Earth enjoyed a milder climate and year-round light, while those on the other side of the mountains were shielded from both the warmth of the Hollow World and the light of the Inner Sun. So, their climate was one of short summers and cruel dark winters. Centuries ago, the warmer of the two finally required the help of the colder to slow Atlantean advances. Used to much harsher conditions, the Nocseid assisted the Mithseid, on the condition of a permanent alliance and trade. This eventually became a joint rule of Mu by the Day King and Night King, each one ruling for six months of the year, but always advised by the other. The administrative staffs have a similar arrangement, and the twice-yearly passing of power is usually attended by some ceremony.

The day side of Mu is like Atlantis for the most part, well developed, with good industry, safe conditions and reliable transport. After you round the tip of the country, past the end of the Great Bay, things rapidly become less populated and less developed. Heavy industry is almost non-existent, prices for manufactured goods are higher, and there are still many hazards associated with life and travel. Aside from the mouth of the Great Bay, the most productive part of the Nocseid is the agricultural land on a long narrow island to the south. Its coastal plains are irrigated by warm volcanic waters, and it is far enough south to have significantly warmer summers. It has a thriving agricultural and fishing center, and is largely free of military worries due to its distant location.

Mu and Lemuria are loosely allied against Atlantis. There is no active state of war at the moment. All sides are currently content with border disputes, expelling ambassadors and accosting ships for violating territorial waters. Atlantis is big enough to defeat either of Lemuria or Mu in a protracted struggle. Together, it has not been worth the economic or political consequences to pick on one and get picked at by the other. As a result, the relations between Lemuria or Mu and Atlantis are always strained, and trade and travel is fraught with suspicion, tariffs and paperwork. Relations between Lemuria and Mu are more amicable, but nowhere near perfect. Neither side is completely satisfied with agreements regarding alliances and trade, but the Kar-Konnig cannot make major changes without lengthy debates among the Car-Konnig, and the Mithdei and Nocdei have reached a compromise between their different viewpoints, and while one can change things without the consent of the other, it would certainly be changed back half a year later.





## **S**cience

Hyperborean science is thousands of years ahead of "historical" developments, but has reached levels of stagnation unparalleled by even the Middle Kingdom. The various Hyperborean nations have reached a stage where appearance is as vital as function, and extravagant complexity is often desired more than durable practicality.

*"Bah! Your constructions are impressive, doubly so for ones who should still be figuring out how to mate stone to wood, but for all their prowess, they lack Art. Even your most impressive of weapons are but random energies of destruction, mowing down all in their path. We have reached the peak of power and of form with our devices, and need not stoop to such crude manipulations of ore and distilled animal essences to do our work for us."*

The best parallel that can be made for Hyperborean science is to compare it to feudal Japan, after firearms had been introduced, found to be damnably effective even without a lifetime of training, and then banned again. All Hyperborean leaders are well aware of the possibilities of modern projectile weapons, and have decreed limitations on their use. Those without status cannot possess them at all. Those with status may do so, but the craftsmen who make them strongly value royal favor (and their lives), so while they make extremely fine single shot weapons, that is all they make. They know how to make better, and anyone with practical knowledge of their use realizes this, but it just isn't spoken of (informers and "sting" operations are common tools to weed out the talkative). The hereditary leaders realize that common availability of these weapons could open the door to massive social upheavals that could affect everyone, so no one goes past the line that leads to ruin. This isn't to say that such weapons are unavailable, just that no one who values their life would be caught making, transporting or owning one. There are fanatics who don't value their lives that highly, or spies or anarchists who are likely to be executed if caught, so adding to the sentence with a prohibited weapon is not a major concern. And rest assured that examples of wondrously destructive devices gather dust in Imperial Vaults...just in case.

In other realms of technology, the pre-eminence of magic tends to stifle the development of modern devices and techniques. When a mage can enter the Metaplanes and generate the force needed to lift a vehicle and occupants from the ground, why make a lightweight and efficient engine of the normal type? Mages and alchemists have also developed sophisticated elemental concoctions that can do everything except raise the dead (and some say even that is possible, after a fashion). The extreme longevity of the wealthy and powerful is certainly no myth.

Mages acting in concert together can work near miraculous feats. You think the canals on Mars are a myth, too? They are the remnants of Hyperborean outposts on our sister planet, also lost when the magic failed them. Science only provides solutions that are more economical than hiring a specialist mage to do the same thing. For instance, there are great stone roads in parts of Hyperborea with raised sides. Great wheeled coaches rumble on them, powered by a steam engine, that in turn is powered by a fire mage. Why? Because no other type of mage could produce a form of motive power both convenient and that allowed the mage to take a rest once in a while. Electricity is the most wondrous and expensive of the sciences. Generators on a large scale are prohibitively expensive because of the metals involved, and must be extremely durable to withstand the power surges that occur near the magnetic poles. This electricity is in limited use by the wealthy who can afford their own generators, but the lion's share goes to feed the voracious appetites of the ceramic smelters and the electrolysis plants that produce the magnesium, aluminum and sodium used in weapons and lightweight vehicles. When you consider that the best generators are iron cores wound with silver wire (both precious metals), you can see why those involved in this industry are politically influential and well protected.

In all, Hyperborean science is some convoluted mish-mash of quasi-medieval feel, with Napoleonic weapons, Jules Verne transportation, alchemy-based thaumaturgy and modern ceramics and electricity.



# Who you are:

Name _____	Profession _____	Weight _____
Race _____	Age _____	Features _____
Sex _____	Height _____	_____

Your Burdens \_\_\_\_\_

Your Boons \_\_\_\_\_

## Attributes & Abilities



Strength \_\_\_\_\_

Physique \_\_\_\_\_

Agility \_\_\_\_\_

Endurance \_\_\_\_\_

Perception \_\_\_\_\_

Intelligence \_\_\_\_\_

Charisma \_\_\_\_\_

Will \_\_\_\_\_



How someone else would describe you: \_\_\_\_\_

Worship \_\_\_\_\_

Insight \_\_\_\_\_

Faith \_\_\_\_\_

Serenity \_\_\_\_\_

Spiritual

Your Story: \_\_\_\_\_

Who you know:

Why you know them:

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What you know:

How you came to know it:

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What you own:

What it does:

Other info:

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## Character Generation

The idea behind the Epiphany system is to make things as simple as possible for the GameMaster and players. Attributes, skills and other characteristics are not measured by a number, but simply as whether a person possesses that quality at all. An average person is just that, average. They can perform basic tasks in a variety of fields or endeavors, and may have an ability or skill of note, like what they use to make a living. Other than that, they are not exceptional. The only character traits that need to be recorded are those that are out of the ordinary, and tend to get the character noticed. A person who has the Attribute of Strength is not just a *little* stronger than normal, they are a *lot* stronger than normal, and people will notice it. The same applies to a person who is remarkably Intelligent, or is possessed of extraordinary Insight.

### Description

Describe your character in general terms in the spaces provided, and read it to all the other players when they see your character for the first time. This information is mostly for descriptive purposes, but can occasionally be an Advantage or Disadvantage in certain situations.

### Attributes

Attributes are split into three categories: Physical, Mental and Spiritual, as listed below, and each of these categories has four Attributes that a character may possess:

Physical	Mental	Spiritual
Strength	Perception	Aura
Physique	Intelligence	Insight
Agility	Charisma	Faith
Endurance	Will	Serenity

Possessing an Attribute in a category gives a character an increased chance to complete Challenges in that category. For instance, any of the Physical Attributes would be of use in a fight. Any of the Mental Attributes could help a character in a social situation, and any of the Spiritual Attributes could increase a character's chance of winning Spiritual Challenges. We don't want to lead you by the nose in Epiphany, so it is up to the GameMaster and players to convince each other how they can use a particular Attribute to help them out in a given situation.

**GM:** "Exactly how were you going to use 'Charisma' to help you find that particular scroll you are looking for in this vast and unindexed library?"

**Player:** "I'll search around to find a custodian of the scrolls, and use Charisma to persuade him to help me in my search!"

### Physical Attributes

- Strength** You are strong, pure and simple. Strength is how much you can lift, and how hard you can swing. You gain Advantages by the use of brute force.
- Physique** You are big, physically imposing, either in height, girth, bulk or a combination of these. You can have Physique without being strong (by being overweight, for instance). You gain Advantages by being able to put your bulk into an effort.
- Agility** You are dextrous. You gain Advantages not from power, but from quickness, economy or precision of movement.
- Endurance** You have stamina. You can try harder, longer. You gain Advantages by outlasting opponents, or make them act recklessly in keeping up with you.

### Mental Attributes

- Perception** You are keen of eye and other senses. You gain Advantages by noticing subtle cues that others miss, or which opponents cannot hide from you.
- Intelligence** You can put disparate facts together to see the whole, deducing and reasoning your way through problems. You gain Advantages by outsmarting opponents, or turning their tricks against them.
- Charisma** You have a personal charm that can influence people, whether through looks, personality or conversation. You gain Advantages when you can work with a person's personality, using your strengths and their weaknesses.
- Will** You can persevere, and have great self-control. You gain advantages by being able to ignore hardships and resist temptations.

### Spiritual Attributes

- Aura** You have a personality intense enough that others can almost palpably feel it. Some say that people have an energy field that influences others, while others think it is just unconscious reactions to body language and other natural cues. You gain Advantages when trying to exert your will, or trying to avoid having your will subverted.
- Insight** You have an understanding that goes beyond conscious thought, accurate "gut feelings" about a thing, without knowing why. You gain Advantages by being able to glimpse hidden truths or veiled flaws.
- Faith** More than will, you have an unshakeable belief in yourself or a higher purpose. You gain advantages by overcoming doubt and convincing others you can't be shaken from your course.
- Serenity** You have an inner peace, untouchable by worldly problems. You gain Advantages by being able to see things from a clearer perspective.



### Abilities

Each Attribute also lets you acquire up to two Abilities related to that Attribute. An Ability is *anything you want it to be*, so long as you can justify it as being related to the Attribute. The most likely Abilities are skills, secondary traits or special characteristics. Spiritual abilities may include magical powers or spells, if the person is capable of using magic.

**Example** - A person with Charisma might have Public Speaking and Good Looks as Abilities. One is a skill, and the other is a physical characteristic.

In some cases, these Abilities may be useful to situations outside that Attribute. An Ability can relate to more than one Attribute if the player can justify it.

**Example** - Both Will and Physique could have Intimidation as an Ability. In one case, the person would be using mental Attributes to intimidate, and in the other case they would use their sheer physical presence. A truly intimidating person would have Intimidation twice, once on each Attribute.

Abilities should not be too specific, and should cover a fairly broad area of expertise or talent. You can have the same Ability multiple times, to represent an extraordinary level of skill. Without going into a lot of detail, here are some sample Abilities, and you may see others mentioned later in the rules.

Physical Abilities	Mental Abilities	Spiritual Abilities
Brawling	Stealth	Magery
Swordplay	Sex appeal	Philosophy
Gunnes	Savior-faire	Diplomacy
Bows & crossbows	Intimidation	Leadership
Pilot	Musician	
Sailor	historian	
horsemanship	Streetwise	
Climbing	Merchant	
Running	A particular scientific field	

### Tools

Most Abilities provide an Advantage in situations where they can be used, but some can provide even further Advantages. These almost always require tools. Possessing the *minimum* level of tools needed only allows you to use the Ability, and does not convey a bonus. Lacking the tools altogether means you don't get the bonus that Ability would provide.

**Example** - The minimum tool for Swordplay is a knife. If you have a knife, you can use that Ability in a Physical Challenge. If you don't have a knife, you don't get to use the Ability. If you have a sword, you get to use the Ability, and get a further bonus. On the other hand, if you had Brawling, you don't need tools, and you always get that bonus in a fistfight.

### Making your character

All characters start with one Attribute, and two Abilities. They can alter their amount of Attributes and Abilities by taking on up to six Burdens. Each Burden a character has allows them to get another Ability, and each two Burdens allows them to get an Attribute (instead of new Abilities), and one or more Burdens can be traded in for Boons. Boons are good things, and will have a cost of one or more Burdens. You can use Burdens to acquire Abilities that you do not have an Attribute for. For instance, an otherwise average person can have Swordplay, even without a Physical Attribute. You can have a maximum of two more Abilities in a category (Physical, Mental, Spiritual) than the number of Attributes you have, with a maximum of eight Abilities in each category.

For instance, if you have no Mental Attributes, you can have no more than two Mental Abilities. And, even if you do not have the Attribute in question, all Abilities must be linked to an Attribute somehow. For instance, if you have Swordplay, but no Physical Attributes, you still must list Swordplay as being related to one of the Physical Attributes, probably either Strength or Agility. This means you could only get one other Ability linked to that Attribute.

Write down the Attributes you possess over the lightly shaded letters so you are clear on which ones you have. Write down any Abilities on a line next to the appropriate Attribute.







## **B**urdens

**Cursed** – You, your family or race has been burdened with a character flaw that you can never erase. For each Burden you take, you lose the ability to ever get a particular Attribute or an Ability linked to that Attribute. For instance, you might say you are weak and frail, and thus can never acquire the Physical Attribute of Strength. This would net you one Burden. A person who is blind might have a Burden on Perception, or someone who is lame might have a Burden on Agility. There are non-human races living within the Hollow Earth, and all members of their race may have such a Burden.

**Outcast** – You are an outsider, who will never quite fit in. It may be your looks, personality, race or your family heritage. For each Burden you take, you will have a Disadvantage in any dealings that require blending in, dealing with the high and mighty, or convincing strangers to help you. While the men and beings of the Hollow Earth can gain acceptance in Hyperborea through exceptional deeds, most still look down upon them as outsiders and barbarians. Anyone who begins the game as one of these outsiders will certainly be an Outcast.

**Enemies** – You have somehow made certain people revile, envy or despise you. For each Burden you take, the GameMaster gets to create opponents who will work behind the scenes to make your life miserable, and who will on occasion confront and confound you. The ringleader of these enemies gets a number of starting Boons to build a character with equal to four times the number of Burdens you take in Enemies, plus two. For instance, one Burden of Enemies gets an antagonist with six Boons, enough for one Attribute and four Abilities (plus their own Burdens and Boons). If you manage to remove the ringleader from the picture through role-playing, you have lifted one Burden from your total of Enemies. If the Enemy is worth more than one Burden, a lesser henchman arises to take their master's place of bedeviling you. If the Enemy successfully confounds you, the GameMaster secretly awards them experience, and they can gain in power as characters do.

**Duty** – You have commitments that you must adhere to, either a personal code, ties to a greater or higher power, or both. For each Burden you take, you are beholden to someone else of greater status and power, or have an inner code of behavior that you must live by. You take a Disadvantage of the number of Burdens of Duty to any action that violates that Duty. If you have two Burdens of “never strike the first blow”, then you would take two Disadvantages for the duration of any fight in which you struck the first blow. If you have a Burden of “always speaks the truth”, you would take a Disadvantage to any Challenge which required lying. If you have a Burden of “loyalty to liege lord”, then you take a Disadvantage in any action that goes against that lord's best interests.

## **B**oons

**Birthright** – For the cost of two Boons per level, you have the Boon of up to two levels of status and wealth, either because of family influence, heredity, as part of a profession, or some other effect. You may get Advantages equal to the level of Status when dealing in matters of status and influence. As an example, a knight would have one level, which would help them enter higher social circles, lead and command others, and so on.

**Companions** – For the cost of one or more Boons, you can have the Boon of loyal friends (other than the players), who may accompany and help you if you wish. The first Boon gets you an average person (no Attributes) and one Boon for that person, and each Boon after that gives the companion another Boon. For instance, one Boon might get you a man-at-arms with Swordplay, or a sage with Ancient history. If the companion dies, one Boon is lost forever, but if the companion is worth more than one Boon, you may use the remaining Boons to eventually find another companion. If you treat a companion callously, or ignore their wants, needs or safety, they may abandon you, either temporarily or permanently. Companions may have their own Burdens and Boons, but they are only worth half as much. That is, each two Burdens they take only count as one Burden, and you round down. As a character gains in power, so do companions that accompany them. Each two Favors a character gains in play will give one Favor to a single companion.

**Gift** – For the cost of one or two Boons, you may possess a gift that is beyond the normal capabilities of an Ability. If this gift is something that is common for a particular race, species or profession, it costs one Boon. This would be something like the wings of the Birdmen, which allow all Birdmen to fly. A gift that is particular only to a few, and extraordinarily uncommon will cost two Boons. The Gift of Prophecy is an example. These gifts are special Abilities, and must be tied to Attributes in a logical way, just like other Abilities. The prophet who loses their faith might lose their Prophesying ability as well, or the Birdman who loses their Endurance might lose their Flight as well. While Gifts may be used in appropriate Challenges, they also provide basic talents which do not require Challenges. The Birdman does not need to go through a Challenge for normal flight, nor does the Prophet need Challenges to gain occasional glimpses of the future.

**Magery** – For the cost of one Boon, you can have the Ability to use magic, in whatever form it takes. Magery is actually an Ability derived from a Spiritual Attribute, acquired like any other Ability. Full rules for mages are later in the rules. Any character who wants to start as a mage must have Magery and have a Boon left over for each five spells they wish to know, so keep this in mind.



**Talents** – For the cost of one Boon a character can have a Talent. A Talent is something *not quite* an Ability, Attribute or Gift. It will provide an Advantage in *some* circumstances, or can be used in combination with an Attribute to gain an Advantage in a particular situation. For instance, a person with the Talent of Ambidexterity could wield a sword in either hand. This might not be an Advantage normally, but could make up for the loss of a single Advantage in combat if you weren't using both hands. Or, a person who has the Talent of Keen Eyes could see better in darkened conditions. Talents do not have to be tied to a particular Attribute like Abilities or Gifts, but a character can have no more than one Talent in each category of Attributes (Physical, Mental, Spiritual), and Talents may not contradict any other character limitations.

**Character example**

A player sits down and decides to create Arlon, the aged sage, who is always accompanied by his eager young apprentice. Arlon takes his one Attribute as Intelligence, and his Abilities as Conversationalist and Research. Arlon is not as spry as he used to be, and takes Burdens on his Strength, Endurance and Perception, for three Burdens. He is also an insatiable seeker of wisdom, and takes three Burdens of "curiosity". If he passes up an opportunity to learn something new and fascinating, it will gnaw at him until he has lost all chance of going back and investigating it. This gives him a total of six Burdens with which to gain Boons and Abilities. His companion apprentice costs him one Boon, and the apprentice has the Boon of Magery, but is otherwise average (he won't know any spells yet unless he takes on some Burdens of his own). With the remaining five Boons, Arlon gets the spiritual Attribute of Insight, the Ability of Magery and the physical Ability of Quarterstaff (he may be old, but he isn't *entirely* feeble!). His last Boon he leaves unspent so that he can acquire a handful of spells using the Magic rules.



**Currency**

Hyperborea is a land rich in history but poor in resources. A civilization that has existed for thousands of years will deplete any natural veins of metals, leaving only low-grade ore behind. Most of the precious metals are stable and do not decay with time, so gold and silver are the means of currency, their value increasing with size and shape. The lowest denominations are triangles, followed by squares, pentagons, hexagons and finally circular coins at the highest denominations. Of course, gems can also be used for currency, but seldom in common usage.

Items of sturdy metals are expensive, as are advanced ceramics, but both are in regular use. Alchemical means have been discovered to pull metals from the ocean. Calcium, magnesium, sodium and aluminum are the metals in common use, with magnesium and aluminum alloys being the lightest, strongest and most durable. The other two metals are important in alchemical and military use.

Prices for items are abstract, on a scale from Inconsequential to Mind-boggling, each one being several times the worth of the previous category.

Standard of living	Price	Example
Inconsequential(-1)	1	a drink
Marginal(0)	10	a full meal, very cheap lodging
Below average(1)	100	daily travel expenses, a large book
Average(2)	1,000	a horse, sword, armor or gunne
Above average(3)	10,000	hvy armor, warhorse, farmhouse
Expensive(4)	100,000	manor house
Very expensive(5)	1,000,000	castle
Priceless(6)	10,000,000	castle and estate
Mind-boggling(7)	100,000,000	prime real estate and castle

The average person (zero levels of Status) can buy Marginal things on a regular basis (once a day) without putting a dent in their standard of living, and each level of social status you have increases that by one level. For reference, a person with Below Average status (one level) is middle class. A person with Average status (two levels) would be a millionaire.

Buying things beyond your standard of living requires spending cash on hand. If you spend from your standard of living to get an item richer than your standard of living, you risk lowering your standard of living *permanently*. Each *four* items that is one level higher than your standard will drop your standard of living, and *one* item that is two levels higher will drop your standard of living. You can recover this through hard work, or coming into a bundle of cash. A month of hard work will recover the losses from an item one level up, and a year of hard work will recover the losses of an item two levels up.



You do not necessarily lose social status if your wealth goes down. Tales of beggared nobles on ruined estates have some truth. However, if you do not have the money to back it up, someone will eventually come along and buy or take your status out from under you. Kings who can't pay their armies soon find that someone else with money is sitting on their throne.

Characters start the game with up to an amount of items that would exactly decrease their standard of living. This *does not* affect their ability to buy things later, but represents what they have acquired to date through hard work. Four items at their standard of living counts as one item above it, and they can have any *reasonable* number of items below their standard of living, provided they realize they can't sell them later for a profit...

**Example** – A character, Evan Dwolsk of the Icefringes, has one level of status as a Boon, which raises his standard of living to Below Average. He outfits himself with a horse, sword and armor, which leaves him room for one more Average item or four Below Average items. A character with no Status might be able to afford a club, a shield, a bow and some trifles.

To maintain your standard of living, you have to work. Being without work for a month counts as buying an item one level beyond your standard of living. And, you have to have a number of *appropriate* Abilities and Attributes equal to *twice* your standard of living to have the skills needed to maintain it.

**Example** – A peasant has no Attributes or Abilities, so they have an Marginal standard of living (only slaves or beggars are below this). A tradesman with a single Attribute and an Ability can maintain a Below Average standard of living, while a noble with two Attributes and four Abilities related to their duties can command pay that supports an Above Average standard of living (three levels of Status).

**Note** – You can of course, start the game with more status than your Attributes and Abilities will support. It just means that if you don't come into some windfall within a few months, you're not going to be able to maintain it. It might also mean you have a very skilled underling who doesn't have the status themselves, but *does* have the ability to maintain yours. Skilled administrators can make up somewhat for incompetent rulers. On the other hand, it is easy for characters to start play with the Attributes and Abilities to support more than a Marginal standard of living, but not have the Boons of Status to take advantage of it. The character starts low, and gains wealth through play.

## Windfalls

Getting paid for a specific task, or finding wealth doesn't increase your standard of living unless it is a *lot* of money. Normally, you just count it as a Windfall of some amount, like "bag of Expensive gold jewelry", which counts as the ability to get one Expensive item (or four Above Average items). If you set the windfall aside, it can raise your standard of living for a year for each two levels it exceeds your current standard of living, or forever for each three levels it exceeds your current standard of living. Since your standard of living is now higher than your skills could support, not working at your job will not affect this standard of living until you run out of money.

**Example** – A person living at a Marginal standard of living stumbles across this "bag of Expensive jewelry", and hoards it away. This exceeds their standard of living by four levels, so they can raise their own standard of living to Average for a year by doling it out slowly, or to Below Average for the rest of their life by spending it *very* slowly. This doesn't increase their social status, but it does raise their income.

**Note** – This system is designed to minimize "gold counting" and let characters get on with their adventures. Money of various amounts now has its proper significance. If a wealthy merchant tosses a Marginal tip to a peasant because they were helpful, this money is not worth keeping track of for the merchant, but it is a significant windfall for the peasant. If you wish, you can assign numerical values to items based on their abstract cost, and let characters keep track of their holdings.

## Carrying things

A character can carry as many heavy things as they have Physical Attributes, plus one. To carry more than this means they will take a Disadvantage in any kind of Physical Challenge, for each heavy item over their limit, until they get to zero Advantages. At this load, the character can move slowly for a while, or they can carry one more heavy thing for a very short distance. Part or all of this penalty may apply to any Challenges that occur after the exhaustion of a long day's travel, even if the character is no longer carrying the load. For reference, an average person is a weight of three heavy things, so an average person can only carry another person for a short distance.

Four Medium things count as a heavy thing, and four Light things count as a Medium thing. Anything less than Light is Inconsequential, and you can carry as many of these as your pockets will allow. All these round in your favor, so an average person can carry a heavy item, three Medium and three Light items before being weighed down, since this is just barely less than two heavy items, and a person with zero Physical Attributes can carry one heavy thing before being encumbered.





## Equipment

**Clothes** Light weight, cost as one level below social status for work, equal to social status for formal occasions.

Winter clothing for the Shadowlands or Icefringes is Medium weight, and cost is equal to social status, with a minimum cost of Below Average.

**Rope** Gives one Advantage to Challenges involving climbing. Medium weight, Marginal cost for a few score meters of light rope, Below Average cost for large quantities or better quality.

**Lock-picks** These are necessary to use the Lockpicking Ability. Inconsequential weight, Below Average cost.

**Lantern** Hyperboreans are used to low light levels, and only require extra light sources when it is truly dark, such as winter outside the Dyalands. The typical lantern burns oil, and provides light out to a Poor range for most purposes (take a Disadvantage on Challenges for each range past this). More advanced lanterns use a readily available alchemical mixture that creates a gas flame that is very bright. These provide light out to an Average range, and larger versions can shed light out to a Good range. Both types of lanterns are Light weight, and will burn for half a day before needing recharged. Regular lanterns are of Marginal cost, and Alchemical lanterns are Below Average cost. In both cases, a week's worth of fuel is Medium weight, with Marginal cost for the oil lantern, and Below Average cost for the alchemical one.

**Travel pack** The supplies an average person will need for a day of travel away from sources of food or shelter. Food is a Light weight and Marginal cost item per day. A tent and insulated sleeping sack is Medium weight and Below Average cost for the pair. A water pouch will be of Marginal cost and Medium weight when full, and will last the average person for a few days. A pack for carrying up to two heavy items of gear will itself be of two Light weight and Below Average cost.

**Med-kit** A chirurgeon's kit contains basic wrappings, unguents, pills, powders, sterile needles and thread, sufficient to treat serious but non-lifethreatening illnesses or injuries. A chirurgeon will require such a kit to use any medical ability without penalty. Light weight, Below Average cost.

**Far-glass** Allows one to see distant objects more clearly, giving an Advantage over those not so equipped. Light weight, Below Average cost.

**Horses** A normal horse has Strength, Strength, Physique and Endurance, so it can carry five heavy things without being slowed down, and can carry up to nine if you don't want to go much past a walk. A warhorse will have an additional Physical Attribute of some kind, and will also have one Mental Attribute, appropriate to a horse. A horse may be Intelligent, but this means it is Intelligent compared to other horses, not people. A warhorse will also have the Physical Ability of Battle Training, which lets it either have two Advantages when fighting by itself (three if it has Agility), or lend one Advantage to its rider.

**Note** – If you don't use all your Advantages in a situation and you lose an Advantage as a Challenge result, you can substitute one that you weren't using for the one you lost. So, a warhorse might only get two Advantages in a fight, but it can lose five Advantages and still have two left (its five Attributes, plus its base of one and one for its Ability).

**Dogs** Dogs are bred for a variety of purposes. Well-trained ones have an Ability of some kind (making them more valuable than untrained peasants, by the way). Dogs of useful size are heavy and range from Marginal to Average cost, depending on their usefulness. Even mongrels can have loyalty and still get a base of one Advantage in certain situations.

**Knife** A knife is the minimum tool needed to use the Swordplay Ability, and it provides no Advantages. Inconsequential weight, Marginal cost for a utility blade, Below Average cost for a fine blade. Knives are made of tempered glass for utility knives, and industrial ceramics for fine blades.

**Sword** A sword provides one Advantage in a melee Challenge. Swords are made of lightweight alloys, often with a replaceable inset edge of industrial ceramics. Light weight, Average cost.

**Greatsword** A greatsword provides two Advantages in a melee Challenge, but you may not use a shield at the same time. Two Light weight, Average cost.



**Axe** An axe provides one Advantage in a melee Challenge. Axes are usually a single piece of industrial ceramic, or more crudely made of stone and wood. A proper axe can be used as a ranged attack with a Poor range, and damage of one Advantage, plus Strength if the user has it. A club does similar damage to an Axe. Light weight, Average cost. A crude axe or a club is of two Light weight and Below Average cost.

**Dolcarn** A heavy wooden shaft with ceramic reinforcement and a chopping and thrusting head. It gives two extra advantages in a melee Challenge if used outdoors or in other open spaces, but none in close or cramped quarters. It requires both hands to use, so a shield cannot be used at the same time. Medium weight, Below Average cost.

**Staff** A medium length wooden staff, often carried by travellers. It gives one advantage in a melee Challenge, but requires both hands to use. Light weight, Marginal cost. Ornate or carved staves are no more effective than normal ones, but are Below Average cost and the bearer may be treated with slightly more deference or respect.

**Cestii** Armored hand protection provides one Advantage in melee Challenges against opponents who do not have a Swordplay weapon. The Challenger may also opt to not take the Advantage, and damage is then considered lethal instead of non-lethal. One Advantage of heavy armor can count as cestii if no other lethal weapon is at hand. Light weight, Marginal cost.

**Light armor** Light armor provides no Advantages in combat, but will allow the wearer full use of Physical Attributes to resist lethal attacks and can absorb one Advantage that would be lost due to lethal damage, once from the front and once from the back. Light weight, Average cost. It is normally only used where you can quickly get a replacement set if needed.

**Example** - An assassin steps out from behind a pillar and shoots Baron Nostramar with a handGunne, which has two Advantages worth of damage. The Baron is getting old, and has no Physical Attributes, so he just gets his base Advantage of one. In the resulting Challenge, he loses an Advantage, which would normally put him out (since he only has one). However, the armor stops this instead, leaving the Baron free to run for his life and scream for his guards.

Light armor is made from cloth with thin plates of ceramic to provide additional protection, and usually only covers the vital regions of the body. It is tailored for people of the same body size, and is the only armor that can be worn concealed under clothing or other armor. People in risky positions wear it as insurance against assassins.

**Armor** Armor provides one Advantage in all combat, including against ranged weapons. Armor is made of leather and cloth, with resins and small plates of ceramic to provide additional protection in vital areas. Numerous cutting or crushing attacks can ruin it, but punctures usually will not. Medium weight, Average cost.

**heavy armor** heavy armor provides two Advantages in all combat, but negates Agility if you have it. It is made of light-weight alloys faced with ceramic plates. It is hard to ruin heavy armor, but heavy attacks can reduce its protection. heavy weight, Above Average cost.

**Shield** A shield provides one Advantage vs. all foes and attacks in front of you, but you cannot use a two-handed sword or LongGunne at the same time. Shields are often wood, laminated with resins and given blunt ceramic edges and ribs to stop sword blows. Medium weight, Below Average cost.

**Bow** Average range, gives two Advantages to damage, plus Advantages for Strength and Physique if the bow was built specifically for a character of those proportions (and people of lesser proportions will not be able to use it). It takes four Advantages worth of effort to prepare the bow, split over any number of consecutive Challenge rounds, after which it can be fired. For instance, an average person with Bows & Crossbows Ability would have a base of one Advantage, plus one for their Ability, so they would use two Advantages on two consecutive rounds, for a total of four. On the next round, they would be able to fire again. Bows are usually made of resin treated wood, with special ceramics on the inside for compressive strength. Light weight, Below Average cost. Arrows are of Inconsequential weight and Marginal cost.





**Cross-bow** Good range, gives three to five Advantages to damage, depending on the model chosen. It takes three times its Advantages worth of effort to prepare, split over any number of *consecutive* Challenge rounds, after which it can be fired. For instance, an average person with Bows & Crossbows Ability would have a base of one Advantage, plus one for their Ability, so they would use two Advantages on five consecutive rounds, for a total of ten. On the next round, they would be able to fire a light crossbow again. Crossbows are usually lightweight alloy frames, with shorter, heavier bows. Medium weight, Average cost.

**hand-Gunne** Poor range, gives two Advantages to damage, regardless of Physical Attributes or Abilities of its user. It takes three Advantages worth of effort to reload the handGunne, split over any number of Challenge rounds, after which it can be fired. For instance, an average person with Gunne Ability would have a base of one Advantage, plus one for their Ability, so they would use two Advantages on two Challenge rounds, for a total of four, one more than needed. On the next round, they would be able to fire again.

Gunnes of any type are prohibited to anyone without higher than average social status (at least one level), with a *mandatory* death penalty for any violation of this rule. Gunnes require a special ammunition, using a saltmetal mixture as propellant, and they fire ceramic projectiles. This ammunition is relatively fragile, and it is usually kept in hard-shelled belt cases. The gunne itself is usually made from lightweight alloy, with ceramic reinforcing. Light weight, Average cost.

A heavy handGunne gives three Advantages to damage and has Average range, but it cannot be concealed under normal clothing like a regular hand-Gunne. It is also of Light weight and Average cost. A pack of ten shells for either type of handGunne is Inconsequential weight and Marginal cost, but note that the shells may not be interchanged between the weapons.

**Long-Gunne** Good range, gives five Advantages to damage, regardless of Physical Attributes or Abilities of its user. It takes three Advantages worth of effort to reload the LongGunne, split over any number of Challenge rounds, after which it can be fired. For instance, an average person with Gunnes Ability would have a base of one Advantage, plus one for their Ability, so they would use two Advantages on two Challenge rounds, for a total of four, one more than needed. On the next round, they would be able to fire again. Two Light weight, Average cost. A pack of five shells is Inconsequential weight and Marginal cost. For Above Average cost, a high quality or fine LongGunne can be custom-made. This will give a particular person one extra Advantage when using the weapon.

**Bombe** A bombe is a relatively unstable device containing an explosive alchemical mixture, much like the shell of a ShipGunne. An inset glass vial is broken, after which it is thrown at the target. It usually explodes in a flash of fiery particles a few heartbeats later. It has a Poor range for throwing purposes, and does two Advantages worth of damage to everything within Poor range of where it lands (double to whatever it lands on). They have the same limits on possession as Gunnes, and are usually only seen in battles where the intended targets are not able to move away once it lands near them. Light weight, Below Average cost.

**Ship-Gunne** Very Good range, gives ten Advantages to damage, regardless of Physical Attributes or Abilities of its user. It may also fire explosive rounds, which give six Advantages to damage what is hit, and two Advantages to damage anything within Poor range of what it hits. It takes ten Advantages worth of effort to prepare the ShipGunne, split over any number of Challenge rounds, after which it can be fired. For instance, an average person with Gunnes Ability would have a base of one Advantage, plus one for their Ability, so they would use two Advantages on five Challenge rounds, for a total of ten. On the next round, they would be able to fire again. ShipGunnes take *additional* Disadvantages to hit any target if either the firer or target is moving, ranging from one to three Disadvantages, depending on the speed. Note the vehicle targets get a base of one Advantage, plus any Ability that the pilot can use to avoid incoming fire. ShipGunnes are three heavy weight and Above Average cost, and must be mounted on vehicles, walls or other sturdy objects. A box of five shells is Medium weight and Below Average cost.



## Using Attributes and Abilities

In *Epiphany*, trying to do anything that is not so easy that everyone can do it is a **Challenge**. Challenges can be Physical, Mental or Spiritual. A Physical Challenge could be a foot race, a swordfight or climbing a wall. Mental Challenges could be solving puzzles, debating politics or figuring which fork to use, and Spiritual Challenges could be tests of faith, soul searching or fighting off the influence of non-corporeal beings.

Challenges take varying amounts of time depending on the type of Challenges and the people involved. For combat, assume each Challenge round is a few seconds, enough time to shout a few taunts, draw, aim or use a ranged weapon, move several steps, or make a flurry of attacks and parries.

Anything that you can apply to the Challenge in your favor is an **Advantage**, and anything that restricts your performance is a **Disadvantage**. Characters without any Attributes, Abilities or equipment to draw on in a given situation still get one Advantage, so the average person has one Advantage in each category. Each Attribute or Ability a character can apply adds an Advantage, and equipment can sometimes add Advantages or be required to use a particular Ability. If you have to Challenge more than one person at the same time, you get your base of one Advantage vs. each other Challenger, but the remainder of your Advantages must be split between them.

Challenges are resolved by having the Challengers face each other, both fists extended. Your right hand is the "offense" hand (how aggressive you are being in the Challenge), and the left hand is the "defense" hand (how much effort you put towards protecting yourself). On the count of three, each person gets to extend a *total* number of fingers equal to the number of Advantages they have to apply, **with no more than four on the "defense" side**. If a Challenger has more than nine Advantages, they are counted as having nine, and their opponent's Advantages are reduced by the difference.

**Sample** - Grand the Barbarian has Strength, Physique and Brawling. This is three Advantages, plus one as a base, for a total of four. On a fighting Challenge the player can extend a total of four fingers, ranging from four on one side and none on the other, to any mix that adds up to four.

*Be careful! If you extend too many fingers, you have to retract them afterwards, from the side chosen by your opponent. If you extend too few, you're stuck with the result.*

Now that you are sitting there with your fingers out, compare your offense to your opponent's defense, and your opponent's offense to your defense (the hands opposite each of yours). How they compare determines the result of that Challenge round.

## Results of a Challenge

A. If either Challenger's offense hand has more fingers showing than opponent's defense hand, then the attack (in whatever form it took, physical, mental or spiritual) got through the defenses. The opponent loses the difference in Advantages for the remainder of the Challenge.

### Example:

Three Advantages vs. two Advantages

Challenger 1



Challenger 2



### Result:

A tie. No one loses any Advantages.



Challenger 2 put all their effort into defense, which blocked Challenger 1's attack.

B. If both sides get through their opponent's defenses, if both would lose the same amount, they can call that round a draw with mutual consent (neither Challenger loses Advantages).

### Example:

One Advantage each.

Challenger 1



Challenger 2



### Result:

Both Challengers win (or lose). Since



each of their attacks was unopposed, each one loses an Advantage. And since each only had one Advantage to begin with, they are both out of the fight. Or, they could say that Challenge round was inconclusive. In a fight, it would be mutual incapacitation, both sides agreeing to call it a draw or a potential stalemate. In a battle of wits, neither side would have the upper hand. A con artist would not swindle a victim, but neither would the victim suspect trickery.

**Note** - Losing one Advantage in a round means a minor loss or setback (unless you only had one to begin with!). Losing two means a major setback, and losing three means a catastrophic failure of some kind. The GM can interpret these losses as needed for descriptive purposes.

*Remember that in Epiphany, most Advantages are flexible. Armor is an Advantage, but you don't have to use it on the defense hand. Your armor could be used **offensively** to help you get closer to an opponent, just like a sword can be used **defensively** to block or parry with.*





### Advantages and Disadvantages

Physical Challenges can also be tests of will, and Mental Challenges can also be tests of spirit. For each two *Spiritual* Advantages that seem applicable, a person gets one extra Advantage in a *Mental* Challenge. For each two *Mental* Advantages that seem applicable, a person gets one extra Advantage in a *Physical* Challenge (but *Spiritual* Advantages never count, even indirectly, towards *Physical* Advantages). It is a burden on the *player* to figure out how best to use their Advantages and Abilities for maximum effect.

**Example** – Mzawi the Scout has Running as an Ability, but no Physical Attributes. He is trying to evade capture by outrunning pursuers, and he has two Advantages in the Challenge, one for his base amount, and one more for his Running Ability. If Mzawi has Perception and Will, but does not say anything, the GameMaster is under no obligation to help the player out. But if the player says “Mzawi uses his keen senses to take advantage of the terrain, and his strength of will keeps him going because getting away is more important to him than catching him is to his pursuers.”, then that’s a different matter. This is a good use of two Mental Attributes to help him, so he gets an *additional* Advantage for the Physical Challenge.

Tools and equipment may also be used to gain Advantages, or they may alter the way in which your Advantages work. For instance, heavy armor will negate your Agility if you have it, which is not good. However, it provides more benefit against attacks where your Agility would not matter, like surprise.

### Stalemate

Sometimes, both Challengers are equally matched, and neither presses the Challenge in such a way that an outcome is forced. For instance, two swordsmen circle warily, occasionally clashing blades, but neither presses an all-out attack on one side for fear of the counter-attack, or both are equally matched and always go full offense, locking blades and breaking free in a desperate flurry of slashes and lunges. Who wins?

Well, this is what player creativity is for. Players need to figure out clever things to do. Local circumstances may affect the number of Advantages a character gets. Fighting defensively nets you an Advantage for the defense hand, but you can never make an opponent lose Advantages if you are fighting defensively. Clever ideas are worth an Advantage, once in a given Challenge. Exceptionally clever ones may be worth two Advantages, or one Advantage twice. Simply having Intelligence doesn’t count. The *player* has to come up with something clever and a way they can make it happen.

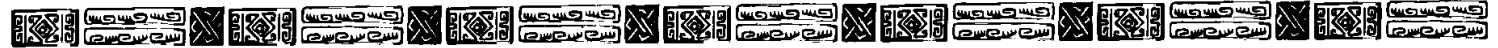
If this doesn't happen, the GameMaster would eventually decide that one of the two would gain an extra Advantage. For instance, a character who had Endurance would eventually gain advantage over someone without it. In a Mental Challenge, a character with Will might stick it out until an opponent gets exasperated, or a character with Serenity overcomes doubt in a spiritual Challenge and stays the course. But sometimes you don't have this luxury and need to go a less conventional route.

**Example** – Face to face, sword hilts pressing against each other, sweat pouring down their brows, Evan Dwolsk and his arch-enemy are dueling on the battlements of a ruined fort. Both are evenly matched, and neither wishes to run the other through at the cost of taking the same damage. Evan's player, knowing that enemy reinforcements are on the way, cannot have Evan wait and use Endurance to wear down his foe, so in the middle of combat, Evan initiates a *Mental* Challenge by touching a sore spot of his opponent's psyche, like a past defeat. The Physical Challenge continues in the background of this, but Evan's goal is to win the Mental Challenge now. If he does, he will get an extra Mental Advantage, and just as importantly, his foe will lose one. If either of them was relying on Mental Advantages to boost their Physical prowess, gaining or losing one could tilt the battle. The victor would be more sure of themselves, while the loser might be demoralized or angry and fight less effectively.

Player creativity is vitally important facet of the **Epiphany** system, since a Challenge between people of nearly equal ability can be a stalemate if one of the parties involves really wants to stall for time. Only clever action can quickly break the deadlock.

**Note** – One important thing to remember about Challenges and potential Challenges is that while you don't have to give players **all** the information available, you **really** need to give them everything that is readily apparent to their characters. For instance, a character with Agility and Brawling might decide that taking on two thugs with cudgels might be the best way out of that darkened alley. They could put their base Advantage vs. each, fight one defensively and try to take out the other. This isn't a bad tactic, and has a chance of working. However, if these goons were Strong, or had Physique, or were wearing armor, that would make a **big** difference in the threat evaluation, and as GameMaster, it's **your** job to make sure the player knows what the character is getting into.







### Alternate Challenge Resolution

Not all players or GameMasters will be comfortable with the diceless resolution system. There is a diced option which uses the same type of results, but gives luck a little more hand in the outcome.

The total number of Advantages a character has are the number of six-sided dice they roll. These dice are split between offense and defense hands, just like in normal Challenge resolution (we suggest using different color dice to keep things simple). These dice are rolled against your opponent's dice. Each die face that comes up "1" counts as zero successes, each face that has "2" through "5" counts as one success, and each face that comes up "6" counts as two successes. You compare your successes on each side to your opponent's, and the outcome is determined by the normal rules.

	<b>Challenger 1</b>	<b>Challenger 2</b>
<b>Example:</b> Four Advantages vs. two.		

<b>Result:</b> Both sides win! Challenger 2's roll of "6" is two successes vs. Challenger 1's single success, and Challenger 1's "4" and "5" are two successes vs. Challenger 2's single success. Each Challenger loses an Advantage in the next round. Since this would make the Challenge three Advantages to one, the outcome is almost certain unless Challenger 2 can find a way to get another Advantage or Challenger 1 is really unlucky.		
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Using dice gives the underdog a better chance at comebacks, since they can get multiple successes on a single die. However, it also increases the stakes, since a good roll can result in more successes against you than you bargained for.

### When it is over

Simple Challenges are done once, whoever is more successful being the winner. For instance, if you shoot a bow, you only use one Challenge to see if you hit. However, many Challenges run for several rounds, each side losing Advantages until someone is unable to participate, or gives up to prevent further losses. For instance, the ultimate outcome of a foot race, a fight between swordsmen or a heated debate would be played as several connected Challenges. This is referred to as a complex Challenge, and each individual Challenge in it is referred to as a Challenge round.





## S Specialized Challenges

Some types of Challenges require special arbitration, when one Challenger is taking special penalties or precautions.

### Ranged Weapons

Using a ranged weapon is a two-part Challenge. First, you must hit your target. For this, the attacker gets their base of one Advantage, and any other Advantages they can think of. The target gets their base of one Advantage, their Agility if they can see the attack coming, plus a further one if the attack is at medium range, two at long range, and four at extreme range. Partial cover or obscurement gives an additional one to three Advantages. A simple Challenge is then resolved. However, both attacker's hands are considered "offense" and both defender's hands are considered "defense" (and the defender can have five Advantages on a hand). If the attacker succeeds in getting any effect through to the target with *either* hand, the weapon hits. Otherwise it misses. This is a "ranged Challenge".

**Example** - Challenger 1 has a bow, Agility and Ability with Bow & Crossbows, with Perception and Keen Eyes as well. This gives them a base of one Advantage, plus two for Physical Abilities, and one for describing how their Mental Abilities help their aim, a total of four Advantages. The target gets a base of one Advantage, plus one because the shot is at medium range, and plus one more because they are obscured by brush.

	<b>Challenger 1</b>	<b>Challenger 2</b>
<b>Result:</b> Challenger 1 wins! Since all Challenger 1 had to do was suc- ceed by any amount, the two points they won by is more than enough. hold on to the total amount the attacker won by.		
		

If a weapon hits, you do a similar simple Challenge using the damage of the weapon vs. any Attributes, Abilities and armor that can apply to mitigating the damage. Usually this is any Advantages given by armor, Physical Attributes except Agility, and possibly a bonus for use of Mental Attributes and Abilities (Will and Pain Tolerance, perhaps?). The attacker gets only the Advantages of the weapon, plus one Advantage for each two points they won the Challenge by.

**Note!** - If you don't have any armor, you can only use *one* Physical Attribute to stop the damage. So, a person with Strength, Physique and Endurance can handle getting hit with a bow or crossbow, but they cannot just ignore such attacks without armor to cushion the blow, since unarmored, they can only use *one* of those Attributes to defend with.





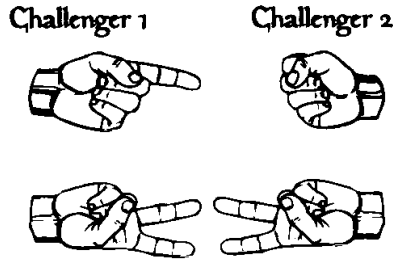
**Example** – The arrow from the previous example hits! It has a damage of two, plus one more because of the two points that got through on the previous Challenge, for a total of three Advantages. The defender has only their base of one, plus one more for their armor, for a total of two Advantages.

## Picking up the Pieces

When a Challenge is over, both sides may have lost some of their Advantages. When a Challenge ends, everyone's Advantages reset to their full amount. Then, they suffer the side effects of that particular type of Challenge.

### Result

Ouch! One side is evenly matched, but the other is unopposed, so Challenger 2 loses a Physical Advantage. Since regular armor does not usually lose its Advantage due to punctures, they lose their base Advantage, and are out.



### Other Advantages and Disadvantages

Below are some useful guidelines for various Advantages and Disadvantages for Physical Challenges.

Attacking while moving or riding	1 or 2 Disadvantages
Attacking a moving target	1 Disadvantage
Attacking with an unready weapon	2 Disadvantages
Fighting defensively (cannot hurt foe)	1 Advantage
Aiming for a Challenge round (cannot defend in melee or use Agility to dodge)	1 Advantage
Aiming for two or more Challenge rounds	2 Advantages
Really close range	1 Advantage
Close range	zero Advantage
Medium range	1 Advantage for foe
Long range	2 Advantages for foe
Extreme range	4 Advantages for foe
Aiming for a special game effect	2 Disadvantages
Target the size of a small dog	1 Disadvantage
Target the size of a horse	1 Advantage
Target the size of a boat	2 Advantages
Target the size of a ship	3 Advantages

In addition, weapons will have a "range" which determines how accurate they are. Since combat is on an abstract scale, what is important is the *relative* scale of any weapons that are involved. That is, a range that might be "medium" for a "good" weapon might be "long" for an "average" weapon and "extreme" for a "poor" weapon. For people who need a scale, assume that "close" range for an "average" weapon is half a dozen steps, and that each increase or decrease of range or weapon quality doubles or halves that distance.

*If you have to ask the GameMaster for a map to describe a combat, then either the GameMaster isn't describing things well enough, or you want more detail than the system is meant to provide.*

### Physical Challenges

When a Physical Challenge ends, participants may be injured. All participants *lose* Advantages equal to the amount of Advantages they lost on the *last* round of that Challenge (ranged Challenges have immediate effects). If you only took one, it was a minor wound, but you'll quickly recover. If you lost *three* Advantages in the last round, that's a bit more serious... If a Challenge ends inconclusively, like retreat or calling it a draw, subtract one from the losses. The Challenge process represents one side or the other gaining the upper hand over time. Whoever runs out of Advantages first is defeated, either by being knocked out, physically incapacitated, giving up or being captured. The Challenge round that determines the ultimate victor also determines how badly each side was hurt in the process. If a Challenger has more than one opponent, each one is handled separately as they are defeated.

The loser of a melee Challenge is incapacitated/unconscious for about fifteen minutes for the first Advantage lost (quadrupled for each additional one lost). The target of a ranged Challenge simply loses Advantages based on the Challenge result, which may or may not incapacitate them. Losses due to a Physical Challenge usually represent injury or fatigue. Figure out what Abilities or Attributes you want to do without for a while. If you used Mental Advantages to give you a Physical Advantage, you can assume some of the lost Advantages come from mental fatigue or injury. Since it takes two Mental Advantages to gain a Physical Advantage, it takes temporary loss of two Mental Advantages to count as a lost Physical Advantage.

**Example** – Surtur the hammer has Strength, Physique, Swordplay, Perception and Will. But, he still lost a fight and two Advantages in the process. He decides that he took a serious head blow (and was knocked out for an hour). One of the lost Advantages negates his Perception *and* Will because he is woozy and has blurred vision. The other lost Advantage negates his Physique, because he doesn't seem as impressive when he is leaning against companions to keep his balance.

**Note** - You can technically use *any* Physical Advantage to soak up damage, but you should really be able to justify it in the context of combat, survival or will to live. If you have "Swordplay", you can say that your sword arm was injured instead of your liver, or that it represents physical fitness. If you have "Pickpocket", you will need to justify to the GM as to why that is relevant to you surviving getting shot in the back.





It takes a number of days equal to twice the *current* number of lost *Physical Attributes* to recover an *Advantage*, with a minimum of one day. If *Advantages* are lost due to relatively non-lethal attacks or fatigue, they recover at twice the normal rate, with a minimum of half a day. Adverse circumstances will add to this if the character does not get proper rest and basic care. If the character was taken down to zero (or less) *Advantages* by lethal attacks, it takes five days per *Advantage* until they get their base of one *Advantage* back, and then they can start to recover the others.

**Example** - Surtur only lost one *Physical Attribute* (*Physique*), so he gets back one *Advantage* per two days. So, in two days he gets back *Physique*, and the next day recovers *Perception* and *Will* (the *Mental Attributes* counted as one *Advantage*, so he recovers both with one *Advantage's* worth of healing). He's back to fighting form in three days.

If one of the lost *Advantages* is based on others, then the one it is based on must be recovered first. For instance, if you lost *Agility* and *Swordplay*, and the *Swordplay* was based on your *Agility*, then you would not be able to recover *Swordplay* until you got your *Agility* back.

If someone has a *Medical Ability*, they can make a "ranged" *Mental Challenge* vs. the total number of *all Attributes* lost. If the doctor wins, then the aid will let the injured person recover one extra *Advantage* the next time they heal back a loss. This can be repeated throughout the healing process.

### Breaking Things

Some *Physical losses* *might*, after a *Challenge* is over, be transferred to any tools that *could* have broken in the *Challenge*. If two characters fought, and the winner lost an *Advantage*, they could instead say that lost *Advantage* was their armor or shield being hacked up to the point of unusability. A climber who took a loss climbing a mountain could say that they wore out a good climbing rope. However, the *loser* in combat *always* has to take at least one *Advantage* in personal damage. In the previous example, Surtur could have broken his sword in the fight, and only lost one *Advantage* instead of two.

### Getting Killed

If you lose *all* your *Advantages* in a fight (including your base of one), you are critically injured. Any opponent with a lethal weapon can spend two *Challenge* rounds finishing you off, otherwise you will not wake until roused or half a day passes. If damage takes you to *negative Advantages* of *more* than the number of *Physical Attributes* you have, you die from trauma or system shock. This means that a "average" person with no *Physical Advantages* is incapacitated if they lose one *Advantage*, and killed if they lose two.

### Mental Challenges

Some *Mental Challenges* have no ill effects for the loser. Failing to spot a hidden item is an example. A battle of wits or test of mental skill is another matter, however. Losing a *Mental Challenge* of this type means that your ego has been bruised, but little else, and this is reflected in a temporarily loss of acuity or focus while you regather your wits. When the *Challenge* is over, the loser loses the use of one *Mental Attribute* or *Ability* used in the *Challenge* until the next morning. The winner suffers no ill effects at all, and in fact gets an *additional Advantage* in further *Challenges* of that type until the next morning. This *Mental Advantage* can be combined with others to get a *Physical Advantage* in certain circumstances. No matter how many *Mental Challenges* you do, however, you can only get a maximum bonus of one *Advantage* for defeating other opponents, but you can lose as many as you have, one per *Challenge*. If you lose *all Advantages* in a *Mental Challenge*, you have been soundly defeated, and may sulk, get angry or do something rash that you will regret later.

### Spiritual Challenges

Losing a *Spiritual Challenge* is more than a loss of face, it is a loss of faith. Involved parties lose *Spiritual Attributes* or *Abilities* based on their losses in the last *Challenge* round, like for *Physical* combat, down to a minimum of zero. The loser does not recover any lost *Spiritual Attributes* or *Abilities* until they succeed in a "ranged" *Spiritual Challenge* against *themselves* (the *GameMaster* taking one side).

The person gets their base of one *Advantage*, plus any remaining *Spiritual Attributes*, *Abilities* or *Advantages*, vs. the number of losses they took in the *Challenge*. This may be done once a day. If the player wins over self-doubt, they recover an *Advantage*. If not, they stay the same (they do not go further into self-doubt if they lose). Supporting friends, a reason to persevere and other such motivations may provide *Advantages* in this struggle. If a character loses *all* their *Advantages* in a *Spiritual Challenge*, they lapse into doubt, depression, and apathy. People who have lost *all* *Spiritual Attributes* or *Abilities* (including their base) may completely lose the will to live, and there are incidents of people known to have just wasted away, taking no food or drink until they simply perish.





## Other types of Challenges

Almost anything in **Epiphany** can be treated as a Challenge, and combats are a small subset of them. To stay up late at night without falling asleep might be a Challenge. Winning a public debate might be a Challenge, as might making a good impression with a show of *savoir-faire*. Having a proper Ability or Boon lets you evade many minor Challenges. Having Status means you already know how to address people and act in formal situations, so what might be a Challenge for an outsider is not one for you. Having Gunnes Ability means you know how to reload and maintain a gunne, so you don't have to pass a Challenge to do this, while a person without the Ability would. These are sometimes "Level Challenges", and simply require a certain number of Advantages to succeed. For instance "Anyone with at least three Mental Advantages remembers that the Baron strongly resents anyone staring at his eyepatch." Anyone who doesn't *automatically* succeed has to succeed in a simple ranged Challenge vs. that number of Advantages. The GameMaster plays the part of one of the Challengers in most cases, and can be as clever or as obvious as desired, depending on how serious the Challenge is. That noble who deliberately brings up a touchy subject, hoping you will say something embarrassing or insulting, is making a serious Challenge. In and of itself, it may be nothing, but if it is being used as a pretext to a duel, losing could have some nasty repercussions.

*"You have insulted my honor, and I demand satisfaction!"*

People generally know their level of competence in a given field, and try to avoid Challenges they can't win. For instance, a person with only one Advantage will seldom beat a person with two. They know this, and defer to the more powerful person, whether this is fighting prowess, social status or spiritual power. "Average" people tend to stay away from situations that would force a Challenge of any type. Characters *must* be aware that sometimes they will have no option other than to back down, run or cut their losses. Sometimes the good guys lose the first round...

## Experience

Experience is measured in Favors, each one being one-tenth of a Boon. If a character collects as many Boons as the number of Attributes they want to have in a category (minimum of 2 Boons), they may purchase an Attribute in that category. Each Ability or Talent that can be acquired will cost Boons, but you can never have more than eight Abilities or Gifts in each category (Physical, Mental, Spiritual), and you can't have more than two Abilities in a category that aren't associated with an Attribute. For instance, a person with no Physical Attributes could not have more than two Physical Abilities. You cannot get Gifts with experience without GameMaster permission.

Short adventure	0 Favors
Medium adventure	1 Favor
Long adventure	2 Favors
Each year of non-play time between adventures	3 Favors
At the end of each year past age fifty	$-(age - 50)/2$
Player showed up for all sessions of an adventure	1 Favor
Successful completion of adventure	1 Favor
Player role-played well	1 Favor
Players creatively overcame superior foes	1 Favor
Exceptional actions on part of a player	1 Favor
Each <i>Physical</i> Attribute lost to lethal damage	-1 Favor
Player acted completely out of character	-2 Favors
General GM award because they feel like it	1 or 2 Favors

**Example** - A character who is Strong and Agile also wishes to get Endurance as well. Since they already have two Physical attributes, getting a third one will cost 3 Boons (30 Favors). If they wanted to later get Endurance-related Abilities, each of them would cost 1 Boon (10 Favors).

A character unlucky enough to end up with a negative number of Favors available must *lose* an Attribute, Ability or Boon, and get "change" of the correct amount. The lost characteristic may be bought back later with future experience.

In addition to acquiring Boons, Attributes, Abilities, Talents or undoing certain Burdens, Favors can also be used to twist fate in the character's favor. A *single* Favor can be used up to give a character one extra Advantage in one Challenge round, and if the character loses any Advantages in that round, one of them is counted as the Favor, so the character takes less damage or no damage at all. Two Favors can be used up to replay a single Challenge round, and four Favors can be used up to preserve a character from near-certain death (at least temporarily). These uses aren't meant to be frequent, but sometimes it is worth it. To keep players on their toes, you can assign a number of Favors to non-player characters equal to their status, and these can be used as a character would use them. More powerful people have more tricks up their sleeves.



## **M**agery

*"Of course it was an early Atlantean scholar, Vvol Tolhd, a surpassing wise and great man, who first stood as a conduit between the Metaplanes and the Prime Plane. It was only later copied in inferior form by the lesser scholars of Mu, and then Lemuria. They claim the opposite, but the feebleness of their magics and the accuracy of our records proves their tales mere boasting."*

*"It seems that your people and age are totally bereft of magic. Those few practitioners you might have left no doubt live in fear of your superstitious wrath."*

Magic is the most powerful force in Hyperborea, and shapes all aspects of culture, commerce and politics. People with Magery are everywhere, though most only know a very limited subset of spells suited for a particular profession.

Each branch of Magery is an Ability, just as Magery is, and there are six separate Abilities for the potential mage:

- Fire magic** Destruction. Fire is the first element tamed by man, but still it tries to evade his grasp. Fire consumes and changes all it touches, and magic of fire destroys, even when it creates.
- Earth magic** Creation. All life comes from the earth, and to the earth all life eventually returns. Earth magic is the magic of the creation of life.
- Air magic** Enhancement. Air is the first thing to enter our bodies when we are born, and the last thing to leave it when we die. Air is what gives us our strength, and the magic of air makes what is strong, stronger, and what is fast, faster.
- Water magic** Neutralization. Water dilutes all things, and the gentle fall of raindrops can eventually wear away even the mountains. Magic of water dilutes, redirects and wears away other magics.
- Spirit magic** Life and Death. Our flesh may return to the earth, but it is our spirits that carry who and what we are. Spirit magic is the magic of the soul, and the ties that bind and shape it.
- Man magic** The way of man-made things. Man has made of his own creations an elemental force, the way of machines that mimic life. They are not as versatile as life, but they can walk and swim and fly, bite and shoot and claw, lift and carry and even make decisions. Man magic is the magic of the making and breaking of the tools of man.

Each of these may be tied to any Spiritual Attribute, and gaining the Ability in play does not give you any particular spells, just the potential to use magics of that element. A character must have Magery before they can acquire any elemental Ability.

### **Initial Spells**

A character who starts the game with an elemental Ability will get four spells of their choice from the ones available based on that element, subject to GameMaster permission, for each elemental Ability, plus one spell of summoning mana of the appropriate element with which to shape the Metaplanes to their will (you may acquire more mana of that element as one or more of your four spells). Further acquisition of spells is neither Boon, Ability or Gift, but a thing that can only be acquired through role-playing and searching for the hidden bits of wisdom that are scattered about Hyperborea.

**Example** – Arlon, our aged sage, saved one Boon to acquire magic. As a sage, he wants to gain knowledge, so he can either work with Earth mana, to create Shades of people, or Man mana, to recreate ancient devices. Arlon goes with Earth as his elemental Ability, which he lists as based on his Insight. He gets one Earth mana as his "free" mana. He takes three spells which have yet to be determined. Arlon knows that without mana, you can do nothing, and so he takes one more Earth mana source as his fourth spell. He is not a powerful mage, but he can do alright.

### **Using the Metaplanes**

The magic of Hyperborea is the magic of the Metaplanes. The Metaplane transcends time and space, and all that has existed and is no more can be found there. A mage with the proper knowledge of what they seek can find the Shade of something past, and call it into being, albeit temporarily, on the Prime plane. They can do this because the mage acts as a living bridge between the Prime Plane and the Metaplane. Without this bridge, standing with one foot in the real world and one foot in the immaterial, the forces of the two planes could never mingle. This link endures only so long as the mage remains unmoving and can continue to cycle through the spells they prepared for that particular journey. Note that the mage can remain "unmoving" while on a moving vehicle.





All magic is based upon the calling forth of these Shades from the Metaplanes. A wizard may enter the Metaplanes if they have the *Magery Boon*. Once upon the Metaplanes, the Mage has an expanded view of time and space. Distances contract or expand at will, and the past and present can be viewed and manipulated by thought alone. To an outside observer, the mage is a shadowy outline that is like seeing an out of focus movie one second out of three. To the mage, a part of their senses always remain on the real world, and the scope of their immediate area is visible in any detail desired, from that of an insect on a blade of grass to a birds eye view, limited only in that they cannot get a view of anything they cannot see from where they are standing (a mage in an underground bunker is hard to attack, but can't do very much). Mages prefer a spot where they can see their intended target, but are shielded from others. When a mage calls forth a Shade of the past, they anchor it to the Prime Plane with a thread of the mana they draw from the Elements. So long as that mage stays on the Metaplane, that summoned thing will remain on the Prime plane, able to attack, defend, harm or heal as is its wont. A mage can remain on the Metaplanes only so long as they can continue to draw new magics from them. Staying on the Metaplanes is a continuing process, and to remain there until your magics run dry can be a hazardous proposition.

The radius of effect a wizard in the Metaplanes has depends on the strength of their *Spiritual Attributes* and the amount of mana at their disposal. A hedge wizard with a single *Spiritual Attribute* and handful of spells could have an effect over a space several steps in radius, or *Average range*. A master mage with four *Spiritual Attributes* could cover an area greater than the range of a *LongGunner*, each *Attribute* doubling the range of the previous one. The fact that magic is being worked in an area is not immediately obvious unless strange goings on take place within sight or earshot. Anyone with *Magery*, however, will know if they are in the region of someone else's influence. This does not affect either mage's abilities or concentration, and the working mage does not automatically know of other mages in their area of effect until these mages also enter the Metaplanes.

Unfortunately, this radius of effect is inextricably linked to the amount of force the wizard takes to the Metaplanes, so mages who want to do powerful Metaplanic magics tend to live in isolated regions. It wouldn't do to have herds of created cattle suddenly stampeding down city streets by accident, or to have a dozen other mages inside your Metaplane ready to take advantage of you every time you do some serious research.

So, powerful mages usually live in rural areas, with apprentice mages to provide watchful protection on the Metaplanes when the master is working, and guards and fortifications to prevent mundane intrusions of a ruder sort.

### Character traits

All life in Hyperborea is influenced by the prevalence of magic. Characters in an *Epiphany* game may have an elemental aspecting, like every other thing does. In average people this aspecting is so weak as to be nearly undetectable, but more powerful characters, and especially mages, may choose an element of aspect. This aspect is chosen at character creation or anytime afterwards, but may *never* be changed. Each element has its own benefits and problems, and is both a *Boon* and a *Burden* in some way, so it has no character cost.

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- Fire** You are influenced by emotion and passion, easily inflamed and slow to cool down. You take a *Disadvantage* to all actions requiring excessive patience, forethought or planning, but get an *Advantage* at least once to actions where you go for the most direct, straightforward solution.
  - Water** You see the world in all its subtlety and the threads that link all things, however tenuous. You get an *Advantage* to resolve puzzles, solve mysteries and make subtle plans. This sometimes makes you blind to the immediate situation, and you take a *Disadvantage* whenever quick, decisive action is called for.
  - Air** You see the tapestry of life in its full grandeur, the order and balance of all the forces of nature, those of creation and healing, and to a lesser extent those of violence and ending. You get an *Advantage* when a sacrifice is necessary to preserve a greater good, but take a *Disadvantage* when called upon to cause unnecessary harm or destruction.
  - Earth** All living things speak to you in their own small voices. You get an *Advantage* whenever tending to the growth and nurture of any living thing, but take a *Disadvantage* in any situation where life has been extinguished or corrupted.
  - Spirit** The chaos of the spirit is as natural as the order of life. You see this, and its place in nature. You get an *Advantage* in any situation where you seek to restore chaos where order now resides, but take a *Disadvantage* whenever called upon to create from nothing, or bring order solely for order's sake.
  - Man** The element of Man gives you insight into the ways of machines and devices, and you naturally want to take things apart and put them back together again, usually managing the former, and sometimes the latter. You get an *Advantage* when resolving *Challenges* involving machines and other works of men, but the sciences of life and the ways of the spirit are baffling to you, and you take a *Disadvantage* in those matters.
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## **C**asting Spells

When a mage bridges the planes, they choose what Attributes they are using. This determines their radius of effect. They must also choose *exactly* what spells and the amount and types of mana they will take into the Metaplanes, which is also dependent on what Attributes are being used. Then, you spend two Challenge rounds concentrating solely on bridging the planes, and at the start of the third round, you are there.

Each Challenge round, the mage may *randomly* draw from their selection, a *single* spell or source of mana. If mana, the mage may place it in front of them as a permanent source of power for future spells, or hold onto it. However, you can only place one mana source into effect per turn. Placing mana represents the mage drawing from a source of elemental power that they have found on the Metaplanes. If the mage draws a spell from their selection, they may hold it for later use, use it immediately, or throw it away unused. The maximum number of spells or mana a mage can hold for later use is two for each Spiritual Attribute the mage is using in the Metaplanes.

A mage *may*, upon entering the Metaplanes, *randomly* choose any amount of spells and/or mana up to the maximum they can hold. For instance, a mage using two Spiritual Attributes can hold ready no more than a total of four spells and mana, and upon entering the Metaplanes, *may* randomly choose and hold up to this many from their selection.

**Example** – Arlon has one Spiritual Attribute, so he can hold a maximum of two spells or mana sources in an “uncast” state. When he enters the Metaplanes, he may randomly choose up to two resources he will have in this uncast state, and he will draw his remaining three randomly, one per Challenge round.

Each Challenge round, a mage may only use each mana source *once*. Mana sources are not used up, but they can only provide a certain amount of power per Challenge round. Once the mage has finished for a round, their opponent draws a spell or mana and acts. Only spells which last for one Challenge round may be cast during an opponent’s turn to act. For instance, you *could* not bring forth a creature on an opponent’s turn, but you *could* use a lightning strike. Remember that *both* sides act over the course of each Challenge round, and melee or other Physical Challenges occur *after* the casting of spells. When a Shade of a person or creature is manifested on the Prime Plane, it cannot be used in an active sense until the following Challenge round. It is materializing or being summoned, so it can’t be interposed between a character and damage, or make any attacks of its own. It can suffer damage or be dissipated by attacks, and if attacked by a Shade, it can defend itself normally. Shades of natural forces like lightning take effect immediately.

These Physical Challenges are often the heart of a magical conflict. Mages in the Metaplanes are *completely* immune to other mages there, and to all but the rare creature that is native to this chaotic plane of existence. So, the mages attack the physical part of their opponent that remains on the Prime Plane. With their enhanced perspective, a mage can call a Shade into being at any point within their radius of effect, and shift it to anywhere in that area with a thought (usually as close as possible to the opposing mage). Of course, that mage can interpose their Shades in the way of attackers, both real and Shades, though not in the way of damage from Shades of lightning or other instantaneous forces like gunshots or arrows. Smart mages generally try to shield themselves from direct observation and sniper fire.

**Example** – A mage calls forth a bear, and sets it upon an annoying archer. On the same Challenge round, an opposing mage brings forth a giant wolf right in front of the first mage. On the next round, the bear is blinked fast as thought to block the wolf, and then the mage calls a lightning bolt to hurl at their foe.





The magic system in **Epiphany** has certain rules, but how you choose to implement them is a matter of personal preference. You could try one of the following:

1. Use a bag of colored beads, each with an adhesive dot that has the spell symbol on it. Coins or pogs could be used as well. Each Challenge round, the player draws one from a pouch, and plays, holds or discards it. When they can no longer draw from the pouch, they must exit the Metaplane.
2. Use a stack of index cards, with each spell written on the face of the card. Each Challenge round, the player draws one card from the stack, and either plays, holds or discards it. When the player can no longer draw cards, the mage must exit the Metaplane.
3. The player simply makes a list of their spells, and puts a number beside each one. Each Challenge round, the player rolls a single die, like a six-, ten- or twenty-sided die, and cross-references the result with their list. They either play, hold or discard the spell, keeping track on paper the disposition of each, and crossing off each item from the list as its number comes up. When all the items have been crossed off the list, the mage must exit the Metaplane.

Between master mages, conflicts can quickly become mass combats, with several Shades fighting on each side, along with any regular troops involved in the battle. Since the Shades can change tactical position at the mage's whim, things can be very fluid, but almost always, the real battle is each side's forces trying to get through to the opposing mage.

**Example** – The player who made Arlon has a simple spell list, two Earth mana and three spells. The player has five colored beads, two dark ones to represent the mana, and three of other colors, which represent the other spells. When Arlon enters the Metaplanes, the player puts any unused beads into a cup, and draws one each round. If Arlon gets many spells, the player might shift to another method, or place small stickers on the beads, each one with a symbol representing a particular spell.

### Losing Control

If a mage loses a Spiritual Attribute that is the source of a particular elemental power, all Shades based on that element may be freed from the mage's control. The mage must make a simple Spiritual Challenge vs. the strongest opposing mage for each Shade. No losses occur from this Challenge. If the mage who originally had control wins by more, they retain control of the Shade. If the result is a tie or both sides are equally successful, the Shade returns to the Metaplane and does not return for the duration of the Challenge. If the opposing mage is more successful, they may take control of the Shade for the duration of the Challenge if they are using that source of elemental power in the Challenge. Otherwise the Shade is banished back to the Metaplane.

### Leaving the Metaplanes

It takes at least two Challenge rounds to prepare to enter the Metaplanes, and one Challenge round to voluntarily leave, during which you can do nothing else. Once the decision to leave is made, it is irrevocable. To re-enter, the mage must start over. A mage who is forced from the Metaplanes by damage or other effects exits *immediately*, but will be stunned and unable to act for a Challenge round. They can use no Attributes or Abilities, but may use passive Advantages like armor.

### Metaplanic Challenges

A mage on the Metaplanes is unable to respond to Physical Challenges from the Prime Plane, and they may only resist them with such passive Advantages as armor, obscurement and so on. A mage on the Metaplanes is only partially on the Prime Plane, and so is less affected by matter and energy that interacts with them on the Prime Plane. Because of this, a mage can absorb *five* Advantages of damage for each Spiritual Attribute they are using for that trip to the Metaplanes. Whenever five of these Advantages are used up, the mage loses the use of a Spiritual Attribute of their choice, and through this, may lose the Ability to do any magics based on that Attribute. If they lose the Attribute their Magery is based on, they immediately exit the Metaplanes and must spend a Challenge round recovering from being stunned. Regardless of the total of Spiritual Advantages lost to physical damage while bridging the planes, a mage only loses *one* Spiritual Attribute at most when they return to the Prime Plane, and physical items are unaffected.

**Example** – A mage with armor and Endurance is bridging the planes, and an opponent shoots them with a LongGunne, which has five Advantages in a Physical Challenge. After a Challenge vs. the mage's armor, the mage loses three Advantages. Normally, this would totally ruin the mage, since it removes their base Advantage, plus the Advantages provided by the armor and Endurance. However, this mage is bridging the planes, so they are much less substantial than normal. The bullet passes *through* the mage, making them lose three Advantages provided by a Spiritual Attribute, instead of taking physical damage. If the mage left the Metaplanes now, they would suffer no ill effects, because they get at least five "virtual advantages" from being on the Metaplanes, and won't suffer any spiritual harm until they take at least five Advantages of damage (and the gun only did three). If they lost two more Advantages in this way, they *would* lose use of a Spiritual Attribute immediately, and the effects would linger after they return to the Prime Plane. In addition, they could also be shot for real if the gunneman is still around...





### Defeat

If a mage is forced from the Metaplane by running out of spells, or taking enough damage to drive them back to the Prime Plane, they might *permanently* lose the use of a spell or mana source. Any item that is in play when a mage retires from an active combat is fair game for their opponent. If an opposing mage chooses to, they can take control of a single Shade or mana source in play, and through taking control, Know that Shade or mana source. The mage who originally held the Shade has left a part of themselves behind on the Metaplane, and loses the knowledge needed to call that Shade. They can relearn it from scratch, or regain it in another magical Challenge, but for now it is lost. Doing this to a mage is a good way to make an enemy for life...

This transference of Shade from mage to mage is the only way that some Shades are still known. For instance, how would one learn to Know a creature that is now extinct, or a hero who is now dead? These gems of knowledge pass from one generation of mage to the next through Challenges, and from master to favored apprentice when the master retires from active life.



### Making Spells

Each spell a character knows will have a name and certain prerequisites of mana or other conditions needed to draw it from the Metaplanes into the material world. In general, each element is better at doing some things than others.

Element	Strong	Neutral	Weak
Earth	Creating life	Creating things, neutralizing	Destruction
Air	Enhancing, remaking	Creating, Destruction	Death, decay
Fire	Destruction	Death, decay Neutralization	Creation of any kind
Water	Neutralizing	Creating life	Creating things
Man	Creating things	Destruction Death, decay	Neutralizing, creating life
Spirit	Death, decay	Creation, neutralizing	Enhancing, remaking

A point of mana is sufficient to bring forth a Shade with two Advantages. These must be split between its ability to harm, and its ability to withstand harm. All Shades of living things must have at least one Advantage towards withstanding harm, while Shades of natural forces do not have a minimum.

A Shade's ability to harm is the number of Advantages it gets in a Physical Challenge. If it loses Advantages equal or more than its ability to withstand harm, it is banished back to the Metaplanes for the duration of the Challenge. This allows Shades that are ferocious, but fairly easy to dispatch, like a mountain cat, or not so ferocious, but which might take several Challenge rounds to dispatch, like the sluggish but armored rockbeast. These Advantages are simplified to two numbers separated by a slash. The mountain cat might be rated as 2/1, while the rockbeast might be a 1/4. The mountain cat gets two Advantages in a Physical Challenge, but it can only suffer one Advantage lost before it is incapacitated. The rockbeast gets only one Advantage in a Physical Challenge, but it keeps this one Advantage until it has lost four Advantages, at which point it keels over and evaporates back to the Metaplanes.

The abilities of a Shade vary with the mana required to bring it into being. Powerful Shades cost more mana than weak ones. A Shade coming from an element of strength will cost less mana than one coming from its element of weakness (e.g. it is easier to create things than creatures with Man mana).



## Abilities

Shades come in a near infinite variety, from extinct creatures whose Shades have been handed down from the earliest mages, to Shades of inventions kept secret so that they can only be used by a select group. Abilities and modifiers on created Shades are as follows:

**Extra combat strength** +1 mana per two Advantages  
The Shade gets two extra Advantages per point of mana after the first that is required to bring it into being. Each third mana spent must be mana of the element the creature is from, but the others may be from any source available when the Shade is created. A non-combat Advantage may substitute for two combat Advantages for Shades that provide knowledge. These Shades get their base of one Advantage, plus any Advantages towards a non-combat skill, such as history. Each non-combat Advantage after the second costs *four* combat Advantages.

**Example** - To get an Earth-pected creature with six extra Advantages (a total of eight) would mean it costs three more mana than normal, and one of the three must be Earth mana. To get a sage with two extra Advantages in a knowledge would cost two more mana than normal.

**Special movement** +1 mana per type of movement  
The Shade gets no additional Advantages, but gets a Gift appropriate to its nature, and which confers a special or limited advantage. For instance, a Shade that can fly can evade Shades that cannot, and a Shade that cannot attack a flying Shade cannot protect a mage from a flying Shade either. The extra mana required for this special movement must be of the element most appropriate for the movement, but if the Shade only costs one mana, it is of the base type for that Shade.

**Special lack of movement** -1 mana per type of movement  
If a Shade is restricted to a single environment, and cannot affect Shades or mages outside that environment, then the Shade costs less mana. For instance, a sea monster would only be able to attack things on or in the sea.

**Variable strength** +1 mana of elemental type  
The Shade can vary its Advantages after being created, like a dragon's breath for offense, or pulling into a shell for defense. To use this ability requires that the mage use an additional mana of the appropriate element for the Shade *per* point of attack or defense strength, each Challenge round that ability is used. Note that if a Shade is given extra ability to withstand harm, any damage it takes comes first from these extra Advantages, and such damage is not carried forward from Challenge round to Challenge round. Only damage that cuts into a Shades base ability to withstand harm carries from round to round.

**Example** - A Shade has the ability to gain extra Advantages for an attack, each one requiring one Water mana per use. If the mage only had two Water mana when the Shade attacks, it could gain a maximum of two extra Advantages that round. These Advantages could be applied on *either* mage's turn, and/or in response to an action done by an opposing mage, provided unspent mana was available.

**Multiple targets** +1 mana of most appropriate type  
The Shade may split its Advantages between any number of targets appropriate to its nature (ranged/non-ranged, etc.). Or, for double cost of its *extra* Advantages (above its base) and one *more* mana of the appropriate type, a multiple target spell can affect *all* Shades, mages and other applicable targets in the mage's radius of effect. For instance, a rain of fire could affect everything and everyone.

**Example** - A Lightning Blast does six Advantages worth of damage. For one extra Fire mana, the Lightning could split its six Advantages between any number of targets. You would call this Forked Lightning, and it would cost two Fire mana instead of the Lightning's normal cost of one. Or, since it cost two extra mana for the four extra Advantages the Lightning does as damage, for *five* extra Fire mana (double cost of extra Advantages, plus one), the Chaos Lightning spell could do a six Advantage ranged attack to *everything* in the mage's radius of effect (including the mage). This spell would cost six Fire mana.

**One use only** -1 mana of main type  
A Shade which lasts but one Challenge round before it departs costs one less mana of the element it is drawn from, with a minimum of one mana of that element. Examples include natural phenomenon, healing spells, or other special attacks. One use Shades may use *all* Advantages at range at no extra cost. One use Shades are the only ones that can be brought forth on an opponent's turn to act, or to instantly counter or attempt to counter their casting of a spell or bringing forth of a Shade.

**In Strength** -1 mana of any type  
A Shade that is drawn from mana that is appropriate to its strength costs one less mana than normal, with a minimum of one mana of the appropriate element. If there is any question, think of the nature of the Shade. For instance, a creature that breathes fire is from the Fire element, not Earth.

**Example** - A Shade with two Advantages costs the base of one mana. Creating an Earth-pected Shade costs one less mana than normal, or zero mana. However, since no Shade has a cost of zero, we add two Advantages in combat strength for a cost of one Earth mana, giving us a 1/3, 2/2 or 3/1 Shade for a cost of one Earth mana.



### In Weakness

+1 mana of main type

A Shade that is drawn from an element that represents its weakness costs one extra mana of the appropriate element. Weaknesses also apply to Abilities other than combat strength.

**Example** - A creature of Water that breathes Fire would pay one extra Water mana for the ability to do so, since this special ability is in its weakness. The firebreathing itself would still cost Fire mana, however. Creating life is a weakness for Man mana, so creating a Shade of something living with Man mana would cost one extra Man mana, since life is in the weakness of Man mana.

### Range

+1 mana of any type per two Advantages

The Shade can attack at range. It is assumed to automatically hit at any range in the mage's radius of effect, and simply does damage to the target as a Ranged Challenge. This does not add to the Shade's ability in melee, but the ranged part may be used against targets the Shade cannot otherwise harm, such as ones with a special movement ability. Shades apply their full ability to withstand harm vs. ranged Challenges, and if targeted by characters with ranged weapons, get half this (round down) plus situational bonuses to avoid being hit.

**Example** - The Shade of an archer cannot itself fly or swim, but it can attack flying targets or ones on the water. The Advantages it can apply at range are separate from those it would apply if attacked by a swordsman.

### Add/Subtract to something

±2 mana of any type available

The Shade has an ability to give Advantages or Disadvantages to a Shade or character. For instance, creating the Shade of a shield might give increased defensive strength to someone, but the Shade of a noxious vapor might decrease it. Other special abilities may be added, but always increase the mana cost.

### Vulnerable/immune to element

±1 mana of any type available

The Shade is especially vulnerable or resistant to attacks of an opposing element. To find the opposing element, see where one element's strength is another's weakness. This Shade treats such an elemental attack as having double the number of Advantages for attacking it if it is Vulnerable to that element, and double the number of Advantages for defending if it is Immune to that element.

**Example** - If a 3/4 Shade is immune to the element of Man, then it gets six Advantages to resist damage from any spell (or tool) of Man. If it is vulnerable to the element of Man, then tools or spells of Man get double their Advantages when attacking it.



### Sample Spells

Each Shade is a separate spell, and of the countless spells available, this is but a small sample to get you started and help you design your own.

#### Mana

Requires: Nothing

Effect: Generates one mana of that element per Challenge round. That is, mana used during either player's Challenges does not "recharge" until the start of the owning player's Challenge.

Appearance: A shifting in the fabric of space, which has some characteristic or feel of that element (heat, moisture, wind, life, death, humanity). Non-mages can feel when mana is brought forth.

Notes: This the power source of all a mage's spells. Once brought forth, it cannot usually be undone by the opposing mage. To Know an Element, the mage must study all the phases of that element, and be exposed to the essence of that Element (which is usually an alchemical item of Average cost, expended upon the exposure). Being exposed to some Elemental essence in order to Know it may require a Challenge (especially for Fire and Spirit).

#### Wharf rats (1/3)

Requires: One Earth mana

Effect: Several very large rats, with one Advantage for attack, and three Advantages for resisting harm (1/3).

Appearance: A pack of very large rats.

Notes: One of the most basic Earth spells, this is the Shade of several large wharf rats. It is not very useful in a Challenge, but can delay an opposing Shade or other foe for a Challenge round or two. It is also very easy to learn, and lesser mages might have it available just because it was easy for them to Know.

#### Phantom warrior (2/2)

Requires: One Earth mana

Effect: A soldier with human capabilities, and two Advantages for attack, and two for resisting harm (2/2).

Appearance: Appears as the soldier did in life.

Notes: Old but still able soldiers often let mages stay in their homes for a fee, so that the soldier has a more comfortable retirement, and the mage gets to Know the soldier. The mage might also pick up an Ability or two through being trained by this soldier.





### **Snow Tiger (3/3)**

**Requires:** One Earth mana  
**Effect:** A tiger with three Advantages for causing harm, and three Advantages for resisting harm (3/3), with vulnerability to the element of Fire.  
**Notes:** The Snow Tiger is native only to the conifer forests near the Icefringes, and is a fearsome predator. In the wilds it has Running, Endurance, Perception and Stealth, and always tries to attack from a position of surprise.

### **Nest of Wasps (2/4)**

**Requires:** One Earth mana  
**Effect:** A swarm of giant wasps with two Advantages for causing harm, and four Advantages for resisting harm (2/4), with the special movement of flying and a vulnerability to the elements of Water and Fire.  
**Appearance:** A large grey nest the size of a barrel, from which angry wasps constantly issue forth.  
**Notes:** Nests this size are rare in the wild. However, certain villages in disputed territories encourage such nests on their walls, and specially armor their soldiers so to make them immune to their stings. Normally, the wasps are fairly docile, but the clamor of battle tends to rile them up.

### **Peasant Rabble (3/3)**

**Requires:** One Earth mana, one of any other type  
**Effect:** A cluster of creatures with a combined total of three Advantages for causing harm, and three Advantages for resisting harm (3/3).  
**Appearance:** A group of angry peasants with clubs and pitchforks, yelling and shouting as they approach.  
**Notes:** This is the Shade of a group of angry peasants, not too frightening, but capable of overwhelming unprepared individuals. Even as Shades, they are quick to disperse when confronted with superior force.

### **Dygmy Mammoths (4/4)**

**Requires:** Two Earth mana, one of any other type  
**Effect:** A mammoth with four Advantages for causing harm, and four Advantages for resisting harm (4/4).  
**Appearance:** Small but otherwise normal looking woolly mammoth, with large curved tusks.  
**Notes:** These hairy beasts live only on a particular island near the edge of the Icefringes. They are dangerous because of their mass and tusks, which are capable of doing a person great harm.

### **Hawks of Iberion (1/1)**

**Requires:** Two Earth mana, one of any other type  
**Effect:** One or more great hawks with at least one Advantage for causing harm, and at least one Advantage for resisting harm (1/1), with the special movement of flying. For each extra Earth mana spent in a given Challenge round, they may increase these Advantages (for instance, two Earth mana could make them 3/1, 2/2 or 1/3 for Challenge purposes).  
**Appearance:** Silver-grey hawks materializing out of nowhere, with more appearing based on the mana spent.  
**Notes:** The great hawks of the Iber mountains seldom threaten travellers, but have been known to surprise travellers whose paths take them near a nest, often resulting in a fatal fall from the narrow paths. They cooperate against intruders that approach their rocky nesting grounds.

### **Ice bear (4/4)**

**Requires:** Two Earth mana, one Water mana, one of any other type  
**Effect:** A creature with four Advantages for causing harm and four Advantages for resisting harm (4/4), and with special movement allowing it to swim.  
**Appearance:** A large white bear with massive paws, which rises on its back feet to twice the height of a man before striking.  
**Notes:** These creatures live exclusively on the Icefringes, but often move onto the southern reaches of Hyperborea during the months when the Outer Sun is hidden. They are not normally aggressive towards man unless they have young, but are not cowed by man either, and will use their strength to break open poorly made buildings to get at any food they smell within.

### **Sea serpent (6/8)**

**Requires:** Three Earth mana, three of any other type  
**Effect:** A creature with six Advantages for causing harm, and eight Advantages for withstanding harm (6/8), which can only confront things that are on or in the water.  
**Appearance:** A monstrous scaled serpent, sinuously rising out of the water to strike with its horned nose.  
**Notes:** The huge serpent-like creatures which dwell in the warm oceans of the hollow Earth do not affect hyperborean shipping because they dislike our colder ocean, but their Shades can be brought forth anywhere there is a large body of water, and are a common weapon in the arsenal of a powerful naval mage.



### healing potion

**Requires:** One Air mana  
**Effect:** Restores two lost Advantages based on Attributes or Abilities to a mage, person or Shade of anything in range that has the ability to uncork and drink/apply the potion.  
**Appearance:** A small ornate bottle with characters on it indicative of healing or good health.  
**Notes:** This is a Shade of a rare preparation (Above average cost for a dose) that can be bought normally, if you get on a waiting list. Magic has the advantage that a Shade of the potion is just like the real thing, and its healing effects are just as permanent. It is said that imbibing the real potion on a regular basis will slow or halt the aging process, but the Shade of the potion will not, since it cannot have long term effects (that is, it vanishes from the person's body when the mage exits the Metaplanes).

### Wind squalls (0/2)

**Requires:** One Water mana, one Air mana  
**Effect:** A spell that uses both Special movement and Subtracting to remove the flying ability from any Shade, person or mage for a single Challenge round.  
**Appearance:** A violent gust of wind that drives the target to the ground, without causing it any real harm.  
**Notes:** This is a convenient way to drive an annoying flying creature within range. The similar Fortuitous Wave spell (two Water mana) will drive any swimming creature onto the nearest non-water surface for a round. A similar spell could grant a terrain ability for a Challenge round, perhaps to drive a foe within reach of a waiting water creature.

### Bane of Chaos (0/4)

**Requires:** One Air mana, one of any other type  
**Effect:** The mage can recall any Shade that has left the field of play or been dissipated, provided it has a base total of four Advantages or less. The mage that uses this spell gains control of the Shade only so long as the spell lasts or until the Shade resummoned is destroyed again. This makes the Shade Vulnerable to the Element of Fire.  
**Appearance:** The Shade resummoned appears in opposite way to which it departed (it rises from the ground, cuts heal, broken pieces reattach, and so forth).  
**Notes:** To Know this spell, the mage must first Know a Shade from each Element, so that they can see both their making and unmaking.

### Lightning Strike (6/0)

**Requires:** One Fire mana  
**Effect:** A six Advantage single use ranged attack.  
**Appearance:** A nebulous cloud bank forms from out of nowhere over the target, and a single bolt of lightning arcs down from it and automatically hits a single target.  
**Notes:** One must be struck by a lightning bolt of this power to truly Know it. Greater lightning bolts are out there, and generally cost one mana more per two extra Advantages.

### Fists of God (2+/0)

**Requires:** One or more Fire mana  
**Effects:** A single use ranged attack with a base of two Advantages and two more for each extra Fire mana used, which may be split between any number of targets in any way desired.  
**Appearance:** A hail of flaming molten rock, as from a nearby volcanic eruption.  
**Notes:** While it is not hard to Know this phenomenon, the regions in which they occur have their own hazards, and one cannot predict or coerce an eruption, so it may take quite a wait to finally learn what you need to.

### Fireking (4/4)

**Requires:** Three Fire mana, three of any other type  
**Effect:** A creature with four Advantages for causing harm, and four Advantages for resisting harm. Its Advantages for causing harm can be increased for a Challenge round by using extra Fire mana, and the fireking is itself Immune to the Element of Fire.  
**Appearance:** Firekings are large squat lizards with wide feet and long toes suitable for grasping and clinging to rocky slopes.  
**Notes:** Firekings always live near volcanoes in the wild, and are relatively aggressive and territorial. However, the ones that remain are not stupid and have had a respect for man bred into them through generations of natural selection. Firekings usually prey on unwary birds and mountain goats, and gnaw on certain rocks that have traces of the Element of Fire in them.





### Word of Unmaking (0/-6)

Requires: Two Water mana

Effect: A shifting of Metaplanic force that subtracts six Advantages for resisting harm from any Shade or Shade effect, which may be used at any range in the mages radius of effect. If a Shade or Shade effect is taken to zero Advantages for resisting harm, it is dissipated back to the Metaplanes. Otherwise, the effects only last for a single Challenge round.

Appearance: A rippling in the fabric of space that leaves the target twisted and malformed. If it survives, the target quickly reforms back to its normal shape.

Example: A mage calls forth a Pygmy Mammoth, a 4/4 Shade. If used on the Shade, it is reduced to a 4/-2 Shade, and dissipates. Or, a mage brings forth a Lightning Bolt. The opposing mage brings forth a Word of Undoing, which will negate the Lightning Bolt at any range, since it has zero Advantages for resisting damage to begin with. However, if the mage cannot do the Word of Unmaking in the same Challenge round as the Lightning Bolt, the bolt will still have its effect, since the bolt is a one-use spell.

### Illusionary Foe (2/4)

Requires: One Water mana, one Spirit mana, one of any other type.

Effect: A Shade of varying appearance, with two Advantages for causing harm, and four Advantages for resisting harm (2/4). It is Immune to spells of Man, and vulnerable to spells of Spirit.

Appearance: Each Illusionary Foe has a unique but usually grotesque appearance, sufficient to make an opponent believe it is deadlier than it actually ends up being.

Notes: The Illusionary Foe is a hard spell to learn, for you cannot Know a thing from just its Shade, and the Illusionary Foe is nothing but a Shade. It is suspected that one must find and fight it as a Spiritual Challenge after ingesting certain mind-altering herbs (which do tend to affect your Spiritual Advantages in a negative sort of way). As a result, each spell of this type is slightly different from the others in terms of abilities and mana cost.

### Angry Spirit (1/3)

Requires: One Spirit mana, three of any other type

Effect: A undead person with one Advantage for causing damage, and three Advantages for resisting harm (1/3), with the special ability that it can only make Spiritual Challenges, and has Immunity to the elements of Man and Earth.

Appearance: A translucent human figure that looks long dead, wailing and approaching with outstretched hands.

Notes: This is the Shade of someone who did not go quietly to the Metaplane, but hung around the world of the living and caused problems. Angry spirits exist naturally in some places of great catastrophe, and average people (with only one Advantage in Spiritual Challenges) avoid these areas like the plague.

### Restless Dead (1/1+)

Requires: Two Spirit mana

Effect: An undead person with one Advantage for causing damage, and one Advantage for resisting harm (1/1), and the Advantages for resisting harm can be raised for a Challenge round by spending one Spirit mana per Advantage.

Appearance: An ashen-skinned human with a total lack of life in its eyes, poorly using whatever tools it had during life.

Notes: This is the Shade of a person who died from a lack of will caused from a Spiritual Challenge. While they are living in body, their true spirit is gone, and they are hard to dispatch, as they can use Spirit mana to increase their defense as needed to survive a Physical Challenge. To Know such a thing requires that you Know them in life, and be present at their anguished spiritual death.

### Miasmatic Mists (-2/-2)

Requires: One Spirit mana, two of any other type

Effect: A choking fog that can subtract two Advantages for causing harm, and two Advantages for resisting harm, which will affect anything that breathes air. This total number of subtractions can be split in any way between any number of targets.

Appearance: A greenish fog that rises from the ground or materializes in the air.

Notes: There are swamps that have weaker choking mists on an irregular basis, which is quite enough to prevent habitation by the normal sort of animals.





### Uthrek the Unmade (7/7)

- Requires:** Three Spirit mana, one Air mana, four of any other type of mana
- Effect:** A great creature with seven Advantages for causing harm, and seven Advantages for resisting harm, plus the ability to fly.
- Appearance:** A shadowy shifting form, several times the size of a horse, with brilliant pinpoints of light for eyes, great enveloping wings and amorphous appendages usually ending in powerful claws.
- Notes:** Uthrek is not a Shade, but one of the true denizens of the Metaplanes. When made manifest, it is not bound by the summoning mage's wishes, and will make a normal Spiritual Challenge against the mage with three Advantages. If the mage loses, Uthrek will attack a random mage involved in the magical Challenge. For those who believe the Metaplanes are an afterlife, Uthrek represents a force of evil that torments the damned. Its presence may inspire terror or great heroism.

### Infernal Engine (5/5)

- Requires:** Two Man mana, two of any other type
- Effect:** A mechanical war machine with five Advantages for causing harm, and five Advantages for resisting harm (5/5), but which is restricted to relatively open ground.
- Appearance:** A great contraption with armored plates, spiked wheels, and sharp blades on every surface.
- Notes:** This is the Shade of a mechanical war machine, commonly used some centuries ago and then discarded as economically impractical. Some are said to have mounted great gunnes, but these cost much more mana to bring forth.

### Levienk's Miraculous Escape

- Requires:** One Man mana
- Effect:** Involuntarily moves the creating mage, cutting their link to the Metaplanes, by creating a one-use device that gives the mage flying ability.
- Appearance:** A backpack type arrangement materializes about the mage's upper body, and a great blast of steam from it catapults the mage high into the air in the direction of their choosing.
- Notes:** When the mage breaks the link to the Metaplanes, all their creations instantly dissipate. This means the engine lofting them into the air does as well. Unless the mage can quickly find a way to safely land, the escape might not be so miraculous after all. Such an involuntary break with the Metaplanes does stun the mage and mean they could lose a spell to an alert foe.

### Armor of the Mage (0/+2)

- Requires:** Two Man mana
- Effect:** Provides two extra Advantages for resisting harm to any humanoid creature, Shade or mage, provided they are not already wearing anything heavier than light armor.
- Appearance:** A glowing suit of armor that covers the mage or other target from head to foot.
- Notes:** This Shade of armor cannot be transferred from target to target after it is created. The similar Shield of the Mage spell costs one Man mana and generates a Shade of a shield that provides an additional Advantage for resisting harm. The Sword of the Mage provides a one Advantage sword for causing harm and also costs one Man mana (but note that the mage cannot use it since they cannot affect the Prime Plane in person).

### Shadow Gunne (5/1)

- Requires:** Two Man mana
- Effect:** Provides a five Advantage ranged attack to any creature, mage or Shade that can use a long-gunne.
- Appearance:** A finely crafted longgunne of varied provenance, depending on the weapon Known by the mage.
- Notes:** This is the Shade of a fine longgunne, and can be used just as the gunne would be in a Physical Challenge. It has the advantage that due to magic, it is always considered loaded. Its ability to resist harm only applies if the gunne itself is targeted, and does not apply to the user in any way. The similar Shadow handgunne spell provides a three Advantage pistol, and only costs one Man mana. Much rarer are Shadow spells that provide weapons of a illicit nature. Note that assassins and spies might make use of the "disappearing gunne" trick to avoid being caught with an illicit device, and it only requires a small area of the Metaplanes to generate it. Unlike the sword, a Shadow Gunne can be used by a mage bridging the planes, as it has an independent part acting at range (and supposedly a Shadow sword could be thrown, as well). All Shades of weapons and equipment apply Advantages normally if a character is wielding them (for instance, armor would be a general Advantage, not just one for resisting harm).





## Other Spells

Now, wizards can summon forth things that have utility other than in combat. The Shade of an earthmoving engine for roadmaking, the Shade of a bridge for a military engineer, the Shade of a bonfire for winter travellers or the Shade of a sage to ask advice from. But remember that all magic has its risks. First, all things a mage creates via the Metaplanes are extensions of the mage's will. All but the most powerful creations are completely at the command of the wizard. So, if you recreate a wizened sage from ages past, the sage will answer your questions to the best of their ability (by making Challenges vs. the difficulty of the questions put forth). But, since the sage is also an extension of your will, you might hear what you want to hear, or expect to hear, not necessarily what you need to hear.

Second, the Metaplanes encompass time and space, and things are not always what they seem. Every time you pull that sage from the Metaplanes, there is a chance you got a version of that sage from a slightly different history, and the answers to the questions you pose may therefore vary.

Third, any mage waiting in ambush for you when you are in the Metaplanes will find you easy pickings if all you have is a few mana and a sage. And once you drop from the Metaplanes to the Prime Plane, you are vulnerable as anyone else to the creatures and energies your opponent summons (and you might permanently lose your sage as well!).

## Sample magical combat

Two mages, Siddik and Xlail, get into a friendly dispute over the strengths of various elements. Feeling they are about evenly matched, they opt to resolve the dispute through a challenge of ability, with some money wagered on the side, of course.

Siddik feels the deflecting and diluting power of Water can overcome any hostile magics, and that Spirit is more powerful than flesh. Siddik has Serenity and Faith, with his Magery and control of Water tied to Faith, and Spirit as an Ability of his Serenity. Xlail believes the power of constructed things is more efficient, and that destroying is easier than creating. Xlail has Insight, with his Magery and Man knowledge tied to it, and Aura, to which his fire Ability is based on. Both Siddik and Xlail are using two Spiritual Attributes, so they will have a Good radius of effect. They pick a cleared field to protect any bystanders from accidental harm. Since each has two Spiritual Attributes in use, after they select all their spells for use in this challenge, they may choose to randomly select four to "hold" when they enter the Metaplanes (two per Spiritual Attribute). Both choose this option. Siddik draws forth a Water mana, a Word of Unmaking, an Angry Spirit and Restless Dead. Xlail draws a Fireking, Fists of God, a Shadow HandGunne and a fire mana. They both enter the Metaplane at the same time. Since magical Challenges are a back-and-forth battle, rather than the simultaneous effects of a normal Challenge, we flip a coin to see who goes first. Siddik prevails.

Round 1 Siddik reaches out into the Metaplanes and draws forth a Water mana. he places this into effect, but does nothing, since he has no spells that can be powered by a single Water mana.

Xlail draws a Man mana, and is happy. he places the Man mana into effect, and then uses it to summon forth his Shadow HandGunne. It will slowly materialize in his hand, and he can use it next round.

Round 2 Siddik draws a Spirit mana. he wants to bring out a Shade, but does not have enough mana of the right type. he places the Spirit mana into play and waits. Xlail draws a Lightning Bolt. he places into play the Fire mana he originally drew, and immediately uses it to send the Lightning Bolt sizzling Siddik's way. Siddik would like to use his Word of Unmaking, but this requires two unused Water mana, and he only has one. After resolving the Physical Challenge with the Lightning, Siddik loses five Advantages, and must lose either his Faith (and Magery & Water), ending the Challenge, or his Serenity (and Spirit), losing his ability to bring forth those Shades. As graciously as possible, Siddik loses his Faith (and Magery) to exit the Metaplanes in a clear sign of defeat. Xlail, seeing his opponent routed, exits a few rounds later.





## **L**earning New Spells

Each spell a mage knows is *unique*, and may not be duplicated at the same time within the region of the Metaplanes by any mage in the Challenge. Since it is unlikely that any two mages learned to Know lightning from the same lightning bolt, this is seldom a problem. However, mages with the knowledge of the same legendary individual can't both have the Shade of that individual at the same time. Whoever creates the Shade first blocks the other so long as it remains on the field of battle.

To learn to create a Shade of something, the mage must Know that thing, be it person, creature or thing. When a mage speaks of Knowing something, the listener understands that it is spelled with a capital "K". To Know something requires the mage learn everything possible about that thing. For instance, to Know an ice bear, the mage might consult scholarly tomes about the habits of the bear, where it lives, what it eats and so forth. Then the mage might find a pelt of an ice bear and feel the fur, the teeth and the claws, imagining all the traits of the bear. Finally, the mage must find a living ice bear and confront it in all its power, and physically feel it, without entering the Metaplanes to do so. Then the mage will Know *that particular* ice bear, and can put that knowledge down as one of their spells. This gives them *one* ice bear spell. To get another, the mage must confront a second ice bear, and so on. Similarly, to get a lightning bolt, the mage must learn of the weather and lightning, and eventually allow themselves to be struck by a lightning bolt. Then the mage can call up the Shade of *that particular* lightning bolt at a later time. To know an elemental source of mana, the mage studies the properties of that mana, and must eventually experience a purified form of that element, usually an Average expense proposition. A side effect of knowing an element or Shade is that the character gets one extra Mental Advantage whenever trying to solve some mental problem involving that element or real-world equivalent of that Shade. For instance a person who can call the Shade of a horse (or many horses) gets one extra Advantage when trying to treat a *real* horse for illness.

Needless to say, mages who can call up the Shades of powerful creatures are either pretty competent in combat or have powerful allies, since confronting a weakened or unconscious ice bear only gives you the Shade of a weakened or unconscious ice bear.

Elderly or wealthy mages will often hire lesser mages to travel and Know a thing, so that when they return, the wealthy mage can accept it from the Metaplanes in a token Challenge with the lesser mage (a reasonable hook to hang an adventure or two from).

And of course, new spells can be acquired by force through Magical Challenges. Mages may bluster and threaten a lot, since they have a reputation to maintain, but the smart mage knows when they are outclassed and does not seek Challenges with more powerful mages. To get in over your depth could easily result in the permanent loss of one of your hard-won spells. On the other side, powerful mages don't go around bullying lesser mages into Challenges, since some mages would rather die than engage in a fruitless Challenge (for what is a mage if they have no spells?), and if there is one thing you can't do in the Metaplanes, it is use the Shade of a mage to perform magic for you. So, you can't just kill a mage, and then call their Shade up and get spells that way. Besides, even a lesser mage can get lucky and do serious damage.

In addition to the mundane sciences, alchemy or magical chemistry is also a well-developed but less public field. The forces of the elements and Metaplanes can be harnessed into devices which anyone can use. They are expensive and of limited utility, but the wealthy are often in need of "edges" on occasion and these devices can provide them. The crudest example of such an elemental device is a gunne. It is an invocation of the power of Man, allowing the projection of will over a distance. Any craftsman can make one, without any magical knowledge. Other devices are less simple. In general, a person can use a thing with just common sense and an idea of its functioning. Any fool can swing a sword or pull a trigger, perhaps without any finesse, but still with the ability to cause harm. To understand the *proper use* of a device is an Ability, like Swordplay or Gunnes. To *understand* a thing well enough to make it yourself is a separate Ability, which you cannot acquire until you first know how to properly use the thing. To make an elemental magic item requires the Ability to use it, the Ability to make it, the Ability of Magery, and an Ability for each element harnessed in the device, with a minimum of Man and probably one other element. As you can see, this is a substantial amount of knowledge (at least four Abilities), and the number of people who follow this career path is limited. That, plus the requirement of elemental essences in the device, which are used up when it is activated, make these magical baubles costly propositions.



Even so, anyone who can afford an Above Average item or two might acquire them just as a potential lifesaver, since they can be used as fast as swinging a sword or pulling a trigger. We won't make up any for you, but if you think of them as at least a Light weight, Above Average cost item that contains a single-use spell, you won't go too far wrong. Assume it needs a unit of elemental essence for each mana required, and a Challenge to build it on the making Ability equal to a base of one, plus one for each mana involved. Failing this Challenge could range from losing an elemental essence or two to having the device go off prematurely.

There are also rumors of more permanent magical constructions, but characters wouldn't even get a whiff of this knowledge until they are well-experienced and well-connected. In Atlantean parlance, these are generally referred to as "unique" items, a face-saving term that really means "we don't know how to make them anymore". Since the element of Spirit can be refined and stored, it would conceivably be possible to collect the Shade of a person upon their death, and if that person had an elemental aspect of their own, this might be a semi-permanent power supply linking a real device to the Metaplanes. Such a device might be bulky, and only work when stationary, but could be of significant power or generate long-term effects not normally possible via the traditional manipulation of the Metaplanes. Of course, it might also require the permanent capture and draining of at least one person's soul in order to make it work, judging by the difficulty of collecting elemental Spirit from places like slaughterhouses. For the most part, such devices are the stuff of children's stories and ancient legends, but if your family is itself wealthy and ancient...

## **S**tarting a Campaign

You should have an idea for the theme of a particular campaign before you let players design their characters. This way you can let them know what to expect, and guidelines or tips on what talents the characters should have. Long-term ideas include things like:

- ⊗ Espionage in preparation for war
- ⊗ Seeking out dangerous knowledge for a powerful mage
- ⊗ Political intrigues within a country
- ⊗ Exploration of the hollow Earth
- ⊗ Keeping dangerous secrets out of the hands of Enemies
- ⊗ Finding out what is causing an increase in volcanic activity
- ⊗ Secret plans for rebellion against the established order

Getting the characters together and giving them a common reason to stay together is up to the GameMaster, who can make it as easy or hard on themselves as they want. If you allow a group of characters to include a Lemurian mercenary, a fugitive from Mu, an Atlantean mage and a barbarian from the hollow Earth, then finding common ground and an adventure to suit them is a problem of your own making. But, a few suggestions for group solidarity include:

- ⊗ hired by a person or group based on their disparate talents
- ⊗ Escaped from prison together, now trying to find safety
- ⊗ Working against a common Enemy
- ⊗ Sole survivors of an ill-fated hollow Earth expedition
- ⊗ Captured by pirates, and forced to work together to escape
- ⊗ Ruined by a bad business venture, now trying to pool talents

Go over character ideas as the players present them, and make suggestions to the players about how each aspect of their character will be viewed within Hyperborea. Discuss the merits of various Boons, or the pitfalls of particular Burdens as you see them, so the player knows what to expect when the game begins. If a player wants to design a part of their character's past, and this doesn't conflict with something you have already figured out for Hyperborea, let them run with the idea as far as they can. Remember that the game is supposed to be enjoyable for everyone, and the more involved a person is with the game, the more they are likely to have a good time.



## **D**here to go from here

The land of Hyperborea is left distressingly vague in some areas. Why? Because it is meant to be a *shared* game world, much like some literary worlds have been shared between multiple authors. Hyperborea is the place, and **Epiphany** is the system. With world-wide Internet access available to just about anyone, you can try your hand at net-publishing and make and share information to fill in the blank spots, and engage in a world-wide cooperative to complete the history of Hyperborea, and the eventual tragic conclusion to the stories of Atlantis, Lemuria, Mu and the hollow Earth. There should be source material to fill in whatever blanks you have, and multiple ideas to choose from for any given subject. Given the politics and background, there are plenty of hooks to hang adventures from. Think about it a bit.

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We hope that there will be an increasing amount of **Epiphany** information published at Net archives and Web sites. BTRC will endeavor to collect and sort as much of this as possible, and create an "official" guide to Hyperborea, and make it available at one site (<http://members.aol.com/btrc/index.html>) along with "unofficial" material. We want as many game-masters and players as possible to have access to source material, so that they can pick and choose what they want.

## **B**lood and Honor

This is a short adventure and minor setting to use in your **Epiphany** campaign, and is suitable for several characters of varying backgrounds. The GameMaster might need to tweak the plot a little to match particular character backgrounds.

Though many in Mu or Lemuria would publically decry its decadence, privately all will admit that Soqtruil is the most beautiful city in Hyperborea. From the ancient stones that line even the smallest streets, you can literally look up at wealth and power. From the poorest dockworkers to the wealthiest nobles, position on the slope of the Eternal Ridges marks your station in life, with the palace of his Illustriousness standing like the prow of a ship on the cliffs overlooking the Great Bay. From the mansions and palaces that line the Eternal Ridges before the jagged entrance to the hollow Earth, there is a view unmatched elsewhere. Light from the Inner Sun lights a halo of flowing fog around the distant, jagged spires of the Peaks of Destiny, and shines down glittering from the icy clouds far above. Gusts of wind shoot streamers of fog high into the sky on occasion, and warm winds carry scents of distant seas. It is a view reserved for the privileged few, for the real estate of these hills seldom changes hands, and if you don't live there, your only chance to see it is as a guest...or a servant.

While it is a luxury that cannot be bought with gold, it can be acquired with blood...

The perfect climate of Soqtruil would naturally draw those who would prefer to live off of others than scabble a meager existence from the Shadowlands or Icefringes, that is, beggars, transients, poor widows, orphans, etc. This would tend to mar the Imperial beauty of the capital city, and is frowned upon. All residents of Soqtruil must purchase yearly residence permits, which is an item of Average cost, and is represented by a individually numbered medallion, which you can wear or keep in a secure location. If you don't have one, or can't produce it within a day of a request, then his Illustriousness's guards will come looking for you. If you don't have sufficient wealth for a one-way ticket out (Below Average cost) on your person when caught, then you go either to the slave labor market, or prison. There isn't much difference, really. Prison is usually slave mine labor, but your sentence can be commuted by a friend or relative who can pay your transport and incarceration costs (plus a handling fee). The slave work is usually in the hollow Earth, a few sources of precious metals and lightmetal ores considered worth the risk, expense and losses it takes to get such expeditions through on a reliable basis. The rumor is that you can escape from the slave mines and make a new life for yourself in the hollow Earth, but if this is true, no one has decided to come back and confirm it.





Acquiring a permit is a simple matter. You have to work for or be someone with at least a level of status, and they have to vouch for your employment once a year. And, you have to cough up an Average amount of money, of course. There are people willing to "hire", no questions asked, but they usually charge a significant fee for the privilege of working for them.

Visitors to Soqtruil, like traders or researchers, can purchase weekly permits for a Below Average sum, and the servants of his Illustriousness's are equally diligent about tracking down truants. In practice however, anyone who dresses appropriate to a level of Status or more will not be asked for their permit, as it the appearance of prosperity that is more important than the prosperity itself. So, anyone who can afford it tries to make sure they "dress for success".

Into this backdrop we find the merchant house of Ahakest and Ikestra, its beautiful eldest daughter, and the noble house Uyaill and Trelase, the heir apparent. house Ahakest is wealthy, but has no noble blood. house Uyaill has a respected lineage, but has fallen on not so prosperous times. So little prosperity has come their way in the past few decades that they are in serious danger of being unable to meet household expenses, and could be forced to sell their "house on the hill".

And so, a beautiful marriage is arranged between the heads of household. An extremely generous dowry on one side, and a respected family name on the other.

The Atlantean tradition for marriage announcements is the public celebration, where the father of the bride hosts an open house in honor of his daughter's betrothal. All, from the highest to the lowest are invited to attend (the highborn usually rent a hall for the occasion, just to avoid the lower classes trampling through their genteel estates). The richer the family, the more elaborate the party, and one such as this will draw several hundred people an hour over the course of an entire afternoon, with food, wine and entertainment for all.

This is what draws the characters there. Whether scholar, merchant or knight, good food and a chance to rub elbows with the rich and powerful is seldom an opportunity to be missed. Whether arriving as a group or individuals, the characters should all be there or in the vicinity at about the same time.

At some point in this gay soiree, an attempt will be made on the life of the bride-to-be. Three persons will be engaged in suspicious behavior. One, the assassin, will be sinuously working his way through the crowd to the dais where the family stands, discreetly guarded by watchful retainers. Another will be preparing to throw a smoke bomb to cause a distraction, and the third, a muscular looking individual, is looking curiously at some of the larger pieces of furniture.

Characters will have opportunity to see one or more of these ne'er-do-wells engaged in some behavior that catches their eye, and have a chance to act when it all breaks loose. On some pre-arranged cue, a smoke bomb will be thrown to one side of the dais, exploding with a muffled "whumpf!" As the guards' attention is drawn to one side, the assassin draws a small crossbow and fires at the midsection of Ikestra, and the strong one picks up a piece of furniture and starts plowing a path to the door. That is, if the characters do not intervene somehow. It will be perhaps six Challenge rounds before the retainers recover enough to assist the characters, probably by holding everyone involved in combat at sword or gunne-point until exactly what is going on can be determined.

If hit, Ikestra will be dazed but unhurt, the light armor her father insisted on absorbing a poisoned bolt that would have otherwise killed or severely injured her.

When the dust clears, the characters are likely to end up in a Soqtruil jail cell, awaiting a magistrate or the pressing of charges against them. Instead, they get a visit by Vighani Ahakest, head of the Ahakest clan, a beefy, well-built middle-aged man who is clear of eye, precise of word and has a large pistol on his hip that wasn't there a few hours ago. Over their protests, he dismisses his retainers and the jail guard, to speak with the characters privately. Tailor the following to match the events that transpired:

"I have personally interviewed those few of my guests who did not stampede from the celebration when things...turned ugly, and while sometimes incoherent, they have been consistent in informing me that you were of some assistance in subduing the culprits, rather than being the instigators of the attempt on my daughter's life." he pauses to look the characters up and down with an appraising eye, and then continues.

"In the confusion, one of my loyal men was run through with a sword, a sword wielded by another of my loyal men. Or, one I thought loyal until now. He then attempted to do the same to Ikestra, but he lost her in the smoke and was forced to flee. He is still at large, I fear."

"I have not had the need for some years to personally hire people off the street to do my work for me, but I find myself in the unenviable position of not knowing who in my household to trust. I have considered the possibility that my antagonist staged this entire event to get new people into my household, but it seems too haphazard for that. And yet, the assassination attempt was not up to the usual standards one expects in Soqtruil, and I am left to wonder why."



"To thank you for your efforts on behalf of my daughter, and as apology for the rough treatment you have received in the past few hours, I would like to offer you temporary positions in my employ. I have done some asking about, and there are tasks suited to the talents of any of you who choose to accept. If not, you are free to go, with my thanks. No charges will be pressed, and my secretary will see to any losses you may have suffered."

With this, he will turn and leave. He is pre-occupied with more important things at the moment, and is not in the mood for long conversation or question and answer sessions. That's why he has a secretary to handle the details for him.

At this point, characters have a few options. If they decide (perhaps wisely) not to get involved in some upper-class intrigue, they will find Vighani Ahakest as good as his word. Any financial losses they might have suffered in the altercation will be redressed, and a token payment equal to their Status as well, in the form of some house bauble or Atlantean coin.

Those who do accept his offer will also be met by his secretary after this, and given either directions or a steamcar ride to the Ahakest estate, on the middle slopes of the Eternal Ridge.

#### What now?

At this point the plot has been fairly predictable for an early adventure. An opportunity to be noticed, for a group of disparate characters to meet, and the potential of a wealthy patron who may come to appreciate their talents. A good start, but where does it lead?

Vighani Ahakest does not trust the characters, no doubt about it. Despite his statement to the contrary, he still considers them potential pieces in someone else's game against him, so while characters might have temporary positions of some importance (like a bodyguard detail), at no time will they ever be alone with him or a family member, even if it may appear so on the surface. The trivial expense of hiring the characters is more than worth it to keep them within close observation distance, and he may even have them followed, just on principle. One of the few guards he still trusts implicitly will probably be given an expensive one-shot magical bauble with some limited protective ability (Armor of the Mage, perhaps?), and a household mage will always be in close attendance with other useful magics available on short notice.

There are several possibilities that come to mind, and you can choose whichever one best suits the group of characters you have.

1. House Uyaill needs the money that house Akahest can provide, but there is a faction within the house that feels this mingling with non-noble blood is an affront to their dignity. The assassination attempt was a "warning" to house Akahest to proceed no further with their ambitions. Neither Trelase Uyaill or his father are aware of these machinations behind their backs...yet. If plans for the wedding continue, another more serious attempt will be made.
2. There is a faction within House Akahest that thinks the dowry to be given to house Uyaill is ruinous, and will eventually bring the downfall of Akahest. This faction obviously knows the amount of the dowry, thus placing them close to the top of things, and also commands sufficient loyalty among the household retainers to have one turn against another. The assassination attempt was designed to scare Ikestra into backing out. While this is an arranged marriage, it is still one she has consented to, and she can always refuse to go through with it. She will be pressured by an unwitting but sympathetic house servant to "call it off", and if this does not work, another "assassination" attempt will be made, this one gruesomely killing someone close to her (a rifle bullet that hits the person next to her, a poisoned drink that goes to the "wrong" person, etc.).
3. Trelase Uyaill already has a secret lover, who he cannot reveal because of matters of family politics. Either he or his lover is behind the assassination attempt, with or without the knowledge of the other, motivated by love or jealousy as appropriate. The first attempt was hastily put together. The next will use more professional persons and equipment.
4. Parties unknown wish to sabotage the marriage. House Uyaill would be forced to leave their Ridge estate within a decade at the current rate, and one of their enemies would like nothing more than to see that happen. The first assassination attempt was a simple attempt to discourage the marriage, and if possible, sow suspicion between the families. If a second attempt is required, it will be a little more serious in intent. Enough money is being thrown at this to bribe ordinarily loyal people into betraying their trusts (of course, these people might be killed later to avoid actually paying the bribe...).

Characters can play a number of roles in this unfolding drama. A martial character acting as a guard may overhear things. Guards are often thought of as furniture by their employers, their loyalty presumed, their silence unquestioned. This, plus scuttlebutt in the kitchen and hallways may provide clues. And of course, the character may get the opportunity to throw themselves in front of a bullet or crossbow bolt.





Characters with an academic bent may find themselves in the Imperial Archive, looking for business records and gossip sheets on House Uyaill. An astute observer can tell that the major expenditures for House Uyaill have steadily declined for decades, punctuated by major outlays for hollow Earth expeditions that met with disastrous results. There might also be notes from several years back about another wealthy house approaching Uyaill to buy off its debts in exchange for their Ridge estate. Obviously the offer was rebuffed. News of interest also includes a substantial Akahest outlay for their hollow Earth timber expedition, an expedition which is a month overdue in returning, and which will be a substantial loss should it not come back at all.

Characters of a more streetwise nature may try to uncover rumors on the street. The would-be assassins were apparently lower class, or wished to appear so, since none of them used or was captured with firearms. Someone had to hire them, and someone had to supply them. These aren't the sort of people the noble houses know on a first-name basis, so there were likely intermediaries and channels, people who know people who know people. Asking around could be both enlightening and dangerous. If anyone would find out, it would be this character who would uncover what likely happened to the traitorous Akahest guard (face down in the harbor with his throat cut). A character from the darker side of the streets or one of high Status (2 or more) would note that this fate indicates the guard *did not* know much about their employer. Otherwise, there is the chance that a mage of house Akahest might have known the guard, and been able to call his Shade for questioning. If the guard had dangerous information, he would have either been locked away in a dungeon until it was safe to kill him, or he would have been taken his blood money and retired far, far away from here.

#### Where to go from here

How the tale of Trelase and Ikestra unfolds, and how long it takes to reach its ultimate conclusion is up to you, the GM. The start is meant as a way to bring characters together, and provide the outline of a major urban adventure setting in Hyperborea (i.e. Soqtruil). Characters might work here for a week or two and never deal with House Akahest again, or this might be the start of a long relationship with this wealthy merchant house, whose head might have numerous things a group of independent adventurers could accomplish for him. Vighani Akahest is now a wealthy and powerful man, but he started life near the bottom of the ladder, and worked his way up. He knows first hand that there are still opportunities for great wealth for people willing to get their hands dirty acquiring it. He'll gladly commission people to acquire that wealth for *him*, and dole a generous fraction back to his hirelings to keep them happy.

## The Ruins of Asceph

This is a short adventure and minor setting to use in your Epiphany campaign, and is suitable for several characters of varying backgrounds. The GameMaster might need to tweak the plot a little to match particular character backgrounds.

The ruins are located in the Atlantean Shadowlands, in sector 12.4. Even though they are in the Shadowlands, it is still an interesting place. A few days walk to the south is the prison of Pzeoq (Zay-rock), which sits on and in a rocky hillock several hundred meters inland from the shores of the Outer Sea. Originally it was a Lemurian gold mine, but that was many centuries ago. A minor border re-alignment placed it in Atlantean hands some centuries back, and no fuss was made since by that time the mine had been played out. The network of tunnels and great rooms, along with its remote location in the Shadowlands, made it an ideal prison for Atlantean malcontents. And since a prison needs guards, a number of guards of less than stellar character. And as long as it is near a border with Lemuria, you might as well fortify it and add some ShipGunnies, using the convenient convict labor pool to do all the nasty dangerous parts of the construction. These gunnies need soldiers to run them and officers to tell the soldiers what to do, so those in official disfavor always have someplace to contemplate the error of their ways. All in all, it's just one big unhappy place. Virtually no one is there by choice, and you should worry a lot about the ones who are. Everyone hates the place, and takes it out on anyone they have authority over. The only bright spots are the regular supply ships, or the rare visits by relatives who make the trek to see incarcerated kin. This brightens the day of the lucky prisoner, and lines the pockets of the guards and officials fortunate enough to be in line for bribes (Marginal to Below Average, depending on the prisoner).

Like all garrisons, Pzeoq has its own little garrison town, which caters to the needs of those fortunate enough to be allowed outside the walls. Rough entertainment, short term lodging, liquor, temporary companionship and the like can be found here, along with a few households of the officers and some relatives of prisoners who are here to deliver bribes, supplies, medicine or pleas for leniency. This town is the only one for quite a distance in any direction, and its only reason for existence is the fort and prison. Costs for goods and services are about average, but the quality received is usually below average, and local rackets mean many items are only available from a single supplier.





The ruins themselves are all that remains of the Atlantean city of Aseph, which was destroyed in a magical battle some ages past. Mute testimony to this can be seen in the visible melting of the stone walls in places, circular pools that seem strangely out of place, and on the north wall, great gouges that take little imagination to see as the marks left by enormous talons. The site is one of the few in the area that catches light from the Inner Sun, due to chance geography and its location on top of a hill. This would make it prime real estate in the Shadowlands, but it remains virtually uninhabited, as it is rumored to be haunted. Actually, it *is* haunted. The ghosts of those who perished in the fall of Aseph still roam the area, and attack all who enter. There are not as many as there used to be, and one can often spend hours inside without being accosted, but they are not something the average person faces lightly. Ghosts appear as indistinct, mist-like human forms, that are not blocked by any form of matter, nor are easily disrupted by matter or mundane energies of any type. In game terms, they are non-corporeal beings with Aura, and they draw sustenance from the living. Anyone accosted by a ghost undergoes a Spiritual Challenge, the ghost having two Advantages to use. It will flee if it loses an Advantage, and dissipate if it loses both. If it wins however, the character loses Spiritual Advantages, and if defeated badly, the victim will often stare mindlessly into space until they die of exposure and become a ghost themselves. The ghosts cannot outrun a person, but they never tire. Fortunately, they aren't very bright, and *never* go past the ruined walls of the city.

What is left of Aseph is pretty much empty. A few structures still keep out the elements, and cold underground rooms might still hold possessions of the dead inhabitants, but neither the Lemurian or Atlantean government has ever considered it worthwhile to clean out and rebuild upon the site. Stunted grasses and hardy shrubs grow on the warmer sides of any buildings that catch rays from the Inner or Outer Sun. Drifts of snow lie in well-shaded areas for much of the year, and wind-blown dust and frost have chipped and sanded away many of the ornate carvings that once adorned the multi-storied stone buildings that made up the bulk of the city.

Despite all this, there *are* people who live here on a full-time basis. Not many, but a few. All have the common trait of at least one extra Spiritual Attribute or Ability, so that even when asleep, they can hold off a hungry ghost indefinitely. Some are holy men, staying in this cursed location as a test of faith or penance. A very few are treasure seekers, and a few others are escaped prisoners, trying to stave off starvation by eating berries or catching fish from the icy streams that flow down the hills to the Outer Sea. The holy men can travel to Pzeoq and purchase food and supplies. They are often mages, so the few escaped convicts give them a wide berth, and the smart ones would rather starve than try and steal from them (not all the wizards here are sane).

## Characters

Characters could be going to Aseph for several reasons. They might be escapees from Pzeoq. The poorly motivated guards aren't going to look very hard in a haunted city, even if they can be persuaded to go in at all. Of course, the ghosts hunt down all living things, so there are no animals to speak of in town to catch for food either. Or, they might be prospectors. The city was originally made great by the gold mines which used to dot the area. There are prospectors in the hills around Aseph who still search for new veins of ore and the path to riches. Some occasionally venture into Aseph to search for clues or the bits of gold sometimes brought to the surface by water and frost. Not all of them return. Perhaps the characters are staging from here to break a friend out of prison, or to spy on or deal with a particular official who has had the bad luck to be stationed here. Or last, perhaps some sage or mage has unearthed a tidbit of knowledge that leads them to believe that there is something of great value left in the ruins, and wants the characters to search for it.

This last case is what we will assume brings the characters to Aseph. About two years ago, a group of prisoners was secretly attempting to clear an ancient blockage in the prison, hoping to find a tunnel that led to the surface. They had no luck, but in the debris one of them found a shattered skeleton, with the remnants of a necklace and pendant. Keeping this to himself, he saw only its value as a precious metal, and used it to bribe a guard to get him better treatment. The guard in turn, sold it in town for female companionship, and from there it eventually made its way to Soqtrul, where it languished in a curiosity shop until it caught the eye of one Zlodrl Mkadi, a sage of the minor house of Mkadi, who bought it and took it home to examine it in detail. The pendant at first glance appeared to be a patterned gold cylinder in a teardrop of quartz, but under close examination, the patterning was actually extremely fine writing, and told an abbreviated life history of a personage of Aseph. Items as this are not currently fashionable and more or less unknown, but in older times they were heirlooms to family members from a successful patriarch or matriarch, to be worn as a constant reminder of the family's greatness.

In this case, the pendant was from House Mkadi, who were almost completely wiped out in the fall of Aseph, and who have never regained the influence they held in that ancient time. To the best of Zlodrl's knowledge, the family's treasures were never plundered, and never found, and so they possibly remain somewhere within the haunted city. Zlodrl has only his own resources to work with, as he doesn't want any other family member getting the credit or wealth if he is correct, so he has discreetly placed advertisements which the characters presumably have answered. He has scholarly works on Aseph, and they provide a rough map of the city as it is, and as it was in its heyday.





From the text of the pendant, it describes in detail some of the characteristics of the family manor in Aseph, but does not give an actual address. It only has descriptive terms, such as the beauty of the sunrise coming over a certain peak, the light of the Inner Sun shining on a particular terrace, and so on. Zlodrl wants the characters to go to Aseph and search the city for places that match the descriptions he will give them. He will mention nothing of treasure, but will speak only in terms of his family's lost heritage and eventually laying the ghosts of ancestors to rest. He won't be going himself. He hasn't had time to make up a plausible excuse for such an extended journey, or to find trusted people to go with him for what could be a protracted excavation.

Zlodrl will meet with the characters at a wage house, a place where employers often meet with groups of potential contract laborers. It's not fancy, but it is appropriate and relatively discreet. He will haggle over the amount of money to be paid, and be very detailed in the things he wants done. He will not offer more than an Average amount of money per person for covering the roughly 900 kilometers of travel each way, nor more than an Average amount per person for their time and effort. Travel by steamcar part way, and horsecar for the rest will eat up most of that travel money, and lodging and meals will cover the rest. Zlodrl has figured the costs carefully, and even frugal characters won't find much slack there. Any character with at least a level of Status can demand and get an extra Average amount for their skills and time if they have a Gunne, but Zlodrl doesn't really think this job requires excessive amounts of martial ability, and isn't willing (or able) to pay market rates for these skills. All he wants is observant warm bodies who can follow directions and write things down. Zlodrl will also supply the characters with a recorder. This is a device of Average cost and Medium weight that uses chemicals to retain the image of what it sees on thin plates of resin. To use it professionally is an Ability, but casual use just requires two Mental Advantages. It takes time to set up, and several seconds to record an image. The resin plates are stored in a liquid bath for several minutes, after which the image is fixed for later viewing.

Presuming the characters accept, Zlodrl will have them all sign legally binding contracts outlining the work to be done and the payment to be given. After this is done, he will arrange a departure time, at which he will supply the characters with their travel money and the recorder, the rest of the funds payable when they return. He is likely to provide the characters with less travel money than agreed, the difference being made up as already-purchased steamcar tickets for part of the trip. He figures that since he already knows the best fares, he might as well purchase passage for his expedition.



**Zlodrl Mkadi**  
(two levels of Status)  
Intelligence  
History  
Research  
Perception  
Savoir-faire  
Aura  
Meditation

The Mkadi family was once prominent in Atlantis, but lost their influence and wealth in the fall of Aseph. Now, if they are known at all, it is as a family of competent functionaries for lower level bureaucratic posts. They no longer have the money or influence to seize and hold higher level positions, though this doesn't stop them from trying on occasion. More often than not, they are used as pawns by some other better-placed family, and end up no better off than when they started. They are not outcast, but they were closely associated with a great tragedy, and so no one really wants to have that rub off on them. They receive the polite distancing you would expect if you mentioned that you were related to a famous mass murderer.

### Travel

The trip out should be fairly uneventful. Steamcar service runs out between the mountain ranges to the communities in this agricultural area, but eventually the end of the line will be reached and characters will have to charter a horsecar for the overland trip to Pzeoq, and from there walk to Aseph. A character who was given extra travel money for status will spend it all if they want to bring a horse on this trip. The expedition is scheduled for summer, so weather is not a major consideration. The occasional cold rain may dampen spirits somewhat, but snowfall or freezing weather is highly unlikely.

Pzeoq has already been described, and unlike many towns in the Shadowlands, it is unenhanced with brightly painted buildings to contrast with the dark landscape and ocean. Everyone here seems to be "doing time", even the guards and soldiers. Brawls and fistfights are fairly common, and a week seldom passes without at least one knifing. While Atlantean





justice sends a lot of people out here, Pzeoq justice is more up close and personal. Everyone here has a secret that could get them sent to the mines, so things are usually handled in an unofficial manner. Usually this just involves simple bribes to the concerned parties.

Marginal bribes are for simple assault, Below Average ones for assault with a deadly weapon, and an Average bribe will usually get you off the hook for an "accidental" death. Bribing bystanders to be witnesses in your favor is usually a Marginal expense per witness. Add one level to any bribe if the offender two or more levels of Status, since more important people have more to lose, and therefore get to pay more to keep what they have.

Pzeoq has no riding beasts to rent, especially not to go to Aseph, as they are easy ghost-bait. Characters will have to walk there, carrying whatever provisions they plan on consuming for the trek out and back. If fully burdened, assume it is a long three day walk. If less burdened, it is two days if you start early and end late. Water is not a problem. Fresh mountain streams abound all through the area. Arriving at Aseph should not be a problem. The area does not have enough travel to support any type of highwaymen or bandits, who would in any case be discouraged by the close proximity of Pzeoq and the regular if uninspired patrols of the border area by the garrison force. The only likely encounter of substance on the way would be one of these patrols, who would possibly give a hard time and extort Average bribes from a group without immaculate travel papers for the border region or a good story.

Once the ruins are reached, the group must decide on a plan of action. In summer, any time of day is as good as any other for doing work, so the few residents of the area are likely as not to be up and about.

Accumulating the information needed is a Mental Challenge of seven Advantages vs. the party leader, and all group members may contribute Advantages over their base amount to work through the problems of figuring out which buildings are potential sites of the ancestral house Mkadi. The ruins never allot more than four Advantages to the defense hand. Each Challenge round is a working day, and characters won't get all the information they need until they "defeat" the ruins. If characters are working in shifts rather than at the same time, they lose an Advantage from their total, since they aren't all awake at the same time to brainstorm or compare ideas and notes. Clever ideas are worth an Advantage for figuring things out, and spending two days per Challenge round is also worth an Advantage. If the characters win, they are pretty sure they have collected all the information there is to be found. If they lose, they have suffered setbacks or dead ends that leave their own certainty in doubt, and they will be pretty sure they have missed something, but not be able to figure exactly what.

## Perils

No expedition should be without its perils however, and the GameMaster should throw at least one monkey wrench in the works, just to mess things up. You can roll a six-sided die, or just choose one or more of the following, depending on the resources of the group. One or more of these might also be appropriate explanations for a substantial Challenge loss.

- 1 Strong ghosts. Not all the ghosts here possess a single Spiritual Attribute. Some possess two, giving them three Advantages in a Spiritual Challenge. These particular spirits tend to be territorial, however, and stay close to their place of death. If this happens to be someplace the characters need to investigate, there could be problems. Defeating such a strong spirit does not gain the characters anything, but it does remove a potential obstacle.
- 2 Jailbreak. half a dozen inmates of Pzeoq succeed at escaping their underground confinement, and head for Aseph as a refuge before making a break for the Lemurian border. Knowing the condition of the Shadowlands, they have a few days worth of food, but they will run out about the time they reach Aseph. They figure they can steal what they need from the few people who are here, and then leave. Not being daft, at least one of the group of escapees is spiritually strong enough to hold off the occasional ghost. The rest are probably average, with some Ability related to their incarceration or criminal profession. These might be things like Brawling, Swordplay, Intimidation, or Pickpocket. The leader might have a Physical or Mental Attribute as well. They will be armed with crude clubs and knives, but have no armor or ranged weapons. Being able to rescue an inhabitant from these ruffians, or holding them off or capturing them would certainly earn the gratitude of someone in the ruins, and in return they might help the characters for a few days.
- 3 Competing interests. Another Atlantean house has gotten wind of this expedition. A similarly stasured functionary of another house is paying someone to travel the same route as the characters, with the same destination. If queried, this individual will state that in order to be an heir of the house, at some time they must travel to a certain spot in Aseph, spend the night there, and then return and tell the eldest heir what they saw and experienced. Not all the potential heirs return, and it is seen as a test of their spiritual strength. He is making this pilgrimage, and considers himself fortunate to have company for the journey. The spy is not extraordinarily talented, and is not expected to interfere with the group. In fact, he may help them if asked, since it gives him better information to return home with. If you need stats, assume this individual has a Mental Attribute and three Abilities of some type, one of them Spiritual in nature. They will also have a level of Status, light armor and a concealed HandGunne.





- 4 Treasure hunters. Rumors of lost treasure brought people out here as soon as the ruins were cool enough to approach. Some have actually found things, but most are content to prospect in the hills and pan for gold in the mountain streams. Characters may encounter a group digging in the ruins at one of the spots they need to investigate. The treasure hunters will not go out of their way to attack the characters, but they will prevent access to the site, and are armed with a crossbow and axes/picks. Convincing them that the characters aren't claim jumpers is a Mental Challenge using one character's non-confrontational Abilities vs. three Advantages. Defeating their suspicion means they will grudgingly grant you access to the site for a day, but someone will still be following the characters around at all times.
- 5 Structural failures. Ruins this old have weak spots, and walls and floors can collapse with little provocation. Pick a character at random. That character must complete a single Physical Challenge (Attributes and applicable Abilities only) vs. three Physical Advantages. If the ruins get one success, it means the character has suffered a lethal injury (lose an Advantage). If the ruins get two successes, it means the character suffers a lethal injury (lose an Advantage) and the character is pinned by debris, which requires a complex Physical Challenge vs. six Advantages to remove. Multiple characters can combine Advantages to clear the debris, and losing the Challenge simply means the character remains pinned until a way to increase the Advantage total is found. If on the other hand, the character avoids injury and gets a success against the ruins, the collapsing structure they dodged reveals a previously untouched part of the ruins, which may provide a Windfall. Pick a random player and do a ranged Challenge with five Advantages each. The amount the player wins by is the value of the Windfall in terms of Status equivalents (e.g. making the GameMaster lose two Advantages is a Windfall of Average value). Ignore the successes of the GameMaster in this Challenge. A very valuable Windfall could be something of no intrinsic value to characters, but a piece of a puzzle for a mage trying to Know something. In this case, characters will need to hang onto it until such time as they can find someone who can tell what it is, and who might find it of interest.
- 6 Threat level upgrade. Roll again and add one to the difficulty of any Challenges, and one to any benefits that might be gained.

### Resolution

If the characters manage to survive and get back to Soqtruil, they will receive the balance of their payment. If they return the recorder and have succeeded vs. the Mental Challenges to survey the sites, Zlodri Mkadi will be generous in his own parsimonious fashion and give an Average bonus to the group, to be split as the characters see fit (the expedition has cost a lot of his discretionary income). He will also consider the characters favorably if at some future time he needs a more thorough expedition or excavation. If on the other hand, the characters come back without his expensive recorder, and don't have all the information he wants, he will be less than pleased. He is contractually bound to pay the characters, and will do so grudgingly, but will not want to deal with them again. If the characters were spied upon, they will end up in someone else's files as well, and they may someday be accosted or approached to divulge what they know about the expedition (and this is why Zlodri didn't tell them what he was up to). **Ruins of Asceph** would be considered a "short" adventure, and characters completing it with flying colors could expect to get a maximum of 5 favors in addition to any monetary gains.



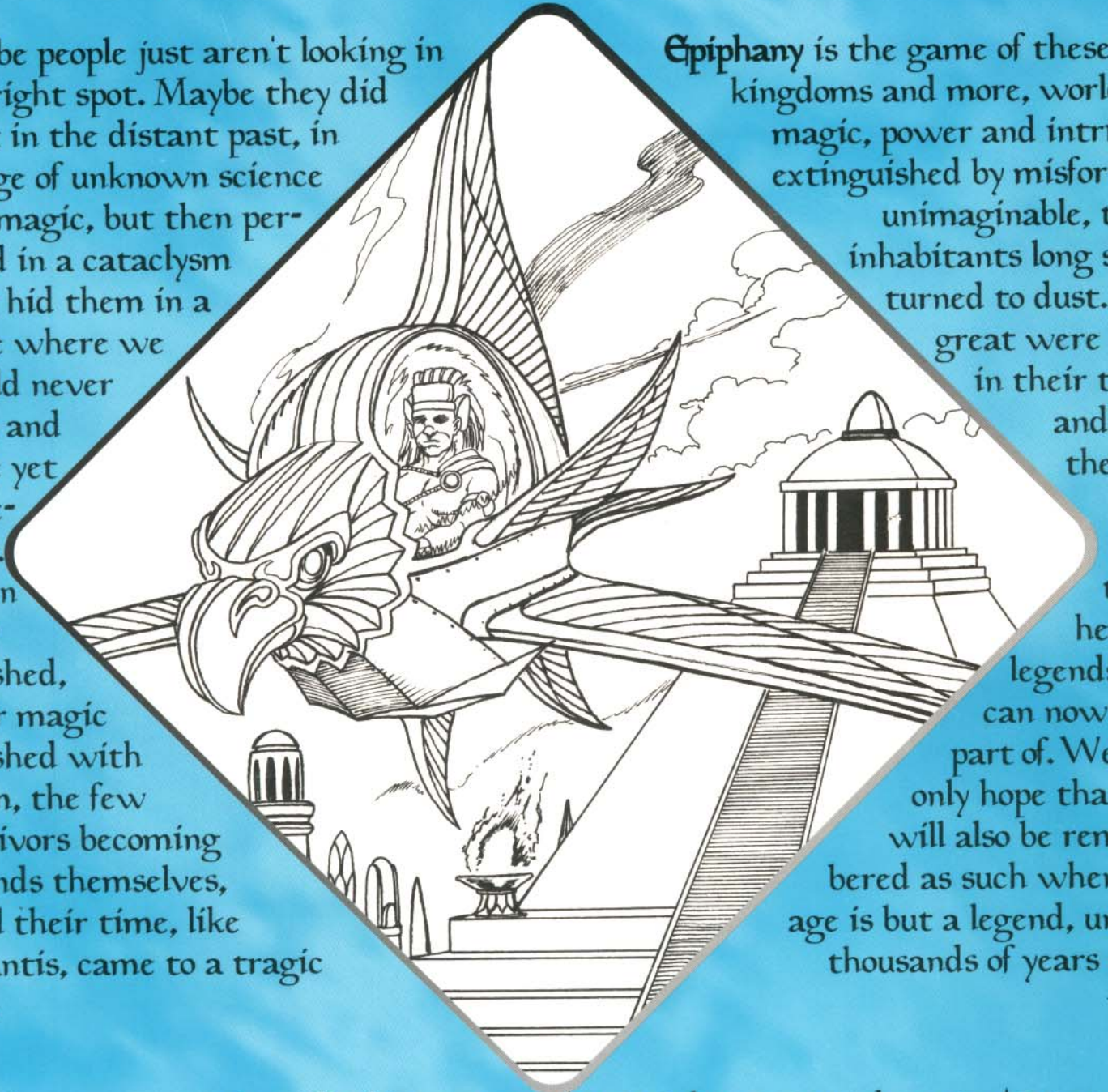
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