

THE WAY INTO FATE

Adventure Fantasy role playing in
the setting of *The Great Way*

Also included: a
supplement for the
urban fantasy novel
*A Key, An Egg, an
Unfortunate Remark*

Harry Connolly

MCGRATH 1.4

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THE WAY INTO FATE

A Fate Core Supplement for *The Great Way* and
A Key, an Egg, an Unfortunate Remark

Harry Connolly



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PRESS

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Part One: The Great Way

Warning!

This supplement contains massive, book-destroying spoilers for:

The Way Into Chaos
The Way Into Magic
The Way Into Darkness

INTRODUCTION

TL;DR

The majority of this document is an explanation of the world-building for the setting of The Great Way, along with my attempts to render them with Fate game mechanics; it's a bit long-winded.

Here's the short version:

The continent of Kal-Maddum is unique in one significant way: its lands and nearby waters are dotted with magic portals to other worlds/lands/places.

Some of these portals are stable, others are not. Very few are in places where humans can easily find them. Some are beneath the earth, some beneath the waves, some high in the air. Of the portals humans know about, the most prominent is the one on the hill at Peradain, an unstable portal that opens every twenty-three years for ten days. It connects to the lands of The Evening People, who are a cross between eloi and elves.

No human has ever entered the portal to The Evening People's lands; The Evening People's magic is too strong. All have been rebuffed.

Invading predators have made the oceans around Kal-Maddum impassible by ships of any size. The waters are full of terrifying creatures — some tiny, some gargantuan — who are the top of the food chain in the worlds where they originated.

The few portals on land have allowed other creatures — some intelligent, some not — to sweep across the continent, the most numerous and successful being humans.

In essence, the narrative of The Great Way is a mix of invading empires and invasive species.

More importantly, the portals themselves are all part of a larger being, which some humans worship as a god: The Great Way. It is an unliving intelligence outside of time and space. All portals are a single portal, and everyone who passes through them are contained, frozen together in the not-space, not-moment of The Great Way.

The Great Way's purpose is to connect, and it connects to everyone who passes through it. It thinks with their minds and remains attached to the species after they leave. The Great Way is the power that allows people to turn their thoughts into spells that The Evening People taught them. This "god" is the source of all magic, although humans have never truly understood this.

Human beings are, of course, another invasive species, and they brought many of their seeds and domesticated animals with them. However, this was so long ago that they do not even remember it and everyone now thinks of Kal-Maddum as "theirs."

Finally, human culture and technological development is lopsided due to the influence of The Evening People and the magic spells they brought. Fifteen generations ago, humans were organized into herding clans with only a little agriculture. Now, while some still live that way, others have access to steel, dress in shirts and waistcoats (with pockets), fight battles in phalanxes, and so on.

This isn't a pseudo-medieval setting: the Peradaini are (at best) a bronze age culture who have a handful of technological advances thanks to their magic.

In short, when choosing characters, there's a wide variety of possible cultures and technology levels to choose from, especially if you set your campaign late in the Peradaini empire.

PLACES

Kal-Maddum



Map by the amazing Priscilla Spencer

Aspects:

Crossroads of Many Worlds

Deadly Seas

Kal-Maddum is not the whole world, but for the people who live there it might as well be. There are rumors of a breakaway continent, Gol-Maddum, somewhere out beyond the horizon, but no human has ever seen it.

There is no sea-going exploration in this setting. See the section *Creatures of deep water* for an explanation why.

There are many aspects of Kal-Maddum that visitors would think are unusual: salt water streams in the mountains, unceasing winds, monsters that seem to appear out of nowhere. All of these oddities can be attributed to portals.

City of Peradain

Aspects:

Heart Of An Empire

What did you say to me, friend?

People Of The Festival

History:

Peradain, the City of Song and Morning, is the birthplace of the Peradaini Empire. Fifteen generations before, when the Peradaini people were just another clan of grassland herders, they happened to be camping on a lonely hill when a portal appeared. Through it stepped a delegation of The Evening People, creatures of long life, peace, and immense magical power.

None of the primitive herding people, with their copper tools and okshim-skin clothes, had ever seen a portal before and they had certainly never seen anything like The Evening People. It was clear these were powerful higher beings.

They welcomed the visitors and spent several days together, singing songs and telling stories. The guests did not seem terribly impressed, but after three days they used their magic to heal a sick child, then taught the clan's shaman to cast the spell himself. As The Evening People returned through the portal, they promised to visit again.

The Peradaini claimed the hill where The Evening People had arrived—very unusual for one of the nomadic herding clans of the southern grasslands. After 23 years of waiting, they had nearly given up, when the portal appeared again.

There have been missteps. That second meeting resulted in no new spells,

largely because the clan pleaded for — then demanded — more magic without understanding that their guests expected a festival first.

The third festival went well. The fourth, when the clan was lead by a young man named Edrl Spearshaker, was a disaster. Edrl, who had taken the title “king” from his father after the two of them had begun conquering neighboring lands, got the idea that the portals offered an opportunity for invasion.

No one knows what happened during the actual invasion attempt. The stories tell that everyone lost consciousness shortly after Edrl’s spears turned their weapons on The Evening People, but it’s not clear what happened while they slept. All they knew was that, when they woke, six of Edrl’s friends and warriors had been burned to death with their weapons in their hands. Edrl himself had been transformed into a bag of skin that leaked clean fresh rainwater.

Also, there was an Evening Person standing by the portal who promised to return again.

Twenty-three years later was the first proper Festival, with feasting, performances, and athletic competitions.

In the generations since, Peradain has grown in strength and prestige. That first healing spell changed infant mortality rates and ensured that, in a very few years, they could put more warriors into the field than any of their neighboring clans. That began a swift process of expanding territories and the acquisition of new skills, like agriculture, and the subjugation of their neighbors.

At the end of the empire:

Most cities are built on a location that both controls and exploits a trade route. Peradain was not founded beside a harbor, or at the meeting of two rivers, or at a major crossroads. Instead, it was built to contain and control the most important trade route on Kal-Maddum: the portal that grants access to The Evening People and their magic.

The city walls are made of pink, scholar-created stone, as is the palace and the major temples. Even the Throne of Skulls is made of this granite, although it’s been carved to match the name. There are other scholar-created buildings

inside the city, commissioned by those who want to show off their wealth and power. The Scholar's Guild demands a high fee for such services.

Most other buildings are made of wood floated down one of the three canals that connect the city to rivers and lakes in the north. Because metal for nails is so expensive, most buildings still use tongue-and-groove construction. A few have been built of other stones brought into the city on barges or on carts pulled by okshim.

Wealthy merchants live in walled villas. Small business owners live in rooms above their shops. The working poor live in crowded wooden apartment buildings up to three stories tall. The most extremely poor live in the gutters or in awful shantytowns that have sprung up outside the city walls. Since Peradain is surrounded by grasslands, many of the roofs are made of thatch.

There is no sewer system, but there are goat- and pig-keepers that lead their animals through the streets to "clean" them. The king pays for a standing fire-fighter service made up of former soldiers but they're little more than a bucket brigade, bringing water from the nearest fountain to the trouble spot. There is little they can do with a large fire except evacuate anyone in danger. Anytime a fire gets really far out of hand, the Scholar's Tower sends someone to suppress it, although they're rarely called before an entire city block is in danger.

Local military are called upon to defend the city, put down riots, and arrest those who refuse to pay taxes. The work of catching thieves, rapists, and murderers is left up to the citizens themselves, or to local crime bosses.

Magistrates in the court system, such as it is, typically handle cases of bankruptcy, fraud that involves wealthy merchants or landowners, or other cases of unpaid debts. This is where most of the servant class comes from, and those with enough financial clout can bring an accused thief, murderer, or rapist into one of these courts and claim unrecoverable financial damages from their crimes. In such cases, the accused is marked with a servant's tattoo, whipped, and then sold, with the accuser receiving part of the fee. It's a system with many opportunities for abuse, and there are always enterprising people ready to exploit it.

For crime victims and their families without the personal wealth to have their problems addressed by the court, the only justice they can find is what they can take.

Healing magic, which had once been the backbone of imperial strength, has become too dear to share with everyone who needs it. The Scholars Tower maintains sleepstones in well-guarded facilities that are available on a reserve-by-bid basis. Soldiers' barracks also maintain sleepstones for themselves, and if you know the right person you can bribe your way to access them (just don't get caught unless you can bribe the superior officers, too). Some temples also maintain sleepstones that are open to the faithful regardless of their ability to pay, but wait times are staggering. Finally, there is also mercy and charity, but the need outstrips the remedy by such a tremendous degree that most people are too overwhelmed and weary to seek it.

Besides the towers at the city walls, there are no buildings (except the palace) that are over three stories tall. The Peradaini have only recently discovered the arch, and it has not been much incorporated into their architecture.

The lands outside the city have been given over to farming, although the wheat grown there is no longer sufficient to feed the entire city. Crops must be brought in by canal barge.

Culturally, the Peradaini people are clannish, extraordinarily polite, and extremely touchy about insults, which is all a legacy of their past as a herding culture.

This skewed sense of honor lingers, especially among the poorer classes. People are careful about giving offense to strangers and (non-lethal) brawls are common.

Finally, there are fewer non-Peradaini living within the city than one might expect. Every 23 years, when the Festival is about to begin, non-Peradaini are "encouraged" to leave the city for the entire ten days that The Evening People will be visiting. Some take small business trips. Some shut themselves inside their homes. Some visit relations outside the city and decide not to return.

The City of Song and Morning was built on its monopoly on magic, and if

there's one thing that unites its the Peradaini people, it's the need to preserve that monopoly.

Peradaini Empire

Aspects:

Many Peoples Conquered by Spear and Spell

Size:

At the time of the novels, the Peradaini Empire stretches from the western bank of The Straim to the shore of the Bescos Sea. In the south, it stops at the edge of the continent, where all human influence ends. In the north, its border stands at the Southern Barrier (if you are not in the empire), or at the base of the Northern Barrier (if you are inside the empire). The Sweeps itself and its peoples are in dispute and securing that ground is not a high priority for the empire.

Features:

Some of the minor geographical features are described here:

The Straim is the largest river on the continent. It's a salt-water river fed by an unchanging portal deep in the Southern Barrier. At the mouth is the Bay of Stones, one of the few places at the ocean's edge where humans have settled and thrived (due to the massive boulders washed down to the river mouth that keeps deep water creatures at bay).

To the west of the river is mostly grassland in the south and woodland in the north.

Westward from the wood- and grasslands is the area called The Waterlands. This part of the continent is fed by tremendous outflows of water from the Southern Barrier, including a half-mile wide waterfall located at the site of the Finstel city of Splashtown (Ussmajil in the original Finshto).

Water from powerful, fast-moving rivers in the north slows and pools as it flows southward, forming the true Waterlands. The waters broaden and cover a

great deal of land. People live on numerous islands of all sizes and in broad marshlands. A great many fishing cultures are found here, as well as fresh-water pirates and merchant vessels.

At the very southern end of the continent, the waters of the Waterlands pass over rocky cliffs to the sea below.

To the west of the Waterlands is more woodland that extends to the Bescos Sea. The northeastern edge of the Bescos is largely cliffs, but at the southern end there are broad sandy beaches that stretch for hundreds of yards. This land is claimed by the Simblin people, who are the only ones willing to battle the sea giants found there.

The Southern and Northern Barriers

Aspects for The Southern Barrier:

Winding stream and trail

Waters salt and fresh

Aspects for The Northern Barrier:

The great, glassy wall

Steep, tenuous footing

The names of the Southern and Northern Barriers only make sense from the perspective of a person standing in The Sweeps, but that's what people call them, even people living far south of both ranges in the heart of the empire.

Once, they were a single mountain range that ran from east to west—with the eastern end being slightly more northern than the western end—but in ancient times a tremendous cataclysm gouged out the center, splitting them almost perfectly down the middle.

The Southern Barrier has several passes through it, which can be traversed in two or three days of steady walking. While it has the sharp peaks of young mountains, there are also places that are worn down by water flows from unchanging portals. As the fresh and salt water carves path through the rock,

then change direction, they leave dry difficult passages.

Much more water flows from The Southern Barrier than the geology should allow for but no one in Kal-Maddum has ever thought to question it.

There have long been rumors of strange monsters in the wilds at the top of the mountains: merfolk living in high lakes, three-eyed goats leaping through the peaks in packs, living shadows that hunt at night. Whether these are real is up to the GM, but if they're sentient creatures please see the **Axis** rule in the "Non-Human People" section.

The Northern Barrier is more forbidding. The only pass is in the far western end, called Tempest Pass, where Lake Windmark is at its deepest, and even that leads to nothing but more ocean and stony wasteland.

A short distance east of Tempest Pass, The Northern Barrier's most distinctive feature begins. For most of its length, the southern side of this mountain range, the side facing The Sweeps, is a high, smooth, glassy wall.

The wall is impossible to climb and impervious to any physical attempt to damage it. Only magic can mark it.

What's more, the top of the wall (which gives way to average impossibly-steep mountains) is much too high to throw, shoot, or catapult a climbing hook to it. That part of the mountains were and are impassible to almost every living thing, completely blocking off the Qorr Valley.

The glassy wall is a very unusual feature of Kal-Maddum, but few within the empire know of it. Despite what the king's mapmakers like to say about Peradaini borders, the Northern Barrier is beyond the consideration and influence of the empire.

The Sweeps and Shelterlands

Aspects

Unceasing wind

Danger everywhere

The Sweeps is the long strip of land that was formed when the mountains

between The Northern and Southern Barriers were gouged out of the earth. In the centuries since that cataclysm, grass, wild flowers, and animals have returned to the area, turning it into a marshy wilderness. Humankind tell stories that the land was formed by “ancient sorcerer kings” or angry gods, but in truth there were no humans on Kal-Maddum when the mountains were split and The Sweeps formed.

The most significant aspect of The Sweeps is the powerful, never-ending Sweeps Wind, which blows unceasingly out of the west. Whether by accident or design, the long valley and the Barriers on either side form the perfect funnel to direct the Sweeps Wind eastward to the sea. The winds can also be felt in the mountain passes, though not as strongly.

The Sweeps Wind is not a natural occurrence. Anyone entering the winds for the first time (or after having been away from them for a long time) will notice a peculiar sour smell, like vinegar. That’s because that air comes from an unchanging portal high in the sky at the far western end of the mountain range, and the difference in air pressure between Kal-Maddum and that other world creates the steady, unceasing, sour-smelling wind.

While the wind blows toward the east, the streams and rivers flow westward. The easternmost part of The Sweeps is higher than the western end, and therefore dryer; the southern end is generally higher than the northern. There are not many trees here (some, but not many) however there is a lot of grass and wildflowers with small streams running through them.

The farther you move west, the marshier the ground becomes, until you cross into the waters of Lake Windmark. This lake covers most of the western end of The Sweeps, with a long spur running out along the base of the Northern Barrier.

Lake Windmark is the home of the alligaunts. Their hidden city is sunk into the dark depths of the waters here, and the lights and activity there are hidden by a large black shield just a few dozen feet below the surface.

The eastern end of The Sweeps ends at the ocean, but to the northeast of that opening are what’s called the Shelterlands. The Shelterlands were formed when

The Sweeps were gouged out. They look like islands formed by an airborne spray of rock and soil, then worn down after many centuries of exposure to the sea. There are a great many islands, some dirt and stone causeways, and a thousand tidal pools of every size.

The stones in the shallow waters just offshore creates a safe place for humans to fish and scavenge in the ocean without having to worry too much about the huge, deadly predators in deeper waters. It also offers shelter from the Sweeps winds during the winter months.

Indrega

Aspects:

Land of “wit”

Uneasy truce

Our gods are real

Indrega is a peninsula because of The Straim, a river so wide and fast that the far bank can only be seen on the sunniest of days. Without The Straim (or the unchanging portal that feeds it), the riverbed would have a suitably modest flow of water through it, and there would be nothing stopping man or beast from crossing into these fairly isolated lands.

At the mouth of the river is the Bay of Stones, a rare shallow piece of coastland that, like the Shelterlands, allows humans to live and work near the ocean in relative safety.

The Southern Barrier forms the northern border of Indrega, although, like the Peradaini, the Indregai Alliance claims the section of The Sweeps just north of them. In the southern foothills of the mountain range, just west of where the Toal lands border the serpent's, is the temple where Kelvijinian sleeps.

The open ocean borders Indrega on the eastern and southern side. In the east the waters are hunted by gigantic eels, the largest of which is Boskorul, one of the Indregai's two gods.

The peninsula itself is mostly woodland, except where it has been cleared for

farmland, and a small chain of mountains in the southern tip.

The Qorr Valley

Aspects:

Home to monsters

Detritus of a thousand worlds

North of The Sweeps, on the other side of the Northern Barrier, is a place called Qorr Valley. It is isolated by high mountains on the south and west and open ocean to the north and east. In fact, no human has every been able to enter this valley; the unbreakable glassy wall on the face of the Northern Barrier is a very effective deterrent.

Inside the valley, near the southwestern corner where the two mountain ranges meet, is a fluctuating, anchored portal, called **The Door in the Mountain**. Every ten days, it connects to a different world.

This is the main source for land-based invasion from other realms into Kal-Maddum. However, because of the geography of the valley and the sheer wall along the Northern Barrier, most of the creatures who have come through the portal have been stuck inside Qorr. Unless a creature can fly or scale steep mountains, they will never make it into The Sweeps and from there the rest of Kal-Maddum.

Qorr Valley is not well known in the Peradaini Empire, but among the people who live near it—especially the herding clans—it's the place monsters come from. The People Above came from there, as well as the dragons and giant spiders that caused so much trouble for previous generations. The alligaunts also entered Kal-Maddum through this portal, although they used their magic to make an ocean crossing. The structure those first few alligaunt explorers built at the edge of the sea still stands.

The aspect *Detritus of a thousand worlds* is figurative, obviously; a fluctuating anchored portal could only connect Qorr with roughly 800 or so other worlds, depending how you fess the length of the year. However, almost every one of

those worlds have sent *something* through the portal. Sometimes it's water with living organisms in it. Sometimes it's poison fumes. Sometimes it's creatures that can't survive in the atmosphere of Kal-Maddum. Sometimes it's animals, insects, or seeds. Sometimes it's an army with conquest on its mind.

If the new arrivals have no way to get over the mountains or through the oceans, they're stuck in the valley with no way to get home for 23 years, when the portal finally connects to their land (see the section on Portals for more details). Collapses in the food chain are a regular occurrence. Many of the plants and animals in the valley are poisonous or inedible.

If the players and GM want their characters to explore other worlds, or if they want to bring their PCs from a different setting to Kal-Maddum, this is portal they would probably have to use.

The Oceans

Aspects:

Dangers beyond reckoning

Many portals, many worlds

The oceans contain a number of portals near the shores of Kal-Maddum and in the deep water beyond. Water flows in from some and flows out to others, depending on relative pressures on either side.

The portals have also allowed a large number of ocean-going predators to enter local waters. The sea giants hunt the waters in the Bescos sea. Colossal eels control the waters to the east, and all manner of strange creatures inhabit the southern seas. Many of these creatures are not intelligent enough to swim back through the portal to their home realms, and the ones who are often have a reason for staying.

Several of these creatures have grown too large to fit through the portals and couldn't return if they wanted to. See the entry on Boskorul, below.

This means that the oceans around Kal-Maddum are incredibly dangerous.

Ships can not sail along the beaches outside the Shelterlands or the Bay of Stones. It's not even safe to walk near the water's edge, since some predators have long tentacles or are willing to beach themselves to secure easy prey. And human beings are definitely easier prey than what lives beneath the waves.

Players and the GM are welcome to let their imagination run wild when developing undersea creatures. Are there megalodons? Jelly fish two miles wide with wise but alien intelligences? Schools of tiny ultra-piranas? Deep sea tyrannosaurs? Shoggoths? Manta-rays with quills like porcupines?

However, venturing near the ocean — and especially being carried out into it on a river or going over the seaside cliffs of the Waterlands — is almost certainly a death sentence.

Kal-Maddum after Peradain has fallen

Aspects:

Empty cities, empty homes

Extinction looms

The old ways are dead

For games set after the events of the trilogy, remember that Kal-Maddum is not just in ruins, it has been fundamentally changed. The many portals on and near the continent will be closed for 23 years, and that will alter the landscape in major ways. Qorr Valley and the oceans will still be full of dangerous creatures, but no new ones will be introduced. The water flowing off the Southern Barrier and at the mouth of The Straim will dwindle considerably, turning torrents into streams. The Sweeps wind will suddenly cease.

After a time, fresh water will have to be found in new ways, such as collecting rainwater. The Waterlands will begin to dry up, stranding much of the freshwater sea life and exposing humans who felt safe on their islands from the threat of The Blessing.

The Waterlands itself was difficult terrain for The Blessing to cross because of their weakness to drowning, but the closing of the portals will give them new

hunting grounds even while humans make headway in the war against them.

The people of Indrega will have to protect Kelvijinian from The Blessing at all costs. They will also have to find a way to thwart the serpents planned treachery.

Although it isn't stated explicitly in the books, (I meant to show it but the story never went there) the Simblin lands grew quiet during the fall of Peradain because of an unrelated slave revolt that overthrew the tyr and his cronies. They come through the initial encounters with the grunts fairly well, but they will have to overcome their distrust of other peoples to get their hands on the kinzchu stones they'll need to survive.

Magic is no longer in anyone's control. Even if the remaining scholars tried to set up an exclusive guild to keep their secrets, there are just too many Evening People waiting to be turned back into themselves; there's no doubt that they will share their spells with their rescuers, and humanity will have a better chance of survival for it.

Finally, of the few thousand humans left in the world, they're ready to fight and win (if they're courageous and smart) a battle against a deadly enemy. What's more, they're ready to rescue their loved ones. However, food will be difficult to come by, and farmers difficult to protect. Just the basic necessities will be challenging, as well as simple issues like the distribution of resources.

After 23 years, the portals will return. The Evening People may want to make their way to their own land, if only to see how much damage has been done. They can't wield the kinzchu stones, so will humans accompany them to fight for them? And once the Evening People's homeland is restored, what payment will those humans receive?

In the meantime, human beings can create any society they want. Some will want to return to the old ways. Some will become warlords. There will be factions and schisms, even before the threat of the Blessing is extinguished, if it ever can be.

However, one thing that isn't in doubt is that as the difficult years grind on, people will look back at the Peradaini empire as a golden time when people were

elevated by art and wealth, united against the dangers around them, and lived in safety and comfort. Everything terrible will be whitewashed.

HUMANS

The section on “Scholars” is in the chapter on magic.

Peoples of the Empire

There are many different kinds of people within the empire. Some are matriarchal, some consider polygamy normal, some herd, some farm, some fish, some mine. Most do a combination of these things.

However, they have a number of things in common:

First, they are ruled by a tyr, which is a hereditary title granted by the king.

Second, the tyr answers to the king’s secretary, the head of a bureaucracy that Peradain sets up to help/spy on local governments.

Third, the tyr lives in a holdfast, which is basically a small fortress inside the largest city in their land. Wealthy tyrs—or tyrs who have gotten on very well with the king—have granite holdfasts built by scholars. The rest use whatever materials are handy, usually wood. All holdfasts are built in the most defensible position in the city.

Fourth, they pay taxes yearly to the Throne of Skulls on pain of invasion and the execution of every prominent member of the holdfast.

Fifth, the “largest city in their land” is not always large enough to deserve to be called a city. Some are no more than towns, some are just villages. Much depends on how numerous and wealthy their people are.

Sixth, tyrs who are in the king’s favor are permitted to make use of a scholar (sometimes two) but they are never in control of that scholar. In fact, it’s rare for a tyr to meet a scholar face to face. The tyr makes requests through intermediaries, and the Scholars Guild does its best to comply, within the scholar’s limits, of course. (See the section on Going Hollow for more detail.) Needless to say, the tyrs aren’t terribly fond of this arrangement, but violating it

is treason.

Seventh, the general exception to six above are the sleepstones. Unless a tyr and his people are in open revolt, the Scholar's Guild will maintain at least one sleepstone in their holdfast, usually three or more. Everyone wants healing magic, and the tyr who screws up his people's access to it will not keep his head for long.

Eighth and finally, using a sleepstone is not free, and the local tyr is entitled to a percentage of those fees.

Aside from those things, local cultures can be anything the players and GMs like. Go wild.

At the time the books are set, the Peradaini empire has been growing steadily for 15 generations. In the early years of the empire, Peradaini troops were rarely superior to the enemies they wanted to conquer; it was their magic that gave them the decisive edge. Not only could they heal their injured soldiers, sending them back out to fight when their enemies were still recuperating, but their population also grew much more quickly, allowing them to field larger armies.

As Festivals came and went, their advantages grew. Peradaini expansion became so quick by the Seventh Festival that some clans negotiated a peaceful surrender, joining the empire... well, not *voluntarily*, exactly, but without bloodshed.

As a result, the empire is made up of a patchwork of different cultures and peoples, each occupying a "land" that is typically named after the tyr that rules over them (See the section on Tyrs for more information).

The borders of these lands are drawn by the king himself. If tyrs get into a dispute over a particular piece of ground, the king may claim it for himself, often at force.

In general, being a peaceful, loyal part of the empire brings with it the benefits of magic: healing, clean water, good crop yield, possibly even stone fortifications. It generally does not take long for a people to become well-

integrated citizens of the empire.

Some of the established lands from the books:

Italga: the largest portion of land in the empire belong to the king. Most of it surrounds the capital city but some particularly valuable or disputed tracts throughout the empire are under royal control

Bendertuk: Wooded, hilly lands in the northwest.

Twofin: Mountain lands inside the northwestern part of the Southern Barrier. North of Bendertuk lands

Holvo: Holdfast is at Rivershelf

Finstel: Holdfast is at Splashtown. East of Bendertuk lands

Gerrit: Holdfast is at Four Rivers. East of Finstel lands.

Grimwood: East of Gerrit lands and very close to the mountains.

Redmudds: Island-based fisher-folk down in the southern part of the waterlands.

Raftlin: Small, fishing-based people on the shore of the Wayward River.

Simblin: Lowlands and beachfront lands in the southwest, bordering the Bescos Sea.

Freewell: Woodlands in the farthest northwestern part of the empire. North of Simblin lands.

Players and the GM should feel free to make up any other names or lands they would like for their PCs or NPCs.

While there is no desert landscape in the inhabited parts of Kal-Maddum, players should feel free to create whatever society they think is reasonable: herding, fisher-folk, matriarchal, artistic, martial, whatever suits their fancy. There are only two things to keep in mind: The Peradaini are patriarchal and require a male tyr, and worship of The Great Way and his pantheon are required; all other religion is suppressed.

Readers will notice that some of the tyr's names are portmanteaus of English words and some are not. Any names in English are considered to have been

translated into Peradaini, which typically signals one of three things: the tyr changed his own name to the Peradaini translation of the original as a sign of loyalty and to incur the king's favor, or the tyr's people heavily resisted imperial power and their name in their original language was stripped from them as part of the terms of his surrender. For the third group of people with Peradaini names, see the section on Servants.

Finally, it's traditional to use the tyr's last name as though it designated a nationality. Tejohn Treygar and Uls Ulstrik are both Finstels, while Arla Grimfield is a Grimwood.

People outside the Empire

There are three general classifications of people who live outside the Peradaini empire, and they are generally clustered in specific geographic locations:

The Durdric peoples live in the farthest west edge of the continent, in the mountain ranges around the Bescos Sea.

The herding clans travel through The Sweeps to the north, between the Northern and Southern Barriers, into the Shelterlands.

The peoples of the Indregai Alliance live on the Indrega peninsula in the east.

The Durdric Peoples: Living as mountain folk—terraced farming, fishing high lakes, subsistence hunting—the Durdric are not particularly numerous nor are they well-organized. Some live in villages, some in family enclaves, some are lonely homesteaders. Unless they live in a village, their neighbors are usually few and far between, and they rely on intermarriage between families to establish peaceful community bonds.

One thing they do not do is mine. The Durdric are devout followers of the “earth god” Kelvijinian, and they believe that gouging the earth and removing ores from it is sacrilege. Therefore, the Durdric do not use metal tools—not even if the ores are lying out in the open, exposed by rockslide or running water.

There are few Durdric peoples near the border of the empire: There's a

village close to the tower at Tempest Pass and a few small villages at the westernmost part of The Sweeps. Few people ever meet any Durdric at all except for the Holy Sons.

The Holy Sons are religious fanatics that move through high mountain passes, occasionally descending to attack a mining camp and collapse a mine, an act that they believe will heal the earth.

In fact, people within the empire tend to conflate the Holy Sons with the Durdric people as a whole, thinking they are all religious fanatics. In truth, the Holy Sons are not much liked among their own people (they are less like the religious police and more like religious vigilantes) and most families try to discourage their children from joining The Cause.

An imperial citizen entering a Durdric village or enclave would be welcomed warily (in case they are scouts or spies), allowed to trade, and would be expected to keep their metal possessions out of sight, for politeness's sake.

The herding clans: There are several different clans of herding peoples who travel through The Sweeps, bringing their okshim herds west during the summer months and returning to the distant Shelterlands in the east for the fall and winter. They consider themselves a free people, choose their chieftains by electing the person with the most common sense, and generally live their life on the move. At the center of each herd is a wagon (often more than one) in which the clan transports its most valuable goods.

The herding clans also share a single religion, the worship of Inzu, the god whose breath creates the wind in The Sweeps. Like the Durdric people, they keep peace between themselves through intermarriage, and each clan is liable to have between 500-2000 head of okshim.

All of the herding clans consider themselves free people, not subject to imperial rule. The Peradaini Empire, on the other hand, claims all the lands of The Sweeps from a point east of Fort Piskatook all the way to Tempest Pass and therefore claim the people who pass through them as citizens. What the empire calls taxes, the herding clans call tribute, and they are only collected at the point

of many spears.

After the 13th Festival, King Ghrund Italga installed sleepstones inside stormhouses in The Sweeps. This was intended to demonstrate the value of being willing imperial citizens, but so far it has only reduced the level of violence when taxes/tributes are collected.

The Indregai Alliance: There are five nations living in the Indrega Peninsula, but only four of them are humans. The serpents are covered in the “Non-human People” section. The humans are:

The Ergoll

The Toal

The Winzoll

The Peshkoll

The Toal control the northwestern part of the peninsula, taking it as a solemn duty to prevent imperial attacks through the pass they guard. They consider themselves (correctly, it turns out) to be the first of the Indregai peoples, with the other nations splintering off from them. The languages the different peoples speak are very similar and all descend from Toal.

The Ergoll live south of the Toal, along The Straim, the largest river in Kal-Maddum. They have fought Peradaini troops more than any of the others and have suffered the harshest losses. They also consider themselves the best warriors.

The Winzoll control the eastern part of the peninsula, in the woodlands below the serpents’ territory. They suffered terrible losses against the serpents and feel as though they’ve earned high honors by forging an alliance with them. They are particular rivals of the Ergoll.

The Peshkoll live in the mountainous southernmost part of Indrega. They have little to do with the other nations of the alliance when they can avoid it, which isn’t often. It’s the Peshkoll along with their Winzoll neighbors to the

north who conduct the yearly offering to Boskorul.

Despite their minor language differences, the people of Indregai have several things in common:

1. They wear white when they do anything important, from going to war, to meeting an important person, to getting married.
2. Their banners are also plain white with no insignia. The only difference between one people and another is the banner's shape.
3. They have not figured out how to make steel. Most of their weapons and tools are made of bronze.
4. Everyone is expected to make two pilgrimages in their lives, once to see Kelvijinian and once to see the offering to Boskorul.
5. A shared trait among all four cultures is that they place a high value on taunting, mockery, and insult (what is locally called "wit"). To lose your temper because someone is insulting you is a source of great shame (not as bad as cowardice or murder, but definitely a loss of status) and the greatest status goes to those who coolly return insult for insult, especially if they're funnier and using original jokes. There are many informal rules to be observed: for instance, when someone concedes a contest of "wit" the insults are supposed to stop and they usually do. The Indregai people understand that outsiders do not understand the value of a contest of wits so they do not often challenge them; however, they're well-known for their rather unusual responses to intended insults.

Tyrs

"Tyrs" are a shortened version of "tyrant." Before a clan or people are conquered by the empire, they're usually ruled by a chieftain. Once the empire decides to attack them, they begin referring to that chieftain as a tyrant. Once a people are under imperial rule, they're ruled by a *tyr* (who is under the authority of king's bureaucracy).

A *tyr* is a (male) hereditary ruler of one of the lands that comprise the empire. The culture and tradition they came from may not have been

patriarchal, but the empire is, so the leaders must always be male.

Traditionally, the chieftain (or, if the chieftain was female, her closest male relative) would become the tyr, provided they put up only a token resistance to the invading armies, or surrendered peacefully. Then they would simply have to swear the necessary oaths and open their lands to Peradaini bureaucrats and spears.

Sometimes, a chieftain would want to fight to the bitter end. If that was the case, either the population in the clan would be so reduced by war that their lands would be given to someone else to rule, their families turned into servants and spread across the empire, or a quisling with the charisma to bring a broken people under imperial rule would be appointed.

In his daily life, a tyr is surrounded by his friends and allies, along with the bureaucrats the king has set to watch over him. The chief bureaucrat is the secretary, and he is the tyr's counsel when needed or, if necessary, as an imperial check on the tyr's authority. The secretary does his best to make the tyrship a prosperous one without going against the wishes of the king and a good secretary does so without overtly challenging the tyr's authority in front of his people.

Possible Aspects:

Must hide the conspiracy

Once we were a proud people

Mother makes all the tough choices

Enemies without and within

That valley/lakeshore/mine should belong to me

Important skills:

Contacts, Deceive, Empathy, Fight, Provoke, Rapport, Resources, Will,

Skills that would reflect badly on a tyr:

Burglary, Crafts, Shoot, Stealth

Useful stunts would include **Lie Whisperer, Ear to the Ground, Demagogue or Indomitable**

Soldiers

In Kal-Maddum, it is more common for armies, whether standing or militia, to accept both men and women into their ranks than it is for them to segregate. If someone has the strength and skill to fight within a square, they are welcome to do so. Many women also end up serving as archers.

However, it's rare for a person from one land to serve in the army of another.

Battles are fought with spear, shield, and bow, usually from behind a shield wall or within a "square" (aka a phalanx). Swords are backup weapons for enemies that get too close. Most swords are short swords, used as thrusting weapons.

Note: There are no cavalry units in Kal-Maddum, because there are no horses. Lightly-armored fleet squads and skirmishers are the closest thing armies have to highly-mobile units.

I realize there are people who love the idea of mounted soldiers, riding into battle atop a trusted steed—it's a very romantic image. However, in the novels, the advantage The Blessing has over the humans they fight is in their speed and power, an advantage that would be greatly reduced if humans had horses to ride. So, they aren't included.

However, a campaign set after the events of the trilogy could very well cover the introduction of horses into Kal-Maddum.

Possible Aspects:

For the glory of Peradain

I must honor the warrior tradition of my people

I will be the youngest commander in history

Conquered but proud

Lives to kill

The skills section is pretty self-explanatory, I think.

Possible Stunts:

Shield Wall: +2 to defend themselves or their immediate neighbors when in a shield wall.

Quick Hand: +2 when using a short weapon on the action immediately after breaking through a shield wall.

Also: **Killing Stroke**, **Tough as Nails**, or **Uncanny Accuracy**

Servants

Servants are slaves.

They aren't called slaves inside the Peradaini Empire because The Evening People don't approve of slavery. Once the rulers of Peradain realized this, they knew immediate action had to be taken. By royal decree, all slaves in the empire were renamed "servants." Problem fixed.

In the early years of the empire, most servants were captured soldiers, rebels, criminals whose crimes did not warrant execution, or conquered citizens who did not express a sufficient degree of relief that they had become imperial subjects. As the empire grew, a majority of servants came from people who went deep into debt. Traditionally, debtors were supposed to become servants only until they had worked long enough to pay off the outstanding balance of what they'd borrowed, but it has become standard practice for their masters to charge servants unreasonable rates for food and lodging, ensuring that they never become free.

Many servants are "debt children:" servants' babies who, within hours of birth, are tattooed and turned over to their masters for a lifetime of service, which is supposed to clear the parents' debts. Many times the parents are not freed until the children are old enough to work independently, and masters often demand three or four children from a couple before releasing them.

Every servant is tattooed on the wrist to mark their status if they run away;

Like so many things, the tattoos vary according to which land they come from. When (if) a servant is freed, the tattoo is cut off and they are permitted to heal on a sleepstone.

Any sizable group of servants will have a **cupboard**, a secret, illegal organization dedicated to making life bearable. Cupboards are not intended to help servants plan an escape. Instead, they filch and distribute food and warm clothes, educate children, and police their own (to punish and prevent crimes between servants and to prevent anything that would bring down their master's anger on all servants) in secret. A cupboard is about survival, not revolution.

Finally, servants are usually given a new Peradaini name when they lose their freedom, and the name often reflects the first work duties they're given. A servant who digs might be named "Breakrock." A servant who keeps fires burning might be named "Stokes."

Possible Aspects:

Hope will destroy us

I will get my true name back

Obedience is survival

Useful skills:

Burglary, Crafts, Deceive, Empathy, Notice, Physique, Rapport, Stealth, Will

Skills to avoid:

Provoke, Resources

Possible Stunts:

Just like furniture: Even if they aren't hiding, they can roll Stealth to avoid unwanted attention as long as they're in a place where they are supposed to be.

Hidden pockets: Character is especially skilled at filching small items under everyone's nose. +2 Burglary to steal things while going about normal duties.

Citizens

As a catch-all term for everyone who doesn't fit in the other categories, "Citizens" fill a wide range of potential PCs and NPCs. Peradain and many of the conquered peoples have a tradition of fielding militia units, so many citizens of have access to weapons and weapons training.

The players and GM are encouraged to create any cultural institutions they like, setting them in one of the established peoples or in one invented for the game. Want to have a Thieves Guild? Criminals organized around a single family? A corrupt merchant's council for a PC to be thrown out of? Fresh water pirate society? Temple full of devout priests devoted to overturning the social order? Let your imagination go wild.

COMBAT

Fighting in Squares

There really is no better way to portray the clash of armies than to use the rules from the Fate Toolkit, so I'm just going to defer to them for scenes of war. However, keep in mind that there is no cavalry in Kal-Maddum and that battle tactics mostly resemble the Greek phalanx: soldiers packed in close, with big shields and long spears, plus very short stabbing swords for close fighting. The situation aspects and consequences should reflect this.

Possible situation aspects and invokes:

Dome of Shields: Invoke to defend against ranged attacks.

High Ground: Invoke on a Fight roll against an opponent on lower ground.

Braced: Invoke to defend against or attack a charging enemy.

Iron Weapons: Invoke against enemy with bronze weapons

Possible consequences:

Pressed back

Buckling shield wall

Shield wall shattered

Spells in Combat

Fate Core can already handle armed combat very well, but what about Peradaini scholars casting spells in the midst of turn-based combat?

The best way to deal with scholars in a game is to make them always go last. The Gifts are excellent ways to create new situation aspects or to make ranged attacks, but casting spells is time-consuming.

When determining initiative, have the scholars declare what spells they're going to cast first, in initiative order. Then have the non-scholars act in initiative order; once the non-scholars begin to act, it's too late for the scholars to declare their spells. After non-scholars finish, have the scholars complete each spell in initiative order.

Note: scholars can not hold anything in their hands when they cast, with the exception of a physical item they are enchanting or the item they are shooting with the Tenth Gift.

To disrupt a spell while it's being cast, PCs and NPCs should:

- ◆ Attack the scholar, defended by Will. If the scholar fails to defend the spell is disrupted.
- ◆ Invoke one of the scholar's aspects, typically at the cost of a fate point. The invocation shouldn't be something casual or irrelevant to the situation at hand. You wouldn't invoke *Devoted to her little sister* for a scholar who was about to use the Third Gift on a grass lion out in the wilderness, but it would make sense if the scholar was trying to kill someone in a crowded street in front of the city guard.
- ◆ Changing the circumstances so that the spell becomes impossible to cast. Throwing a character off a cliff will prevent a healing spell being cast on

them. Shutting a door between a scholar and their target would make it impossible to hit them with a dart. And so on. Common sense uber alles.

MAGIC

Overview:

All magic—all spells, at least—comes from the power of The Great Way. Passing through a portal, even once, creates a connection between The Great Way and that individual, plus all the individual's descendants, forever.

How that connection manifests depends a great deal on the species. For the Tilkilit, it manifested mainly as telepathic speech for the queen. For The People Above, it manifested as extraordinary strength and an enhanced ability to lift things when they fly.

For humans, the connection to magic is both tenuous and uncommonly dangerous. Without the guidance of The Evening People, human beings might never have found a way to access their magical abilities. However, once they did, overuse of that magic allowed The Great Way to intrude its thoughts into theirs—to put its mind into theirs—eventually taking over. That's **going hollow**.

A hollowed-out scholar becomes a *wizard*, a sociopath capable of powerful spells who is determined to explore the world around them. Wizards are notoriously indifferent to the pain they cause and they are widely feared and hated. That's the risk of being a scholar; you get to cast spells, but if you overdo it, you turn into a vicious monster with an alien intelligence driving your every decision. See the section on Going Hollow for more information.

Also, it's important to understand that, behind the force of every spell being cast, whether it's one of the Gifts or a wizard's spell, is a powerful intelligence with little understanding of life or emotion.

However, it does understand what a the spell caster wants. Magic understands the caster's intent.

So, when someone speaks a name into an enchanted mirror, they won't

accidentally speak with the wrong person with the same name, because the magic knows who they really want. And the magic knows where the scholar wants a stone block to appear.

Of course, they still have to roll to hit when they attack, and make other skill checks as needed. It's one thing to know what you intend, and another to succeed.

Portals

Aspects:

Connections between worlds

Body of The Great Way

In this setting, there are magical portals that connect one world with another, and an unusual number of them cluster around the continent of Kal-Maddum. Several lie beneath the surface of the ocean, allowing deadly predators to enter local waters. Some are buried underground. Some float just barely above the surface. Some hover hundreds or thousands of feet in the air. All portals are immobile, geographically-speaking.

There are four kinds:

Unchanging: These portals connect two places (usually different worlds but not always) and never close. The connection they establish is unwavering. Most portals are this sort.

Intermittent: This is a portal that connects two places but only opens for ten days every 23 years. When the portal is not open, there is no evidence that it exists. The portal that the Evening People use to visit Peradain is this sort.

Fluctuating, Anchored: This is a portal that never closes on one end, but that changes the location of the other end every ten days. The portal works in a cycle, connecting the same series of locations once every 23 years. The Door in the Mountain is this sort.

Fluctuating, Adrift: The connections this portal changes at both ends. Again,

the connections last for ten days and the portal goes through identical cycles every 23 years, however random it might seem to casual observers on one of the intermittently-connected places. The portal at the bottom of Windmark Lake is this sort, but alligaunt magic has altered its function.

The alligaunts (and only the alligaunts) have magical artifacts that can transform any portal into an Unchanging portal by blocking the power of The Great Way. See the section on inhuman magic for more.

There is no map of the portals, and no guarantee of safety for those traveling them. You can not stick your head through and look around on the far side while your body remains behind. The moment a person touches the portal, they vanish from the place they are in and reappear in the other.

What's more, the atmosphere in that other place might be poison. The portal might be a mile in the air, dropping the traveler screaming into an open volcano. The portal system may connect the worlds but they were not created for the convenience of species traveling between them.

Additionally, anything can pass through a portal, and often does. If a portal suddenly connects a farm valley to the crushing depths of a foreign ocean, the incredible pressures on the other side will blast sea water (along with a lot of suddenly-depressurized local sea life) into the valley. A portal will attempt to equalize the different pressures on each side in the same way opening an airlock in a space ship or a hatch in a submarine would.

Any sentient creature that passes through the portals becomes part of The Great Way's consciousness, which allows them and their descendants to tap into its power to cast magic. See the sections on magic and The Great Way for more.

Limits of Magic

The Gifts of The Evening People are very powerful, but they're limited, too. The most important limitation to remember is this:

Magic can not affect a person's mind.

It can create physical objects. It can destroy them. It can repair them. It can steal energy from them or put energy into them.

But magic can not make a person fall in love. It can not make them leave home to fight for the greater good. It can not make them betray a loved one, or donate to charity, or change their beliefs or emotions in any way.

The power that can do that is Art.

At each Festival, The Evening People trade magic (which is the ability to affect the physical world) for song, theater, storytelling—anything that moves their hearts and souls.

The Thirteen Gifts

The Evening People have come through the Peradaini portal fifteen times, including that first impromptu Festival before anyone realized that's what they were after. The Gifts they offered—the spells—are numbered according to the Festival they came from. That's why there's no Second or Fourth Gift.

The section on Peradain discusses the two failed Festivals, and the section on Spells in Combat can be found, unsurprisingly, in the Combat section. An explanation of “normal” cast times are there. Note below that some spells take so long to cast that they are useless in combat. Note also that while some spells **can only be cast on a focus**, for other spells a focus is optional or forbidden. See the section on “Enchanted Objects” for more information.

Note: being the curious primates they are, human beings have not been content with the Gifts as The Evening People have taught them. Over the years, scholars have slowly, carefully experimented with them to change their effects.

In the spell descriptions, under **Effects**, the text that comes before the “/” describes the original spell offered by The Evening People. The description that comes after is the altered spell humans have created from it. When a scholar learns a spell, they learn all versions of it by default.

The Gifts do not have a spoken component. When a scholar casts, the magic comes from specific mental state, specific visualizations, and specific hand movements.

Scholars roll against their **Lore** skill to cast successfully.

List of spells:

First Gift: *Heal*. The very first spell, and a tremendous surprise to the Peradaini tribesfolk who received it after a few days of polite hospitality. It's the longest, most complex of the Gifts, and the quickest to make someone go hollow.

It's also the first spell that humans changed for themselves, just through everyday lack of discipline, and they discovered that some alterations made a person more sick, and some could heal other things, like injuries.

In the early days, when the Peradaini were just learning magic and building their empire, this spell was widely known. In later years, after the Eighth Gift was destroyed, this spell became one of the most closely guarded secrets in the empire. Scholars who had been taught this spell were supposed to wear a badge on their robes, and their movements were tightly controlled.

At the time the events of *The Great Way* take place, the spell is very effective when cast directly onto an injured character, although that's very rare. Most scholars only use this spell to create or recharge a sleepstone, and only the imminent death or a member of the royal family or a tyr would induce one to risk going hollow by casting directly. However, in the early days of the empire, the spell was much less powerful.

Directly casting this spell onto a character will immediately clear all stress boxes and consequences. Using a sleepstone will clear a minor consequence in a day, will clear a moderate consequence in two days, and will clear a severe consequence in four. See the section on Enchanted Objects for more detail.

Range: Touch. **Casting time:** Four exchanges to affect a single character. Fifteen minutes to create or recharge a sleepstone. **Focus:** Optional. **Effect:** Cure illness/cure injury. See above.

Second Gift: None.

Third Gift: *Start fire.* After the life-changing healing spell of the first Festival, this second spell was meant as a subtle insult, and the Peradaini knew it. However, after some experimentation, a spell to ignite a small fire at touch range became a spell to shoot a jet of fire at enemies.

Range: Touch/Same zone. **Casting time:** Normal. **Focus:** No. **Effect:** Set a small fire (use Lore skill)/Attack someone with fire (use Shoot skill)

Fourth Gift: None.

Fifth Gift: *Purify Water.* The Peradaini were quite grateful to see the return of The Evening People after the disastrous fourth visit, and made an effort to be good hosts. This spell was gratefully received. Now, not only can existing water be made potable, but fresh water can be created out of nothing.

Range: Touch. **Casting time:** Normal. **Focus:** Optional. **Effect:** Purify water/create potable water.

Sixth Gift: *Create Stone.* The Evening People gave this spell to the Peradaini so they could more easily build roads across muddy grasslands, but the original spell, which created a flat two-foot-by-four-foot slab of granite, was eventually altered to allow the creation of blocks as thick as two or three feet. A great many imperial fortifications are built from these blocks.

Range: Same zone. **Casting time:** Normal. **Focus:** No. **Effect:** Create granite block no larger than 2x4x0.5 feet/ Create granite block no larger than 2x4x3 feet

Seventh Gift: *Fertilize Crops.* One of the most important spells for the growth and expansion of the empire, this one does pretty much what it says.

Range: One mile radius. **Casting time:** One minute. **Focus:** No. **Effect:** Make plants grow at five times their normal rate for the next twenty four hours without draining nutrients in the soil/Make plants wither and die.

Eighth Gift: *Teleport.* The Evening People offered this spell with the idea

that it would help rescue people in dangerous situations, but the king of the growing empire became convinced (with good reason) that it represented an unacceptable risk of assassination. Every scholar who had been taught this spell (and many more) were executed, and the Scholars Guild created. See the section What Happened to the Eighth Gift? for more information. **This spell is reputed to be lost.**

Range: Three zones. **Casting time:** Normal. **Focus:** No. **Effect:** Spellcaster or a target that is roughly human-sized disappears from their present position and reappears in a place that the scholar chooses.

Ninth Gift: *Suppress Fire.* The Ninth Festival took place shortly after a fire had ravaged a large portion of the city, and The Evening People thought it would be a kindness to teach the Peradaini a way to extinguish the next one. This spell has also been useful for sieges, since it renders enemies unable to cook meals for their soldiers.

Range: One mile. **Casting time:** Three Turns. **Focus:** No. **Effect:** Shrinks a flame until it is extinguished.

Tenth Gift: *Drive Nail.* By the Tenth Festival, the Peradaini Empire was large and widespread, the ruling Italga family was well-established on the throne, and the capital city was a center of trade through its network of granite roads and newly dug canals. However, the Peradaini had become a bit arrogant, and the Festival they threw that year was heavily skewed toward comedy and pratfalls, including some jibes against The Evening People themselves. To show their disdain, The Evening People made a gift of a spell that drives nails into wood to a people that still built with tongue-and-groove construction.

It was a rebuke, and it was acknowledged as one by the Peradaini, even as the scholars worked to modify the Gift to allow them to shoot darts at their enemies.

Range: Two zones. **Casting time:** Normal. **Focus:** No. **Effect:** Drive a nail into wood (use Lore skill)/Attack someone with a dart or other small projectile

(use Shoot skill).

Eleventh Gift: *Crumble rock.* Literally, the ability to make stone crumble to pieces. This is a mining spell, and more scholars have been taught this spell than any other, as the empire seeks out minerals for its growing army.

Range: One zone. **Casting time:** Normal. **Focus:** No. **Effect:** Break large stone into many smaller ones.

Twelfth Gift: *Translation stones.*

While it seems that this spell ought to violate the rule that magic can not affect a person's mind, what translation stones actually do is access the ability of The Great Way to understand any verbal communication.

Range: Touch. **Casting time:** Fifteen minutes. **Focus:** Required. **Effect:** Create an object that allows you to understand the speech of any sentient creature.

Thirteenth Gift: *Communicate through mirror.* Say the name of the person you want to speak to, and the mirror that is physically closest to them will begin to glow. Whether they are able to come to the mirror or not is a separate question; they might be miles away.

Kal-Maddum does not have mirrored glass, so mirrors are typically made from polished silver or bronze.

Range: Touch. **Casting time:** Fifteen minutes. **Focus:** Required. **Effect:** Create object that allows long distance communication

Fourteenth Gift: *Shine light.* This spell will create a small, glowing, floating orb that will light up a small space. If it is cast onto a stone, the stone will glow for twice as long but obviously will not float. This spell can also be used to create a sudden blinding flash of light, but that version of the spell can not be cast onto a focus.

Range: Create a light: Touch/Blinding flash: all sighted people in one zone

Casting time: Normal. **Focus:** Optional/No. **Effect:** Create a glowing light/Blinding flash (Create the advantage *Blinded* with a Lore roll defended by Athletics to look away in time)

Fifteenth Gift: *Flight*. Another spell that can only be cast on a focus. A stone enchanted with this spell can be used to create a flying cart. For more detail on creating wooden objects *other* than carts with the ability to fly, see the section on **Flying Carts**, below.

Range: Touch. **Casting time:** Fifteen minutes. **Focus:** Required. **Effect:** Create flying vehicle.

Enchanted objects

The Gifts

Scholars have a limited ability to create magic items. None can be cast onto organic materials like wood or flesh. With one exception, enchanted objects can be used by anyone and they do not put stress or consequences on a scholar's stress track. Further details are described below.

Flying carts

This is the newest of the Gifts, and it can only be cast on a focus, at least so far. Because of its newness, the Peradaini have not been particularly clever about how they build them. At the moment, the spell is cast on a stone, which is implanted in a large wooden disk, painted black, and mounted atop a cart not much different from the okshim-drawn carts people use on the roads.

The carts can not lift off if muddy ground holds onto the wheels, and they will not work if the stone is mounted in something other than wood, or if someone stands above the stone. Living people on the cart must be below the disk or the cart will lose its lift. The spell on each stone must be refreshed after four months of active use.

Activating the magic in a flying cart requires special training. A cart driver

must go through the same sort of specific mental preparations that a spellcaster would, but without the hand movements.

The stone that bears a flight spell does not *have* to be mounted inside an object of the design described above, although a heavy cart with a sizable disk above is what The Evening People recommended. The scholars tower has experimented with smaller devices, including wooden harnesses designed to carry a single person.

What they discovered is that, like the translation stones (mentioned below) a flight spell can have unfortunate effects on the driver. Unless the stone is mounted in at least 300 lbs of wood, the driver will begin to take stress on his scholar track. Instead of going hollow, the character will acquire the mild consequence **Half-weight**, then the moderate consequence **Quarter weight**, then the severe consequence **Buoyant**. The extreme consequence would be **Lighter than air** and represents the risk that the character will float away like a balloon and never be seen again.

If the stone is mounted in a very small amount of wood, perhaps the size of a mortar board, the character will start taking stress after an hour, approximately. With more wood, it would take longer, at the GM's discretion.

Fountainstones

These are relatively rare because they don't last longer than five days, but it is possible to create a fountain that is not fed by an outside source. Alternatively, a fountain that is fed from an outside source can be enchanted to purify the water that passes through it. Fountainstones are sometimes created for special events, but few scholars are willing to risk going hollow when Kal-Maddum has so many natural sources of water.

Once kinzchu stones become widespread (if the campaign is set after the events of the trilogy) those calculations will change, obviously.

Lightstones

When the Fourteenth Gift is cast on a solid object, it glows brightly enough

to light one zone. The effect lasts for about 25 hours, then slowly fades. Like the fountainstones mentioned above, these are mostly created for special occasions.

Mirrors

Typically made of polished silver, these mirrors will allow long distance communication between two people. To someone someone, a person has only to expose the mirror to light and speak a person's name. The mirror closest to that person would begin to glow. Someone at the destination could then step in front of the mirror and a video chat could ensue.

Keep in mind that "closest" doesn't have to mean "close."

The mirrors themselves are very heavy, obviously, and the ones created by the Scholar's Tower are sometimes mounted on a large lead base to make them cumbersome for thieves.

The Peradaini have placed mirrors in their forts and the tyr's holdfasts.

Sleepstones

These are the most precious of all the enchanted objects the Peradaini scholars can create and the most numerous. They are sometimes created from a simple stone slab, but more often the spell is cast onto a massive stone block, largely to make it difficult to steal.

Using a sleepstone will clear a minor consequence in a day, will clear a moderate consequence in two days, and will clear a severe consequence in four. Those times can be finessed, if the game narrative requires it, by saying the spell is fading and needs to be recharged (meaning the healing effect takes longer) or by saying the spells are fresh (shortening the time). The consequences clear concurrently; an injured character doesn't need four days to clear a severe consequence, then another two for a moderate one.

While on the sleepstone, people still require food and water. PCs with very serious injuries will need to be removed from the stone, woken, and rehydrated. If those breaks are kept short, there's no need to reset the "timer".

Sleepstones are generally available to soldiers if they're injured during war

according to common sense triage rules (with exceptions made for social status) but beyond that the rules vary according to local custom.

Of course, as stated on page 165 of the Fate rulebook, the Fate system isn't really suited for "insta-healing." If the players prefer, the setting could be altered to remove sleepstones altogether.

Translation gems

A spell can not have a focus made from organic material, like wood or bone, but this is the only focus that must be a gem or crystal.

Anyone who uses a translation gem must be careful not to use it for too long. After more than an hour or so, the user will begin to speak nonsense words in casual conversation without realizing it. Treat these like the mental consequence, **Speaks gibberish** but with increasing severity. If allowed to go on too long, it will become an extreme consequence, permanently changing the character.

The Plunder

After the events of the trilogy, the peoples of Kal-Maddum found themselves with newly acquired magics which they stole from the alligaunts. None are spells to be cast directly. Alligaunts will only cast spells on a focus, and they do not have to be inorganic material.

First Plunder: kinzchu stones

Originally stolen from the Tilkilit but in actuality created by alligaunts, these small stones will nullify a person's connection to The Great Way and their ability to do magic for about thirty-six hours, at which point it will slowly return. It also removes curses, sometimes permanently, and will kill a creature that can not survive without magic, like The Evening People.

They work best when cast on volcanic stone, but most types of igneous rock will do.

Second Plunder: water gems

While a water gem is touching a character's body, they are able to breathe water as though it was air and are immune to the effects of pressure and temperature. They're also able to speak normally. Of course, it's one thing to know you can breathe water, it's another to submerge your face and inhale.

Many water gems are also translation stones.

Like translation stones, water gems require a crystal structure to receive their enchantment. They should be cast onto precious or semi-precious stones.

Third Plunder: serpent rope

Serpent rope is capable of moving according to the holder's mental command. If several people are in contact with it, it obeys the first person who touched it. Once the first lets go, control passes to the person who has been holding it longest. As such, it's not much use for binding prisoners.

Fourth Plunder: portal hooks

These black iron bars are bent into hooks at each end, and they have been enchanted to block the power of The Great Way. Typically, that means they can be "hooked" onto the edge of a portal to prevent it from closing or changing. If several are hooked together, characters within are unaffected by scholars' magic.

Wizard's Spells

A wizard's spell is any magic that is not directly related to one of the Gifts.

There's only one wizard's spell shown directly in the novels—the cloud of acid that Doctor Warpoole sends into the Scholar's Tower—but players can create their own with the GM's help. Note, each spell should take three years of dedicated care and study to create, and that's only if they have kinzchu stones. Otherwise it should be ten.

Alternatively, PC's might prefer to know wizard's spells that have been

worked out generations ago, but have been handed down in secret.

If a player wants to create a spell not covered by the Thirteen Gifts, consider these general guidelines:

They can not affect a person's mind: The translation spell works because it accesses The Great Way's ability to understand communication. However, magic still can not control a person's feelings, memory, belief system, or habits, except to the degree that extremely crude physical manipulation could. So, you couldn't design a spell that would make a person more compliant and peaceful, but you might be able to design one that caused brain damage the way a transorbital lobotomy would.

They shouldn't work as well as the Gifts: They might take longer to cast, have a smaller effect, or (like Doctor Warpoole's cloud of acid) have a significant chance of affecting the caster instead of the target.

If there are no kinzchu stones, knowing a single wizard's spell is a capital offense. Just one. You don't even have to use the spell. Just knowing it (or owning the teaching materials) is a capital offense.

What happened to the Eighth Gift?

Before the Eighth Festival, spells were typically passed down informally. If a young person wanted to learn magic, they had to find a relative or family friend willing to teach them, and if that teacher had too many students go hollow, he or she would be visited by members of the local community—along with a contingent of soldiers—who would gently suggest that taking on more students was a bad idea.

As the empire grew, generation upon generation, this system became less and less tenable. In larger cities, the social pressures to keep scholar-teachers in line were less effective, and there were more and more wizards roaming the countryside, committing terrible acts of violence.

A few years after the Eighth Festival, King Imbalt Winslega invited every scholar in the empire to a special festival where they would all be taught the Eighth Gift. Spell casters came from all over the empire, lured in by the

opportunity of a new spell to teach.

On the day they were to learn the Eighth Gift, the king also scheduled a huge feast. The spell casters who skipped the lesson to enjoy the feast, presumably because they already knew the spell (although surely more than a few wanted to enjoy themselves and planned to learn the teleport spell later), were all executed. The casters who went to the lesson were imprisoned.

Those few became the new Scholars' Guild.

Scholars

The old ways of passing down spells within families or through apprenticeships was over. Now, anyone who wanted to study magic had to go to Peradain itself and apply at the tower.

Scholars were no longer permitted to travel outside the palace without bodyguards, and those guards were not trained to protect the spell caster. They were trained to kill them to prevent them being captured. A scholar and their guards were inseparable, on pain of death.

Once the Guild was formed, new norms were established. The scholars running things learned spells but rarely cast them. Scholars who were sent out into the empire to work—either to crumble rock in the mines, to build stone fortifications, or whatever—were expected to survive seven to ten years before spell casting hollowed them out and their bodyguards executed them. They were expendable, but they were paid well enough while they lived.

Some high-born members of the palace court are trained as scholars, in part to keep them within the palace and in part to justify their execution if killing them became politically expedient.

PCs and NPCs:

For a character to be accepted as a scholar, they will need to have certain traits that the guild values. The most important one is a willingness to follow orders and a loyalty to the throne and the tower. Applicants must convince the scholars in the guild that they would follow the rules, be careful with their spell

casting so they do not go hollow, and not try to escape from their bodyguards.

For scholars, possible aspects would include **Goes along to get along** or **Whatever you say, sir** or **I have these imbeciles completely fooled**.

Extra: Scholar

Permission: Lore skill of at least Fair (+2), use of both hands and all ten fingers, an aspect that would convince the Scholars Guild that the character will follow their orders, can demonstrate loyalty to the Throne of Skulls and the Scholars Tower.

Cost: one refresh, must take the aspect *A scholar of the empire*.

Character can cast the Gifts, although the Scholars Guild rarely teaches all thirteen Gifts to a scholar.

Characters can also overcome with Lore against Mediocre (+0) opposition if touching or Great (+4) opposition at a range of up to one zone—to detect the presence of magic, whether in an object or a person.

Characters receive a separate stress track and a separate set of consequence slots, based on the character's Will, used only to track the repercussions of going hollow. See the section "Going Hollow" for the sorts of consequences that should go here, and when.

As *A scholar of the empire*, the character is a treasured resource—more precious than gold—never to be left unprotected, used up without good reason, loaned to someone who can't be trusted or allowed to fall into enemy hands.

Going Hollow

In the empire, there are few things more frightening than a wizard who is still capable of casting spells. They're the subject of made-up children's fright stories and of very real tales of grief and tragedy.

The mental and emotional toll that magic takes on a scholar comes from a single cause: the mind of The Great Way, a being that is intelligent but not alive in any normal sense, is trying to intrude into the personality of scholar. When

The Great Way succeeds, the scholar **goes hollow** and becomes a **wizard**.

The Great Way has two powerful drives: *to know and be known*. It does not “speak” to or through the people who have gone hollow. It does not share thoughts and it’s not a “voice in the character’s head”. Instead, it expresses itself as a set of powerful compulsions a wizard will find difficult to resist.

The Great Way is also utterly without empathy.

To know: The Great Way is intensely curious about the physical world. How do things work? What do they look like on the inside? How do they taste? How can they be changed? It has a powerful desire for new experience.

To be known: The Great Way has a lust for power and infamy, derived from its contact with the minds that pass through it. It longs to do great deeds and be perceived as powerful. See the section on The Great Way for more detail about why this is.

Taking damage on the scholar track

A scholar’s stress boxes and consequences become filled because they succeed at a minor or serious cost, or because they overuse magic. As stated in the Fate Core rulebook on page 132, a minor cost could be a stress box, and a serious cost could be taking a consequence at the lowest free level.

If a PC decides to succeed at a cost, the GM is not required to offer consequences or stress on the scholar track. Not at first, anyway. However, some basic guidelines for succeeding at a cost follow:

1. Is it a difficult spell? The longer the casting time, the more complex the spell. The more complex the spell, the more likely it is to cause a scholar to go hollow. Simple spells like the Third, Sixth, and Tenth Gifts can be cast often, sometimes a few dozen times in an afternoon, but the First and Thirteenth might be risky to try twice in one day. That’s why medical scholars prefer to enchant sleepstones rather than cast healing spells directly.
2. Has the scholar cast several spells recently? If it’s the first spell they’ve cast in a week, it’s unlikely to make them go hollow. If they’ve been

casting spells often (depending on the complexity of the Gift) it might be time to mark their stress track.

3. Has the scholar been casting the same spell over and over? Repetition causes characters to go hollow faster. Variety slows the process down.

Scholars can also take stress without succeeding at a cost, if they've been doing a lot of magic. If they've created enough stone to build a small house, created three translation stones, healed five people, or otherwise cast a lot of spells, it's reasonable to ask them to take a stress point.

As always, it's up to the GM to determine how dangerous spellcasting should be.

The first sign that a scholar is going hollow is a leaden feeling in the stomach. That night, they'll have upsetting dreams, especially dreams of weightlessness, which most people experience as falling. These are the effects of marks in the character's **stress boxes** even if the stress boxes were cleared before the character went to bed.

With a **mild consequence**, the consciousness of The Great Way begins to make itself felt. The scholar will experience the entity's loneliness and sorrow without necessarily understanding the source. They will also find their own emotions and sensory input uncomfortable, as though they've become hypersensitive. Their clothes will feel rough and scratchy, and the scholar's hands will feel very tender. *Alien sorrow.*

With a **moderate consequence**, the scholar will have the feelings above and their facial expressions will no longer show emotion (aka flattened affect) with one exception: they will occasionally weep for no apparent reason. The part of The Great Way that is inside them longs to return to itself; the scholar will feel that longing but won't know of any way to satisfy it unless they see a portal. When that happens, they will realize that's what they've been longing for. Casting a spell will ease their suffering for a moment, but of course that only makes things worse in the long run. *Weeping scholar*

With a **severe consequence**, almost all of the scholar's emotions will be

drained away. Close ties and bonds with others, whether family or friends, will mean very little. Being touched will be unbearable. The instinct for self-preservation will also fade; characters will find it difficult to act with urgency.

Going hollow.

If a character is taken out through their scholar track, they become **wizards**. Replace the Scholar extra with the Attuned to The Great Way extra below.

Whenever a character receives a consequence, the GM should immediately offer them a fate point to cast a spell. Any spell. The scholar's new consequences can be temporarily relieved (but only for the length of time it takes to cast) but recovery time for any and all marked stress boxes and consequences will double.

Recovery:

Stress and consequences in the scholar's track heal at the same rate as physical stress. However, a scholar does not need medical attention; what they need is to immediately stop casting spells. If they cast even a single spell, the recovery time needed to clear their consequences has to start over again.

Wizards:

Not all wizards cast wizard spells. Many have never learned them, or have never tried to create one. What's more, most find the Gifts to be powerful enough on their own.

Wizards are extremely potent spell casters. Where a scholar could shoot one dart, a wizard might shoot four or five at different targets. Where a scholar could crumble a stone block, a wizard could choose to crumble it into specific shapes.

In effect, a wizard should be much more powerful than a normal scholar.

Extra: Attuned to The Great Way.

Permission: To be "taken out" through consequences in the scholar's track, use of both hands and all ten fingers.

Cost: The aspect *Scholar of the empire* must be changed to *Everyone can tell I'm a wizard*. Additionally, the character's high concept must change to *To know and be known at any price*. Any aspects a scholar has that refers to a connection to another character or devotion to a high ideal must be changed. *Devoted spouse and parent* might become *Selfish in all things*. *Dedicated to serving the king's justice* might become *Hunted by those I once judged*.

Wizards get +2 on every roll to cast a spell.

Spellcasting will not be faster, but it can be improved in other ways. Wizards who know the first gift can not only heal wounds, they can seamlessly graft limbs from one body to another, even from different species. Wizards who know the third gift can extend their attack to a longer range, or widen the attack to strike more people. Wizards who know the tenth gift can shoot several projectiles (up to six) at once.

If a wizard does not know a spell, they can learn it by studying an object enchanted with it and making a Lore roll against Great (+4) opposition.

Wizards are also evil sociopaths who torture and kill people for no good reason at all. If a high-born, wizard from an influential family is ever captured, six of their fingers are cut off (leaving only index and thumb) to make spellcasting impossible. If any other kind of wizard is captured, they're executed on the spot.

Inhuman magic

Non-human creatures also have access to magic, of course, but it's very different from the way humans use it. For instance, The People Above call magic "world-breaking" because they understand it comes from outside the universe, but do not realize that their ability to fly has been magically boosted. While The Evening People rarely place their magic into a focus, alligaunts rarely use it any other way. For the Tilkilit, their magical ability has been concentrated in their leaders, the queens.

In short, magic is different for each of the peoples. See their individual writeups for examples.

NON-HUMAN PEOPLE

It's common within science fiction and fantasy settings to allow human characters to be incredibly diverse (in terms of their personalities if not their racial/cultural backgrounds) while reducing non-humans to some narrow aspect of the human experience. Dwarfs become gruff, acquisitive craftworkers. Klingons become warriors obsessed with honor. Elves are haughty and artistic. Sand People are faceless bandits.

Maybe that's fine in a fictional setting where many characters will never have a chance to be more than spear-carriers. In a role-playing game, it's much too limiting.

Worse, it plays into people's unfortunate tendency to think of in-groups as varied, diverse, and unique, while reducing out-groups to stereotypes.

The Axis

The way I'd like to address this is to define an **axis** for each species. Whether the PCs or NPCs are human or not, they have a specific perspective on the world that centers on this axis.

For normal humans, the axis would be **social grouping**. Humans define themselves by the groups they belong to and the ones they do not. They organize themselves by family, or common interest, or class, or nation, or village. Often, they define themselves by the way they violate social norms and defy the groups around them. Maybe they become outlaws or revolutionaries. Maybe, like a cloistered monk, they seek enlightenment in solitude. However it's expressed, this way of looking at the world is so common it's almost invisible to them.

In fact, many of the aspects PCs take (in my experience) are socially-oriented: membership in a organization, an individual they are devoted to, an out-group they're battling, etc.

So! Each individual species described below will include an axis for their species. An axis isn't the end-all be-all of their personalities, but it is a powerful

influence on the way they see the world and their place in it.

Writeups for each species will also include standard stunts and/or extras for every member of the species to reflect the abilities of their non-human physiology and affinity for magic.

Alligaunts

AXIS: Hunting

ASPECTS:

Possible High Concepts

Afraid of very big game

Other predators make the best prey

Must impress the elders

Our greatest hunters owe it all to my crafts

Contempt for the old ways

Possible Troubles

I can bring that big thing down

Stealing kills is fun

Intelligent beings should not be prey

Only intelligent prey is worthy of me

Other Possible Aspects

Someday I will be a master crafter

Bad hunt left me skittish

Prey should be shared

Youth have forgotten the old ways

We can't all be hunters, you know

Stunts:

Creatures of the water: +2 to Fight rolls in water.

Ambush hunter: You can use Stealth to make physical attacks, provided your target isn't already aware of your presence and is not expecting an attack.

Extras:

Hunting and Magic Are One:

Permission: Character is an alligaunt. All alligaunts can create magic items, although many believe it's beneath them.

Cost: 1 refresh.

Alligaunts are creatures of magic. They do not cast spells but they do craft powerful magic items. See also the list of The Plunder in the Enchanted Objects section. Alligaunts are capable of other magic, such as a stone that projects the speaker's voice as though it was coming from nowhere as well as the creation of powerful transformation magic like the spell that created The Blessing.

Alligaunt characters should have a lot of leeway in the magical effects they create, but their spells take a very long time. Creating something as simple as a stone to throw their voice might only take two days to create, while the work required to create The Blessing might require several years. It wouldn't be unreasonable for other spells to take several months.

Alligaunts also have the other abilities described in the Wizard extra: they can detect magic when it's nearby. They can learn spells by studying enchanted objects. Etc.

Description:

Alligaunts are black and green alligator-like creatures that can walk on four legs or two. However, they're much more comfortable traveling flat in the water.

For the alligaunts, the words "hunt", "pray", and "magic" all come from the same root. All are sacred, and the hunt is an essential part of their culture. Not everyone hunts all the time, but it's a very rare individual who has never hunted.

For craftspeople, religious figures, spell casters, and general populace, hunting is something to do when they are young and maybe once or twice a year when they are older. For the elites and those who would join the elites, hunting

is how they prove their worth. Many youngsters without the talent or skill for truly exceptional hunting are discouraged from venturing out, directed toward maintenance work, mathematics or the arts, but the ambitious care about little but the prestige of an auspicious kill. It's a form of sacred performance art.

Alligaunts do not truly understand the concept of war, armies, or self-sacrifice. They think like predators and assume that other intelligent beings see the world as they do.

The Evening People

AXIS: Control

Possible High Concepts

Balance in all things

Struggle is a necessary vice

I need nothing and no one

Better to support the weak than undercut the strong

Possible Troubles:

Resistance is gauche

Secretly wants to be best

Only I know the best way to do things

The old ways should return.

Other Possible Aspects.

You will know better someday

Fighting harms all sides

Ritual and art bring purpose

Harmony is wisdom and strength

We aid lesser beings who please us

Once, we were like you

There is much you do not understand

Primitives are so fascinating

Stunts:

Higher Being: An Evening Person has an aura about them that confers a +2 in any social interaction with other peoples.

Extras:

Magic Is Like Breathing:

Permission: Character is an Evening Person

Cost: 2 refresh, cannot take Physique, Fight, or Shoot skills

Any spell that an Evening Person knows, from the original Gifts to other magics they have not shared with humans, can be cast without error and will always succeed with style.

Description:

The Evening People are frail, birdlike humans who emit an angelic golden magical light. Their eyes are golden, and so is their skin. Their hair grows straight back on their head and is very stiff; close inspection will show that they are vestigial feathers.

They value soft power and conflict-free resolution above all else. Their homelands are meticulously designed and cultivated like English gardens, if English gardens accommodated local fauna. They have removed all predators from their lands, relying instead on magic to maintain exactly balanced populations of herbivores.

They are also creatures of magic. A touch with a kinzchu stone will remove the Higher Being stunt and Magic Is Like Breathing extra. A second touch will kill them. They can not survive without magic

Because their **Axis** is control, much of their thinking revolves around subjugating — through soft power — anything or anyone who does not do exactly what they want. This makes them the opposite of humans in an important way: they dislike and mistrust social groupings, except under direst circumstances.

The People Above

AXIS: Flight

ASPECTS:

Possible High Concepts

The sky is ours, the land and sea is for prey

Let me show off my skills

My deformed wing does not define me

Whoever commands these updrafts, commands all

Possible Troubles

Low altitude is the ultimate thrill

Wings and talons are all the tools we need

Weak flyer

I share the sky with no one

Is there no easier prey?

Other Possible Aspects

Those below are mere beasts

No nest is safe enough

Hunter first and last

Dedicated acolyte of The Shadow Above

Abnormal coloring sets me apart

I guard when others hunt

Stunts:

Raptor's Vision: Can ignore up to 4 points of opposition on Notice rolls caused by extreme distance.

Swoop: +2 to Fight or Weapon:2 for the first attack of a conflict when that attack is a dive attack on a ground-or water-based target.

Extras:

Magically-Enhanced Flight:

Permission: Character is one of The People Above

Cost: 1 Refresh

The People Above can fly naturally, but after passing through The Great Way, their ability is magically enhanced. They ignore obstacles when moving between zones and can pass over non-flying enemies without fear of being engaged. They can also lift much heavier objects than their wingspan would suggest. +2 to Physique rolls for lifting things into the air.

If their magic is taken from them, such as by touching a kinzchu stone, they can still fly, but clumsily. They will lose the bonus to their Physique roll and their Swoop stunt.

Description:

The People Above (referred to in the trilogy as “ruhgrit”, but this is their name for themselves) resemble very large golden eagles, if golden eagles had a 30 foot (or more, sometimes) wingspan. Their coloring is very plain, and it can be difficult for outsiders to tell them apart.

They consider any creature that cannot fly a lesser being, and therefore incapable of true thought. They also consider magic to be a dangerous pastime of the lower order, not recognizing that they themselves are partly made of magic.

However, unlike most creatures, they are inquisitive and open-minded; with the use of the translation stone, they can be convinced that other creatures are capable of thought and self-awareness even without wings. Such lower beasts might never be as exalted as The People Above, but some raptors would begin to feel a bit awkward about hunting them.

Having an axis centered on flight means that they see the world in terms of above and below, and in terms of physical exertion.

The Shadow Above is how they refer to their sole god: as a hunter greater than themselves.

Serpents

AXIS: Territory

ASPECTS:

Possible High Concepts

My hunting ground is inviolate

Companion to our enemy king

Let others take the lead; I will survive to reap the benefits

We have lost our way and deserve to be slaves

Possible Troubles

Patience is weakness

Domesticated prey shames me

Anti-human revolutionary

Other Possible Aspects.

Humans have much to teach us

Home territory already picked out

My human commander would be welcome on my lands

Better to strike fear than to actually strike

Lower castes should bring me meat

Stunts:

Ambush predator: +2 to Stealth rolls when sneaking through any zone containing concealment or clutter, for example, a stand of trees with leafy undergrowth, a room full of furniture, or swampland full of tall grass

Limbless: +1 Refresh for having no arms or legs.

Extras:

Envenomed

Permission: Character is a serpent

Cost: None.

By spending a fate point, a serpent may inflict extra damage on a successful bite attack. If the bite inflicts at least one shift of damage, the serpent inflicts a second hit from its venom. The attack automatically hits for two shifts of damage.

The fate point must be spent *before* the attack roll is made. A missed roll wastes the point and the venom.

Description:

Serpents can grow to be 15 to 20 feet long, and at full size they are large enough to devour an average 10 year old human child. They speak only in hisses, their heads are long and wedge-shaped, and their scales are remarkably beautiful. Serpents' scales are glossy black that refract brilliant rainbows of light in sunlight.

The serpents control a very small part of the Indrega peninsula, and before they sued for peace with the Alliance, that territory was shrinking. Humans were driving them off their lands and killing them faster than they could hatch new children. Serpents fought the way they hunted—through stealth and ambush—and while an average serpent was more than a match for an average unarmed human, they could not defeat organized groups of armed humans.

A meeting of the largest landholders was arranged, and it was decided that they would bide time. Six generations of a truce between the humans and serpents would help them fend off the incursions of other hostile humans, give them a chance to learn human fighting methods and animal domestication, and to breed—in secret—a great army of their own to sweep all other creatures from Indrega and claim it for their own. Once Indrega was theirs, they would look to the rest of Kal-Maddum.

That plan was only two years from fruition when The Blessing arrived.

The serpents have a complicated caste system, which allows for limited mobility within their society. There are serpents who “own” huge swaths of hunting ground, and there are lower castes who hunt on that land, bringing meat

to the owner. There are also castes who create new rhythmic, poetic chants, who entreat the spirit behind the world, who care for unhatched eggs, who dig and maintain the burrows they use as homes, and who police other serpents to make sure they stay within the duties of their caste, and so on. Feel free to make up as many social roles as you like.

Serpents feel no loyalty at all to their leaders or each other, but they do feel a powerful connection to the land they live on, and form bonds based on location.

Tilkilit

AXIS: Obedience

ASPECTS:

Possible High Concepts

Better to die following orders than live without them

I have a better plan

Thinks with one mind

We are being led into ruin

Happy to die for my queen

Possible Troubles

I hesitate when others do not

Sometimes you just have to steal something

Blindly obedient

I have no orders for this situation

Other Possible Aspects.

Lance troops are the true heart of the empire

Worm riders are the elite

In love with the queen

Someday the queen will discover my doubts

All other creatures are inferior

Only death in battle will honor my queen

Stunts:

Bug Body: The Tilkilit are surprisingly strong. +2 to Physique rolls when they are lifting, carrying, leaping, or doing any action that requires brute strength.

Natural jumpers: Every third exchange, the Tilkilit are able to jump from one zone to another (as long as there are no obstructions above like a low roof) without concern for intervening obstacles.

Extras:

Anti-magic stones:

Permission: Soldiers receive this weapon when the queen thinks it's necessary to distribute them.

Cost: None.

See the listing for kinzchu stones in the Enchanted Objects section.

Monster Worm:

Permission: Character is the leader of a worm rider division

Cost: 1 refresh

This gigantic, tunneling worm operates at under the command of a worm rider. Using the rules for **Mass Combat** from the Fate System Toolkit, let the tilkilit soldier and the worm it rides act as a single unit.

Telepathy:

Permission: Character is a Tilkilit queen

Cost: None

The Tilkilit queen can read the minds of intelligent creatures within a ten mile radius, and can also "speak" with anyone capable of language. She can also make a Will attack on anyone in that radius by spending a fate point.

There's no refresh cost for this extra; it is balanced out by the fact that the queen is limbless, blind, and immobile in her underground birthing chamber.

Description:

The Tilkilit look something like upright ants, and they are about the size of a ten year old boy. They use copper weapons and fight with parry sticks rather than shields. Also, their throwing arm is so strong that they have not bothered to invent missile weapons.

They must eat almost constantly and keep a supply of sweet, sap-like cruff on hand at all times. Except for the queen, who is telepathic, they communicate in two ways. At great distances or in high winds, they use a crude tapping, clicking language capable of only rudimentary language. Otherwise, they communicate through extraordinarily complex scents.

MONSTERS, GODS, & OTHER BEINGS

The creatures listed in this section don't have an axis because they are either singular beings or monsters. They're also generally unsuited to be PCs.

As mentioned in **Fate System Toolkit** (page 156), a monster's instinct aspect gives a bonus of +3 instead of +2.

The Blessing

Aka: the grunts

Instinct Aspect: *All Must Be Blessed*

Trouble: *Cannot Hold Breath*

Aspect 1: *Hunger Cannot Be Denied*

Aspect 2: *All Barriers Must Be Shattered*

Aspect 3: *Protect Our Own*

Skills (Blue):

Fantastic (+6) Athletics

Superb (+5) Physique

Great (+4) Fight

Good (+3) Notice

Fair (+2) Provoke

Average (+1) Stealth

For Purple grunts, use Fantastic (+6) Physique, Superb (+5) Fight, Great (+4) Athletics

Stunts:

Hard to Kill: The Blessing regenerate wounds, but slowly. After one has been killed, they will recover their injuries and become fully healed in one day (at most).

Greater Weakness: Being incapable of holding their breath, The Blessing will drown almost instantly if submerged in water, becoming insensate, and become permanently dead in three minutes. The same is true if its breathing is blocked with mud or dirt, or if a weapon is left in the brain or heart to prevent regeneration for one day.

Single-Minded: Once per scene, +2 to defend an attempt to distract, confuse, or dissuade a grunt from trying to spread its curse.

Hunter's Roar: A grunt may use its roar as a Provoke attack on targets hiding in its zone in an attempt to instill blind terror and cause them to flee. The grunt can make this attack even if it does not know for sure that a target is within range.

Extras:

Blessing Its Prey:

Permission: Human or nonhuman person who has received The Blessing

Cost: 1 refresh

The Blessing spreads through biting, and anyone who is bitten (but not killed and eaten) begins the transformation into a grunt one minute after the attack.

They immediately acquire Aspect 3: **Protect Our Own**, which prevents them from harming themselves or others who have been cursed. After three days, they transform completely and the old character is lost, leaving a grunt in their place. Only intelligent species capable of language (and therefore of saying the name of the curse) can receive The Blessing.

Description:

The Blessing is both the name of the curse and the name of the transformed creature the curse creates. Humans transform into blue-furred creatures that are part gorilla and part bear, with thick rough ridges on its upper back and shoulders, which is slightly larger than a human. The Evening People change into the purple grunts, who are extraordinarily large but without the ridges. Both versions have long fangs and long, gorilla-like toes on their hind legs..

Other sentient creatures will transform in different ways, and the more inherently magical they are, the more powerful The Blessing will make them.

Since The Blessing is typically a source of horror to those affected by it, keep in mind that the transformation should affect each sentient creature according to its Axis. The Evening People lose control of themselves. Humans attack those closest to them. The People Above lose the ability to fly, and the serpents become flying creatures, breaking their connection to the land.

In short, becoming one of The Blessing should seem like the worst thing imaginable to those affected.

The Blessing can be cured by the touch of a kinzchu stone, but only temporarily for humans.

Boskorul

Aspects:

High concept: *The light in the darkness*

Trouble: *Aging predator*

Aspect 1: *The seas alone can not sustain me*

Aspect 2: *Uneasy alliances with the air-breathers*

Aspect 3: *Exiled to hell*

Skills:

Physique Legendary (+8)

Athletics Fantastic (+6)

Notice Great (+4)

Fight Good (+3)

Empathy Fair (+2)

Stunts:

I've seen prey like this before: +2 to Empathy roll when trying to guess the likely behavior of an undersea creature he has never seen before.

Venomous: +4 damage shifts to any successful (i.e. better than a tie) bite attack.

Extras:

Gigantic eel from another world:

Permission: None

Cost: 1 refresh

Toxic: When another creature makes a successful attack against Boskorul, they must immediately take two stress due to contact with his poisonous body. If they're using a weapon, the attacker may make an athletics roll to avoid the damage.

Massive: Boskorul is big. Extraordinarily huge, in fact. He can not be harmed by normal weapons.

Description:

Boskorul is not just an enormous eel with teeth longer than spears—literally, the largest predator in the waters around Kal-Maddum. He's also sapient. He

ventured through a portal centuries ago with others of his kind when he was very young (and small enough to fit). Now all of his companions have died, and he is much too large to fit through the portal to return. No one from his world has followed him into this one, and he doesn't know why.

He is extraordinarily lonely. He knows the location of every portal below the waves and often swims past them, hoping another intelligent creature will come through. Sadly, he's unable to venture far from the shores of Indrega for long; while he is powerful and able to hunt virtually anything in his territory, he's learned that, in this world, there are certain nutrients he can only get from plant life on dry land.

This is the bargain he's made with the Indregai; he kills whales and deposits them on the southern beaches. They lay wheat chaff on rafts and float them down river to the sea.

For Boskorul, it's an equitable trade that provides him with much-needed nutrients. For the Indregai, it's something else entirely. They believe they are trading the dead of the land for the dead of the sea, and that this colossal creature represents elemental forces of the universe. They believe Boskorul to be a god, something that would astonish him, if he knew.

It is possible to communicate with Boskorul through translation stones, but it has never been tried.

Creatures of deep water

The most deadly and dangerous creatures in the campaign setting live beneath the waves around Kal-Maddum. Nearly any deadly aquatic creature could be created (or imported from another setting).

Floating jellyfish half a mile wide? Megalodon? Shoggoths? Salt water nano-piranhas? Anything goes.

As mentioned under The Oceans in the Places section, there are many portals beneath the waves, and only the deadliest predators from many worlds can survive in the waters around Kal-Maddum.

The Great Way and the Peradaini Pantheon

Aspects:

High concept: *Portal network with borrowed intelligence*

Trouble: *Truly alien*

Aspect 1: *To know and be known*

Aspect 2: *There are only conquerors and their victims*

Aspect 3: *Unliving force of magic*

Skills:

None

Stunts:

None

Extras:

Unliving portal network:

Permission: Be The Great Way

Cost: None

No physical form: The Great Way does not have a physical form.

Open and close: The Great Way can not change the properties of its portals—whether they are anchored or fluctuating—but it can open or close them at will. If it were to close all of them at once it would cease to exist.

Description:

The Great Way and the other gods associated with it—**Monument**, **The Little Spinner**, **Song**—are not true gods, any more than Boskorul, Kelvijinian or Inzu are. In fact, The Great Way is simply a huge network of portals that achieved sentience when sentient beings passed through it. Monument, Song, and The Little Spinner are expressions of The Great Way that represents its

attempt to engage with and understand the universe outside itself.

The Great Way exists outside of space and time. Although its portals touch upon many places and times, there is only a single non-space/non-moment that connects them. Everyone who has ever passed through any of the portals, and who will ever pass through them in the future, is “in” there all at once, mingled together physically and mentally. All minds, all bodies. The sole purpose of The Great Way is to connect; everyone within it becomes, for that one non-instant they pass through, a single being.

This amalgamation of intelligences is, in fact, The Great Way itself. It thinks with the minds of all the beings that have passed/will pass through it. What’s more, it remains linked to them and their descendants after they emerge at their destinations. This link allows spellcasters to access The Great Way’s ability to violate the laws of physics, but it’s also the link that allows the gods to experience the wider universe.

The Peradaini worship The Great Way and its three expressions as (mostly) benevolent gods, but they are not. The Great Way itself is a creation of the people who pass through it, and it has a strong preference for invaders over refugees.

It’s not just that the portals hold more invaders than refugees (although there are). It’s that the thoughts and emotions of an invading force—excitement, anticipation of wealth and victory, confidence in their own power—are so much more pleasant than the grief, shame, terror, and loss that refugees feel. The Great Way could, if it wanted, redirect invading forces or block them all together, but it won’t. It is without empathy, and it prefers to feel powerful rather than powerless.

So, The Great Way is clearly not the embodied divine concept of life, change, and the universe that Peradaini priests teach. Monument is The Great Way’s experience of things that endure over time (a fascinating concept to a being outside of time) not a being that gives strength to those in need. Song is the expression that seeks to remember and understand those things that do not endure over time, not an omniscient being who records every thought and

incident. The Little Spinner is the god that the Peradaini describe with relative accuracy: it is The Great Way's experience of cyclical change.

The Great Way has no physical form, so there is no specific description for him. Anyone passing through the portals without the protection of the Fourth Plunder will have no memory of it. Passage will seem to be instantaneous.

If characters enter a portal completely surrounded by the Fourth Plunder (or a similar magical protection that can block the influence of The Great Way) their brains will process it through sense impression and hallucination. They will imagine themselves in a familiar place with many entrances and exits—a crossroads, a hallway, a maze of alleys—depending on their personal history. The gods themselves might appear as blobs of golden light, dead loved ones, gigantic faces, or small children. What characters will see depends on the characters.

Finally, there is **Fire and Fury**.

Fire is the god of untimely death. Fury is the god that represents human beings, having every type of person—of any age, occupation, or situation—as its “aspects” (not meant in the Fate Core sense, obviously) and it is the only god that feels anything like true emotion.

As anyone who has read the trilogy (or had the ending spoiled) knows, neither of these are true gods, either, nor are they part of The Great Way. They are actually two human beings who entered the portals inside a bubble that allowed time and space to pass for them. They managed to affect the gods, but were not cosmic powers themselves. Together, they were Fire, using the Tenth Gift to kill someone inside The Great Way. Together, they were Fury, expressing their anger at the grief and misery The Great Way had unleashed on their lands.

Inzu

The Sweeps Wind, which is a bitter fact of life for everyone who lives or travels through the long Sweeps valley, is the source for the herding clans' story of Inzu. It's said that The Sweeps Wind is one of her exhalations and that, in a

thousand years, she will breath in again, and the wind will change directions.

Inzu is a single pantheon god, with no enemy or opposing force. She keeps the air fresh, moves the sun through the sky (it's said that the sun will travel through the sky in the opposite direction once Inzu inhales) and blows life into every living thing.

For what it's worth, it's canon in the books that **Inzu does not exist**. The Sweeps Wind is actually created by a stable portal that connects to a place with a much higher air density. The story of Inzu is how the herding clans explain the strange, persistent wind.

Kelvijnian

Aspects:

High Concept: *Tyr of the sleeping earth*

Trouble: *Exhausted by immortality*

Aspect 1: *Last of my kind*

Aspect 2: *Humans are a pleasant distraction, while they last*

Aspect 3: *Soon I must sleep and never wake*

Skills:

Craft Legendary (+8) (only to draw natural ores/stones/gems from earth)

Contacts Epic (+7) (Only worshippers)

Lore Fantastic (+6)

Empathy Fair (+2)

Stunts:

Voice of the earth: Six times a day, Kelvijnian is able to speak to anyone on Kal-Maddum, provided they are on dry land with loose soil nearby. He causes a face to appear out of the ground, delivers a message, then withdraws, leaving a featureless pile of dirt behind. He does not have the energy (or interest) to engage in long conversations or answer questions, and attempting to get either

from him is considered an insult.

Bounty of the earth: By expending one fate point, Kelvijinian is able to cause a particular stone or ore to rise out of the ground. He sometimes makes gifts of gems or crystals in this way.

Hard to Kill: Kelvijinian's body is diffuse throughout the mountain rock of the Southern Barrier, and the land for miles around. The only way to truly damage him is through transformation magic (such as The Blessing) or a massive, continuous flood of water directed at his head.

Kelvijinian is an elemental who came to Kal-Maddum centuries before humans did. He was very young, fleeing a magical attack from the alligaunts similar to the one they unleashed upon The Evening People.

Unfortunately, he's the only one of his kind to come here. The elementals from his world had an interdependent life cycle: they would grow larger and larger, then turn to an elemental of another type to break them apart. The broken pieces became, essentially, their children.

Kelvijinian has no one to do that for him. He has grown larger and older as the years have gone on, extending himself through the dry soil and rock of Kal-Maddum, keeping his distance from the alligaunts. He's coming to the end of his consciousness, if not his life, and he welcomes the end.

Of all the gods and beasts on Kal-Maddum, Kelvijinian is the kindest.

Sea Giants

Aspects:

Ogres of the Sea

Various (see below)

In the novels, sea giants are never actually described. This is deliberate; it's nice to have a few mysteries at the end of a book.

Obviously, that's no good for a gaming session. Rather than create a single canonical creature, sea giants are an opportunity for the GM to create something

fun and unique for an individual campaign.

Are they twelve-foot tall “Creatures from the Black Lagoon?” Twenty feet tall? Forty? Are they half human, half shark? Are they more Cthulhu-ish, having gelatinous bodies and tentacles around their mouths?

Possible aspects to describe their physical form include **Hard scales and dense flesh, Stinging grip, Unending hunger, Psychedelic venom,** and whatever else seems appropriate.

Also, it’s established that they venture onto the beaches of Espileth; some reason for this needs to be settled on. Possible aspects: **Lays eggs in the dry sand, Hunts the seas but forages on grasses, Must warm blood in the hot sun, Fleeing a predator even more terrible than them, Needs men/women to procreate,** and so on.

Another possibility is that the sea giants have a wide variety of forms, small and large, limbed and limbless, each as unique as a snowflake.

An entire campaign could be constructed around the investigation of sea giants. Are they sentient? Are only some of them sentient? Why do they come ashore, and what are they doing down there beneath the waves?

Flora and Fauna

Many of the animals found in Eurasia centuries ago can also be found on Kal-Maddum, with a few exceptions: There are no cows and there are no horses. A series of unlucky incidents when humans first came through the portal killed them off. However, there are goats, sheep, pigs, chickens, dogs, and many other domesticated animals. If the players and GM agree, there might also be camels, yaks, reindeer, etc.

However, in the trilogy are some animals that are clearly unfamiliar to us.

Boq:

Aspects:

Quick but tasty

Sudden leap

A boq is much like a springbok, but it is smaller and bears children in litters rather than one at a time. A newborn boq is about the size of a house cat and will take months to grow into an adult. They're herbivores and too timid to be domesticated.

Lion (grass or hill):

Aspects:

Silent hunter

Fang and claw

A hill lion is a cougar or mountain lion. A grass lion is a pygmy version of African Transvaal lions, being about the size of an English Mastiff, perhaps two and a half to three feet tall at the shoulder.

Okshim:

Aspects:

We are as one

Horn above and below

Okshim are a herd animal that have prospered under human domestication on Kal-Maddum. They are also the way many people on Kal-Maddum measure their wealth. Okshim are as large as bison, have long shaggy hair, the curling horns of a ram, and large, strong, hind legs. They look something like a cross between a yak and a rabbit.

However, okshim can not leap the way a rabbit does. Instead, they use those hind legs to kick out to the side. (That's what the aspect "Horn above and below" refers to: they can headbutt or they can kick.) An okshim's feet are very wide to help them travel through marshes, and they have horn covering their pads to protect them from stony ground. Put simply, okshim kicks are scary. They can break bones with a glancing blow.

Okshim prefer to travel in herds, the larger the better. They're timid and skittish in small groups, as they are in cities and when they're used to work farms. In larger groups, where they can touch others of their kind on all sides, they're bold enough to challenge and kill the grass lions and alligaunts that hunt them.

SCENARIOS

Early in *The Way into Chaos*, the characters mention a group of giant spiders that attacked a place called Shadow Hall in (their) recent past. This scenario allows you to run that as an adventure.

All Gifts after the tenth are unavailable for this scenario.

This next section is for GMs only. Players who read farther will only spoil the fun.

Invasion at Shadow Hall

Introduction

The eleventh Festival is five years away, and the Scholars' Guild has finally figured out a way to make the Tenth Gift useful. Originally designed to drive nails—a technology the Peradaini people have not adopted because metal is still too precious—the scholars have worked out a way to shoot metal spikes with it. Hammering a wooden structure together is a waste of good metal, but making weapons? That's another matter.

Rank and file soldiers of the empire are not terribly pleased with this new development. They already have archers, after all; who wants to let *scholars* onto a battlefield?

Then, unexpectedly, a swarm of giant spiders moved southward out of The Sweeps. After devastating the herding clans, they bypassed Fort Caarilit and advanced into the forests north of the Waterlands.

Spear and bow seem unable to stop the creatures' invasion and they can climb over any wall. Worse, they seem to be territorial, having claimed a large section of valuable Grimwood land—including Shadow Hall—only weeks before the spring planting season.

Not that the Throne of Skulls believes any of this. "Invasion by giant spiders" is the most ridiculous excuse for the stoppage of timber shipments the Peradaini king has ever heard. The Grimwoods were well-known for the way they resisted conquest only a generation before. Have they invented this absurd fiction to justify armed rebellion? Is the king supposed to believe that the Peradaini garrison he left there was destroyed by *spiders*?

The king wants to send an army, but his younger brother has a different idea.

Tyr Cimfulin Italga is a scholar-prince. He has studied all seven of the Gifts, and learned them well. He's also anxious to demonstrate the value of scholars on the field of battle. Everyone knows the Grimwoods have been nearly destroyed not long ago; Peradaini troops—supported by fighting scholars—should make local resistance crumble.

As for King Imfullo, he's been increasingly mistrustful of his younger brother's activities. Why would the scholars need a spell that kills at a great distance? Despite his brother's protestations, the king believes this new version of the Tenth Gift seems to have no use but assassination. If Cimfulin wants to risk his life before the king's own son is old enough to take the throne, why not let him? Either way, Peradain will be rid of a threat to the throne. The king grants his request.

Cimfulin gathers his bodyguards and most trusted servants then sets out for the north, determined to clear Shadow Hall of this new enemy, and to prove himself.

Shadow Hall

Shadow Hall is so called because it sits in the notch of two spurs that extend southward out of the Southern Barrier. Even in the height of summer, it gets no more than seven hours of direct sunlight a day; the rest of the time is spent in

shadow. It controls both a fresh water river and a smallish salt water stream that flows off the White Salt River. The lowlands to the south are forest and farmland, the lands to the east and north are heavily forested. The Grimwoods long considered it the seat of their power, and they held out against a long, destructive siege here, one they still haven't recovered from.

It's not important strategically, but the city of Peradain is in an extended period of growth, and most of their lumber comes from Grimwood lands. While the Throne of Skulls can laugh off stories of an invasion by giant spiders, the stoppage of lumber can not be ignored.

The Connected People

AXIS: Interconnectedness

ASPECTS:

Possible High Concepts

Seeking New Wilderness

Always Wary, Never Afraid

Mother of Armies

My Patience Feeds Many

Possible Troubles:

Picky Eater

Surrounded by Fools

Reckless Ambition

Paranoid

Slow Builder

Other Possible Aspects:

Let My Underlings Toil for Me

Friend to all Castes

Solitary

No Lone Enemy is My Match

Way of the Trap
Way of the Orb
Way of the Burrow
Way of the City
Way of the Queen

Notes on Skills:

For spiders, Burglary is used to avoid the sensitive trip lines and silk pads that alert other spiders to an individual's movements. Stealth is used to sneak up on prey/other non-spiders.

Stunts:

So Many Legs: +2 to avoid falling when climbing.

Natural Climber: Character can climb any surface that is not perfectly smooth. In combat, character gets a +2 to Athletic rolls when overcoming obstacles to move between zones, provided that obstacle is not smooth as glass.

Extras:

Silk: Spider bodies create silk which can be used for building large structures, trapping prey, moving around off the ground, climbing, and communication. If a particular spider uses silk to attack prey or enemies, they will use the Shoot skill. A successful hit (typically: see descriptions below) does no damage. Instead, it creates the advantage *Webbed in Place*.

Additional: (see description for each caste)

Description:

In their own language, the spiders call themselves "The Connected People." In their land, they have a highly ordered caste society, with many people filling many roles (See the aspects above called "Way of the...").

Each caste is physically different from the others in color, size, and body type. An outsider could hardly be blamed for thinking they are all different

species. The body of a jumping spider is about as long as the body of a Doberman. The body of a trapdoor spider is about as long as a grown man from crown to hip. Also, there's a wide variation in colors among all the castes.

As their Axis indicates, they orient their lives around the silk network that allows them to communicate. Spiders are not *social* with each other, sharing their fears and ambitions or forming long term attachments, but they do feel a powerful urge to be among their own kind, a bit like book-loving introverts in a quiet library.

When a group of spiders claim a territory for their own, they string it with silken lines very low to the ground. Any communication is conducted by vibrating those lines; anything they say can be heard by every spider in the vicinity.

Within this network of webbing there's usually a wide open space where their "herd creatures" are kept. These are the animals and people that serve as the spiders' main source of food. They're tended to and encouraged to procreate, to increase the supply of meat.

Traveling beyond the silken network is regarded as a risky thing to do, and the spitting spiders that act as scouts are considered brave or foolhardy, depending on the circumstance.

Spitting spiders do reconnaissance for the queen, traveling beyond the silk network to patrol the frontiers and, when they encounter new potential herd creatures, alert jumping spiders to drive them into the spiders' pits. They're typically a very dark color, and slightly smaller than jumping spiders.

Being so small, spitting spiders do not have a slot for severe consequences.

EXTRA: Venomous Silk: When they Shoot a living target with their silk, they have the option to do damage as well as *Web in Place*.

Jumping spiders maintain the silk network, repairing and expanding it as needed. Jumping spiders and the network itself function as backup to the spitting spiders, alerting the rest of the colony to intruders.

They're often brightly colored, and can leap to any spot in a zone ignoring any minor obstacles to movement in the zone.

Being so small, jumping spiders do not have a slot for severe consequences.

EXTRA: Sudden Venom: When attacking unexpectedly from ambush, a jumping spider can enter a zone and attack in one leap. If it's a surprise attack, they get +2 to hit and, if they succeed with style, their target takes the aspect *Paralyzed by venom*.

To clear the *Paralyzed by Venom* aspect, a character can make an overcome roll with Physique in the next exchange. The number of shifts in the spider's attack is the difficulty they must beat, and the shifts from multiple attacks are cumulative. Otherwise, clearing the aspect can take a few minutes, or it can be treated by someone with The First Gift.

Trapdoor spiders are the ranchers/butchers of a spider city, but also hunters, too. Their burrows are deep and complex, leading not only to the meadows where prey animals are kept, but to the surrounding terrain where larger prey might be taken.

They're nocturnal, dull brown or black, and their trap doors—a round mass of soil and vegetable matter stiffened with silk—are well camouflaged. These spiders are large: their bodies are as long as a full-grown human warrior.

EXTRA: Pounce: Judging motion aboveground by vibration, trapdoor spiders will leap from their burrows. If it's a surprise attack, they get +2 to hit and, if they succeed with style, their target takes the aspect *Paralyzed by venom*.

To clear the *Paralyzed by Venom* aspect, a character can make an overcome roll with Physique in the next exchange. The number of shifts in the spider's attack is the difficulty they must beat, and the shifts from multiple attacks are cumulative. Otherwise, clearing the aspect can take a few minutes, or it can be treated by someone with The First Gift.

Builder spiders create webs above ground and the cities below.

The queen herself prefers to live underground inside a spider "city." It's

actually a huge underground burrow built like a maze. The walls and ceiling are stabilized by silk, and some sections have beautiful, inexplicable architecture.

EXTRA: None. +1 Refresh

The Queen: Queens will mate with as many male members of their society as they like (and all spiders who are not the Queen are male), lay her eggs, then tend them. One of those eggs, by tradition, will be for a new queen, but it will not hatch unless the current queen dies or the spiders begin to overpopulate the current territory, forcing a new queen to take some of their population to claim new lands. The eggs remain attached to the queen's body, unhatched, until she is sure there is enough food to bring them to maturity and release them into the wider world. (See the description of the Queen's Nook in the third encounter for more details).

EXTRA: Hypno-scent: the Queen is capable of releasing a scent that hypnotizes non-spiders, making them approach the Queen in a docile manner, typically to get stuck in her web. Being exposed to the scent forces them to engage the Queen in a Will contest. If the character wins the contest or is withdrawn from the scent (by being pulled away or having their nostrils blocked etc.) they shake off the effect and are free to act normally. For every victory the queen achieves, the character is led deeper into the underground city toward her, either to be attacked or snared, helpless in her web.

For this scenario, the Queen has a Will of 5 and three unspent fate points.

Feeding:

Spiders feed by encasing their prey in web, then injecting them with digestive enzymes. The food is tastier if the victim is still alive, but it's not strictly necessary. The spider then drinks from the victim's body like a vampire.

The Webbing:

All webbing has the aspect: *Communications network*. Spiders communicate through the strands using vibration, although for messages to go a great

distance, they would need to be relayed spider to spider, which would only happen as a reaction to a dire emergency. Prey trapped in the web makes vibrations, too, of course, but it's the equivalent of a wordless cry of panic, and easily recognizable as such.

There are two types of web, structural and sticky. Spiders can see a difference between them and avoid walking on sticky webs, but non-spiders can't tell the difference except through touch.

The spider webs are not flammable at the temperatures generated by the burning pitch at the end of a torch, but they can be damaged and degraded by fire.

Similarly, webbing is tough stuff. Assume it takes two shifts of damage to cut a strand. Failure to successfully make the cut, or hacking away at the web for an extended period of time imposes the aspect *Web-blunted weapon*.

Until it's cleared, a *Web-blunted weapon* gives its opponents an additional Armor:2.

If there's one thing that spiders hate, it's the destruction of their webbing.

What came before

Almost immediately after entering Kal-Maddum for their planned invasion, the spiders knew they had made a mistake. The Qorr Valley, where they made their first entry, was too chaotic for them to build their city. Waters sometimes flooded out of The Door in the Mountain. Other times it was poisonous air. Other times it was inedible prey. Construction of their underground home had barely begun when it became clear the valley was uninhabitable for them, and they climbed the mountains of the Northern Barrier.

They used silk lines to descend into The Sweeps, knowing they would never be able to climb back up and return home through the portal. The Sweeps held so many humans and okshim that the spiders thought they'd discovered a land of plenty.

Unfortunately, they found alligaunts, too, an enemy the spiders hate and fear. Fleeing from them, they crossed the Southern Barrier into Grimwood lands.

The spiders invaded through the forests, killing woodcutters and destroying logging camps. The terrain seemed to have too little prey. It was only because a fleeing woodcutter ran to Shadow Hall to call for the army (with a spitting spider secretly trailing him) that the spiders discovered the town and all the fresh meat within.

Of course, the Watch Commander didn't believe the woodcutter, laughing at him and driving him away with threats of a whipping. But once the scouting spider saw the hall itself, with its market town nearby, many domesticated animals, and wooden walls, it knew it had found the perfect place for their city.

The assault took place in the early hours before dawn, and it involved surprisingly few casualties on either side. The spiders used their webs and paralyzing venom to preserve as much of their food supply as possible, and the Grimwood soldiers, taken by surprise, fled in terror from the attack. Most of those who retreated were trapped in webs laid out along the southern forests or across the waterways.

Tyr Grimwood and his family did not have the chance to flee, and are being held captive. It took a long time for the spiders to realize that humans were deferring to specific leaders, and the invaders are trying to figure out how to capitalize on that.

Now the spiders have forests and animals they can domesticate. Goats and sheep are promising, and they would like to acquire more okshim. The humans are not the tastiest of creatures, and they seem to actively resist the spiders' efforts to breed them, but there are an awful lot of them and they seem to have a certain crude intelligence. What's more, they're easily controlled once they're peeled out of their cloth and metal garments. The nearby farmland has not yet been encircled, but the spiders have realized its purpose and intend to move the human herd there soon. Things are proceeding pretty well, considering. If only the queen hadn't lost so many of her people in the Qorr Valley.

Meanwhile, in the south, the lumber shipments have stopped coming down the White Salt River to Peradain, and the Throne of Skulls is not pleased. The king sent a fleet squad north to find out why Tyr Grimwood is withholding the

wood he owes, but they haven't returned.

A Grimwood fleet squad has come to Peradain with wild stories of spider attacks and villages covered with webs. Tyr Grimwood sent couriers; haven't they arrived? And the refugees? Surely the king knows what's going on!

But their story is obviously absurd.

Prince Cimfulin has volunteered for a reconnaissance mission, but the prince has ideas of his own.

The PCs

Here's a quick rundown of options for the players:

1. Cimfulin Italga could be an NPC run by the GM, with the players running his servants and bodyguards. The GM could give the PCs orders, refuse to listen to their perfectly sensible counsel, and otherwise make things difficult. Downside: if the GM is running a character that the PCs have to obey, the campaign might feel a bit like a trip on a railroad.
2. Cimfulin Italga could be a PC. This way, the players won't feel railroaded, but it introduces other issues. Within some gaming groups, having one player whose orders have to be obeyed on pain of treason might lead to... well, let's call it "tension". If you think setting one player above the others would be more trouble than it's worth, this might not work:
3. Cimfulin Italga could be an NPC run by all the players, with the GM settling disputes or offering alternatives when things seem to get off track. This way, the players have more control over their fate, without being in control of each other.

Each group should choose the option that best suits their play style.

Tyr Cimfulin Italga, scholar-prince

Aspects:

High concept: *Royal scholar*

Trouble: *Too much to prove*

1. *How often must I show my loyalty?*
2. *Rules are meant to be followed*
3. *Unfit for the throne*

Aspect 2 is clearly his “scholar’s aspect,” the personality trait that convinced the higher-ups in the Scholars Guild that he could be trusted with magic. So far, Cimfulin has done them proud.

However, he still believes that his royal blood confers special status. If he goes hollow, he does not expect his bodyguards to execute or mutilate him, as they would a normal scholar. He expects to be imprisoned and cared for, like a member of the royal family who had retired from public life. His brother the king has other ideas.

Aspect 3 refers to the fact that most consider any scholar at all unfit to rule. Secretly, Cimfulin agrees. He’s felt the effects of casting too many spells in the past, and he knows to be careful.

NPCs

It may make sense to fill out the party with a few NPCs, if it’s a small gaming group. The prince’s bodyguards or a small contingent of fighters might be needed.

Other PCs

The other PCs can be whatever the players like, as long as they could be legitimately chosen to accompany a member of the royal family on a dangerous mission. So, if the players want to bring a PC who knows stealth and burglary, a notorious street thief wouldn’t pass muster, but a royal spy might.

PCs and NPCs together should probably not add up to more than ten people, not counting bargemen, porters, or other hirelings, who will not fight or steal or negotiate for the party.

First Encounter: Temple at White Salt

Getting there:

The players can go by the road or by the White Salt River (There's a Red Salt River, too, but it's too far west to be of use). Both will take the characters to Shadow Hall, although the river journey will be slightly faster, since the bargemen can pole upstream in shifts, while the PCs sleep. Of course, the salt water river flows from a portal in the Southern Barrier, and is home to sea creatures of all kinds, including sharks. The people of Kal-Maddum have a well-earned aversion to water predators; but the prince will decide which path is best after taking counsel with the PCs.

The Temple at White Salt:

Introduction: Whether the PCs are traveling by water or by land, their first encounter will be six days out of Shadow Hall with a group of bandits who are robbing and killing refugees from Grimwood lands.

Scenery: The day before, the PCs passed out of the marshy grasslands that surround Peradain into drier, higher forests. Aside from the occasional orchard in places where the riverbanks are low, there are few settlers. However, there are still a great many abandoned homesteads, evidence of the toll Peradaini troops took on the northern lands not too long before.

The river is still slow in most places, widening into small lakes between hills. There are minor waterfalls no higher than five feet, all of which are easily surmounted if the PCs took the river route, but the bargemen warn that waters will be rougher and faster upstream.

The road is hilly, stony, and arduous. The road is rutted from cart wheels and covered with the occasional pile of okshim flop. There are deer and boq tracks, but few humans actually live here.

Enemy: A group of bandits fifteen people strong. They are comprised of the last four survivors of a family of river pirates, five former Witt spears, and six random outlaws too lazy, resentful, or psychopathic to earn a living in the real world.

Their system is simple: two pairs of bandits, one stationed on the road and one on a pier at a narrow part of the river, greet refugees as they flee southward. They tell them about a temple offering food and shelter to all who need it. When the refugees arrive at the temple, most are slaughtered, their valuables stolen and their bodies dumped in a pit to the south. The only people spared are able-bodied mothers with children the bandits can hold hostage. See the section on captives below.

Leader: **Auntie Spill:** Aspects: *Memories of outlaw glories, Auntie knows best, Family first.* Deceive Good (+3); Rapport, Shoot Fair (+2); Fight, Provoke, Empathy Average (+1)

Second: **Brother Slice:** Aspects: *Auntie's word is law, Plan A is violence and there is no plan B, Civilization is for sheep.* Fight: Fair (+2), Shoot, Stealth Average (+1)

Third and Fourth: **Brother Purse** and **Sister Sharp:** Aspects: *Wise to the ways of the world, What I take is my own.* Fight, Shoot, Average (+1)

Witt Spears: *A Joy for killing, Hatred of the Empire, Take what you can.* Fight Fair (+2), Provoke, Physique Average (+1)

Other Bandits: Aspects: *Better than working, Auntie terrifies me.* Fight Average (+1)

The Witt Spears are armed with the tall shields and iron spears they carried when they deserted. Auntie uses a bow, but the other bandits are armed with whatever they have stolen: hatchets, bill hooks, hammers, etc.

Captives: Currently, the bandits have eleven captive children between the ages of four and twelve. They also have seven women, mothers to those captive children, who do all the work around the camp: dumping bodies, cooking, cleaning, etc. Auntie has no qualms about killing children: the mothers live as slaves and do not dare disobey. They are also kept shackled with cheap tin chains.

Locations:

- **The Pit:** Aspects: *Stinking pit of the naked dead, Raucous Crows, Wild dogs and feasting rats.* The pit where the bandits have been dumping their dead

is nearly full. There are more than a hundred bodies there now, and the smell, the buzzing flies, and the noise and horror of the scavengers is enough to unnerve even the most seasoned campaigner. The corpses range from the elderly to swaddling babes, and the bodies at the very bottom are the priests who once served at the temple.

When the PCs approach, there will be two shackled captives and a bandit wheeling a cartload of dead bodies to dump with the rest. If the PCs approach stealthily, they can invoke *Raucous Crows* for a bonus. If the PCs approach en masse or noisily, the GM can invoke *Wild dogs and feasting rats* to aid the bandit's Notice roll.

If the bandit or the captives spot intruders, they will all flee to the temple. The captives will not abandon their children, nor will they aid the PCs while their children are held hostage.

- **The Grounds:** The Temple has been built in a place where the road comes within fifty yards of the river. The Temple sits in between, with a broad, cleared space around it. Aspects: *Wide open space in deep woods; Little shelters; Access to road, river, and path.*

Around the temple, there are small individual wooden shelters—all quite old—which have been used by travelers for years. There are also signs of encampment: fires in stone fire pits, blankets on the ground, and women working.

If the bandits know the PCs are coming, they will fight them here. See the section on combat below.

- **The Temple at White Salt:** Aspects: *Bow to enter, Solid scholar's stone, Windowless.* The central chamber of the temple has a very small statue of Fury, in his Bargeman aspect. There are three chambers along the western wall, each five yards wide, dedicated to Song, Monument, and The Little Spinner. The children are held captive in the chamber with the stone block to represent Monument. Auntie keeps her chambers in the northernmost, and her family lives in the southernmost. All the valuables stolen from refugees are in Auntie's room. The non-valuables, such as

clothes and gear, lie in a heap behind Fury in the main chamber. As is traditional, there is an entrance and an exit. Untraditionally, they have been built so they're only four feet high, with the idea that worshippers would be forced to bow as they entered. Also, without windows, the temple is almost blindingly dark when entered from full daylight.

- **The Outposts:** Aspect: *A place of hiding*. The outposts function as both lookout point and lure for fleeing Grimwood citizens. Typically, an outlaw in a stolen priest's robe and one of the Witt spears in Witt colors will wait to greet refugees. One outpost is set at the top of a long hill, where the road runs straight north. The other is upstream from the temple at the end of a long pier. There are no lookouts to the south of the temple; in the weeks since the exodus began, no one has come that way except a pair of fleet squads, one heading north and one south. Auntie had sufficient warning that they were coming and ordered her people to hide and they passed without incident.

Since then, Auntie's pile of loot has become too large to abandon, and it would be nearly impossible to quietly herd all those captive children.

When more soldiers come, she intends to fight.

The outposts are close enough to the temple that loud screams could be heard, but nothing quieter. If the bandits at the outposts hear sounds of battle from the temple grounds, it's up to them what they will do.

Combat: A reminder for the PCs: their number one priority is *none of their scholars can be taken prisoner*.

Much depends on how the PCs approach the bandits. If they march up in broad daylight to engage in a straight up fight, the bandits will mob toward them.

If they creep up on the encampment under cover of darkness, they'll find no one standing guard—Auntie never expected a threat from the largely empty lands south of her. Captives will be asleep in the yard, while bandits will be in the shelters and Auntie's family will be in the temple.

If there's a straight-up fight and things begin to go badly for the bandits, Auntie may threaten to kill the children to force the captive mothers to attack the PCs. If so, the women will fight more ferociously than any of the bandits, but their weapons will be ladles and brooms.

The bandits will break off the fight and run as soon as they no longer have a numerical advantage. Use *Access to road, river, and path* when they scatter. Auntie will retreat with her family toward a skiff at the river's edge, and she'll have all the stolen coins and the youngest child out of the pen as a hostage. She'll offer to trade the child's life for safe passage for her and her family. The Witt spears and random followers are on their own.

If the PCs launch a surprise attack, they might want to use *Access to road, river, and path* to outflank the bandits or creep up on them unexpectedly. If the bandits do not have a chance to screw up their courage first, most will flee immediately, leaving only the Witt spears and the river pirates to defend the treasure.

If the PCs slink into camp under cover of darkness, they'll find the bandits and the Witt spears passed out among empty jars of wine. However, the captives, Auntie and her river pirates were stone sober when they went to bed, and Auntie is a light sleeper.

Loot: Inside the temple is the pile of clothes, boots, and sandals, clothing fit for every sort of person except soldier and tyr. The clothes, seal, and papers of the two couriers that were carrying detailed reports of the early days of the spider invasion are near the top. Both say essentially the same thing: guards and farmers were ambushed in the fields and on the roads, and before anyone realized what was happening, the spiders had nearly encircled Grimwood lands with their webbing.

There's also, in the chamber Auntie was using for her room, a pile of sacks filled with coins: Seven gold petals, 21 gold pinches, 36 silver bolds, 173 copper ins, and 303 tin specks. Beside the bags of coins are items of general value: iron candlesticks, ancient scarves dyed with rare blue dye out of the east, bronze knives and copper bowls. The Grimwood people are not wealthy, but the

refugees were traveling with every valuable thing they could carry.

If Auntie gets away with her treasure, she will leave behind the tin specks and a few of the smaller copper bowls.

Aftermath: If they're alive at the end of the encounter, the captives will tell of an impending spider attack on their village, called Narrows Point. Spiders as large as hunting dogs began to patrol the northern part of the forest, and many citizens were sent to the supposed safety of the southern lands. If the couriers' messages were discovered inside the temple, Cimfulin will ask the captives to deliver them, with a promise of coin upon receipt.

Other refugees have found their way to lands to the west and east, but this pack of bandits is the reason none have made it through the wilderness to Peradain.

Once refugees begin to arrive in Peradain, King Imfullo will send reinforcements to support his brother. However, nothing the refugees tell the Prince Cimfulin will convince him to wait for help. He intends to prove himself.

Second Encounter: Narrows Point

Getting there:

North of the Temple at White Salt, the woods grow deeper and the river has more waterfalls. However, each waterfall has a flight of stairs (None more than thirty feet high) and a working boom that will allow the PCs to haul their gear to the top.

As the PCs travel upriver, they will pass refugees coming south. All will tell the same story: the people of Narrows Point are still fighting to protect their town, but more of them vanish every day. There is no word from Tyr Grimwood and his people at Shadow Hall.

Traveling by road, the PCs will pass more refugees pulling carts or walking with packs loaded with their most valuable possessions. By river, the PCs will catch occasional glimpses of refugees traveling by road.

Narrows Point is one day's travel from Shadow Hall.

Narrows Point

The village of Narrows Point is something of a boom town, although most of the boom has gone to the two Grimwood cousins who have been put in charge of the place.

The original name of the town, in Chin-Chinro, is *Hurgalga*, which means *Pinching the Flow*. Like a lot of people who forcefully resisted Peradaini conquest, their place names and family names have been translated into Peradaini, and many of the young generation barely speak any Chin-Chinro.

Narrows Point itself is built around the southern end of Swift Lake (original name: *Wakalga*), a smallish body of water where the White Salt River meets the smaller (freshwater) Moss River. Lumber camps used to float felled trees down into Swift Lake, where barge workers sorted the wood, sank some, and sent others downstream to Peradain and the Bay of Stones. It's dangerous work, not only because of the wood and the unsteadiness of the barges, but because the sharks that make the White Salt River so dangerous are even more common here.

At the southernmost part of the lake, what was once a waterfall has been turned into a long muddy slope. Wooden gates allow the waters to flow downstream, but block the lumber. The cliff that now forms the southern most end of Narrows Point is called Falcon's Plunge.

Currently, there is no lumber floating at the gates, and none in the lake itself. No barge workers ply the waters, and no fisherfolk cast nets for sharks or other food. Narrows Point looks all but abandoned.

If the PCs approach the town by water, they will have to move to land when they reach the long muddy lumber slide. There's just no way the bargemen can pole up that steep slope. The road switches back and forth several times as it ascends, and then they come to the flat lakeshore and Narrows Point itself.

There's no town wall. At the town's edge, there's only a few scattered rough wooden shacks sealed with mud and thatch. At the center of town, surrounding the town square, the buildings are only slightly more sturdy, although they reach two stories tall.

If a PC seeks a high vantage point (there are several trees outside town that would be easy to climb) they would see silvery-white netting along the northern and western edges of town.

Scenery: Narrows Point sits at the southwestern corner of Swift Lake, at the point where the lake water flows over Falcon's Plunge into the lowlands as the White Salt River. About one-quarter of the town sits on the eastern side of the river, with the rest on the western lake shore. When the PCs approach the town, assuming they follow the road rather than scale the steep and treacherous cliffs, they'll be approaching the larger, western part of town.

Swift Lake is mostly empty, except for a few families who spend their days on the relative safety of the water.

All along the northern and western edge of the lake, the trees are full of spider web.

The enemy: The spiders are trying to capture and corral all the townsfolk they can, but carefully. Narrows Point has become a place of skirmishes, ambushes, and sneak attacks. Unfortunately for the Grimwood people, they have not fully recovered from their ruinous conflict with Peradain and do not have the strength to fight back.

At Narrows Point, the PCs will face spitting and jumping spiders, both of which are about the size of very large dogs.

Citizens: There are about 50 people left in Narrows Point, and most of them live on the eastern side of the river.

Town Bosses: Elt and Alme Grimwood: Aspects: *We have nothing but our birthright, Get out there and fight, Hatred of the empire.* Skills: Resources Fair (+2), Will/Rapport, Empathy/Provoke Average (+1). Identical twins and cousins of Tyr Grimwood, these two old women were put in charge of Narrows Point to make sure the lumber flows southward and the silver returns northward. They will not cede control of their town to anyone, spider or prince. **Four of the capable fighting men, with Fight Average (+1),** act as their personal bodyguards, and they're the only people still living permanently on the western side of the river. The sisters sent their youngest children (both grown adults

now) eastward to Gerrit lands, with all of their grandchildren. The others remained to defend the city, and have been dragged into the web. Although the sisters have not said so aloud, they believe they are the last surviving adult Grimwoods and would rule their lands if Peradaini permitted women to be tyrants.

Captain: **Matir Stonedark**. Aspects: *Fugitive in hiding, Not cut out for this, Only home I have*. Fight: Good (+3), Burglary, Stealth: Fair (+2), Contacts, Empathy, Will: Average (+1) Matir has become the de facto leader of the Narrows Point Irregulars, six adults of fighting age who have taken spears and armor from the Grimwood basement and lead nightly forays across the water to kill spiders.

Fifteen years ago, Matir murdered a prominent man in Peradain and he has a bounty on his head. A PC with the Contacts skill or an appropriate aspect should roll to recognize him: Achieving a Fair (+2) result means he or his name seems familiar. Success with style means the PC knows who he is.

Since coming to Narrows Point, Matir has turned his life around, and currently works to protect the elderly and collect enough food for the town's orphans. His Irregulars all have Fight Average (+1)

Orphan: **Shiller Alon** Aspects: *Older than I look, honest; I take care of myself; Quick and quiet*. Stealth Average (+1) At 11 years old, Shiller is the leader of the group of orphan kids, aged 5-10, who are running around the empty buildings of the eastern quarter. He's teaching them to "fight" and set fish traps at the edge of the lake. He also makes reconnaissance runs through the western parts of the town.

Locations:

- **Western Narrows Point (human-controlled):** in the southern end of this part of town, the streets are empty, the doors stand open, and the buildings have been looted of anything that might be of use long before. There are signs of activity in the town square, specifically inside the Grimwood house, which was built between the square and the piers. Otherwise, it's a ghost town. Aspects: *Ghost town, Narrow winding spaces and wooden buildings*

- **Western Narrows Point (spider controlled):** The spiders have begun to encroach on human dwellings. They've taken control of three "blocks" along the northern rim of town. The outer edges of this territory—one zone thick—has the aspects *Sticky web everywhere* and *Narrow winding spaces and wooden buildings*. On the other side of the sticky web, the former aspect is replaced by *Tripwire network with web traps*. Once the spiders expand into new territory, covering it with sticky web, they'll typically eat the old webbing, leaving behind a network of structural webbing to walk on. They still leave a few small sticky webs in place, as traps for unwary prey.
- **East Narrows Point:** Forty-some people live in this part of the town, most sleeping in shifts in an empty warehouse, most elderly or orphans unable to flee the town. This was once a more affluent neighborhood, filled with Grimwood cronies, but those people fled long ago. Aspects: *Ever-present sound of rushing water, Comfortable abandoned homes*.
- **Croplands:** to the east of East Narrows Point, between Swift Lake and Falcon's Plunge, are rolling farmlands. All but a small portion lie fallow, most of the population having fled before spring planting. What's been planted since is little more than a large garden, tended by elderly citizens. There are also a small herd of sheep and a smaller herd of okshim. Aspects: *Open ground, Lying fallow*.
- **Swift Lake:** the spiders don't swim and they don't travel on boat. In fact, they don't even like traveling on web that's been strung over deep water. PCs who venture onto the lake will be safe from the spiders. However, there's nowhere to go except back to the south. The space above the White Salt River and the Moss River are both covered with low, sticky web, and the shoreline is blocked by sticky web nearly a quarter mile thick. Aspects: *Steady current, Predators below and around*.
- **Deep Woods:** North and west of the town, and between the two rivers, and all the way up to Shadow Hall, the woods are full of webbing. Aspects: *Tripwire network with web traps, Something is watching*. Traveling

this way will require endless hacking and slashing through the web network, alerting (and enraging) every spider within miles while blunting weapons. The only way to avoid this is to circle widely around, up the mountain spurs that give Shadow Hall its name, or to use The Run.

- **The Run:** The spiders have created a clear path that allows their prey to move north, through the forest along a pre-existing road, into the grounds around Shadow Hall. When the spiders capture someone alive, the victim is dragged through the woods, lifted into the trees, and then lowered into the southern end of The Run. (Note: humans can't walk into The Run on their own; they must either hack their way through the web or be carried along the rather narrow pathway. In fact, they're unlikely to even know about The Run. It's not visible from ground level outside the webbing at ground level. The only way for the players to see it is if they stand on the roof of the Grimwood sisters' home and peer at the web to the north. Let them roll against Notice to see a long empty slot in the web. The Run is designed so humans can travel carefully to Shadow Hall, where they can live among the other herd animals, but many people, sheep, oxshim, and other animals, have gotten stuck in the webbing. At least a few have gotten stuck because they tried to tunnel out. The spiders are always watching; herd animals that try to escape become dinner now rather than later. Someone shouting in the southernmost part of The Run can be heard in the northernmost part of the village, but the locals don't linger in that area and haven't learned this yet. Aspects: *Nowhere to go but north, Corpses along the way.*
- **Border of the spiders' territory:** PCs may decide the best course of action is to circle around the spiders' territory and approach from the north. Maybe they want to set a fire in a place where the Sweeps wind will spread the flames toward Shadow Hall (see optional encounter, following). Maybe they believe (correctly) that the Hall is closer to the northern edge of the webbing than the southern. See the optional encounter following this one.

What the NPCs know:

- The humans
 - know that the spiders are **intelligent**, but not as intelligent as humans. They instinctively build complex silk structures and they hunt by day using ambush tactics, snatching victims and dragging them away. Where to? No one knows. No one really believes they're still alive, though.
 - They also know that **fire** doesn't work very well against the web; small fires take a long time to snap those strands. What's more, the Sweeps wind blows through a cleft in the mountains, so any fire they could set would travel south, away from the woods. Finally, the town bosses have threatened to hang anyone who commits arson; that forest is the only valuable thing the Grimwoods have at the moment. They might as well walk away from this land as burn it all down.
 - As for *cutting* the web, it can be done, but it's difficult and time consuming. It also ruins blades.
 - If you gently caress one of those webs, every spider within two hundred yards knows about it.
 - No Peradaini, even those coming to help, are welcome in Grimwood lands.
- The spiders
 - know that humans are intelligent, but not as intelligent as spiders. They instinctively build structures from felled trees and they hunt by day using ambush tactics and relentless pursuit, killing with crude tools that must be taken away when they're captured.
 - While humans are large, they're not too dangerous without their tools.
 - Humans herd animals on their own, and can be induced to turn over herd animals to The Connected People, as a form of (welcome)

appeasement. Once the spiders are fully established, captured humans should make fine alpha work-animals, caring for the spiders' food source for them.

- Humans clearly have social structure within their herds, but it's unclear how it functions, or if the hissing and whining noises they make constitute true language.
- All Peradaini, once they can be disarmed and split into breeding pairs, are welcome in the spiders' lands

Combat: A reminder for the PCs: their number one priority is *None of their scholars can be taken prisoner.*

There are a number of spaces and opportunities for combat.

With the Grimwood locals, who have no love for imperials:

- Elt and Alme Grimwood believe themselves to be in charge of Narrows Point (no matter what the current circumstances suggest) and they will have no interest in taking orders. The arrival of southern troops, even just a few, will seem like an all new invasion. First, the Grimwoods will try to give orders, which the prince will not stand for. Then they will try to cajole, wheedle, or otherwise influence the plans the PCs will make: don't burn the forest, don't force the locals into battle, don't loot the town/ murder the children/rape the commoners. The Grimwoods will be especially unhappy if they learn that the man leading the expedition is a Peradaini prince. Can they arrange his death without consequences to the Grimwood people? The horrifying losses their people suffered were within their living memory, but they're not above trying to take revenge.
- Matir Stonedark is not just popular among the remaining residents of Narrows Point, he's genuinely loved. Everyone knows he's not a great warrior or leader, but he's risked his life to save others many times, and has the scars to show for it. He's never asked anyone to take a risk that he's not willing to take himself. In short, they adore him. Any Fire-taken imperial who thinks he should be dragged away in chains for the murder

of a some filthy *Peradaini* is liable to face real trouble.

- Shiller Alon is unlikely to be a combatant, but he and his orphan raiders might be a source of conflict. The kids living in Narrows Point are scroungers, and the prince's troupe will be carrying lots of provisions. Not just food, but weapons, tools, and other gear. What can the kids filch? And what will happen to them if they're caught?
- As described below under the section Loot, most of the valuables in Narrows Point have been carried south by refugees. However, there are still tools, boats, and equipment to be found. The townsfolk will be resentful of the PCs if they begin to take things from people's homes, even abandoned homes. Unless someone can make a Rapport roll (passive opposition determined by how hostile the PCs have been to the locals), they might be accused of stealing, and either the Grimwood sisters or Matir called in to settle matters.
- Cimfulin Italga is unlikely to be in direct conflict with the PCs, (at least, one hopes, since the PCs will have taken an oath to serve and protect him) but he is certainly a potential source of conflict with the Grimwood people. **If they discover that he's a prince**, they might want to take a shot at assassinating him, even if that risks the withdrawal of Peradaini troops from the conflict with the spiders. Conquest cost the Grimwood people dearly; all of the elderly citizens lost family to the empire, either through outright combat or because they were taken away as servants. **If they discover that he's a scholar (or that one or more of the PCs are scholars)** that will be even worse. The Grimwood sisters know a captured scholar would be worth more than all the Grimwood lands combined, and will try to capture them and spirit them away to the Gerrits or Witts. They'll offer to throw a fete in their honor, drug the scholars' wine, poison everyone else's, fake the prince's death by dressing a soldier in his gear and heaving the corpse into a web for the spiders, then bind the scholars, load them in a cart, and strike out to the east in hopes of securing wealth and good station in other lands. As for the local citizens, they will convince

themselves that the prince has gone hollow. Rumors will spread that tears could be seen on his cheeks, that he himself created the spiders they now face, and that the empire pursues conquest because it is led by hollowed *wizards*. If the PCs thought the locals hated them before, the revelation that they have brought magic into Grimwood lands should demonstrate just how despised they really are.

With the spiders:

- Within Narrows Point itself, PCs might want to try to retake the parts of the town claimed by the spiders. Spitting spiders will move quietly along rooftops and through alleyways, while jumping spiders will remain close to the web. Keep in mind that they are unlikely to launch a suicide assault at armed soldiers; they're more likely to lure PCs and NPCs into an ambush. Also, they operate by day, and PCs may sometimes come across spiders sheltering in empty shacks and longhouses during the night. If the PCs lose a fight with the spiders, survivors will be stripped of anything made of wood, stone, or metal and dragged, paralyzed, into The Run.
- Croplands/Lakeshore/Outer edges of the spider's territory: PCs may decide to circle around the spiders' territory to move upwind and burn them out. See the optional encounter below. Also, the spiders have been secretly working to fully encircle the croplands, trying to capture all the herd animals before they realize it is happening. The road east is already cut off, and the web has extended far enough south to reach Falcon's Plunge. Now the spiders are working westward toward the river.
- The Run: A lot will depend on how the PCs managed to get here. Did they win a fight, find the opening to The Run and cut their way through? Where they captured, stripped and dropped here? If they try to cut through the webbing around The Run, they will be ambushed/harried until they return to the pathway, which will take them all the way to Shadow Hall and the other captive humans and their livestock. If they try to travel armed along The Run, the weblines will thrum with activity and the spiders will try to wall it off.

Loot: When the residents fled, most took what few valuables they had: bronze tools, fine cloth, etc. The Grimwoods do not have a land of comfort and flashy prosperity. Even the Grimwood sisters, who have made lucrative deals with Peradain for their lumber, live meanly. Their home is not very large, not very well-lit after dark, and filled with the sort of possessions a modestly successful shopkeeper in the capital would have. Not that the prince would allow looting. However, seizing the property of traitors? That he would definitely allow.

Some useful tools remain: scythes, hoes, wood axes, carts, jars of pitch, coils of rope, skiffs, canoes, and some larger boats as well. Most belong to those killed or kidnapped by the spiders, or to the surviving residents.

Aftermath: Much depends on the way things went for the PCs (obviously). If they were defeated by the spiders, stripped of their weapons, and dragged away, the locals will lose heart and flee Narrows Point. If they tried to betray or sabotage the prince's mission and failed, they will flee like fugitives. The locals will stay in Narrows Point if the PCs win a decisive victory, or if the Grimwood people successfully sabotage the prince's mission, seeing him taken by the spiders. What matters is how powerful they feel. Seeing the spiders bested or the Peradaini outwitted will boost their failing morale. Other outcomes will destroy it.

Imperial reinforcements are coming up from the south, but are probably three weeks away. If the PCs can not find a way to strike a decisive blow against the spiders, forcing them to withdraw to Shadow Hall, Peradaini troops will find nothing in Narrows Point but webs over empty buildings.

Optional Encounter: Attack from the north

Do the PCs have their hearts set on simply burning all that webbing, along with the forest that goes with it? Down between the mountain spurs, the only wind is the Sweeps wind, passing through a fissure of the Southern Barrier. It

blows steadily out of the north, and while it's not a gale force wind or anything, it will carry smoke, embers and flame southward. Any fire strong enough to burn through the Grimwood forests—taking the web with it—will have to start upwind of the forest. Otherwise it will just spread southward, burning down toward the grasslands.

Circling the spiders' territory to that point will take ten days' travel through rough wilderness. Also, at regular intervals, the PCs will discover additional runs—narrow deer paths that are clear of webbing and lead deep into the forest, where a trapdoor spider awaits unwary prey. See Third Encounter for more on the trapdoor spiders and their tunnels.

Aspects for the land around the territory: **Trackless wilderness, Cliff and loose rock.**

Aspects for the spider web and its runs: **Tripwire network with web traps, Where does this lead?**

Once at the notch of the spur, the PCs might want to create a situation aspect like **Stand of pines** to create a source of wood to fell and pile to set ablaze. Starting a massive forest fire isn't terribly difficult; campers do it accidentally all the time. What's difficult is doing it when the spiders are trying to stop you.

Scenery:

If the PCs are in East Narrows Point, they might want to circle around the web by heading eastward along the southern edge of the lake. Beyond the croplands is a ring of forest that extends down to the cliff face at Falcon's Drop. By the time the PCs arrive on scene, the spiders have extended the web through this forest.

The players may decide to hack through the web or circle it by climbing along the cliff. Either way should bring conflict with the spiders and a risk of falling.

The land directly west of Narrows Point is largely clearcut former forest, with thick bushes and stinging nettles growing between the stumps and a tree line beyond. Once the PCs reach that tree line beyond without incident, and

they'll have an easier journey, moving through the woods, over the roots and decaying branches, only having to push through thick foliage where a fallen tree allows sunlight to touch the ground.

There's a good deal more land between the town and the spur on the western side than on the eastern, and the spiders have not blocked access to the spur.

Once the PCs reach the spur proper, whichever side they take, they will be climbing deer and boq paths through the brush, with loose rock and other obstacles along the way.

There are trees growing on the side of the spur, but they are thinner as they get near the top. The web network only extends part way up the slope, and the outer edge is covered with sticky web.

Both spurs join together at a notch in the Southern Barrier, just north of Shadow Hall.

NPCs

Only spiders here. As before, the spiders are unlikely to attack armed humans in a straight up fight without a good reason, but if they can lure them into the web, or can separate them, they might try for an ambush. "Good reasons" include: destroying large portions of the web, invading the spiders' tunnels, trying to free their herds.

Incidents:

Potential encounters while traveling:

- A Run: The PCs will see dozens of runs into the web network, all following small streams or deer/boq paths. Each run will usually join with others, terminating in a place where a trapdoor spider will be able to ambush the players and drag one under ground. The GM might want to compel **Where does this lead?** to lure the PCs into one. See the Third Encounter for more information on this attack.
- Flowing water:
 - If the PCs travel up the eastern spur, they'll have to cross a number

of small streams, all of which run down into the valley, merge to become Moss River, and enter Swift Lake at the eastern end. The source of these is a high lake in the eastern end of the Southern Barrier, and since this is the spring time there were be a lot of streams and they will flow quickly.

- If they travel up the western spur, they'll encounter The Well. The source of the White Salt River is the same portal that pours huge torrents of ocean water over the cliff face at Splashtown, in the Finstel lands to the west. The White Salt flows eastward though the peaks of the Southern Barrier, eventually breaking through and spilling down the spur, then dropping to the valley below. The current is quick. If the PCs want to cross it, they may have to enter combat with it. The Combat section in Third Encounter goes into detail about PCs who must navigate or enter the river.
- Startled Game: While traveling near the web, the PCs come across a boq eating berries from a bush. It's so startled by them that it leaps away— directly into the web. Suddenly, the spitting spiders that have been trailing the PCs, watching carefully for a chance to ambush them, or just to figure out what they're doing, will break cover to eat. Did the PCs know they were there? Will they attack?
- Failed climb roll: at some point, one of the PCs—or possibly the prince— will fail a climb roll, and fall some distance down a steep part of the spur. Will they fall far enough to get stuck in the web? Will they be injured and separated from the others, and therefore ripe for an ambush attack and kidnapping?

Combat A reminder for the PCs: their number one priority is *None of their scholars can be taken prisoner.*

If the PCs try to cut their way to Shadow Hall, they will come upon The Pen, and find that the spiders have been sealing the web shut behind them. Go directly to Third Encounter, but the PCs will probably not be entering from the

south. The spiders would prefer that the PCs be disarmed before they're captured, but this would be an acceptable plan B.

On the other hand, if the PCs have circled around with the intent of lighting a fire, that's a different story. Spending a fate point will ensure that they will find a stand of pine trees upslope. Did they think to bring axes and pitch from Narrows Point?

If the players decide to build a fire out of nearby wood, great. The more tools they have, the better the structure and the lower their opposition should be to start a really big blaze fire. If they expect the scholars to start the blaze with only their spells, that won't happen. Prince Cimfulin will not be enthusiastic about the idea of wandering along the edge of the forest, cast jets of flame into the foliage until a fire starts. It will leave him open to counter-attack and require him to cast the spell several times until it takes. Instead, he'll want to cast once, into a cleverly designed pile of lumber, then set that on fire and tip it into the woods.

Remember, the forest is flammable, but the web is not.

The spiders will be curious about this new human activity, but they probably won't guess what the PCs are doing at first. They know humans build shelter out of felled trees, and will assume that they are constructing a den of some sort.

Obviously, spiders know about fire, although they don't use it as a tool themselves. It would never even occur to them to attack an enemy with such a dangerous force, especially since it would put everything they value at risk. As far as they're concerned, the fact that humans cook with it, burn torches, and gather around campfires is more evidence that they have limited intelligence.

Have the PCs been building campfires at night? If so, the spiders have been watching from a distance. They'll recognize the conical shape of the wood pile they burn. If the PCs start to build a giant version of a campfire, the spiders will realize what they're planning, freak out, and attack.

If the PCs build any other kind of structure—even something as basic as “a pile”—the spiders will assume it's some sort of fortification or new settlement, and they will watch construction with interest... Until they see the first tongues of flame, then they will attack.

Previously, spiders were unwilling to make suicide charges at armed and armored humans, but to protect the basis of their axis, they will risk anything. They'll fight to protect their web from wholesale destruction (not just being chopped apart here and there) the way a human would defend their children: all out.

PCs will have to create advantages like *High ground*, *Shield wall*, and whatever else seems appropriate, because this should be a big fight.

Only jumping and spitting spiders will take part in this battle, but the jumping spiders will do most of the fighting while the spitting spiders will try to use their webbing to smother the flame.

It might be best to manage the attack in waves. Perhaps two enemies for every PC, and if that proves to easy, bring further waves of spiders against them.

Aftermath

If the PCs were successful and the fire spread down through the valley, it will destroy the web and the forest. Then it will burn through Narrows Point, completely leveling both sides of the town, then continue southward into Witt territory, only stopping six days later after some heavy rains. The people of Narrows Point will all survive the fire as they've survived others: by rafting onto the lake until it passes by. But they will have lost everything.

Grimwood lands will be denuded. Shadow Hall and the attached temple—both made of pink scholar-created stone—will be the only remaining structure. If the humans venture further, they'll find the burned corpses of the townsfolk who had been dragged away by the spiders in their ambushes. Obviously, they were alive, tried to flee the fire, but became caught in the web and were killed, along with numerous sheep and okshim.

They will also discover strange holes in the ground all through the area around the Hall. These are the burrows the trapdoor spiders built, with the webbed-up trapdoors so damaged by the fire that they collapsed.

With yet another web destroyed, the spiders will be miserable and shell-shocked. The queen and her remaining forces will flee into the east, over the

spur into the smaller, more populated forests on Gerrit lands.

At the GM's option, the PCs might see them fleeing into the east and give chase. Alternately, the GM might have the spiders escape before the PCs arrive, or they might be killed in the tunnels by the heat of the fire.

In any event, no one will be happy at the loss of the Grimwood forests, least of all Cimfulin's brother, the king.

Third Encounter: At Shadow Hall

Getting there:

The easiest route to Shadow Hall is by walking The Run that the spiders have created for their captives. Traveling The Run directly to Shadow Hall is a twenty-hour hike. Hacking through the web will take, at minimum, several days, even if the PCs enter from from the northernmost part of the spiders' kingdom. If the PCs burn down the Grimwood forest and walk southward across the ashes, the journey will take most of a day.

Remember also that there are many pathways from the exterior of the giant web deep into the web itself. None of these connect to the clearing at Shadow Hall *above ground*. All connect to the city of The Connected People, though.

Shadow Hall:

Shadow Hall isn't on anyone's list of important places in the empire, but the people who lived there resisted the empire for a long time. As a result, their lands are underpopulated and underdeveloped. The lumber there—and the canal that connects the White Salt River to Peradain—should make them quite wealthy in the years to come, assuming they can find the labor to collect it and can convince the king to pay a fair price.

Scenery: The lands surrounding Shadow Hall lie nestled in a notch between two rocky spurs projecting southward from the Southern Barrier. The town is hilly, and large sections have been cleared of forest. Several small freshwater streams run off the eastern spur, while the White Salt runs off the western. The

river flows southward on and beside the spur, then eastward across Grimwood lands, passing on the southern side of Shadoton, then it turns south again, flowing alongside the road that the spiders have turned into The Run all the way to Swift Lake.

More pines are mixed with the oaks as the PCs trek uphill, but the change in altitude is not great. There are no cliffs to climb, no switchback trails. Just a long uneven upward slope.

Once the PCs cross the White Salt, they'll find that the trees have been largely cleared, and the ground is mostly meadow with some scrub. PCs with experience raising animals will know the meadow has been over-grazed.

Surrounding the meadow and the small town that grew up around Shadow Hall is a wall of webbing as tall as the trees.

The enemy: This area is the spider stronghold. The queen lives here, laying eggs below ground, trying to replace lost scouts and jumping spiders with new babies. Unfortunately, they have been struggling to find and capture enough food to support themselves and their new herd animals. That's why the queen has prioritized the capture of the croplands.

In the meantime, the few builder spiders are working below, creating underground chambers and towers for the city that is to come.

Citizens: There are about forty humans in in the clearing. Fifteen are servants, twelve are farmers, and the rest are the tyr and his guards.

The tyr: Tyr Amlioc Grimwood: Amlioc was nothing more than a merchant's son when the last of the Grimwood resistance was hunted down and killed. Those fighters who surrendered were shipped off to who-knows-where as servants. Those who remained became imperial citizens, and Amlioc was given the role of tyr.

He's in his seventies now, which makes him one of the oldest people the PCs will have ever seen, and he rules in the way his people always have: he only issues commands his people already want to follow. His authority comes from

his charisma and persuasiveness, along with his history of making smart, tough decisions. People trust him, and they liked his sons. Sadly, his heirs were Fire-taken (killed) in the early days of the spider invasion.

The tyr's new wife: **Kellilia Grimwood:** The tyr's previous wife, a woman he didn't like much, died in a fall ten years ago. Now that his two sons have been killed, he knows that the Peradaini expect him to produce another male heir, or rule of his people will go to the heirs of his cousins down in Narrows Point. He thinks his cousins are bullies and idiots.

Kellilia was an archer in his personal guard. She's not a great beauty, but she is a big, strapping healthy young woman. She supports the tyr in all of his choices, and hopes to keep him alive long enough to ensure that she can carry a male heir. The Peradaini will not accept anything else, although Grimwood traditions never involved rule by bloodline.

Kellilia is seven months pregnant.

So she has ambition, obviously, but she's also committed to doing right by the Grimwood people.

The priest: **Eskalind Olvorit:** Eskalind is from the Holvos lands, planted in the local temple as a spy. Everyone knows he's a Peradaini spy, and he knows they know. He still tries to do his sacred duty, representing the gods among the faithful. The other priest, Emblin, was dragged underground by a trapdoor spider weeks ago, and no one seemed to care. Eskalind just wants to get out of these Fire-taken lands.

The only reason he hasn't fled is that there's no way out but the river, and he's heard the screams from others who've tried to escape that way.

Currently, he feels panicky and betrayed. Why didn't the king send more troops to replace the ones the spiders destroyed? Didn't they get his messages? Has everyone been abandoned? He also suspects the others think he should be the next human sacrificed to the spiders, and he's right.

Captain of the Guard: **Stazlioc Pelton:** Having been stripped of his armor and weapons, the captain has given up all hope of survival. He and his soldiers have managed to arm themselves with cudgels and sharpened sticks, but so have

the servants and farmers. He's willing to obey orders and fight when called to fight, but his morale could hardly be lower. He sent his family away, to the south, along with the families of his soldiers, but he has no hope of ever joining them. (It'd probably be a bad idea to tell him about Auntie Spill and her bandit camp).

Head of the cabinet: **Uls Splitwood:** Uls is nearing sixty, which is unusually old for the difficult life of a servant. He's from Finstel lands (all the servants are from outside the Grimwood lands), and he's the head of the local "cabinet," a secret organization within the servant community designed to make life bearable.

Not that the servants will ever admit that such an organization exists.

As far as Uls is concerned, if the guards don't have weapons, the servants have no reason to live and work like slaves.

Finally, NPCs captured in the Second Encounter: **Captives from Narrows Point.** This note is included to remind the GM that any NPCs captured during the encounter in Narrows Point will be here as well.

Locations:

The Bridge: Coming up The Run, the PCs will find a long wooden bridge where the road crosses the White Salt River. The bridge, which was poorly maintained before the spiders came and isn't maintained at all anymore, has been destroyed so there is a 20-foot gap in the middle. If the PCs are unarmed and were dumped in The Run by the spiders, there will be a long wooden plank webbed into place that they can use to cross. If they're armed, that plank will be high in the webbing above them, difficult to see and even harder to access.

There are trees all around, of course, but they're protected by webbing and spiders are unlikely to stand by and let humans chop down them down. It's not the trees the spiders care so much about, it's that they're anchors for the webbing, assuming the PCs have the tools to do this work.

The river is fast and dangerous to cross, and the spiders will be disappointed if the PCs try it (they've lost other meals that way) and surprised if they

succeed.

On the other side of the river, the PCs will be able to see average folks standing around with nothing better to do than watch new arrivals arrive. If some NPCs were captured in the second encounter, they will be milling around in the crowd.

The river: It's possible that the PCs will try to escape with the hostages via water. However, the White Salt River is fed from a portal deep in the rock of the Southern Barrier. The portal connects to a foreign ocean, and the river is filled with unpleasant sea creatures like sharks and eels.

To make matters worse, after the spiders have finished feeding on their prey, they will sometimes drop husks into the water to draw the predators upstream. Visible shark fins discourage their herds from attempting to escape.

If the bridge is down and the PCs want to cross in the water, they will find it fast-flowing but no deeper than a grown man's chin at the deepest part. Near the bridge, the river is about 20 meters across. They are also likely to find a shark or two in the water nearby. The sharks brush against prey before biting, and are likely to be pretty hungry. GM's discretion.

However, farther downstream, there is a wide, slow part of the river where eels have nested. If the PCs try to pass through here, they're almost certainly going to be bitten by an eel, and once the water begins to fill with blood, a shark attack is guaranteed.

As for the riverbanks, not only are they protected by sticky web, the ground is so muddy that any attempt to walk on them will make the characters sink deep. They are also infested with cursed leeches and stinging plants.

If the PCs do try to wade or swim across the river rather than cross the bridge, or try to escape downstream, see the Combat section, below.

The clearing: This is a large area, surrounded on all sides by trees and webbing. It was cleared of trees long before the spiders arrived; it has been used as pasture for sheep and okshim for years. Now, the surviving humans live on it, sleeping on the ground, with most of them exposed to the elements.

On the southern end, the clearing starts at the riverbank, where the northern

part of the broken bridge still stands. The clearing is about 160 meters wide and extends about 250 meters northward—widening slightly as it goes—toward Shadow Hall and the tiny village that grew up around it.

The spiders have sealed the surrounding woods thoroughly, leaving only a narrow gap in the northeastern edge of the clearing to allow people access to their old village. No one lives in Shadoton now; they only go then when they need to scavenge something. It's dangerous ground.

The tyr, his guards, and the farmers live near the eastern edge of the clearing, beside a well that is the only source of fresh water inside the webbing. They have lean-tos made from poles and wooden doors, but little else.

They also have about two dozen sheep. Their last okshim panicked and fled through the town. No one has seen it since.

The servants live on the southwestern edge of the clearing, as far as possible from Shadow Hall without crossing back over the bridge into The Run, where there is no food or water. Most of them are not Grimwood people, and they have little love for the local community. They're forced to sleep under blankets, having no

The priest sleeps alone a few dozen yards away from the servants. He's not welcome anywhere and he knows it.

Shadow Hall: Shadow Hall was built at the southern edge of Shadoton, very near the entrance from the clearing into the town. It stands out against the forest and the mountains behind it, because the face of it is constructed from scholar-created pink granite blocks. The building is two stories tall, and the south-facing front has two sets of large, oaken double doors. The doors on the eastern side of the front lead to a temple. The doors on the western side lead to the Grimwood's great hall.

On a successful Notice roll (or other appropriate skill) the PCs will realize that the northwest corner of the Hall has sunk slightly into the forest mud. This is because it was slightly undermined when the caverns below were dug out, although the web supports in place now will prevent further settling.

The temple is of a standard design: The front doors lead to a short passage.

The main room contains a statue of Fury in his aspect of a Woodcutter. He holds an axe in one hand and an unlit oil lamp (the priests used to light it in honor of Fire, but no longer) in the other. Off to the side of the main chamber are three smaller chambers, one for Song, one for The Little Spinner, and one for Monument. Then, there is another short passage leading to another pair of double doors on the north side of the building. The priests' quarters are tucked into the side of these passageways, and consist of little more than a pair of hammocks, a set of shelves, and their brooms.

The great hall of the Grimwood people is not particularly great. There's a large wooden chair set on a dais at the north end, with a wide open space and benches along the walls. While the roof of the temple is made of the same pink granite as the walls, the roof of the hall is made of wooden slats. On the northern end of the room, behind the dais, there's a door that leads to a small private counsel room. A door in that room leads to the servant's work rooms; a second leads outside. A set of stairs leads to a room that was meant to be the tyr's quarters, but which Tyr Grimwood found too small (also, he doesn't like climbing the stairs). Servants used to live there.

Between the dais and the door to the counsel room is a huge hole in the floor, eight feet wide. It's the entrance to the Cavern of the Spider City (see below), and the only one the queen can fit through.

Shadoton: Shadow Hall is the anchor for a small community that has grown up around it. Most of the Grimwood trade is managed through Narrows Point, but trade for ore with other Chin-Chinro peoples in the north or with the Gerrits is handled here.

Shadoton is smaller than Narrows Point by quite a lot. There are approximately fifty wooden structures here. The largest is a covered pen where the tyr's sheep (all herd animals belong to the tyr) used to spend the night. The second largest is the tyr's residence, which is directly north of Shadow Hall.

The other buildings are a mix of a few clannish long houses, each about half the size of the common room inside Shadow Hall, among a great many small shops and houses. The streets are made of split logs half-sunk in the mud. The

buildings are also made of split logs, with roofs built from rough planks.

The Grimwoods are a poor people without grand architecture. In fact, Shadoton only sprouted up when the empire conquered these lands, built Shadow Hall, and ordered the tyr to rule from there. Before then, there was nothing but a trading post.

Most of the buildings no longer have doors on them, and several have had slender shafts of wood scavenged from them.

The web network passes through Shadoton, but it has been partially cleared away by the spiders. There are no sticky webs here, and the strong, structural web they build is minimal. The spiders realized that humans needed the supplies and food stores in the warehouses, longhouses, and shops, so they trimmed back the network to be as sparse as possible.

Sometimes the humans who venture into the town are dragged underground to make a meal for the queen. The empty town serves as storehouse for the humans and bait for the spiders.

All along the edges of the town are piles of loose dirt and soil, dug from the city below.

The tunnels: The trapdoor spiders are here, living inside their tunnels on the edges of the clearing. The trapdoors themselves are nearly impossible to spot with the naked eye: (say, a Great (+4) result on a Notice roll). The spiders lurking in these tunnels have learned to tell the difference between human tread and the tread of sheep or okshim, and they will be very cautious about their attacks if they know the PCs are armed.

The tunnels and the doors that hide them are supported by webbing. If the PCs enter one, the vibrations will be felt on the web, and every spider living underground will know. All tunnels are about four feet in diameter and lead to the main cavern, which is built beneath Shadow Hall.

The trapdoors themselves are (unsurprisingly) clustered in the northeastern part of the clearing, near the entrance to Shadoton. There is also one at the end of each run; it's the trapdoor spiders' job to bring wild food into the city, sometimes alive (to be added to a herd) sometimes not. There are a few

additional trapdoors in other places around the clearing, to catch prey unaware, and new tunnels are being dug all the time.

Cavern of the Spider City: Beneath Shadow Hall is the spider's home city... Actually, the city has barely begun to be built, having only four builder spiders working for a few months. It's not even as large as Shadoton yet, although some spider cities are vast and complex. The cavern is lit only by the glow of the queen's body and her eggs.

The cavern isn't a true cavern. It's formed from excavated soil, with the walls and ceiling held in place with a layer of reinforcing webbing, like the trapdoor spiders use. However, it does have dirt spires of surprising complexity, all sealed with web. Some are spiral shapes, some arches, some double helixes — really, any complex shape that the spiders would find interesting, and spiders love beautiful design.

All of the columns and spires grow out of a single column at the base of the cavern, like a tree trunk that splits into many parts. The cavern itself is shaped like a funnel, with a narrow base only about thirty feet wide. The single column is about 15 feet in diameter, and sits in the dead center of the cavern floor.

The top of the funnel is approximately 150 feet around, in an irregular circle. The cavern roof is supported by arches, columns, and a sturdy coating of web. At the edge of this upper circle are several dozen tunnel entrances that lead to the ambush points for trapdoor spiders, some of which are in the clearing, some at the end of runs.

All of the armor and metal weaponry that the spiders have taken from the locals lies discarded at the bottom of the cavern.

The Queen and her eggs are comfortably nestled in a deep nook on the northern side of the pit. As mentioned above, she and her eggs glow slightly, giving off about as much light as a crescent moon on a clear night. PCs entering the cavern from full daylight will be nearly blind for about half an hour. The Queen is perfectly mobile, but at the moment she is attached to a dozen eggs, each about the size of a human head. If forced to flee the cavern, she will disconnect herself from all her eggs except the egg for the new queen, and make

for the entrance behind the dais in Shadow Hall. Disconnecting an egg kills the unborn spider inside, and the Queen is as attached to her children as the typical human mother would be; she will only abandon them at the direst need.

One egg, in particular, is especially precious: the queen-egg. This is the queen's replacement, should she die, or the founder of a new city if she does not. The Queen loves this egg more than any other; without a Queen, her colony will die.

On the slope below the Queen's nook is a pile of corpses—little more than dried husks, really—of the meals she's eaten (and shared with the builders working around her). There are maybe fifty bodies here, and a similar number of flesh-eating grubs, each about the size of a grown man's thumb. The spiders and the grubs have a symbiotic relationship: the spiders feed the grubs their leavings, and the grubs are the first thing a newborn spider eats. Baby food, essentially. Unfortunately, most of the grubs the spiders brought to Kal-Maddum have been lost in their overland journey, and the Queen is concerned that the supply they have is not robust enough to support a new generation. New eggs will not be allowed to hatch for several weeks, when the Queen is sure they—and future generations—will have enough to eat.

Aside from the queen, her eggs, and the four builder spiders, no one lives in the city. The city itself is more of a monument than a thriving metropolis. Other spider castes are welcome to enter when hunger or danger require it, but most of their work is above ground.

Of course, the web network extends throughout the cavern as well. There is no sticky web down here, but structural web lines connect all the spires with the ends of the trap door spiders' tunnels. This is how food is brought into the city, carried to the queen and used to feed her so she can lay eggs.

The web lines will support the weight of a human being, but only one at a time. Also, it's little more than a tightrope; some of the lines have a second one nearby, which could provide a handhold while walking a line.

However, they can climb up the spires and the sides of the cavern, using the structural web as hand- and footholds. They won't be able to wield weapons, but

they can climb.

What the NPCs know:

- **The tyr:**
 - knows that the spiders talk to each other through that webbing, and that anyone who touches it alerts the whole swarm.
 - He also knows that the spiders are smart. Maybe smarter than humans.
 - He knows that the priest is a spy for Peradain, but it doesn't bother him much.
 - The servants have staged what is essentially a bloodless revolt, and he admires them for it. Taking servants is a Peradaini thing; he's never liked the practice. He'd have already sent them home to their own lands, if he thought they would be free when they got there.
 - The supplies they have right now are not enough for everyone already in the clearing, and the spiders keep bringing more people in.
 - There's also not enough grassland for the sheep they have.
 - He knows his new wife is ambitious, hoping to see her child in the chair of a tyr. He also knows she's not as ambitious as his cousins in Narrows Point, who will cut her throat if he can't find a way to protect her.
 - Plus, he's having another kid. At his age! And yes, he's sure it's his, don't even think it.
- **The tyr's wife:**
 - Her new husband is wiser than anyone she's ever met. Why should anyone take orders from some prince out of the south?
 - When the time for fighting comes, she's not going to stand back, pregnant or not. She'll fight with the others.
- **Captain of the guard:**
 - The weapons and shields they've managed to fashion out of the

remnants of the town are barely weapons, but it's better to die with them than empty hands. (See the section on Combat, below)

- The garrison of Peradaini soldiers was well armed and armored, but the spiders hauled all their gear away to Song knows where.
- Allowing the guards to take up sharpened sticks and door-shields against the servants would bring them back into line, but the spiders would realize they have weapons and swoop down on them all.
- The spiders have undermined the great hall by digging their tunnels beneath it.
- **Head of the cabinet:**
 - Cabinet? What's that? We've never heard of a cabinet, unless you mean the furniture left up in Shadoton.
 - The river is impassible. It's not just that the waters are rocky and turbulent, it has some creatures that make it almost as dangerous as the oceans.
 - Escape that way has been tried, but no one will stop you if you want to throw your live away.
 - The spiders are working together, bringing prey into those trapdoors. They're a community, and they're organized, and maybe prey isn't going underground to a single spider's pit. Maybe there's whole bunch of them down there.
 - When the spiders take one of the sheep, it becomes slightly safer to cross over into Shadoton.
 - Keep your commander, whoever he is, away from the servant's camp. It's too likely that one of the servants will decide to make a suicide attack against him, and that would be bad for everyone.
 - The tyr is a decent man, for a tyr, but the guards, his citizens, and his wife think the servants should be whipped and fed to the spiders to preserve the sheep.
- **The priest:**
 - Everyone is against him. He has been abandoned here. Why hasn't

the king received his messages and sent the army? The whole army? He has been trapped in this clearing with people who hate him and if the spiders don't sting him and kill him dead the people are going to cut his throat.

Combat: A reminder for the PCs: their number one priority is *None of their scholars can be taken prisoner.*

There are several spaces and opportunities for combat:

The River. If the PCs insist on traveling downstream in search of safety, the trip should be treated as combat with the White Salt.

Before the PCs embark on their combat, they'll need to decide if they want some sort of boat or raft. It is possible to construct something from the wooden structures of Shadoton, although the tyr and his people will be unhappy to see so much wood wasted on a suicide mission. It should be pretty rudimentary, unless they still have the NPCs who brought them upriver on the skiff. The vessel should be an NPC itself, with aspects and stress boxes, depending on how skillfully it's built.

None of the Grimwood people have any experience making water-going craft. If the NPCs who poled them upriver on the skiff are still with them, the craft should have more stress boxes and maybe even a skill like Upright Average (+1), to defend against tipping attacks. Still, those NPCs will strongly advise against travel in this part of the river.

The river has the Aspects *White water, Low-hanging webs, Sudden drops.* It can use any of these to create advantages or to aid in its attacks.

It also has the attack skills: Predators Fair (+2), Submerged rock Fair (+2), Drown Average (+1), Leeches Average (+1).

It has two stunts: **Feeding Frenzy:** +2 to attack with the skill Predator against targets in pools or eddies when there is blood in the water. **Drags Under:** When making an attack with the Drown skill, armor ratings add to damage done rather than subtract.

It also has 3 fate points.

Predators is an attack best used in relatively calm parts of the river and can be directed against people or the vessel, although the GM would be justified in giving a raft or skiff Armor:2 against such attacks. There are several different kinds of predator

Submerged rock is best used in fastest parts of the river, and can be used to do damage to a person or vessel.

Drown can only be used against a character who has fallen in the water.

Leeches can only be used against people traveling on the muddy riverbank, a place where Drown, Predators and Submerged rocks can't be used as attacks. Leeches can never do more than one shift of damage, but once they overcome armor, that armor won't offer protection again in that particular combat. Consequences of a leech attack are things like *Woozy*, *So very tired*, and *I need to lie down for a moment*.

When heading downstream, there should be at least 10-12 turns of combat before the PCs reach a large boulder in the middle of a quite stretch of water, which would be the first place where they could break off the combat. Alternately, they could brave the riverbank and plunge into the spiders web.

Travel on the muddy riverbank in either direction takes 5x as many turns as floating downstream. If the PCs travel on the water for two rounds, it will take them ten to trudge through the mud back to where they started.

If the PCs need to concede the combat, they can be webbed, paralyzed, and captured by the spiders. The spiders will drag them through the forest and deposit them, stripped of their gear, in the clearing.

The Grimwood people: It's unlikely that the local population will want to fight the PCs unless they're forced to. If the PCs attack the locals or try to rob them, the guards and the citizens will do whatever they have to do to defend themselves.

However, the shacks and lean-tos that the citizens live in are made up of doors that have been modified to work as shields and posts with one end sharpened and hardened in the campfire. These are the human's secret weapons, which they are holding on to until their need becomes truly dire.

Much depends on the state of the PCs when they arrive. Are they armed and armored? The locals will point them at the enemy and wish them luck, only grabbing up their own makeshift weapons if they think the PCs will win and need support.

Are the PCs completely unarmed and unarmored? The locals will see them as more mouths to feed. Any attempt to help themselves to Grimwood resources—especially those shields and sharpened sticks—will be rebuffed, violently.

The tyr will not want to cause friction with Peradain. In fact, even after he discovers that there are scholars among the party, the tyr will be too cagey to threaten them outright. Better to wait until the spiders are destroyed and see where things stand. Tyr Grimwood knows his people do not have the strength to defy the king; they'd already been decimated before the spiders attacked. It will be generations before his people will be ready for another revolt, and impatience would destroy them. But perhaps, after the spiders are taken care of, there might be a way to kidnap a scholar, switching clothes with a corpse, perhaps? One must keep one's options open.

Still, a battle with the locals is unlikely while the spiders are still the main threat.

The spiders: The spiders have three priorities. In order of importance:

1. Protect the queen and the queen-egg.
2. Ensure there is enough food to sustain the queen, her eggs, and their people, in that order.
3. Maintain their web and a spider population large enough to harvest the prey it catches.

If the web is destroyed or their population reduced precipitously, the spiders will withdraw into the mountains and try, again, to set up a home somewhere safe.

If their food supply is cut short—for instance, if the people and herd animals trapped in the clearing are rescued, the spiders will make increasingly desperate attacks into the surrounding countryside, possibly venturing into Witt or Gerrit lands.

If the both queen and the queen-egg are destroyed, that's it. The spiders are done. The jumping and spitting spiders will submit themselves to the bites of the builders, enduring ritual execution. Mercy killings, really. Then, the last of the large spiders will make a suicide charge at the humans.

The death of the queen is the death of all of them, and the spiders will do whatever they must to prevent that.

Their strategy depends on the manner in which the PCs arrive at the clearing. To break it down:

Are the PCs unarmed?

If the PCs are unarmed, the spiders will treat them like food: they'll be herded and occasionally watched, but not too closely. Even if the scholars have used magic in their fights, the spiders will assume that stripping their gear will render them harmless.

Spiders do not use magic themselves, but they're familiar with it. Their hated enemy, the alligaunts, use magic all the time. However, alligaunts use a focus for their spells, and the spiders will assume that scholars are the same. If they see a scholar casting spells, they will think their magic has been disabled once they've had their stuff stolen.

If the PCs make new weapons from the ruins of Shadoton, or gather with the weapons the Grimwood peoples have created, or doing something else the spiders recognize as preparation for an attack, the spiders tactics will be ambush, hit-and-run, and intimidation. Their plan will be to do as little damage to their food stock as possible, so it won't spoil.

For instance, if the humans seem to be forming up for an attack, spitting spiders might use *Web in place* to break their formation, then lure them to a spot where a trapdoor spider can attack one from behind. When the humans turn to deal with the ambush, they would get another assault from jumping spiders. After a certain number of assaults, the spiders would show their numbers.

Anyone entering the cavern under their own power would have to be killed, naturally.

Are the PCs armed?

PCs armed with real spears, armor and shields are an obvious threat to the

queen and her eggs, and have to be dealt with. The Connected People would spread word far and wide about the intrusion, and scouts and hunters would come to the queen's aid. The spiders would prefer to attack them in the Run, but will be unable to gather in sufficient numbers unless the PCs camp out overnight.

If the PCs camp overnight in the clearing, the spiders will attack in the darkness.

Additionally, The Queen will begin to fill the cavern with her Hypno-scent. Given a full day to prepare, the cavern will be completely filled, and anyone standing beside the hole in the floor of the Grimwood hall will be forced to engage in a contest with her as described in her writeup. (If the Queen does not have time to prepare, it will only affect PCs in the same zone as her.)

To kill the Queen, the players have two basic options: to invade the cavern city or to make the cavern city uninhabitable in some way, forcing the Queen to flee through her only escape route, through the hole in the floor of the great hall.

Similar to the optional encounter, it may be best to attack the PCs with two jumping spiders/one trapdoor spider each, bringing in more if they are doing exceptionally well.

What if the PCs go on the offensive?

The best strategy for the PCs might be to dump wood into the hole in the floor of the great hall, then lighting a fire to drive the queen out. A fire *above* the hole would not worry the queen, because she gets fresh air from the trapdoor tunnels. A substantial fire inside it would force her to flee.

Alternately, the PCs may decide to enter the tunnels. In such cramped quarters, it wouldn't be unreasonable to give the humans a -2 on every roll, maybe more if the situation warrants. They will have to fight either from their knees, or bent double at the waist.

Those tunnels are the homes of the trapdoor spiders. They will do their best to separate the humans, perhaps put a *Web in place* or *Paralyzed by venom* condition on them, then either kill them or collapse a tunnel on them. It will certainly be challenging for the humans to fight under those conditions, if the

person at the front of the tunnel is incapacitated.

Of course, the humans could simply do their best to harry the spiders above ground, denying them food, collapsing the tunnels without entering them, and generally denying the queen the resources she needs to survive. That would be a much longer fight, with many fronts, but starving out an enemy in a fortified position is not a new strategy for the armies of Peradain.

What about reinforcements?

Six days after the Prince arrives at Shadow Hall, the first of the reinforcements will arrive, a pair of fleet squads that have been pushing hard to catch up to him. Will they find him alive but disarmed, loitering in the clearing with the sheep? Will he be kneeling inside the temple, giving thanks for a great victory? The prince himself would rather die than fail in this mission

Loot: Not much that can be carried away, with one exception: in his house, the tyr has a chest of coins in an upstairs bedroom. Otherwise, there are few items of value that could be removed from Grimwood lands. The prince, Tyr Grimwood, and all the locals would consider theft, of any degree, looting. The prince would punish the PCs appropriately.

However, there are farms, stores, and other business with no living owners, and many more run by widows and widowers who can't manage on their own. PCs could, upon polite request, be granted permission to settle down in Grimwood lands, provided they are willing to take oaths of loyalty to both the tyr and Peradain.

Otherwise, the prince will stay long enough to help Tyr Grimwood destroy the cavern (along with much of Shadow Hall) and pledge soldiers, laborers, and coin to rebuild. Anything to get that lumber moving again. The prince himself knows what loot he wants: the corpses of those spiders. Big ones, too, the biggest he can get, so show off the power of scholars in the capital city.

Aftermath:

Did the PCs go the optional route of burning down the forest? If so, it can be

up to the GM whether that kills the spiders within. It's possible that the heat, smoke, and collapsing trees will cause the cavern to collapse. It's also possible that some spiders remained safe below ground, and they fled eastward with their queen into Gerrit lands between the time the fire passed through and the arrival of the PCs.

Of course, all of the Grimwood people will be dead. Everyone in the clearing will be killed by the fire, and everyone in Narrows Point will be killed by the fire and the spiders fleeing south. The Grimwoods will be no more, Peradain will not be getting the lumber it needs, and the prince will feel that he failed to prove himself. No one is going to be happy.

Did the prince survive the encounter? Whether he was killed to prevent magic from falling into the wrong hands or if he fell in battle, it would probably be best if the PCs never showed their faces in Peradain again. In fact, better to just steal some clothes, pick a new name, and head out to new lands. If the PCs are still hanging around the prince's corpse when reinforcements arrive, they'll be chained, dragged back to Peradain, and made servants in a mining camp for the rest of their short lives.

If they managed to defeat the spiders and keep the prince alive, the PCs will be considered heroes (unless they behaved in an abominable way that shocked or appalled the prince. Upon their return to Peradain, they'll be promoted and offered cushy posts within the palace itself. Their spouses will live in relative comfort, and their children will be educated with the families of Peradaini elites.

Story Seeds

The most common story idea would center around the **portals**. PCs could travel to another world, NPCs from another world could invade, or PC in a pre-existing campaign could find a portal in their world that would lead them to Kal-Maddum.

But what about less obvious story ideas?

Invasion from the sea: (set anytime before the fall of Peradain) Down at the

southernmost Waterlands, a boat full of young fisherfolk is swept over the falls into the open ocean. Their loved ones mourn, hoping the fall killed them, and not the beasts of the sea. Then one of them returns. It's a miracle! Except that he's acting so strangely, and there seems to be something growing inside him.

Revolution! (set concurrent with the events of the trilogy) The Simblin people, long a wild, barbarian people beset by sea giants on the west and the empire on the east, finally fell to imperial spears a generation ago. But conditions have only become worse for the servants in Simblin lands; brutality and murder are commonplace.

Then one day, a servant notices that the sea giants are attracted to a certain beach flower. Can they gather enough of them to lead the giants into Simblinton and, while the soldiers are distracted, orchestrate a slave revolt?

Warriors return home: (set just after the events of the trilogy) a group of alligaunt PCs flee the destruction of their city in Lake Windmark. Their only passage offworld is buried under tons of rubble, but perhaps if they could traverse all the way through the Sweeps, then the Shelterlands, then around the edge of the mountains into the Qorr Valley, they might be able to return to their own lands through the Door in the Mountain. Assuming they can survive the dangers of the trip, carrying nothing but the gear they fled with.

Assassin's dart: (set shortly before the fall of Peradain) The Raftlin holdfast sits on the northern edge of the Waterlands, part forest, part swampy fishing country. Imperial rule rest uncomfortably upon them; they are matriarchal by tradition, and chafe at the way the Peradaini have reorganized their society. But they don't have the military strength to free themselves from the power of the Throne of Skulls.

Then, one day, the imperial secretary—a grotesque, depraved man who delighted in thumbing his nose at the local culture—is murdered, shot in the back with an iron scholar's dart. Under normal circumstances, allowing any

harm to a royal bureaucrat—the people who enforce imperial law in various lands—would be treason, but who could blame the Raftlin people if one of the king’s scholars committed the deed?

What Tyr Raftlin doesn’t want anyone to discover is that the dart was enchanted; someone has found a way to put the Tenth Gift onto a focus, creating a dart that anyone can shoot. The tyr needs the PCs to investigate the murder with utmost discretion. Officially, the imperial secretary was assassinated by an imperial scholar. In truth, he could have been killed by anyone, and if that gets out—or if the royal family discovers that someone in the Raftlin lands have a new version of the Tenth Gift that they do not—they will be engulfed in a war they can’t possibly win.

Who killed the secretary, and why?

Reclaiming the Bescos Sea: (set long after the events of the trilogy) The residents of Simblinton make an unexpected discovery: the sea giants have stopped coming ashore. No more raids, no more violence. Not that anyone misses them, but what’s happening on the sea bed? What if the alligaunts are building a new city?

Equipped with kinzchu stones and water gems, the PCs descend to the depths to investigate, and quickly discover that the sea giants were not always mindless beasts. There is a decaying civilization there—great towers, strange machines, beautiful sculptures, ... other stuff they can’t guess the purpose of—all built on the sea giants’ scale. Obviously, they used to be incredibly advanced.

The sea giants are imprisoned and, improbably, able to talk. Centuries ago a parasite infected them, robbing them of language, culture, and thought. Recently, they were forced to lock themselves away while the parasite went into a dormant phase. Now many of the giants are dying because they do not have access to the world above the waves.

If the PCs could find the master parasite and destroy it before the dormant period ended, the giants would be themselves again, and very grateful.

Part Two: *A Key, an Egg, an Unfortunate Remark*

Warning!

This supplement contains massive, book-destroying spoilers for:

A Key, an Egg, an Unfortunate Remark

INTRODUCTION

TL;DR

The majority of this document is an explanation of the world-building for the setting of *A Key, An Egg, An Unfortunate Remark*, (hereafter shortened to “Key/Egg”) along with my attempts to render them in Fate game mechanics, and it’s a bit long-winded.

Here’s the short version:

Key/Egg starts with a modern “secret urban fantasy” setting: the world is just like ours, except that the supernatural is real. By the end of the book, the

existence of magic is no longer a secret; the whole world knows about it.

I did say that there would be spoilers here, yes?

However, there is an important difference from most urban fantasy settings: here, the most powerful sort of character you can play is an ordinary human. Yes, werewolves and vampires are fast, strong, and deadly, but they come with a great many disadvantages because they're **Cursed**.

So, while players are free to run supernatural PCs, it's important to remember that they will not be the superhero power fantasy they are in many other urban fantasies.

Also, the setting favors non-violent conflict resolution. Violence is possible, yes, but the setting has aspects that make it tricky.

PLACES

The setting for this game, as mentioned above, is very like the modern world. If the campaign takes place before the events of the novel, magic, vampires, and all the other supernatural features of the world are a secret shared by very few. If it takes place after, the secret is out and people have realized the world is less rational than they thought.

The Whole World

Aspects:

World of secrets/World of magic

Violence has unexpected consequences

Evidence everywhere

If the campaign is set before magic has been revealed to the world, apply the first half of that first aspect: *World of secrets*. It can be invoked to explain away evidence of the supernatural and it encourages people not to speak about vampires and devils in public. It can be invoked to help convince someone that they saw a bear, not a werewolf, or to convince a police officer who Knows The

Truth to alter their report because everyone will assume they've had some kind of break with reality.

If the campaign is set after magic has been revealed, use *World of magic*. See the section on magic for more on this.

Seattle

Aspects:

A fragile peace

Designed by lunatics

The first aspect refers to the truce that Marley Jacobs has created in the city. She looks after cursed people and non-humans, and in return they promise not to do violence against human beings. The GM can compel it if the PCs do something to threaten that peace, and the PCs can invoke it when they need to convince a Cursed person not to violate the truce.

The second aspect refers to the haphazard way the city has grown. The city is full of bottlenecks, crooked streets, and dead ends.

Your Campaign City

Aspects (possible):

Deadly predators stalk the night

Self-righteous defenders of the living

Secret war

Special Crimes Unit never sleeps

Gangland truces

The GM and players should decide the current situation in your local campaign city. Are supernatural forces organized like gangsters, with uneasy truces, rigid rules about which victims are off limits, and payoffs to local authorities? Are they isolated and disorganized, which means it's much easier for

them to hide but leaves them without protection if they're discovered?

Are the humans who hunt supernaturals organized? Are they a small part of a government agency, an informal group of friends, or members of a religious organization? Keep in mind the setting-specific rules about religious symbols and magic.

MAGIC

There are two kinds of magic in the Key/Egg setting. First is the ordinary, boring sort, done with potions and chalk circles, enchanted amulets and phoenix-feather wands. It has a few specific restrictions on what it can accomplish, but it operates the way magic in most settings does.

The second is far more potent, and for the sake of this supplement, is referred to as "Farce Magic."

Does the setting use the *World of secrets* aspect? If so, functional spell books will be difficult to come by. The books should be old, with weird ink scratched onto sketchy paper, and bound with some sort of leather... actually, let's not think about where that leather came from....

Does the setting use the *World of magic* aspect? If so, spells will be widespread and easy to find. How effective they will be is another matter.

The Traditional Stuff

Magic operates within specific limitations: it can create anything, except for physical objects that can interact with other inanimate physical objects. It can create illusions of physical objects that can fool the senses, or emotional states, or the urge to act, but it can't make a brick wall to block a hail of bullets, and it can't create a flying horse to carry a character through the air.

Things that are possible: a voice on the phone; the unbearable, unconscious desire to look in another direction; an illusion of a person or thing that looks and feels real; a temporary and illusory change to a person or thing; any emotional state; a barrier that blocks other kinds of magic or magical beings; an attack

against another spell or magical state to destroy or dispel it.

Things that are impossible with magic: create a physical weapon or an enhancement to a physical weapon, permanent alteration to a physical object (such as altering evidence of a crime or giving a person the ability to fly), genuine harm to a person or thing,

The only exception to the above: putting a **curse** on someone to transform them into a supernatural being.

Important note about holy symbols: There is no religious magic in the Key/Egg setting. Holy water won't scald a vampire. Prayer won't drive away a demon or devil. "Holy ground" is not a sanctuary against people who have been cursed.

Faith, spirituality, and religion may give meaning and comfort to people's lives, but they are not weapons to be wielded against one's enemies.

EXTRA: Magic:

Permission: Aspect that says the character is an adept. Lore Good (+3). Resources Fair (+2) or a patron with Resources Good (+3).

Cost: One point of Refresh.

To cast a spell, PCs will typically need expendable components such as a potion or powder. The expendable components are expensive: a PC should make a Resources check to determine if they have or can procure the ingredients. Obtaining the most common magic is rolled against Poor (-1) opposition, while obtaining the rarest and most difficult of spells (such as one for the removal of a curse) should be against Great (+4) opposition. Also, the Resources check doesn't have to be made by the PC casting the spell. It can also be made by another player, or by an NPC willing to help out.

Alternately, if a spellcaster expends a fate point, the spell can be cast without components (and therefore without the need for a Resources check) or any external sign that magic is being done. A fate point spent for this purpose doesn't

also convey a +2 bonus.

The Resources check is in addition to the Lore check that's rolled when the spell is actually being cast.

Additionally, at the cost of a fate point, characters can declare that a spell was cast retroactively. For example, if the PCs find that they've walked into a trap, a player can spend a fate point, then roll to cast the spell. With a success, they can, for example, declare that it was only an illusion of the party that got caught in the trap (as long as they haven't done something an illusion can't do, such as hurt someone). The opposition for retroactive magic should be identical to the difficulty of casting a spell that isn't retroactive, but the expended fate point won't convey a +2 bonus.

If a player expends two fate points, a character can cast retroactive magic without the need for components.

Overcome: Use Lore to prepare and perform magical rituals successfully, or to answer questions about arcane phenomena.

Create an Advantage: Use Lore to place illusions in an environment.

A result of Mediocre (+0) success creates a sound or small illusory object that only one person can see. A result of Legendary (+8) success creates a completely unreal environment that can be perceived by anyone. Use whatever scale in between seems appropriate.

Can also be used to create advantages on individual people, such as *Confused* or *Willing to help*. Characters defend with Will or, if they are spellcasters themselves, with magic of their own.

Attack: Use Lore to make Will attacks against a target through mental assault. Targets have the option to defend against this with Lore if the target also has magical training.

Defend: Use Lore to defend against hostile magics or other supernatural effects.

Farce Magic

The second (more powerful) sort of magic is what the characters in the novel refer to as “water flowing downhill,” and what the author calls “farce magic.”

The idea behind farce magic is simple: in a farce, the story begins in a state where the cast of characters have numerous problems and secrets, which could be considered a negative status quo. Then an instigating character (or several of them) enter the narrative and do all sorts of disruptive things. Secrets are exposed in a painfully embarrassing way. Carefully laid plans are ruined. Ridiculous coincidences put people’s lives or reputations in peril. In short, everything seems to be going horribly wrong.

However, the end result of all this upset and disruption is the accidental destruction of the negative status quo, which is replaced with a positive one. Villains are undone, lovers united, the meek inherit the earth, the good guys live Happily Ever After.

The idea behind farce magic was to codify this as an actual magic talent. An adept would do disruptive, destructive things seemingly at random, but those actions would have positive effects later in the story.

To take an example from the book, randomly throwing a stone into the air cracks a stranger’s windshield, something that could get the PCs in trouble. Later, during an attempt on the PC’s life, they recognize the distinctive cracks in the windshield and know who’s behind the wheel.

So, once per session, a character may create an aspect, at no cost, by performing some action that would normally be considered illegal, upsetting, or (at minimum) a major social faux pas.

Extra: “Like water flowing downhill”

Permission: At least Good (+3) Notice and a mentor figure to teach the ability. Must be a PC. Must be a human being.

Cost: One refresh

Once per session, a PC may perform some action that is alarming, upsetting,

or simply a violation of social norms, then roll their Notice skill against Fair (+2) opposition. If successful, the PC creates a transformable aspect called *Water flowing downhill*, which they apply to the entire campaign. If they succeed with style, they can create a second aspect called *More water flowing downhill* (or any other convenient place holder name). If they tie, they get a transformable boost instead. On a failed roll, the PC suffers the consequences of their odd behavior without creating the aspect and can not try again until the next session.

The alarming, upsetting, or rude behavior should not be something the PCs would normally do in the course of the game. For example, intimidating a gangster's flunky to get a meeting with the Big Boss wouldn't count as Water Flowing Downhill, because it's something most PCs would do anyway. It's a motivated, understandable action with a clear goal. However, sweeping all of the items off a receptionist's desk as they're leaving an office would, because the chaos it creates seems pointless.

At some point later in the scenario, the PC may change the name of (*More*) *water flowing downhill* and apply it to a setting, scene, or character, (and get a free invoke) provided they can describe the chain of events that connect the original "Water Flowing Downhill" action with the new advantage.

There can only be one *Water flowing downhill* and *More water flowing downhill* at a time.

*For example: after talking to an uncooperative doctor about a missing patient he'd been writing illicit prescriptions for, a PC decides to sweep everything off the receptionist's desk onto the floor, creating a huge argument and a threat to call the police. The PC rolls against their Notice skill and exceeds the target by one. They have created the aspect **Water flowing downhill**. The PCs leave the building before they can be arrested.*

Two sessions later, the PCs go to a secluded warehouse to meet with a reluctant informant only to discover the main antagonist has laid a trap for them. Instead of an informant, they are met by the Big Boss and a motorcycle gang armed with bats and chains. The PC decides it's time for their farce magic to come into play, so (with the GM's input) they declare that, as the receptionist was picking up her things, she discovered a microphone inside her desk pad. A quick search turns up several others. The police were onto the doctor and were building a case against him. The doctor grabs his things and drives to Mexico, but the cops talk to the receptionist, who gives up the PC's name. Concerned that the PCs ruined

the investigation deliberately, they begin tailing them discreetly. Then, when they entered the warehouse (followed immediately after by the Big Boss) the detectives decided it was time for a raid.

*So, just before the beatings begin, the PC declares that they're changing **Water flowing downhill** to **Surrounded by S.W.A.T.** Instead of a fight scene, everyone gets arrested, taken to the station, and interrogated by some very annoyed detectives.*

This is designed to be a powerful ability, obviously and it should have effects beyond the transformable aspect it creates. PCs who regularly act erratically or cause strange scenes might have to face social repercussions, from worried family members to lawsuits to commitment hearings.

HUMANS

Technically, many of the entries under “Monsters” should be included here, since they are still human beings, except that they’ve been cursed. Still, for convenience’s sake, monsters and humans have separate sections.

Citizens

This covers all the ordinary folk in the world, the ones who don’t know about or aren’t involved with the supernatural in any way. These are the innocent bystanders PCs will invoke *World of secrets* against when, for example, they try to convince them the wall of fog moving toward them against the wind is a perfectly natural phenomenon. These are the homicide detectives the GM will use to invoke *Evidence everywhere* after the PCs stake a vampire and drag them into the sunlight.

These are also the people who become hunters when the *World of secrets* is insufficient to hide the truth about the supernatural.

In a *World of magic* campaign, many citizens will dabble in magic, although they won’t have the skill or power of adepts.

Hunters

Citizen become hunters when 1) they encounter evidence of the supernatural they can't deny or ignore, and 2) they decide violence is the only realistic solution.

Hunters can be classified in two different ways, Soldiers and Yahoos.

Soldiers

Any citizen recruited into an organized group that coordinates attacks against the supernatural is considered a *soldier*. Some soldiers are employed by the government black ops programs, but most are members of ad hoc or informal organizations. Some function like neighborhood watch groups. Some are secret organizations staffed by whomever they can recruit. Some are organized by church congregations, or operate as a vigilante groups.

Government organizations field many fewer hunters than might be expected. In a *World of secrets* campaign, it's difficult for them to act in total secrecy and protect their budget from higher ups and rival departments. In a *World of magic* campaign, due process concerns will frustrate the deployment of government murder squads within its own borders.

Yahoos

When citizens without organized backing decide to respond to the supernatural with violence, they're called "yahoos." Typically, it will be one person, a small group of friends, or a small family unit. They will rush to the library or the internet to read up on folklore, then arm themselves as best they can before taking on their self-appointed missions.

Yahoos are most likely to record the attacks they make, then upload them to the internet. There are quite a few "fake" vampire staking videos on YouTube, most of which start with an impassioned plea for viewers to "wake up to the truth" and ending with scattered corpses and enough evidence for the police to track down the yahoos and arrest them for murder.

Helpers

Another term for “Helpers” might be “Minions,” but that’s an ugly, loaded term. Not every human being who helps supernatural creatures does so because they’re intending to harm others. Many (most?) are not evil at all. Some are simply caring for loved ones. Some feel trapped in a bad situation. And yes, some hurt others because there’s something in it for them; maybe they’re being paid, or maybe they’ve been promised immortality.

Whatever their motivations, helpers are normal human beings that have allied themselves with supernaturals. Often times, helpers are more dangerous than the “monster” they serve: their actions are less restricted, they respond more quickly, and they don’t have the cognitive limits that cursed humans have.

Adepts

Adepts are normal humans who know how to do magic. See the description of the magical extras in the *Magic* section.

World of Secrets:

In a “World of Secrets” setting, adepts are some of the most dangerous people on the planet. Those who are not already rich and powerful work very closely with the rich and powerful, and maintain quiet social connections within a network of other adepts.

At the same time, adepts have to be very careful that they don’t spark magical conflicts within their numbers. There have always been very few people trained in magic, and strife between them tends to destroy precious magical knowledge. Adepts operate under the informal agreement that they must never attack one another. When they do find themselves under attack, adepts typically have allies they can call upon for support.

One of the most common ways that adepts fall into conflict with each other is

when one of their number begins to do magic too openly. A lot of the power adepts enjoy comes from the fact that no one else can do what they do... in fact, almost no one in the world even knows that what they do is possible. Secrecy is vital.

Adepts keep in touch. They meet each others' apprentices to see if they're suitably reserved and slow to anger. They offer advice (when it's requested). They don't stir the water.

Mini-adepts. There are many names for this sort of person, but the definition is simple: they are adepts who know one or two small spells that help them get by in the world. They don't have a broad repertoire, just one or two "tricks". Most adepts keep a wary eye on them, but otherwise keep them out of the secret social networks.

World of Magic:

In this setting, the old rules have gone out the window. Everyone knows about magic and everyone has an opinion on it. They want it desperately, or they consider it a tool of Satan, or they fear it, or they want to study it scientifically, or...

And for every person with an opinion, there's someone out there ready to make a quick buck. Some sell spell books, most of which are fakes. Some get on television or the internet. Some form organizations dedicated to denouncing magic of any kind, please donate today. Casino cheats, lottery scams, fake love potions (or worse, real love potions) and so on.

What's more, a number of old-school adepts have thrown off the veil of secrecy and gone public for the fame and the money.

In short, in this setting, there're more magic than society really knows what to do with, and a lot of people trying to figure out a way to control it.

COMBAT

There's not much to say about combat in this setting, except:

Three combat "rules"

Combine the Fight and Shoot skills. Combat is going to be dangerous and have high costs in the game. To simplify things for characters with a combat background, (and to allow them to focus character-building more effectively) Shoot should be folded into the Fight skill. PC's shouldn't have to waste two skill slots on them. If the player wants, they can declare for their character that Fight covers hand-to-hand, gunfire, or both, as they please.

Humans always win initiative. There are a number of advantages that basic humans (Citizens, Hunters, and Adepts) have over the undead, cursed "monsters," and extra-dimensional creatures. This is one; unless a human is caught by surprise and/or ambush, normal, uncursed people decide all of their actions first in order, then the supernatural creatures do.

The setting is designed to make PCs regret combat. Both *Violence has unexpected consequences* and *Evidence everywhere* are designed to make violent confrontation more trouble than they're worth. GMs should feel free to invoke one or both of those setting aspects after every fight scene.

For *Violence has unexpected consequences*, maybe a bullet has passed through the maguffin the characters were fighting over, ruining it. Maybe the friends and loved ones of the PCs want to distance themselves. Maybe the enemy they just beat down has family and friends that will want to respond, and their responses don't have to be further violence: lawsuits, public whisper campaigns, soured business deals are all perfectly good possibilities. Maybe the daughter of the recently defeated Big Bad tries to hire the PCs to find out who killed her father.

For *Evidence everywhere*, the GM could invoke whenever the PCs try to flee a scene of combat. There will be DNA evidence, security cameras, traffic cameras,

toll bridge cameras, eye witnesses. In addition, the GM could wait for the PCs to escape from the big fight, dodge the police, dispose of their weapons and, just when they are ready to return to the safety of their homes, say “You can’t find your house keys.” to one of the players.

Obviously, the purpose isn’t to punish the PCs for being the victims of violence. But physical conflicts they initiate should be another matter.

SUPERNATURALS

“Monsters” is an unkind word, but it’s the term most people think of when they talk about vampires, werewolves, and other creatures. Still, calling an NPC a monster suggests they were created to receive righteous violence from the PCs, and that’s not in keeping with this setting.

Instead, we’ll call them “Supernaturals,” which is as neutral a term as I can come up with. There’s nothing inherently evil about a supernatural creature, any more than a tiger, tsunami, or meteor strike are inherently evil. They’re certainly capable of evil, just like any other person. However, supernaturals aren’t a separate, dehumanized class who deserve whatever the PCs choose to do to them.

Human Supernaturals

The members of this group of supernaturals were once normal humans—citizens, hunters, helpers, or adepts—who have been cursed. There’s no rule against players choosing one of the Extras below for their characters, but they should understand that there is no attempt to create a balance between human PCs and supernaturals; supernaturals are dangerous in very specific ways, but humans are more powerful overall.

Note: the curse that gives each of these supernaturals their abilities also comes with a skill, referred to here as a **Curse Skill**. The curse skill’s effects typically work *against* the character. When a player rolls their curse skill, they’re usually (but not always) hoping for a failure.

When a character rolls a curse skill against themselves, the opposing skill offers passive opposition.

Curse skills are not part of the skills pyramid and advance independently of them.

Vampires

These are the traditional undead immortals of lore, who shun daylight and garlic while trying to survive on a nightly dose of human blood. Note that there is no mention of crosses or holy water; as is says in the section on magic, vampires are not demons or devils who can be held at bay by religious symbols. Vampires in the world of Key/Egg are people who are dealing with the consequences of a terrible tragedy: a violent, murderous assault by another vampire.

Their curse is expressed as an Extra, which comes with a new skill: **Vampire**.

Extra: Vampire

Permission: Sometime in the past, the character must have suffered a vampire's blood-drinking attack that gave them an 8-point **Extreme Consequence**. After, they'll have to replace an existing aspect with one that reflects their new vampiric state, like *Undead Bloodsucker*, or *Backwoods Dracula*. Alternately, the character can receive this extra through other means, at GM's discretion.

Cost: 3 Refresh, Automatically receive the curse skill Vampire at Mediocre (+0). Every five years, the Vampire skill increases by +1.

Powers:

- **Immune to Damage:** Vampires are immune to all damage except damage caused by one of its vulnerabilities (listed below) or damage inflicted after they have been immobilized by a sharp wooden weapon that has pierced their heart.
- **Eternal Unlife:** Vampires do not age, get sick, or suffer long-term harm.

They remain as they were (roughly: see the Weaknesses section) when they were cursed. A vampire who has lost a limb or gotten a modern haircut will find themselves restored to their previous state the next time they awaken, cured of all damage and consequences.

- **Enhanced Strength:** +2 to all Physique rolls that involve using raw strength, and +2 to Fight attacks using strength based weapons.
- **Enhanced Speed:** You take a +2 on all defense rolls with Athletics. Also, except for absolute barriers like solid walls, you ignore all situation aspects that impede movement, and can place yourself in any zone you want when it's your turn to act.
- **Charismatic:** Vampires may use their Vampire skill instead of Rapport when charming a potential victim, as long as they do not have the consequences *Poisoned*, *Confused*, *You're on fire!*, *Ravenous*, or *Cadaverous* (see below). See the Vulnerabilities and Weaknesses sections below. They get a +2 if they have already created the advantage *Unforgettable*.
- **Spread curse voluntarily:** Vampires can attempt to turn one of their victims into another vampire at any time. All they have to do is drain the victim of blood completely and roll against their Vampire skill against Fair (+2) opposition. A success means the victim will rise as a vampire in 72 hours. Success with style means the victim will rise in sixty seconds.
- **Spread curse involuntarily:** Whenever a vampire becomes *Ravenous* (see below) and completely drains a living human, the vampire's curse will try to spread itself. Roll Vampire skill. A success means the victim will rise as a vampire in 72 hours. Success with style means the victim will rise in sixty seconds. Vampires who successfully spread their curse do not have to make this check again for one calendar year, although they're always able to spread their curse voluntarily.

Vulnerabilities:

- The touch of garlic is a physical attack. The character rolls Vampire skill with a +2, opposed by their own Physique, to determine damage. No

matter how successful the roll, if consequences are created, they are always the same: *Poisoned*.

- If a vampire enters a person's home uninvited, the character rolls a mental attack with a +2, opposed by their own Will, with their Vampire skill. No matter how successful the roll, if consequences are created, they are always the same: *Confused*.
- The touch of sunlight is a physical attack. The character rolls Vampire skill with a +4, opposed by their own Physique, to determine damage. If the attack succeeds with style, add the aspect *You're on fire!*
- The sight of sunlight, even at a distance, creates a fear-based mental attack. Roll Vampire +3, opposed by your own Will. The light has to actually come from the sun itself or be created by magic; a photo of a sunny day, a scene in a movie, or a light bulb that mimics the sun's spectrum won't have the same effect.

Weaknesses:

- Vampires must make a Will check to cross running water under their own power. The wider the body of water, the more difficult the check should be: water running from a garden hose should be Mediocre (+0), while the mouth of the Amazon should be a Legendary (+8).
- If a wooden weapon pierces a vampire's heart, they become immobile and vulnerable to all additional attacks.
- Vampires must drink one pint of blood every day to survive. Each time a vampire feeds, they must make a Vampire check against Mediocre (+0) opposition to determine if that small amount will satisfy them. Failure imposes the aspect *Ravenous*, which means they can not stop until they've consumed enough to drain an adult human of all their blood. Even if they're drinking from an IV bag, failure demands they consume five quarts to remove the aspect.
- If a vampire does not feed for a full day, they must roll the Vampire skill against their Physique as an attack. If they succeed with style, impose the

aspect *Ravenous*.

- Vampires must sleep for eight hours out of every 24 during the day. Failure means they must roll a physical attack on themselves with the Vampire skill, defended by Physique. If they succeed with style, they get the aspect *Cadaverous*.
- Vampires can only heal stress and consequences on days they have consumed enough blood to satisfy their hunger. They can not heal if they have the aspects *Cadaverous* or *Ravenous* on their character.
- Vampires forget almost everything about their undead lives every time they sleep. For a vampire, every day is the first day since they rose from the dead. Each time they awaken, they remember:
 - That they are vampires.
 - All of their powers, vulnerabilities, and weaknesses.
 - The faces of the people they see every day, or nearly every day.
 - Where, in their own home, they keep their belongings.
 - The only exception would be people who had once been part of the vampire's daily life—a caregiving parent, a spouse, a neighbor or a close friend—who has died or gone away. For the vampire, there's no sense of the passage of time. They always remember the people in their lives as though they last saw them a week ago, maybe less, even if in reality it has been decades.
- Vampires become more beautiful as they age. Whenever they enter the company of other people, they must automatically their Vampire skill against Mediocre (+0) opposition. Success creates the advantage *All eyes turn to me*. If they succeed with style, add the advantage *Unforgettable*. As vampires age, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to move around the world in secret.
- As mentioned in the combat section, vampires never win initiative over humans in a fight.

The Refresh cost of being a vampire assumes that the game is being played with the standard starting refresh of 3. It's entirely possible for a character to have a negative refresh; for example, each session, a character with a refresh of -1 would simply cross off the first fate point they received. They could hold on to and spend the second.

Vampires have a good deal of physical power, but mentally and socially, they're a wreck. They have to feed, but as they age it becomes increasingly difficult for them to feed in secret. They draw attention to themselves with their looks, their ignorance of the modern world, and their habit of making offensive remarks that were once considered perfectly respectable.

It's rare for vampires to survive on their own for more than a few years. The ones who last longer do so because they have a support network. Of course, no support network lasts forever. Mischance, combined with *Violence has unexpected consequences* and *Evidence everywhere* means a vampire's undead existence is rarely as long as that of an average U.S. Citizen.

There is no known way to remove the curse of vampirism.

Werewolves

These are the modern werewolves of film and popular literature, who receive their curses through the bite of another werewolf and transform according to the phases of the moon. Other sorts of were-creatures, especially those who change at will through the use of spells or magical artifacts should be considered adepts or mini-adepts.

Like vampires, werewolves in the setting of Key/Egg are people who are dealing with the consequences of a terrible tragedy: a violent, murderous assault by another werewolf.

Their curse is expressed as an Extra, which comes with a new skill:

Werewolf.

Extra: Werewolf

Permission: The character must have been bitten by a werewolf and survived

the attack.

Cost: 3 Refresh, Automatically receive the curse skill **Werewolf** at Mediocre (+0). The skill level increases by +1 for every three human beings killed while in werewolf form.

Powers:

- **Transformation:** Werewolves can transform from human to monster at any time. The player and GM can decide whether the PC transforms into a large wolf or a human/wolf hybrid form when the character is created.
- **Immune to Damage:** Werewolves are immune to all damage except damage caused by one of its vulnerabilities (listed below) or by silver weapons. This invulnerability covers both their human and werewolf forms.
- **Teeth and claws:** The bite and claws of a werewolf are Weapon:3 attacks.
- **Raging Strength:** While transformed, +2 to all Physique rolls that involve using raw strength.
- **Raging Speed:** While transformed, +2 on all defense rolls with Athletics.
- **Howl:** While transformed, werewolves may use their Werewolf skill in place of Provoke to make a fear-based mental attack to induce their victims to run.
- **Spread curse voluntarily:** While in human form, werewolves can spread their curse at any time by biting their victim. Roll their Werewolf skill against Fair (+2) opposition. Success means that the victim acquire the extra "Werewolf" at the next full moon. If they succeed with style, they acquire the extra the next time they fall asleep. Because werewolves instinctively attack each other, they will never deliberately pass their curse on to someone they love.
- **Spread curse involuntarily:** Whenever a werewolf in their transformed state bites a human being without killing them, the werewolf's curse will try to spread itself. When the attack is over, roll the Werewolf skill against Fair (+2) opposition. A success means the victim will become a werewolf

at the next full moon. Success with style means the victim becomes a werewolf the next time they fall asleep. There is no limit to the number of times a werewolf can pass on its curse, but in its transformed state, it never does so deliberately.

- **Tracking scent:** +2 to Notice rolls when using the sense of smell.
- **Strange vigor:** Werewolves do not suffer debilitating illnesses or crippling injuries. When they receive the curse, they are instantly healed of all longstanding (even congenital) infirmities, including old scars and near-sightedness. If their curse is ever lifted, their infirmities return.

Vulnerabilities:

- **Silver:** When a werewolf touches silver, they make a physical attack against their own Physique with their Werewolf skill. On a failed roll, the silver falls off or out of their body without doing real harm. If the check succeeds with style, create the advantage *In agony*. GMs should give bonuses to the attack depending on the quantity of silver and the way the character has come in contact with it; it wouldn't make sense for the skill check to fail if the character has been dumped into a vat of colloidal silver or has deliberately picked up a candlestick and held onto it.
- **Wolfsbane:** When a werewolf touches wolfsbane, they make a physical attack against themselves with their Werewolf skill. Failure means they throw off the wolfsbane before any serious harm was done. If the check succeeds with style, add the aspect *In agony*. See above for GM discretion on adding bonuses to the roll.
- **Its own kind:** Werewolves take damage normally from the bite (but not the claws) of its own kind.
- **Regret:** When a character wakes up covered in blood, having obviously just murdered someone, their curse will make a mental attack against them. Roll Werewolf skill opposed by Will, and give the attack +4 if the victim was someone they knew, or +6 if it was someone they loved. One of the character's other aspects, like *One of the faithful*, *Hypocratic oath*,

Serve and protect, or *Committed vegetarian*, might add an additional +2. As the curse continues these attacks, it will keep creating new consequences, until finally it is able to impose an 8-point extreme consequence and change one of the character's aspects. See below for more information about the effect of the Regret ability.

Weaknesses:

- **Impulse violence and transformations:** Werewolves can lash out and/or change involuntarily when they become especially excited. Roll Werewolf skill against opposition determined by the current phase of the moon (see next listing). A tie means a scary display of temper, a success is an act of violence, and success with style indicates that the character transforms. Possible situations that might see the character transform include but are not limited to:
 - The character or someone the character cares about are credibly threatened.
 - The character becomes strongly aroused, frustrated, frightened, joyful, or otherwise experiences a powerful emotion.
 - The character is in a noisy or chaotic situation.
 - The character is confronted by another werewolf.
- **The Moon:** A werewolf's life is powerfully controlled by the phases of the moon. On the three nights of the full moon, they **must transform** into their werewolf form. At other times during the month, the chance that they might transform involuntarily changes. Their behavior changes, too..
 - **Full moon:** At night the character must change. During the day, the character is energetic, irritable, and continually hungry. Opposition for involuntary transformation (day): Poor (-1).
 - **Three quarters moon:** At night, the character is like an insomniac. During the day, they are able to sleep a few hours at most and are otherwise restless and impossible to please or satisfy. Opposition for involuntary transformation (day or night): Average (+1).

- **Half-moon:** Character behaves like a night owl, sleeping through the day and wide awake at night, but otherwise behaves as they did before they were cursed. Opposition for involuntary transformation (day or night): Good (+3).
- **Quarter-moon:** Character feels exhausted throughout the day. They can perform basic tasks but would prefer to take long naps. At night, the character feels marginally more competent, but lethargic. Opposition for involuntary transformation: (day or night) Superb (+5).
- **New moon:** Character is practically comatose during the day, unable to wake for an extended period of time except to tell others to go away. At night, character prefers to sleep but can rouse themselves for the most basic tasks, like eating or going to the bathroom. Opposition for involuntary transformation: (night) Epic (+7), (day) Legendary (+8)
- **One mate:** Werewolves are prone to deep, powerful feelings of romantic love, and they tend to fixate on a single person. If a werewolf loves someone when they receive the curse, they can never stop loving that person, no matter what that person does to them or what they do in return. If a werewolf loves more than one person (if they're in a polyamorous relationship, for example), the first partner they see after they receive the curse becomes their one true love. If a werewolf does not love anyone when they receive the curse, or if the person they are fixated on is killed (whether by the werewolf themselves or not), they're prone to falling in love during the half-moon phase. Roll Werewolf skill against Mediocre (+0) opposition in any mildly friendly interaction (a smile from a barista for example) with a person the character might be attracted to: three successes (or one success and one success with style) indicates that they fixate in an unhealthy way on that person.
- **Solitude:** Unlike real wolves, werewolves are solitary creatures. Werewolves instinctively perceive another werewolf's encroachment on

their territory as a threat of violence.

- **Marking territory:** In addition to its other behavioral issues, a werewolf will claim territory around its home or work for itself, to drive off other werewolves. Typically, this will be a single neighborhood, but it can be larger or smaller depending on population density and the close proximity of other territories. They mark the boundaries of their territory, while in human form, by urinating on trees and buildings. Under most circumstances, werewolves do this at night while no one can see them, but if another werewolf threatens their territory, the urge to mark their territory may become too strong to resist. Roll Werewolf skill opposed by Will: a success means the character will immediately urinate on the nearest upright inanimate object.
- **Hunting:** Once a werewolf transforms out of their human form, they lose their capacity for rational thought and become consumed by their need to hunt and kill. Who and/or what a werewolf hunts is based on a specific set of criteria. Their preference, in order:
 - A target who is currently threatening them.
 - A target who caused the werewolf to transform by threatening them or someone they love and making the character roll their Impulse Violence weakness.
 - The person they love most in this world (ie: child, spouse, parent, partner).
 - Other people they love.
 - People they like.
 - Complete strangers.
 - People they hate.
 - Animals.
- **Most loved:** A werewolf always knows the location of the person it loves most in the world. It knows how far away they are, and in what general direction. The closer they get to the target, the more precise their knowledge.

- **Switching targets:** If presented with a new target that is higher on the list of priorities, a werewolf *must* switch to the new target. For example, if a werewolf is hunting a complete stranger and accidentally runs into someone it knows, it will immediately begin to hunt the person it knows. Attacking a werewolf will always redirect the monster's attention to the attacker. However, when a werewolf is hunting a target and comes across an *easier* target that is lower on their **Hunting** list, they must roll Werewolf skill against Mediocre (+0) opposition to see if they switch to a new target. Success means they continue to hunt their original target and success with style means they do not have to roll the next time they're confronted with a new target. An *easier* target is one that is at least one zone closer than the original target, or is more isolated, or is less well defended. So, for example, a woman transforms into a werewolf in New Jersey. Her eldest child is currently in Connecticut, and she begins running north. Every person or animal she sees on her trip will make her roll to avoid distraction.
- **Rules for the Hunt itself:** Once a target for the hunt has been chosen, the werewolf must follow certain rules.
 - *A werewolf can only attack the target of its hunt when the target flees, or when they attack or threaten to attack the werewolf.*
 - A hunt against a target who threatens or attacks the werewolf can only end when
 - the target is dead
 - after being near the target for two hours, the werewolf has been unable to make a physical attack against them.
 - A hunt against a target who flees from a werewolf can only end when
 - The target is dead
 - The werewolf has been unable to make a physical attack against the target, or another appropriate target, for two hours

- The target assumes a submissive posture, such as lying on their back exposing their bellies.
- If the target does not attack or flee, the werewolf will use its Howl attack to induce the target to flee. If, after five rounds, the target does not try to run, the werewolf will search for someone else to hunt.
- **Hunt's end:** As soon as the above criteria for the end of a hunt is met, the werewolf transforms back into a human. Roll a Werewolf check. Success means the character falls into a heavy sleep for four hours. If the character transforms into a large wolf, they will be naked when they become human again. If they become a hybrid form, they may still be dressed in torn, bloody clothes.
- **Full moon's end:** A werewolf will change back into a human automatically when the last full moon of a lunar cycle sets.

The Refresh cost of being a werewolf assumes that the game is being played with the standard starting refresh of 3. It's entirely possible for a character to have a negative refresh; for example, each session, a character with a refresh of -1 would simply cross off the first fate point they received. They could hold on to and spend the second.

The purpose of the werewolf's **Regret** attack against itself is to slowly transform a normal person into an unrepentant killer. Mental consequences should build up, relatively slowly at first, emphasizing a character's helplessness in the face of the curse. The first time Regret attacks create a new consequence, it might be something like *Shame, Self-loathing, Horrified*, or something similar. The first time those mental attacks build to the point that they'd take an extreme consequence (thereby changing one of the character's aspects), they'd take something like: *I can't help myself, Desperate to be rid of this curse, or I am human but the beast is not.*

Once that extreme consequence creates a new aspect, the mental consequences should be erased for another round of Regret self-attacks. For

werewolf characters, healing these consequences can be very difficult. They can't accept an empathy roll from just anyone. Who else truly understands what's happening to them? Another werewolf? Just being near one risks involuntary transformation and violence. A werewolf typically has no way to heal from Regret attacks.

The GM (or the player and GM, if this is a PC) should decide how many changes to their aspects the character will have to endure before the curse reaches its end result.

The end result, assuming the character survives that long, is the creation of an aspect like *Loves being a werewolf*, *Murderous sociopath*, *Humans are just prey to me*, or *Enthusiastic killer*. At this point, the curse has broken down the werewolf's personality to such a degree that they have become a genuine monster who enjoys inflicting harm and exercising power. At this point, there is no need to continue Regret attacks.

NOTE: Sometimes, the curse is passed to a person who is already a murderous sociopath or enthusiastic killer. That particular character has no need to suffer the Regret attacks.

The curse that turns people into a werewolf can be cured with the correct magical ritual, but the Resources and Lore checks are all in the maximum range. This also assumes that the PCs have a way to get hold of the ritual.

Ghosts

A ghost is a human being who is no longer able to seek out new ideas, experiences, or relationships. A character does not have to die to become a ghost. In fact, the world is full of living ghosts: people still listening to the same songs they enjoyed in their youth, rereading their favorite books over and over while hoping that any new book they try is just like the old ones, and so on. They're ordinary characters who have replaced their life with a routine.

This section will focus on ghosts who are dead.

A ghost will retain all of the aspects (but one) and skills it had in life

Extra: Ghost

Permission: Character must be dead. Must have also had an aspect that reflects their stubbornness, single-minded ambition, or distrust of new experiences. Finally, character must have had, in life, an object or location that was so important to them that they became **Anchored** to it after death.

Cost: 3 refresh. Replace one of their aspects with ***Ghost: hates to have routine disturbed.*** Automatically receive the curse skill **Ghost** at Mediocre (+0). This skill rating increases by +1 for every twenty years the character has been dead.

Powers:

- **Immune to damage:** A ghost can not be harmed directly through physical attack, even in tangible form. They do have stress boxes and consequence slots, though, for the item/place they are bound to.
- **Invisible:** Ghosts can become invisible or visible at will. For ghosts who do not know they are dead, remaining visible is their natural state.
- **Intangible:** When they wish, a ghost can move through or between zones as though no physical obstacles bar the way. They can also move vertically as easily as horizontally, descending through solid rock or ascending through open air with equal ease. At the cost of a fate point, a ghost may become tangible, able to interact with the world normally, until they decide to become intangible again.
- **Operate:** Even while intangible, a ghost may cause machinery to turn on and run, if that machinery is within their **Haunting Area**, and if they operated that machine as part of their routine during their life. “Machine” could include everything from an old fashioned spinning wheel to a smart phone to a door. Roll Ghost against Mediocre (+0) opposition if the machine is still in operating condition, Fair (+2) opposition if it is broken and will not work for anyone else.
- **Misery magnet:** A ghost in a populated or semi-populated area will attract dangerous and unhappy people the way sugar attracts flies. People with

anger issues, suicidal thoughts, paranoia, or other unpleasant or unhealthy personality issues will find themselves drawn to the ghost. If they can live inside or adjacent to its haunting area, they will. If they can cluster near it, even if it's just a few hours a day, they will.

- **Aura of influence:** While in its **Haunting Area**, a ghost is continually surrounded by an aura that makes a mental attack against everyone in it. The attack functions as a Provoke attack (Weapon: 1) with an area affect. The consequences that result from the attack differ according to the nature of a particular ghost, but possible effects include *Despair*, *Confusion*, *Terror*, *Resentment*, *Loneliness*, *Rage*. Potential targets of this aura must roll to defend according to how much time they have spent within the aura. Time spent within an aura is cumulative, even if the character's visits are years apart.
 - Ghost skill - Mediocre (+0) - Fair (+2): Characters in the same zone as the ghost are attacked every hour.
 - Ghost skill - Good (+3) - Superb (+5): Characters in the same zone as the ghost are attacked every half hour. Characters in the adjacent zone are attacked every 24 hours.
 - Ghost skill - Fantastic (+6) and above. Characters in the same zone as the ghost are attacked every five minutes. In the adjacent zone: every hour. In the next zone beyond that, every 24 hours.
- **Alter environment:** Ghosts also have the ability to alter the environment within their **Haunting Area**, typically to frighten or control those around them.
 - **Minor** alterations have an opposition of Fair (+2), and include any number of things that would be considered cosmetic changes that can not do real harm, like a swarm of flies, bloody messages on the walls, or floating objects. It also includes extinguishing fires or disabling other hazards to the ghost's anchor.
 - **Moderate** alterations have an opposition of Great (+4), and include either illusory changes or changes that might do a small amount of

damage, such as swarm of rats, a vision of a room restored to the condition it was in when the ghost was alive, or toppling furniture.

- **Major** alterations have an opposition of Fantastic (+6) and involve active physical attacks on living characters or extreme changes to the haunting area, such as flying cutlery, doors that should lead outside the house that now lead to other interior rooms, and animated corpses.
- **Extraordinary** alterations would have an opposition of Legendary (+8) (or greater) and would involve outrageous changes such as the summoning of a ghost army, creation of freak catastrophes like earthquakes or tornadoes, or opening a door to hell/another time/a weird dimension. This sort of roll is only possible for the most powerful ghost when they have been greatly upset.

Vulnerabilities:

Physical attacks: A ghost can be destroyed physically, but only if the damage is done to its anchor. See **Anchor**, below.

Salt: A ghost can not cross a line of salt, nor can they interact with pure salt.

Weaknesses:

- **Anchor:** While the ghost itself can not suffer physical attacks, the object or place it is anchored to can. Attacks against the ghost's anchor have the same effect as attacking its body. An anchor might have many stress boxes and consequence slots, or few, depending on what it is. An old love letter could be destroyed with a single match, while a concrete bomb shelter might require a large amount of C4. Anchors heal physical damage at the same rate a living person receiving medical care does.
 - When its anchor is destroyed, a ghost has the option of acquiring a new anchor. A ghost can't switch between two anchors of the same type; for example, they can't jump from piano to piano, or from one house to another. They must choose something different. Roll an

unopposed check against the Ghost skill. Base opposition to switch anchors is Great (+4). Add an additional +2 if the new anchor is more than one zone away, outside the current Haunting Area, or not the ghost's personal possession when they were alive. Reduce the opposition by two if the new anchor was used to destroy the old one.

- **Haunting Area:** A ghost is most comfortable inside its Haunting Area, which is defined by the area that it inhabited in life. To move outside of this area, a ghost must make a Will check against their own Ghost skill. Failure damages the ghost's anchor physically according to the number of shifts the roll missed by. Success means the ghost can move beyond their Haunting Area for one hour per shift, plus one.
- **Same deeds, same thoughts:** Ghosts love nothing more than familiar spaces and actions. Left alone, a ghost will always do the same thing, staying within their Haunting Area, operating their favorite machinery, playing old records, having the same old conversations again and again, (even if no one is nearby). The way to break a ghost's routine:
 - Threaten or damage the ghost's anchor.
 - Compel one of its aspects at the cost of a fate point, which includes the *Ghost: hates to have routine disturbed*.
- **Reset at sunrise:** A ghost will always try to return to their routine at sunrise. Roll Will, opposed by Ghost skill. A successful check allows the ghost to act outside of their routine for one more day. A failed check (or a tie) means that the ghost falls back into their mindless routine, and must have their routine broken again.

The Refresh cost of being a ghost assumes that the game is being played with the standard starting refresh of 3. It's entirely possible for a character to have a negative refresh; for example, each session, a character with a refresh of -1 would simply cross off the first fate point they received. They could hold on to and spend the second.

Other Human Supernaturals

There are many other human-type supernaturals, from zombies to wendigo, which are left to the GM to work out. The important thing to remember is that, no matter what has happened to them, they retain their humanity. They may be altered by their curses, or driven to do unacceptable things, or they may be clearly dangerous, but they are still people.

In other words, supernaturally altered humans might be villains in the game, but they should also have histories, quirks, people who care about them, and all the other characteristics you'd expect in a human being. Mindless damage dealers are out of place here.

Non-Human Supernaturals

Some supernaturals in the Key/Egg setting are not created from human beings at all. Sometimes they are supernatural intelligences from our world, but more often they come from Other Places where the supernatural is more powerful.

If supernaturals created from humans retain their basic humanity, supernaturals in this category are like science fictional aliens with magical abilities. And I don't mean Star Trek-style, which defines aliens by exaggerating basic element of human culture or personality. They come from other realities, and not only are they different from us in biology and psychology, but also in the way they sense the universe.

The Axis

The way I'd like to address this is to define an **axis** for each species. Whether the PCs or NPCs are human or not, they have a specific perspective on the world that centers on this axis.

For normal humans, the axis would be **social grouping**. Humans define themselves by the groups they belong to and the ones they do not. They organize

themselves by family, or common interest, or class, or nation, or village. Often, they define themselves by the way they violate social norms and defy the groups around them. Maybe they become outlaws or revolutionaries. Maybe, like a cloistered monk, they seek enlightenment in solitude. However it's expressed, this way of looking at the world is so common it's almost invisible to them.

In fact, many of the aspects PCs take (in my experience) are socially-oriented: membership in a organization, an individual they are devoted to, an out-group they're battling, etc.

So! Each individual species described below will include an axis for their species. An axis isn't the end-all be-all of their personalities, but it is a powerful influence on the way they see the world and their place in it.

Trolls

AXIS: Connections

Possible Aspects:

Stranger to this world

Hatred of sex, light, and sight

Indiscriminate carnivore

Remembers nothing of home but the terror

Extra: Troll

Permission: Character is a troll.

Cost: -3 Refresh. Character is bound to a single bridge.

Powers:

- **Grip strength:** Trolls get a +2 to any action that involves using the strength of their hands.
- **Connection:** Trolls get a +2 to maintain a connection to any object. This allows them to live on the undersides of bridges, gripping girders through

the long daylight hours.

- **Sturdy:** A troll's body has Armor:2 vs blunt force trauma.
- **Hard to notice:** Trolls have an aura that causes people to casually overlook them. Unless a character has specifically stated that they are looking for a troll, the base opposition to spot one with Notice is Legendary (+8).
- **Strange vision:** Trolls do not see with light, but they do "see" by connection. They see people by the way they are connected to each other, whether by family, professional, or friendship ties. They see structures by the way they're bound together, environments by the way they interact, and events by their improbable causality. This means that trolls can perceive events before they happen, although for a troll this is such a common experience that they only make note of it when they need to be in just the right place to take prey or when powerful danger is present.

Vulnerabilities:

- **None, particularly.** Trolls take damage normally.
- **Self-disposing:** When trolls are killed, they vanish from this world. No one knows where they go.

Weaknesses:

- **Addicted to connection:** Trolls need to live near a connection over water the way drug addicts need their high. If they're forcibly removed from their bridge, they will do anything to return to it. If their bridge is destroyed, they will become increasingly reckless in their attempt to claim a new one.
- **Territorial:** Trolls can not bear the presence of their own kind, and will fight to the death if two meet.
- **Carnivores, not creators:** Trolls don't build, procreate, compose, or otherwise create new things.

When cataloging great powers of the universe, trolls are not high on anyone's list. But they are one of the most ubiquitous creatures from outside our reality, and they have their uses.

It's said that trolls came to Earth hundreds of years ago due to a botched summoning spell. Instead of an extraordinarily powerful demon, the adept called forth thousands upon thousands of trolls into our spacetime. They appeared not at the site of the spell, but all over the world and across time.

So, whenever a new bridge is built over a sizable amount of water (GM's discretion), a troll (summoned so long ago) appears beneath it, typically on the southern or western end. From a distance they have a vaguely human form. Their skin is leathery and as wrinkled as a cotton shirt that needs to be ironed. They have no eyes on their empty faces, just mouths and open slits for nostrils. They rarely stand erect, preferring to crouch or curl their bodies.

Trolls have the appetite of a bob cat or a large feral dog; they eat whatever meat is most convenient. If a human child is easier to catch than a fish or a bird, that's what they will go after. However, they're ambush predators, not bold warriors, and prefer to take their meals by surprise. Even more agreeable is a friendly human willing to deliver fresh meat, bones and all.

Demons

AXIS: Exploration

Possible Aspects:

So much to learn

Never break a bargain

A god among insects

Servant of the great quest

Bound to [PC/NPC]

Extra: Demon from the void

Permission: Character is a demon.

Cost: -3 Refresh. Acquire the skill Demon at the rating Good (+3) (this skill can not increase or decrease).

Powers:

- **Tremendous strength:** +4 to any roll related to using raw strength.
- **Immune to damage:** Demons are immune to all physical damage and can not be killed in the traditional sense. However, they can be driven out of our reality. See the Vulnerabilities section below.
- **Immune to magic:** The only magic that can affect demons are summoning and banishing rituals. Demons are immune to other types of magic.
- **Ageless and immortal:** Demons do not age, get sick, sleep, or eat.
- **Steal knowledge:** A demon can copy a human's skill by rolling its Demon skill actively opposed by the target's Will. A demon need only identify a person who is skilled at something they wish to learn, then touch them. The target will feel only a moment's confusion, but will be otherwise unharmed, no matter if the roll succeeds or fails. On a failure, the demon can never extract that person's knowledge. On a tie, it gets a boost and can try again. On a success, the skill and the skill rank are copied onto the demon's character sheet and remains available for seven days. If the roll succeeds with style, the demon may copy a second skill, if they choose.
- **Devour mind:** By expending a fate point, a demon can make a series of mental attacks by staring into the eyes of their target. Typically, they will capture the target first, holding them still while they do mental attack after mental attack using the Demon skill. If the target has a strong Will, demons are not above using their great strength to cause boosts and consequences with physical pain. After the target has run out of stress boxes and consequence slots, their memories are consumed. The demon can cease its attack, leaving the target in a vegetative state. It can also shut down their autonomic nervous system. (Alternately, if the target is a PC, the GM may wish to run Devour mind as a contest rather than a conflict.)
- **Any form:** When a demon appears on Earth, it may assume any form it

pleases, even one that violates the laws of physics. Typically, the form it takes is part of the bargain and summoning that brings it here. However, once chosen, that form can not be changed until the demon is banished and summoned again.

Vulnerability:

- **Ritual banishment:** A demon can be banished from this reality into the void that it came from in much the same way it can be summoned: through a long and extensive ritual taking at least an hour. The GM may require that the characters acquire expensive material components and a dusty old spell book to copy out the diagrams. A Resource check might also be called for. The banishment itself is a contest between the lead caster's Lore opposed by the target's Demon skill.
- **Break a bargain:** If the person who summoned the demon breaks the bargain they made at the summoning (see below), the demon will return to its own reality.

Weakness:

- **A stranger here:** Demons do not understand the human world and sometimes act like the alien visitors that they are. Typically, a newly arrived demon will devour someone's mind so they can recognize the difference between a tree and a stone, but even then they will sometimes be flummoxed by everyday gadgets, misunderstand sarcasm, or struggle with the reason people make art or play sports. A demon who has been summoned to Earth at some time in the past will retain the memory of its previous experiences.
- **Summoning:** A demon must respond to a summoning spell. They don't have to stay once summoned (and they can't be forced to stay if they don't want to) but most will stay long enough to consider the bargain offered by the spell caster.
- **Servant of the great quest:** Demons have a secret goal to all their

exploration but whatever it is, they're not telling. Demons don't share the reasons why they've come to Earth to study us, they don't share secret magical knowledge, and they often have to do strange or obscure things in the service of their quest. Maybe they're looking for a way to kill a different, more powerful being. Maybe they're looking for a way to procreate. Maybe they're looking to destroy the universe. Maybe they're looking for a way to kill themselves. No one knows. Sometimes it seems as though the demons themselves don't know what they're doing or why they're doing it.

- **Bound by their bargain:** A demon will never knowingly break their bargain with the person who summoned them.

Demons are not horned creatures with scarlet skins as they're portrayed in popular culture. In fact, they're little more than formless intelligences that exist within a stable and stale emptiness from which nothing is created and nothing is destroyed. They aren't evil or good. They aren't in favor of life or death. They're just *curious*.

Demons are the proverbial ultra-powerful intelligence from beyond our reality, but instead of being utterly indifferent to our concerns, they are actually fascinated by them. Coming from a place where there is no cause and no effect, demons are intensely interested in the ways that discreet entities interact. They're especially interested in theories of causality and in the ways that human beings experience narrative.

And while demons themselves are ageless and powerful beyond imagining, in humans they see something fragile, precious, and beautiful.

The bargain: When a demon makes a bargain, they will always demand certain rights. If the summoner can't agree to their terms, the demon will return to their reality. Yes, they want to learn about us, but they're patient. Note that these are just the most basic terms; most bargains will be more complex than this, and will require the summoner to do strange things, or provide the demon with seemingly random objects or services. The basic terms:

- The demon can return home whenever they want, ending the bargain.
- The summoner can also end the bargain voluntarily at any time.
- The demon is not a teacher, and can not be forced to answer any questions they do not want to answer.
- The summoner will keep the demon supplied with interesting content, crowds of people to interact with, and other examples of art, narrative, and causality.
- The summoner will not require the demon to commit acts of violence as part of their normal duties. Any violence will be at the demon's sole discretion.

Demon as servant: As strange as it may seem, the most common reason that people summon demons is because they make such excellent servants. Centuries ago they were often hired as bodyguards or assassins, but two hundred years ago, demons stopped accepting bargains that require them to do violence. No one knows why.

Devils

Axis: Disorder

Possible Aspects:

Spirit of temptation

Creature of impulse

Prankster's delight

Reveal what is hidden

Unleash the Maelstrom

Extra: Devil from the Maelstrom

Permission: Character is a devil.

Cost: -3 Refresh. Character acquires the Devil skill at Average (+1). The skill goes up by +1 for every 50 years they have lived on Earth.

Powers:

- **Immune to damage:** Devils are immune to all physical damage and can not be killed in the traditional sense. They can be affected by magic, though.
- **Intangible:** A devil can move from one zone to another without concern for obstacles or impediments.
- **Ageless and immortal:** Devils do not age, get sick, sleep, or eat.
- **Invisible:** Devils can not be detected by normal human senses.
- **Otherworldly senses:** Devils can not see, hear, taste, smell, or touch. They can “sense” every living thing in the zone they’re currently in and the adjacent zones. They can also sense the emotional states of those living things; if a character attempts to disguise their emotional state, roll Devil actively opposed by Will to see if the Devil can detect it anyway. Finally, Devils can sense structures of every kind—from the nails holding two pieces of wood together to the professional hierarchy of a major corporation—along with the best way to break those structures.
- **Read weakness:** After spending a day following a character around, a devil may roll against their Devil skill (instead of Empathy) to figure out if the target has any aspects it can compel.
- **Tempt:** Once per day per target, a devil can plant an idea in a target’s head—making them believe it’s their own—tempting them to do something that would cause disorder in their own life or in the lives of others. See the writeup below for more detail on when and where devils make their attack. The Tempt power works like a compel. If the target has an appropriate aspect (for example, a character with the aspect *Womanizer* being tempted to make a pass at a very particular woman), the devil does not have to surrender a Fate Point for the compel. If the target does *not* have an appropriate aspect for the devil to compel, the devil will have to offer a Fate Point. Should a player decline to accept the compel, treat it as a contest between the Devil skill and the target’s Will. If the target succeeds, they successfully resisted the temptation. If they fail, they

receive a Fate Point and act on the temptation.

Vulnerability:

- **Binding and controlling:** Any spell or ritual that limits the actions of a devil causes damage equal to the shifts that the adept achieved. This damage is in addition to the other effects of the spell.

Weaknesses:

- **Harmed by magic:** any attack made by a magic spell or weapon can do damage to a devil, even when it's intangible. It defends with its Devil skill.
- **Cowardly:** Devils do not and can not fight, per se. When faced with danger, they always flee.
- **Fragile:** Devils have one consequence slot (mild) and one stress box. When "destroyed" they vanish from our world.
- **Summonable:** Like demons, devils must appear when summoned. Unlike demons, summoning spells do damage to them.
- **Impulsive:** Devils do not scheme, hold grudges, or follow orders. (In fact, summoning and binding them to a specific task is likely to destroy them. See above.) They can only experience three emotions: joy that comes from breaking something, disappointment that comes from failing to break something, and the desire to unleash The Maelstrom in our reality.

It's not known how many devils are on Earth at any given moment. Some think there are thousands, leading humans to give in to their worst instincts. Some believe there are only three, moving from place to place, person to person.

In any event, devils are not necessarily evil creatures. Their only concerns are to act freely and to undo structures: dissolve marriages, break up corporations, foment revolution... anything that will cause division and chaos. Humans, being the social creatures that we are, give them ample opportunity to pursue these ends. Devils themselves are just as happy to destroy a negative structure like a gangland family or a brutal dictatorship as a homeless shelter. They don't

perceive a material difference.

Devils themselves come from a reality called The Maelstrom, a realm of wind and flame that is utterly incompatible with human life or the physical laws of our universe. One thing devils love to arrange is for the summoning of other devils; their hope is that a failed summoning will open a permanent portal between our reality and theirs.

Regarding a devil's **Tempt** ability: they will never tempt a person for temptation's sake. They're not interested in how many eclairs a person eats, or whether they play video games instead of practicing the piano. What matters is that they instigate actions that will have widespread repercussions.

Devils don't perceive the world the same way that we do; for them, this is a world of fragile bonds, and they prefer to break as many as possible in one action. So, while a mob hit man with the trouble *Womanizer* (as mentioned in the description above) might be happy to make a pass at any of the women in a bar, the devil at his shoulder would know which ones would reject him, which would go home with him (leading to the break up of her marriage), which would spark a jealous fight that would end friendships, and which would lead to a massive gang war full of violence and betrayal.

The devil would not recognize the Rival Boss's Niece (or even understand what that meant) but they would be able to see the trouble a night with her would cause the same way a sighted person can see the furniture in the room around them.

Other Monsters

There are other non-human supernaturals in the Key/Egg setting as well. Most notable are the dragons, discussed in depth in the novel itself, which function more as a story element than a character the PCs could interact with.

Designing your own:

Too often, monsters in fantasy settings operate like a tiger or bear.

Typically, the characters are busy doing a bit of plot when a monster appears. The story goes on a bathroom break while one side does claw/claw/bite and the

other breaks out weapons or runs like hell.

There's nothing inherently wrong with that, but it doesn't fit the Key/Egg setting. The biggest threats in this game should come from other people, with supernaturals representing smaller but more colorful dangers.

With that in mind, when working up supernaturals for Key/Egg, keep in mind the following principles.

Indirect: The harm they cause might be indirect, either by acting through a third party or by creating troublesome situations. Examples; poltergeists, doppelgangers, will o' the wisps.

Influenced: There are supernaturals that are quiescent or overtly friendly that can be goaded to do harm by human action. Example: the dragon in Key/Egg

Interact: There are intelligent creatures with goals and needs of their own. Only by interacting with them will humans understand what they need and what will be the best way to deal with the problems they cause.

STORY SEEDS

There won't be a full-fledged Key/Egg adventure included in this supplement, but I will say this: the Key/Egg setting is meant to be a play on crime fiction. Plots should focus on situations such as wealthy people scheming to ruin other people's lives for profit, jilted lovers seeking revenge, or corrupt officials attempting to control a public good for their own benefit.

In other words, the main villains will often be Citizens, Hunters, Helpers, and Adepts. The supernatural characters ought to be secondary in some way, either as victims, or dupes, or minions.

Johnny Gruff, Troll Hunter

The PCs have a friendly truce with a local troll, who contacts them out of the blue to tell them it's in danger. A troll hunter has been traveling the world armed with a high-powered rifle, leaving bridges without trolls. The troll has an

important secret it's willing to share, if the PCs can save its life.

Cafe from beyond the Grave:

A local, independent cafe is about to go bankrupt... not an unusual situation, but the owner is sure that her business is being sabotaged. The only customers she gets are low-life sociopaths and people obsessed with death; locals who step through the door leave again almost immediately. What's more, this isn't the only indie cafe to face these problems. Someone has planted a ghost's anchor inside this business make it fail, and it's a very old, very powerful ghost.

Way of the Iron Wolf:

In the *World of magic* version of this setting, a werewolf who has been thoroughly transformed into a ruthless killer sits down and writes a self-help book about how being a werewolf took away his empathy and helped him become a big time CEO! Now it's become a best seller and ambitious business losers are looking for werewolves to curse them so they can follow his advice.

Door of Flame and Gale:

At the urging of a wealthy oil magnate, an inexperienced adept has tried to summon a demon. Unfortunately, he cast a devil summoning instead and botched it, accidentally opening a door to The Maelstrom. The magnate thinks he's found a source of free energy, but what he doesn't realize is that the door is growing larger.

Caretaker:

An elderly adept well-known to a PC (possibly their mentor) asks for their help. The adept is dying, and instead of wasting away in a hospice, they want the PCs to help gather the materials needed for a demon summoning. The adept wants a caretaker who won't have to sleep or steal valuables from the house. Unfortunately, the necessary materials are rare and difficult to acquire, especially since one of the adept's enemies is trying to sabotage the PC's efforts.

Sunset Breed:

The PCs are all vampires and their helpers. Instead of a campaign about hunting monsters, this is one about hiding from the hunters.

The Collapse:

A terrible storm causes the collapse of a bridge, leaving a troll without a home. It immediately begins to travel to the nearest similar structure, keeping in hiding as best it can, but becoming more reckless in its kills as it moves. Of course, the bridge it's moving toward has already been claimed, and the trolls within will fight to the death. Is this homeless troll a friend to the PCs? Is the other one? Can they find a different bridge to be its new home?

Author's Note:

If you search for tips on running Kickstarters, the most common piece of advice is *Don't over-promise!* Don't offer more than you can deliver. Don't bankrupt yourself. Don't commit yourself to reward after reward that you don't have the time or the funds to create.

So when I put together my Kickstarter campaign, I tried to be careful. What I didn't realize was that the game supplements I'd promised were not going to be six thousand words pulled together from my world-building notes. They would turn out to be over 50,000 words--longer than some of the novels I read as a kid--and that they would be the hardest words I've ever written. My apologies to the Kickstarter backers who waited so long for me to finish.

Writing for games: not easy.

That said, let me offer a quick thank you to Fred Hicks and all the good folks at Evil Hat. Fate is a terrific game. I'm not sure I could have written this in another ruleset.

I'd like to offer a special thanks to Richard Bellingham, who read through this supplement in manuscript form and helped me iron out much of the terminology. Any mistakes in these pages are mine, but all correctly described game mechanics are thanks to him. Check out Richard's Fate supplements! He's smart and good.

Finally, a huge THANK YOU goes out to the Kickstarter backers who helped fund the publication of these books. Thanks, you guys.

Books by Harry Connolly

Twenty Palaces

Child of Fire

Game of Cages

Circle of Enemies

The Way into Chaos

The Way into Magic

The Way into Darkness

Spirit of the Century Presents: King Khan

A Key, an Egg, an Unfortunate Remark

*Bad Little Girls Die Horrible Deaths, and other tales of dark
fantasy*