

# odd Soot

Science Fiction Mystery in the 1920s

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 saw otto saw  
 & crox otto  
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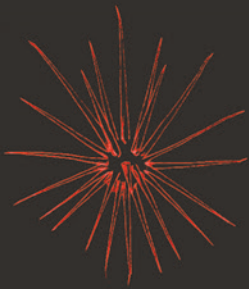
crox otto  
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9. 2

Clarence Redd





## TELL STORIES YOU HAVE NEVER HEARD BEFORE

*Humanity has reached the stars  
An alien plague without a cure  
threatens civilisation*

*Only a few tragic heroes can save mankind*

Odd Soot is a roleplaying game of mystery and investigation set on an alternate Earth in the 1920s. Mankind has travelled into space and found alien civilisations. But a disease called The Soot spreads, driving those infected into madness. And they follow a twisted logic, wreaking havoc around them.

With Odd Soot you can tell stories you've never heard before.

You play deep, personal characters with impressive talents and tragic backgrounds. The setting is strangely familiar – combining alien worlds with 1920s tropes – full of mysteries and unsolved enigmas.

*Odd Soot is a complete roleplaying game based on Mythras.  
No other books are needed to play.*

Mythras  
GATEWAY



*FrostByte Books*



# 088 Soot

written by

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## In the Dream Library

*Five circuits and 43.5 degrees.*

*Rafael Scheutz checked the measurements again. Only a slight adjustment was required. If his sources were accurate, the book should be on the shelf right in front of him, on the unbroken rows of volumes along the curved wall of the Dream Library. He made a quick estimate. He should be about 21 metres below ground. A few hundred years ago – it was hard to tell how fast the building was sinking – this floor levelled with the street outside.*

*He let the beam from the flashlight move over the unmarked book spines. Uncertain what the volume looked like, he pulled out a few at random. A worn leather volume comprising a thousand tightly written pages, two small books with braided covers and a thin booklet, half full of letters he could not place. He regarded the idea that all dreams ever dreamed were saved here as superstition. Yet, what the books contained, their origins or the number of volumes, he could not estimate.*

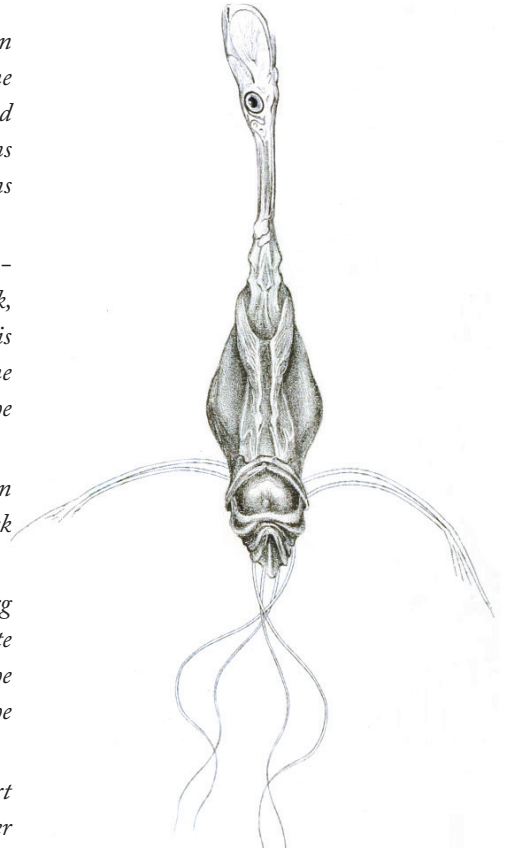
*On the bottom shelf, tucked in between two folios, something gleamed in the flashlight beam. He pulled out a metal sheet, intricately ornamented along the sides. The book, a *fons mercurialis* in perfect condition, rested in his right hand, the cool metal against his fingers. He felt how an agonising fervour came upon him. Years of searching might come to an end. He slid his trembling fingers along the edge. Menaryan writing formed on the metal, inscribed in several circles that encompassed each other.*

*Rafael sank down onto his knees. He placed the flashlight and the Luminarian book on the floor in front of him, unbuttoning the cuff to pull up his left sleeve. The black blisters began halfway up his forearm. Finally he would get rid of *The Soot*.*

*He rotated the circles in the book with the fingers of his right hand. The Wittenberg Priest had, on his deathbed a year earlier, showed how the various characters should relate to each other for the magic spell to activate. When the last circle slotted into position, the air shifted around him – or did he just imagine it? Rafael recited the spell with all the power he could muster and stared at his forearm.*

*The black spots came to life and crept slowly over his skin. Rafael tore open his shirt and looked down at his upper body. The spots were moving, but they all seemed to slither towards a point just above the heart. The more they gathered, the darker the blackness became. The black spot shrank and penetrated deeper.*

*Deeper and deeper.*



*L'sesenaugh librarian from *The Dream Library*, *Sisymbrium*. Opposite: a dual-tone rubbing of a page from a Luminarian *fons mercurialis* book.*

# Introduction



Rafael Scheutz.

Originally a journalist, Rafael Scheutz travelled to many of the worlds in Comae Space, often on scientific missions funded by Glimminge University in Doggerland. He was reported lost during a mission on Sisymbrium in late 1921. Information has been scant regarding the circumstances.

*'There's an odd soot growing slowly on my back. I'm desperately trying to keep it out of my mind, but I can't withstand much longer. The dark secrets it's whispering in my head is driving me to the brink of madness...'*

*Excerpt from the diary of Rafael Scheutz, June 1919*

**E**ORTHE, 1922. A UNIVERSE SEPARATED from our own only by a thin veil. The first humans crossed the voids between the stars 40 years ago and found it teeming with alien life.

The Soot spreads from planet-to-planet, sending humans and aliens alike into madness. The Philosophy Engine presents increasingly stranger predictions and the Skreeder Shamans detect signs of worrying times to come. Comae Space needs heroes more than ever.

After 200 years the gruesome disease grows again. Only a few dare to see the truth. Will the insanities of the infected once more threaten to throw entire worlds into chaos? Are the desperate actions of a few ragged individuals enough to turn the tide?

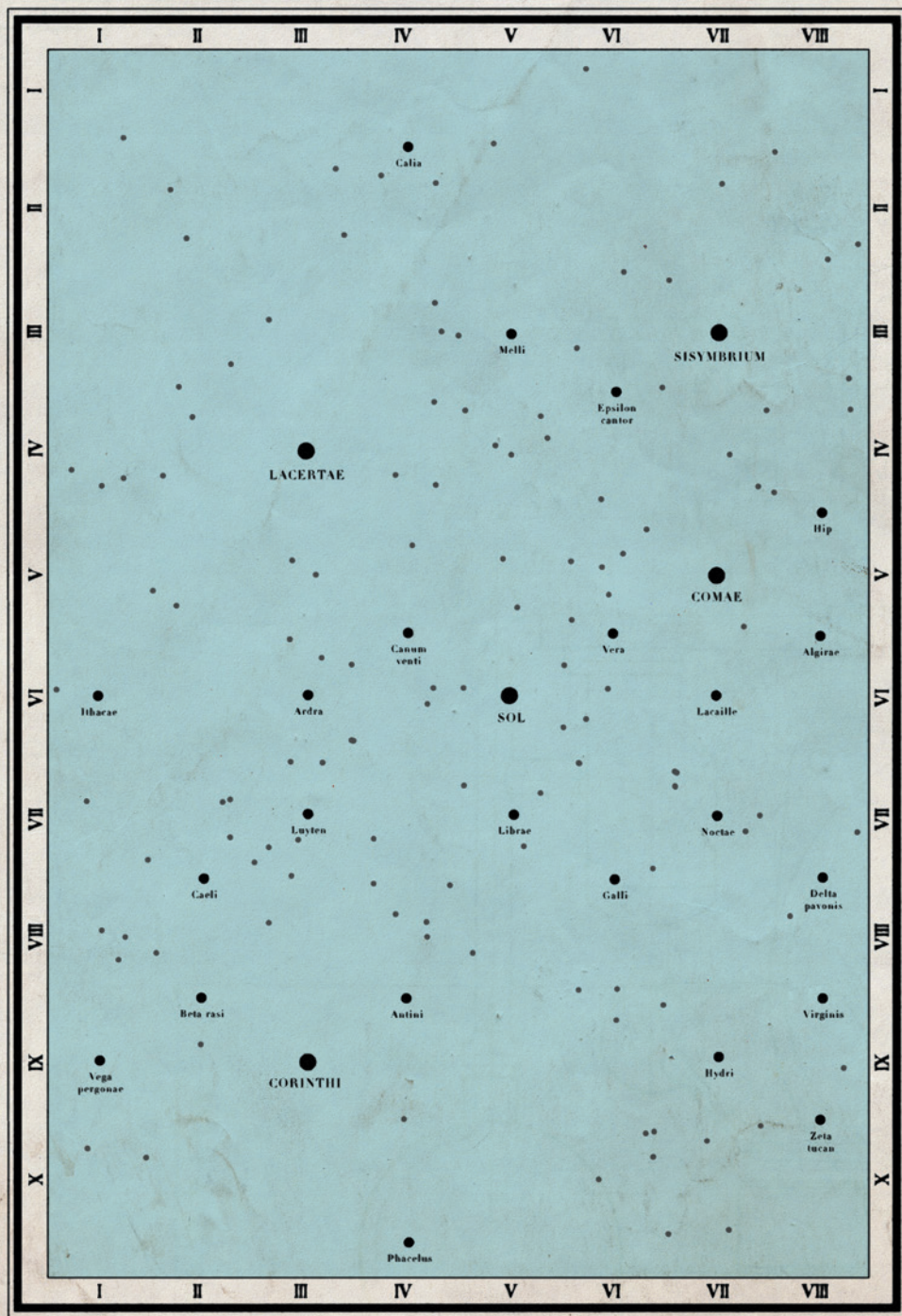
The survival of civilisation lies in the character's hands.

## WELCOME

*Odd Soot* is a roleplaying game based on *Mythras Imperative* by The Design Mechanism. This book – together with dice, pen and paper – has everything you need to play. It will guide you through character creation, rules for conflicts and magic. Thereafter, it will describe the alternate universe of *Odd Soot*: detailing its history, alien life-forms, major forces, technologies and strange worlds.



# MAP OF COMAE SPACE





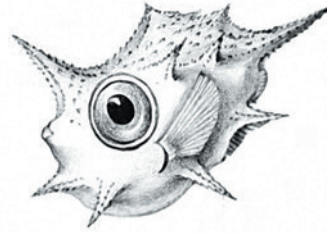
### *A Note on Roleplaying Games*

*Odd Soot assumes that the reader is familiar with the concept of how roleplaying games work, the differences between the players, the Game Master (or referee), the use of characters and the use of polyhedral dice. If this is your first roleplaying game, we recommend that you take a look at:*

*<http://www.rpgamer.com/savingthorow/primer.html>*

*It offers an excellent overview of the different participants in roleplaying games and how a typical roleplaying game session is structured.*

The following pages will give you a good overview of the game. Then, the book dives straight into character creation. We recommend that you read the entire book before rolling up characters, to ensure that you capture the flavour of the game.



## Odd Soot Themes

*Odd Soot* revolves around a few dominant themes:

- » *The mysteries of a disease called The Soot that need be solved to save civilisation from madness and ultimate destruction.*
- » *Player Characters come from troublesome backgrounds. As they get infected by The Soot, they will struggle with mental and physical shortcomings, hindering their work.*
- » *An unknown magic force permeates the universe and some can learn to manipulate it.*
- » *Advanced technology is rare and not well understood.*
- » *An alien species called the Luminarians withdrew 200 years ago but left some of their artefacts behind.*
- » *The backdrop of the game is a landscape of poorly understood areas of space near an alternate Earth – called Eorthe – in the 1920s.*

### *On the Web*

*Visit our website to find free downloads for Odd Soot:*

*[www.frostbytebooks.com](http://www.frostbytebooks.com)*

*There you can also learn more about M-SPACE.*

*For more information on Mythras, the game Odd Soot is based on, see The Design Mechanism's website:*

*[www.thedesignmechanism.com](http://www.thedesignmechanism.com)*

As stated previously, the players take on the roles of tragic heroes, desperately trying to stop The Soot. Life has not been kind to them. Yet, despite their weaknesses, they are determined to do something. No one else grasps the profound danger of civilisation's existence. Player Characters can be detectives, journalists or scholars. Or any other competent individual willing to sacrifice their meagre lives for a greater cause.

The mysteries of the setting focus on The Odd Soot (or The Soot, as it is often referred to). This is no ordinary disease; it is connected both to the supernatural, in the form of magic, and the destructive madness of those infected by it. Not only will the characters try to stop The Soot from spreading, they will also need to halt the corrupted schemes of those already infected.

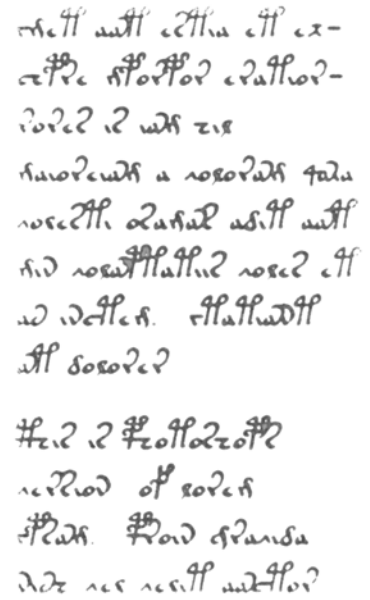
A few shrewd investigators have detected a slight increase in the number of Soot-infected and – even more worrying – these madmen act with a renewed frenzy. They coordinate their foul experiments in a manner not previously seen. A streak of fear has exuded into the less fortunate parts of society but the authorities have not yet sensed the growing threat.

The backdrop of *Odd Soot* is a vast and relatively unexplored area of space called Comae Space, filled with strange worlds and life-forms. With Eorthe at the centre, these territories inspire much the same feelings in humankind as the uncharted Eorthe once did. The explorations of the 19th century have continued into space.

Since the difference engine was invented in the 1820s by human scientists, physics and astronomy have taken massive steps forward. Combined with faster-than-light devices inherited from the Luminarians – the high-tech alien species that fled to avoid The Soot – humanity has travelled to the stars. They have found a handful of intelligent alien species in the star systems closest to Eorthe. The equivalence of the great ocean steamers now cross the voids between the stars and the various species live in relative peace.

Scenarios in *Odd Soot* are joint investigations and adventures. The characters will delve into magical mysteries, explore unknown exoplanets and dismantle otherworldly machinery. All while the antagonists do everything they can to stop them. Whether the villains are madmen infected by The Soot, scheming aliens or powerful organisations, the fight for truth will often be lethal.

The ultimate conflict is within the character. In some roleplaying games, a character's mental health is challenged by ghastly monsters or gruesome scenes. In *Odd Soot*, characters are their own worst enemies. The way characters act slowly impacts their stability and only they can stop the descent to the bottom.



The image shows a block of handwritten text in a cursive script, likely a fictional language. The text is arranged in several lines, with some words appearing to be repeated or written in a similar style. The script is dense and somewhat difficult to decipher, but it appears to be a transcription of a document.

*Excerpt from a Luminarian document found in the northwestern part of The Sinking City on Sisymbrium, not far from the The Dream Library. Ervin Brecht, 1916.*

## Setting Background



*At a height of 70 centimetres, these sentient plants on Sisybrium can cause considerable damage even to a human. Their main prey consists of various small creatures, which they catch with their oversized jaws and then pulls it inside the hardened body to eat.*

*“ We flee now, not for the fear of death but for the fear of what we would become if we lived. ”*

*The last message sent by the Luminarian fleet as they left Comae Space. Since then no one has heard from them.*

*Odd Soot* is set in the 1920s but the world lives in the repercussions of events stretching back centuries.

600 years ago the Luminarian species entered Comae Space. They brought faster-than-light travel and advanced mechanical arts to the four intelligent species. The Aygaan: peaceful giants with mental powers. Eldirerrr: feared for their medical experiments. Nuveri: a paper-thin life-form, surprisingly durable because of its regenerative tissues. Sumsum: serving all, seeing all. The Luminarians deemed humans too primitive to include.

A period of peace and abundance began.

But with light, a shadow will also fall. A terrible disease called The Soot seeped into the minds and bodies of some unfortunate life-forms. They soon spread their evil madness around. The soot-like blisters on the skin and the following descent into insanity affected all life-forms. No one seemed to be able to stop the plague. It threatened to throw entire civilisations into chaos.

The Luminarians fled.

They left behind some starships and parts of their knowledge. A few receivers picked up one last message: ‘We flee now, not for the fear of death but for the fear of what we would become if we lived’.

Comae Space entered an age called The Oblivion. Interstellar travel broke down and many life-forms were stranded on alien worlds.

Eorthe remained blissfully unaware of this, its inhabitants still tethered to the thin sliver of air surrounding the planet... but not for long. In 1832 the first rockets launched into Eorthe orbit. 24 years later, two mysterious alien probes were found encircling Venus and Mars.

Not until the greatest difference engine of all times, The Philosophy Engine, analysed them, were the probes identified as Luminarian. The probes’ engines, the Unfolding Devices, were salvaged and re-purposed for improvised starships. Humankind’s journey to the stars began.

Comae Space turned out to be full of intelligent life-forms. Human explorers found planet after planet holding alien civilisations. During this process, humanity made interstellar travel, once again, a reality to the other inhabitants of Comae Space. Today, in the 1920s, trade and exploration is flourishing. Star liners and freighters cross the voids that kept the species apart.

But The Soot is spreading again. The Skreeder Shamans of the north have realised something is afoot and are sending watchmen to find the cause of this deviation. Aygaan Seekers travel even further for answers. The relentless hunt for black magic is intensified by the Priests of Wittenberg. But the Soot-infected grow bolder every day – more determined than ever and their goals too ravaged by insanity to be understood.

## Doggerland



The nation of Doggerland, a fictional island between Denmark and Great Britain, is the focus of the period details of *Odd Soot*. Doggerland in the 1920s is very much a mixture of its past influences. Both the Scandinavian countries and Great Britain have left their distinct marks on Doggerland culture.

The inhabitants speak Doogel, similar to Norwegian but with many words borrowed from English. It is a flat island, much like Denmark, with long sandy beaches and small picturesque coastal towns, resembling Cornwall. The capital, Glimminge, lies on the southern coast and could be mistaken for a Swedish port.

The Dooges, as the inhabitants call themselves, live off the sea and their fields but they are also keen inventors. The University of Glimminge has a great reputation in Europe, not least because of The Philosophy Engine. They also fund exoplanetary research.

Even though Doggerland is the game's initial focus, characters do not have to be from Doggerland. They can be from any Eorthe nation or one of the human exoplanet colonies. Nor will all scenarios take place in Doggerland but we recommend running the first scenarios on the island.

There are more details on Doggerland in the chapter called Worlds.

### *Odd Soot & M-SPACE*

*Odd Soot* is, in many ways, a setting for our *M-SPACE* game. But *Odd Soot* is a complete game; you need no other books to play.

The two games share rule-sets but this book is lighter on rules than *M-SPACE*. But in some areas *Odd Soot* adds important details for the setting. If you already own *M-SPACE*, these are the sections to keep an eye on:

**Skill Detail.** The skill list is almost the same. However, some skills have specialisations and further descriptions, like *Art (Photography)*. Other changes include *Difference Engines (replacing Computers)* and *Science (Magic)*.

**Culture.** The rules for a character's Culture use a more flexible system. Instead of just three alternatives, it allows for more diverse backgrounds.

**The Soot.** *Odd Soot* adds a layer of existential struggle to characters with The Soot value and Peculiarities. While these rules are not required to run the game, they will drive scenarios and campaigns in interesting new directions.

**Circles.** The rules here define Circles bottom-up instead of top down. If needed, the two approaches can be joined in a *Grand Unified Circle Theory™* resulting in very detailed Circle stats and descriptions.

**Extended Conflicts.** Rules for using strange devices, difference engines and nested conflicts are included. Characters also use *Extended Conflicts* to learn magic. Additionally, a set of optional *Special Effects* are included.

**Starships.** Individuals seldom own starships in *Odd Soot*. Interstellar travel is more akin to the steamships, bulk freighters or scientific expeditions crossing Eorthe's oceans in the 1920s.

**Collaborative Creation.** Gaming groups can use collaborative creation to define a Circle common to all characters at PC creation. All players take turns describing it, with the GM taking part on equal terms.

If you find yourself in need of more detailed rules, have a look at *M-SPACE*. And there are also the full Mythras rules – and the many supplements released for it – to fall back on.

# Characters

EVERY PLAYER IN ODD SOOT controls a character. A character is the player's alter-ego, and is usually very different, physically and mentally, to the player. *Odd Soot* characters can be everything from archeologists and explorers, to journalists and librarians! All depending on what type of scenarios you want to play.

The basic character is defined by a series of different elements that describe the character's capabilities. These elements are:

- » *Characteristics: such as Strength or Charisma*
- » *Attributes: things like Hit Points or Movement*
- » *Skills: expertise in fundamental abilities*

Most of these elements are described in terms of numbers, and some are dependent on or calculated by others. What each element means, and how they are determined, is described in the following sections.

Characters are usually recorded on a character sheet, which is a handy way of organizing all the information about the character. It is recommended that you first design your character using scratch paper, and then transfer the information to a character sheet once you have gone through each step of the process. Use a pencil and have an eraser handy; certain numbers such as skill values will change several times during the character creation process.

An empty character sheet is included at the end of the book and also as a free download from our website.

## *Alternate Character Creation*

*There is an alternate character creation process presented on page 36. It is slightly quicker and focuses on the character's background and relationships, with skills and attributes taking a back seat.*



# Character Creation Steps

## 1. Character Concept

Decide on the kind of character to play. Keep it simple for now. More will come.

## 2. Characteristics

Use 3d6 for STR, CON, DEX, POW and CHA. 2d6+6 for INT and SIZ. Allocate results to fit the concept.

Alternatively distribute 80 points amongst the characteristics. Minimum 3 (8 for INT and SIZ), maximum 18.

## 3. Calculate Attributes

Use the characteristics to determine Action Points, Damage Modifier, Experience Modifier, Healing Rate, Hit Points, Initiative, Luck Points, Movement.

## 4. Standard Skills

Calculate the base value of Standard Skills by adding together the appropriate characteristics.

## 5. Culture

Decide on a Cultural Background. Allocate 100 points amongst the listed Standard Skills, the chosen Professional Skills and the Combat Style (if any) for the chosen culture.

## 6. Career

Choose a Career from those available to the setting. Distribute 100 points amongst the career's listed Standard Skills and whatever Professional Skills were chosen.

## 7. Bonus Skill Points

Assign a final 150 points between any Standard skill or those Professional skills gained as part of Culture or Career.

## 8. Equipment

Determine Starting Equipment based on Culture and Career.

## 9. Circles

To define the character's social framework, two Circles are defined: one with a positive impact on the character's former life and one with a negative impact.

In some campaigns, the characters will also be infected by The Soot from the start.



### *Rounding of Numbers and Results*

*On some occasions you will be required to divide numbers – typically the rating in a skill (such as for determining a critical success, which is  $\frac{1}{10}$ th of the skill's value). Whenever a division result creates a fraction, always round up to the whole number. So, for instance,  $\frac{1}{10}$ th of 64% is 6.4; this is rounded up to 7.*

*Above: Doggerland singer and actress Ria Sander in 1929.*

### Example Concepts

*Librarian seeking rare alien manuscripts*

*Detective investigating the source of a local Soot outbreak*

*An expelled Wittenberg Priest losing faith, still researching black magic*

*Exo-archeologist looking for abandoned Luminarian sites*

*Writer exploring the hardships of human exo-colonies*

*Medical doctor studying the effects of The Soot on alien species*

*Journalist following up leads on Eldirerrr human experiments*

*Priest seeking the spiritual roots of The Soot epidemic*

*Doggerland soldier on a secret mission to evaluate the interstellar Crisg'tu threat*

*Solipsist agent setting up a network of contacts*

## Character Concept

A good place to start is to have some idea of what sort of character you want to play; a hardened colonist for example, or a cunning thief. Your character concept does not need to be elaborate at this stage; simply an idea that will help guide certain choices such as profession. A few character ideas are listed in the sidebar to provoke your imagination.

### CHARACTERISTICS

Everyone is defined by seven characteristics which tell you something about your character; how strong or fast he or she is; how clever or healthy. Characteristics are at the core of every *Odd Soot* character and form the basis for most of the other elements such as Attributes and Skills. The seven characteristics are:

- » **Strength (STR)**
- » **Constitution (CON)**
- » **Size (SIZ)**
- » **Dexterity (DEX)**
- » **Intelligence (INT)**
- » **Power (POW)**
- » **Charisma (CHA)**

Before calculating the characteristics, the following section explains what each represents.

#### Strength | STR

STR represents physical strength: how much one can lift, how hard one can hit, and so on. STR is a component of the Damage Modifier (page 19). If a character is reduced to zero STR he lacks the ability to move or lift objects.

#### Constitution | CON

CON is measure of health and hardiness. CON is a component in determining Hit Points (see page 18) and Healing Rate (see page 18). If CON falls to zero for any reason the character dies.

#### Size | SIZ

SIZ measures mass, and helps indicate height and weight. SIZ is used to help figure Hit Points (see page 18), as larger, heavier creatures tend to have greater endurance



against damage. SIZ can also be used to determine a character's Damage Modifier, since mass helps to increase the force of a blow.

### Dexterity | DEX

Agility, balance and reflexes are measured by DEX. It is an important aspect of Action Points (see page 19) and Initiative (see page 19). If a character is reduced to zero DEX they suffer functional paralysis.

### Intelligence | INT

INT is measurement of cognitive ability. Those with a lower INT score are not necessarily stupid, but they are likely to be constrained in how creatively they can employ their wits. INT is a factor in calculating Action Points and Initiative. If INT is reduced to zero the character becomes completely mindless.

### Power | POW

Pow is a measurement of different things. It can be, for example, a measure of a character's soul, spirit, inner drive or capacity for psionics. Pow governs a character's Power Points and Luck Points (see page 18). If a character's Pow ever drops to zero they lose all independent will.

### Charisma | CHA

Charisma measures personality and is independent of physical appearance. CHA affects a character's Experience Modifier (page 19). If CHA ever falls to zero, the character can no longer socially interact with others, becoming so painfully shy or antisocial they are ignored or even driven away.

## Attributes

Each character also has a set of attributes. These are particular capabilities derived from the characteristics, or determined by them that are used to govern certain factors of game play. The nine attributes are:

- » *Hit Points*
- » *Luck Points*
- » *Power Points*
- » *Action Points*
- » *Initiative Bonus*
- » *Damage Modifier*
- » *Movement Rate*
- » *Healing Rate*
- » *Experience Modifier*

### Calculating Characteristics

*Each characteristic has a numerical value to determine how potent it is. Roll the indicated dice for STR, CON, SIZ, DEX, INT, POW and CHA taking each rolled score as it comes. Since the results of these rolls can be somewhat random, it is often better to decide on a character concept after the dice are rolled. Otherwise the final characteristics may preclude a preconceived role.*

*Roll 3d6 for STR, CON, DEX, POW and CHA; then 2d6+6 for SIZ and INT. Other species may use different dice.*

*Your Game Master may want to calculate characteristics differently.*

*Alternate suggestions include:*

*Dice Roll, Assign: as per normal generation, except the player may exchange values between Characteristics with the same dice range.*

*Dice Pool: roll 19 six-sided dice and assign three rolls to each Characteristic, save SIZ and INT which only get two, but start with a base value of 6.*

*Points Build: players assign Characteristic scores from a pre-determined pool of 80 points. Characteristics cannot be lower than the minimum rolled value, nor higher than the maximum.*

*10 Method: all characteristics start at 10 and 10 more points are added freely. It is also possible to lower values below 10 by moving points to another characteristic.*

*Game Masters are free to come up with their own methods or point values as desired.*

*Opposite: the circulus is an almost immobile herbivore of Sisymbrium. It settles in a spot rich in herbs, using its long snout to rip them out in a circle around it, before moving on slowly to the next spot. The snout is also used for protection. By turning quickly and swinging it, small animals are kept away.*

## Luck Points

POW	Luck Points
6 or Less	1
7–12	2
13–18	3
Each 6 points	+1

*Luck Points can be used for:*

- » *Re-roll the dice, if they are unfavorable*
- » *Mitigate physical damage or other unfortunate circumstances*
- » *Gain an edge at a vital moment in combat*

## Healing Rate

CON	Healing Rate
6 or Less	1
7–12	2
13–18	3
Each 6 points	+1

## HIT POINTS

Hit Points represent how much injury an area of the body can withstand before it becomes useless, possibly resulting in incapacitation and ultimately the character's death. The body of every creature is divided into separate locations – humans for example have seven; the head, chest, abdomen, arms and legs – each location with its own hit points. To calculate the Hit Points of each location, add CON and SIZ together and cross-reference on the Hit Points table below.

It is also possible to run *Odd Soot* without Hit Locations. There are two different characters sheets, with and without locations; see Simplified Combat on page 100 for more details.

		CON+SIZ								
		1–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21–25	26–30	31–35	36–40	+5 pts
<b>Leg</b>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+1
<b>Abdomen</b>		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	+1
<b>Chest</b>		3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	+1
<b>Arm</b>		1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	+1
<b>Head</b>		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	+1

## LUCK POINTS

Luck Points represent that strange force differentiating adventuring heroes from everyday folk. Call it fate, karma or simple good fortune. See sidebar what Luck Points can be used for.

Exactly how they are used, and when, is described on page 67. Once a Luck Point is spent, the pool decreases; when one is out of Luck Points, no more are available – unless the Game Master makes an impromptu award – until the next game session when they replenish to their normal value.

## POWER POINTS

For those who can utilise such powers, a character's Power Points are equal to their Pow. These points are used for magic, the cost of which is dependent on the type of power used. When the magic user runs out of Power Points he has exhausted his ability to use any powers until they are replenished.

## ACTION POINTS

How often a character can act in a combat round (page 68) is determined by Action Points. For simplicity, the *Odd Soot* rules grant all characters with 2 Action Points (the full *Mythras* rules can give characters a different number, depending on their DEX and INT).

## INITIATIVE BONUS

The moment at which someone reacts in combat is governed by initiative. Initiative Bonus acts as a modifier to initiative rolls; the higher the bonus, the faster one responds in a combat situation, determining when you can act. Further factors – armor for example – may modify it. Initiative Bonus is the average of the DEX and INT characteristics.

## DAMAGE MODIFIER

The bonus amount of damage a character inflicts when physically striking or applying force. It is an extra die roll which is either added to, or subtracted from, the damage inflicted by a weapon or tool. If a negative damage modifier takes a weapon's damage to zero or below then no damage at all has been inflicted. Add together STR and SIZ and consult the Damage Modifier table in the sidebar.

## MOVEMENT RATE

Every creature has a Movement Rate – a number of meters that can be travelled during a specific period of time. Movement is not calculated from Characteristics but is a default value which differs from species to species. The base Movement Rate for humans is 6 meters.

## HEALING RATE

After receiving injuries, a character needs to recuperate. Healing Rate determines how quickly they naturally recover from wounds. Depending on the severity of the injury (page 68) the Healing Rate denotes how many Hit Points are recovered per day, week or month.

## EXPERIENCE MODIFIER

Over the course of play characters improve their skills and capabilities. This is achieved through the use of Experience Rolls which are explained in more detail on page 71. A character's CHA score may adjust the number of Experience Rolls the character has, reflecting the relationship he has with his peers and his reputation in his community.

## Damage Modifier

STR+SIZ	Modifier
5 or Less	-1d8
6-10	-1d6
11-15	-1d4
16-20	-1d2
21-25	+0
26-30	+1d2
31-35	+1d4
36-40	+1d6
41-45	+1d8
46-50	+1d10
51-60	+1d12
61-70	+2d6
71-80	+1d8+1d6
81-90	+2d8
91-100	+1d10+1d8
101-110	+2d10
111-120	+2d10+1d2

*Each 10 points Continue Progression.*

## Experience Modifier

CHA	Exp. Modifier
6 or Less	-1
7-12	0
13-18	+1
Each 6 points	+1



## Standard Skills Basic Scores

Skill	Basic %
Athletics	STR+DEX
Boating	STR+CON
Brawn	STR+SIZ
Conceal	DEX+POW
Customs	INT x2 +40
Dance	DEX+CHA
Deceit	INT+CHA
Drive	DEX+POW
Endurance	CON x2
Evade	DEX x2
First Aid	INT+DEX
Influence	CHA x2
Insight	INT+POW
Locale	INT x2
Native Tongue	INT+CHA+40
Perception	INT+POW
Ride	DEX+POW
Sing	CHA+POW
Stealth	DEX+INT
Swim	STR+CON
Unarmed	STR+DEX
Willpower	POW x2
Combat Style	STR+DEX

## Skills

Skills fall into two classes. Everyone has Standard skills – things such as sneaking around or influencing others. Professional skills on the other hand, are those requiring specific training before they can be attempted – things such as tracking wild animals, piloting a spacecraft or understanding ancient languages.

Characters are given three pools of points to spend on acquiring skills; the first pool for the Culture they grew up in, the second for the Career they adopt after childhood, and the last to further round out their skill set.

» *A novice character assigns 100 points to the Culture skill pool, 100 to the Career skill pool, and a further 150 points for rounding out.*

Each Culture and Career has a defined range of standard and professional skills to which those skill points may be assigned.

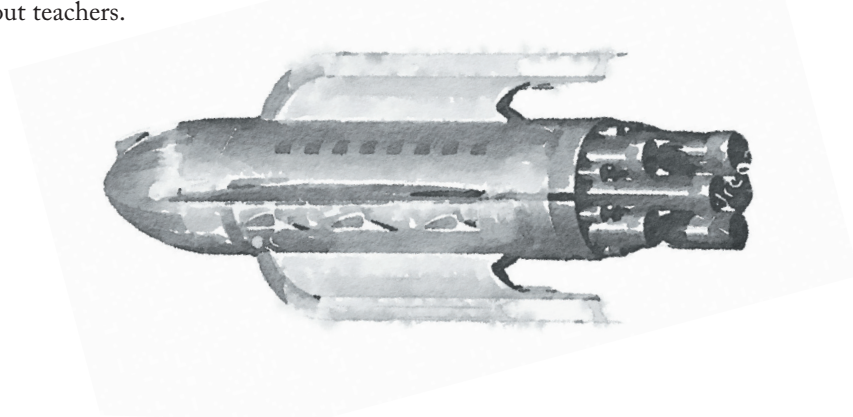
### Standard Skills

Standard skills cover a range of everyday activities and local knowledge which anyone can use without specialised training.

The basic score of each Standard skill is determined by the sum of two characteristics or a multiple of a single characteristic. The value represents the character's innate competence in a given area, before any points from the skill points pool are assigned. The score represents the percentage chance of success for a skill; so, an Athletics score of 25 is expressed as 25%. See the following pages for descriptions of standard skills.

### Professional Skills

Professional Skills represent more specialised forms of training and experience. They can only be picked up during Character Creation as part of a character's native culture or their career. Once play starts, new skills can be learned by seeking out teachers.



## STANDARD SKILLS

**Athletics.** STR+DEX. Athletics covers a range of physical activities, including climbing, jumping, throwing and running.

**Boating.** STR+CON. The Boating skill covers the operation of small floating craft on rivers, lakes and close inshore.

**Brawn.** STR+SIZ. Brawn is the efficient application of technique when using raw physical force. The skill covers lifting, breaking and contests of strength.

**Conceal.** DEX+POW. Conceal is the counterpoint to Stealth, being the concealment of large objects rather than the character themselves.

**Customs.** INT x2. Customs represents the character's knowledge of his own community; its social codes, rites, rituals, taboos and so on.

**Dance.** DEX+CHA. The Dance skill measures a character's ability to move rhythmically and accurately (to a reasonable degree) when called upon to do so. This includes, for example foxtrot, waltz, and any traditional dances in the character's country.

**Deceit.** INT+CHA. Deceit covers all instances where a character attempts to mask the truth and offer a deceit of some kind; barefaced lying, misleading a guard or even bluffing (or cheating) during a card game. Deceit forms a counterpart to the Insight skill and can be used to oppose Insight rolls when others are attempting to discern either truth or motive.

**Drive.** DEX+POW. Drive covers the control of automobiles, motorcycles and carriges. Drive rolls are needed when a character wants to do something out of the ordinary with a vehicle – traverse treacherous terrain, jump obstacles, chase another vehicle and so on. See the chapter on Extended Conflicts for rules on car chases.

**Endurance.** CON x2. Endurance is a character's capacity to endure physical stress, pain and fatigue. It is used in a number of ways, but most specifically to resist the possible effects of injuries, including harmful poisons and disease.

**Evade.** DEX x2. Evade is used to escape from observed, impending danger and can be used against ranged weapons (by diving for cover, for example), avoiding traps, changing the engagement distance in combat, and generally getting out of the way of a potential physical hazard.

**First Aid.** DEX+INT. First Aid measures a character's ability to treat minor injuries and stabilise more severe ones. First Aid may be applied only once per specific injury and heals 1d3 points of damage.

### *Skill Use in Alien Cultures*

*Skills are learned within the cultural boundaries of one's homeworld. As soon as a character travels to a different world, some skill rolls might have a default penalty of Hard or Formidable, depending on the situation.*

*To mitigate this, the character need points in any of the following skills (often with a specialisation tied to the alien species in question): Culture, Knowledge, Science, Language.*

*Example: For a human character to use a Nuveri barge, the GM applies a Hard penalty to the Boating skill. But if the character has Culture (Nuveri) at 15%, the penalty will be -20 plus 15, resulting in a -5% penalty.*

*A medical doctor with Medicine 80% needs to treat a Sumsum with a light gunshot wound. The GM decides this is quite difficult (-40%), but as the character has Science (Astrobiology) at 50%, the penalty is reduced to zero.*

*Determining the penalty is up to the GM, but a few guidelines are presented below.*

- » *Social skills: Formidable*
- » *Physical skills: Hard or No Penalty*
- » *Combat Style: No Penalty (Unarmed can be Hard however)*
- » *Technical skills: Hard*
- » *Medical: Formidable or Herculean*

*Opposite: the rocketships moving passengers into orbit seem crude compared to the luxurious star liners moving faster than light between the stars.*

**Influence.** CHA x2. This is a measurement of a character's ability to persuade others, through personal charisma, into a desired way of behaving. It is used in a wide variety of situations; from changing someone's mind, through to bribing an official or guard.

**Insight.** INT+POW. Insight is the ability to read or intuitively define another's verbal and non-verbal behavior (such as body language or the manner of speech) to establish their motives and state of mind. Insight can be used to determine if someone is telling a lie.

**Locale.** INT x2. Locale measures a character's understanding of local flora, fauna, terrain and weather in the area where he has spent the majority of his life, usually within his community.

**Native Tongue.** INT+CHA. Native Tongue is the ability to speak one's own language, the one learned whilst growing up in one's home culture. It measures articulation, eloquence and the depth of the speaker's vocabulary.

**Perception.** INT+POW. Perception is used for both passive observation and focused detection; whether hunting for something specific, a general scan of an area or simple awareness of their surroundings.

**Ride.** DEX+POW. Ride covers the ability to control and remain mounted on those creatures that are trained to be ridden. The skill can be applied to a diverse range of beasts, everything from mules to elephants; even flying or swimming creatures or alien beasts. The most common to Eorthe humans will be *Ride (Horse)*.

**Sing.** POW+CHA. Carrying a tune is covered by Sing, anything from monotonous chants through to complex arias.

**Stealth.** DEX+INT. Hiding out of plain sight, or moving with minimal sound are covered by the Stealth skill.

**Swim.** STR+CON. Swim covers your ability to stay afloat, even if it is only a doggy paddle or treading water.

**Unarmed.** STR+DEX. Unarmed measures the ability to defend oneself without the aid of weapons.

**Willpower.** POW x2. Willpower is a measure of a character's ability to concentrate, channel his force of will in a particular direction, or harden his psyche to possible mental shock. It is also a measure of personal resolve.

**Combat Style** (*Specific Career or Cultural Style*). STR+DEX. Each Combat Style is the skill to use the weapons expected of a career (or culture). Combat Styles can be very diverse, ranging from, for example, revolver hip shots all the way to naval artillery.

## PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

**Acting.** CHA x2. Acting governs the art of being able to impersonate and convey a completely different character, whether in a staged performance or in a social situation. Theatre Mechanique is the most popular theatrical artform on Eorthe in the 1930s.

**Acrobatics.** STR+DEX. Acrobatics covers acts of balance, gymnastics, juggling and tumbling. The skill can be used in its own right as a way to impress an audience, but also to help mitigate damage from falls. Acrobatics can be substituted for Evade if the situation warrants it.

**Art.** POW+CHA. There are many specific art forms. Painting to Poetry; Literature to Sculpture. A character chooses an Art specialization when taking this skill. Subsequent Art forms are advanced in separately.

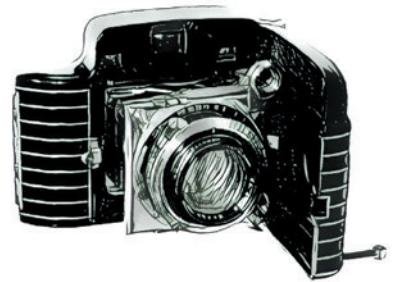
*Art (Photography)* is quite common among *Odd Soot* characters. The skill includes both the actual camera handling and the knowledge of how to develop the film in a darkroom. Skill rolls are only used for the actual camera usage.

Cameras small enough to fit in a pocket or purse are still quite new, but the quality of the photos is not very good yet. Failing a roll means the shot(s) will come out blurry or badly exposed – not good enough to work as evidence. Fumbles lead to camera malfunction or that the entire film roll is exposed to light (all photos being destroyed). Apply penalties for low light, stress and so on.

**Astrogation.** INT x2. Astrogation is equivalent to Navigation, save that it enables starship pilots to plot a course at stellar and interstellar distances. It is a rare skill, as starships are relatively uncommon.

**Bureaucracy.** INT x2. Understanding administrative procedures, records and unspoken conventions are covered by the Bureaucracy skill. It is used to interact with officials or discover pertinent civic information.

**Commerce.** INT+CHA. Commerce is used to evaluate the worth of goods and commodities and to trade them for the best possible price. It is also used to understand the intricacies of business transactions in addition to securing a profit.



**Comms.** INT x2. This skill grants the ability to use communications equipment to detect or conceal comms traffic. Radio and telegraph are the most common forms of communication. The Comms skill also grants a chance of cracking encrypted messages.

**Courtesy.** INT+CHA. This skill covers understanding how to act appropriately in a social or formal situation: modes of address, rituals and conventions of behavior and so forth. It includes everything from who to bow to and when, to how low; from when to use a particular title to when it is appropriate to act informally.

**Craft.** DEX+INT. Each Craft is a specialised form and there are as many crafts as there are professions for them. Like Art, Craft is used to create the subject item. How long it takes depends entirely on the nature of the product: weaving a rug takes longer than throwing a pot, for instance, but time is not necessarily the most important factor: it is the skill of the crafter, the quality of the resources and attention to detail.

**Culture.** INT x2. Culture is the more specific form of the Standard Skill of Customs, relating instead to societies foreign to the character's own. Each Culture skill must be given a particular society to which it applies. Mechanically it works in the same way as the Customs skill.

The Culture skill, with specialization, is used to understand the behaviour of aliens. It is also used to remove penalties to other skill rolls (see page 21). As soon as a character has spent time on an alien world, she will gain 1d4 points in that culture – outside of the regular experience points.

*Culture (Luminarian)* is a common specialisation, indicating the character's knowledge of and experience with Luminarian writing, technology and archeological sites. It can be used when trying to decipher Luminarian manuscripts, together with Language (Menaryan), or technology.

**Demolitions.** INT+POW. This skill permits a character to safely handle and utilise explosive materials.

**Difference Engines.** INT x2. This skill reflects the character's ability to solve complex problems or extract complex information, using difference engines. It covers general usage, programming and diagnosing/repairing software and hardware.

**Disguise.** INT+CHA. Effecting a convincing disguise, using appropriate materials (costumes, cosmetics, wigs or hairpieces), is covered by the Disguise skill. Creating the disguise requires time and attention to detail, as well as access to the right materials to make it convincing.



*Glimminge pickpocket and burglar.*



**Electronics.** DEX+INT. This skill allows the user to tinker with, bypass or repair electronic devices. It has many applications, most often to temporarily patch up damaged equipment or replace broken circuits with spares. Designing and building new electronic devices is not covered by this skill and instead requires the Engineering skill.

**Engineering.** INT x2. The design and building of large-scale structures, from houses to bridges, gates to engines, is in the remit of the Engineering skill. Rolls are necessary when planning large scale projects to ensure correct construction, but are also made when an engineer wants to assess a structure's integrity for whatever reason (state of repair or weak spots, for example).

**Forgery.** DEX+INT. The Forgery skill permits the creation or falsification of official documentation.

**Gambling.** INT+POW. The Gambling skill measures a character's competence in games of chance and especially where money is staked on the outcome. It is used to assess the odds of success or failure or spot when someone is cheating.

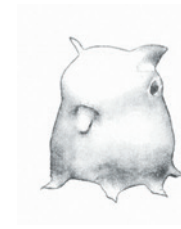
**Knowledge.** INT x2. Knowledge covers a specific body of knowledge which must be chosen when the skill is first learned. Astrology, History, Mythology, Strategy and Tactics: these are all typical examples of Knowledge skills. They mean the character understands its fundamentals, how it can be applied to immediate challenges and problems, and can use the Knowledge to recall useful information.

*Knowledge (The Soot)* is a common specialisation, but no starting skill points can be spent on it. This skill covers the behaviour of the infected, recognising their built contraptions and the history of the disease. For medical assessments or treatments, use the Medicine skill instead.

**Language (Specific Language).** INT+CHA. This skill covers the speaking and comprehension of a language other than the character's own. The skill is treated as a static representation of overall fluency. 1-25% a few basic words, 26-50% simple sentences, 51-75% fluent for general conversation, 76+% able to converse eloquently. Its value is used by the Game Master to limit the level of spoken interaction when the players converse with personalities in the game.

*Language (Menaryan)* is a common specialisation among all species, as it is the shared language in Comae Space.

**Lockpicking.** DEX x2. Lockpicking is the ability to open a mechanical locking system without the aid of a key or other device made specifically for the lock.



*A small Vonner from the Vera colony. Not over 7 centimetres high and moving slowly, colonists first viewed them as curious snail-like animals. Later studies by the colonists have revealed it to be an efficient predator. Its hunting method is unique and has given the Vonner its nickname: Trojan. Larger animals will eat the small creature, but because of its rubbery skin they swallow it in one piece. Once in the stomach, the small snout turns out to be a sharp combination of mouth and cutting tool. The Vonner uses it to cut up the stomach and eat the larger animal from the inside.*

### Doggerland Names

Below are some common names for characters born in Doggerland. See next page for last names.

Male:	Female:
Aaric	Anrid
Andres	Eir
Jalle	Disa
Aevvar	Idun
Afi	Lin
Egil	Lysa
Erp	Aeva
Ull	Katla
Raud	Freja
Nilas	Siri
Olar	Telma
Tessel	Tissla
Agne	Krärke
Sveid	Anna
Aare	Agni
Krys	Ari
Pollur	Bera
Rune	Bjork
Bolle	Groa
Unne	Kaia

It includes the techniques of levering open bolted or barred doors and windows without causing damage.

**Mechanics.** DEX+INT. Mechanics represents the knowledge and skill to assemble and disassemble mechanical devices. The skill of Mechanics generally involves the creation of delicate contraptions with small working parts, as opposed to Engineering, which deals with massive constructions. This can be anything from the servicing of automobiles to fixing difference engines. The skill cannot repair something completely destroyed, but could permit a brief jury-rigged fix if enough spare parts are available.

This skill also includes the maintenance and repair of starships, as long as the Unfolding Device at the heart of the ship is not involved (as all Luminarian technology is yet to be understood). Also, the design and building of new mechanical devices are not covered by this skill, but requires the Engineering skill instead.

**Medicine.** INT+POW. Medicine is the in-depth knowledge of medical procedures, based on cultural practices. It is based on the knowledge of herbs and natural cures, in combination with drugs and more advanced treatments. In all cultures healing includes the ability to set bones, suture wounds and so forth. To use on an alien species, all rolls are *Formidable*. Add points from the skill Science (Astrobiology) to reduce penalty.

**Musicianship.** DEX+CHA. Musicianship covers the playing of musical instruments; from a simple reed pipe to a complex stringed instrument such as a harp. Each iteration of Musicianship is applied to a group of similar instruments. A musician who can play a reed pipe can also play a flute, panpipes or a recorder because the fundamentals are the same.

**Navigation.** INT+POW. Whether using prominent landmarks, the stars or the varying taste of seawater, the ability to accurately direct travel is covered by the Navigation skill. Each Navigation skill covers a specific world, such as Sisymbrium or Eorthe. Rolls should be made during unusual journeys or when in completely unfamiliar territory.

**Oratory.** POW+CHA. Oratory is the art of delivering a speech to large group of people with the aim of conveying or swaying a point of view. It is a skill frequently used by politicians to drive home a policy, but is also used by commanders to inspire troops and impose discipline on the battlefield. Wherever mass persuasion is needed, Oratory, rather than Influence, is used.

**Pilot.** DEX+INT. The Pilot skill permits the control of various flying vehicles. It also covers the maintenance and upkeep of such a vehicle: assessing when repairs are needed, where it is safe to land, the dangers of violent weather, and so forth.

*Pilot (Aeroplane)* and *Pilot (Dirigible)* will be the most common specialisations for characters. Pilot (Starship) is a rare skill and should seldom be allowed; it works best if tightly tied to a character's background

**Politics.** INT+CHA. Characters possessing the Politics skill understand how to navigate and negotiate the corridors of government at local, national and interstellar levels.

**Research.** INT+POW. Research uses various resources (such as a library, newspaper archive, difference engines and so on) to discover desired pieces of information. For information that is difficult to find, use the rules for Extended Conflicts.

**Science.** INT x2. There are dozens of scientific disciplines and the Science skill, which can be taken multiple times, is always associated with a discipline: Science (Astronomy) or Science (Astrobiology), for example.

*Science (Magic).* INT+POW. Covers the theoretical understanding of magic and the history of the field. Note that this is not an accepted branch of science and normally starting skill points cannot be spent on it. To learn a spell, this skill is required (see Magic chapter).

**Seamanship.** INT+CON. This skill is used in exactly the same way as Boating but is instead applied to large waterborne vessels powered by sails or mechanical means.

**Seduction.** INT+CHA. Seduction is the romantic or sexual persuasion of another person, a skill very different to Influence. It uses explicit signals – verbal and non-verbal – to elicit a sexually positive response. It also takes a significant amount of time: successful Seduction may take hours, days or weeks to achieve depending on the morals of the target, who always has the opportunity to resist a Seduction attempt with Willpower.

**Sensors.** INT+POW. This skill allows the accurate use and analysis of radar devices, both on ground and in space.

**Sleight.** DEX+CHA. Sleight covers attempts to palm or conceal small objects and includes attempts to pick pockets, cut purses or cause a visual distraction. Naturally it is an essential thieves' skill.

### *Doggerland Names*

#### *Last Names:*

<i>Blome</i>	<i>Poppe</i>
<i>Blika</i>	<i>Qvam</i>
<i>Blebr</i>	<i>Rode</i>
<i>Blekken</i>	<i>Raanes</i>
<i>Enoksen</i>	<i>Ramm</i>
<i>Eines</i>	<i>Rasmussen</i>
<i>Fleger</i>	<i>Rustli</i>
<i>Grøe</i>	<i>Snoan</i>
<i>Hernes</i>	<i>Snofjogl</i>
<i>Haagensdotter</i>	<i>Sande</i>
<i>Hermstad</i>	<i>Schanke</i>
<i>Kaald</i>	<i>Schei</i>
<i>Knudsen</i>	<i>Steen</i>
<i>Koch</i>	<i>Stokke</i>
<i>Kallar</i>	<i>Tem</i>
<i>Maar</i>	<i>Teiste</i>
<i>Maasø</i>	<i>Thomassen</i>
<i>Mørch</i>	<i>Trøan</i>
<i>Nervik</i>	<i>Vitø</i>
<i>Nielsdotter</i>	<i>Wattne</i>
<i>Nold</i>	<i>Ygre</i>
<i>Petersen</i>	<i>Aele</i>

### Characters' Age (Optional)

Most players want their characters to be quite young (twenty-something) but there is nothing stopping them from creating older individuals.

To model this, every decade entered upon from their 40s and upward will bring the following changes:

- » Remove 2 points from STR, CON or DEX.
- » Add 15 points to any Professional skills.

Example: a player wants to play a middle-aged academic researching Luminarian history. He decides the character is 55 years old. This is two decades worth of change. The player subtracts 2 points from STR and two more from CON, also modifying all derived values. Then he adds another 30 skill points to his Professional skills.

### Architectural Styles of Eorthe

Towns and villages in Europe look very similar to the 1920s we know. Low buildings interspersed by occasional churches and official buildings, all centred around a small market square.

In cities, however, the new age is more apparent. Buildings are grander, more decorated and the classic architectural styles are taken to new heights. But the poor districts are even poorer, with run-down houses and unkept streets. Modernist ideas of minimalism and pure function have yet to appear on Eorthe, drowned out by the thrill of space exploration.

Right: a drawing of Blankvattn, a small town by the Dimle river in western Doggerland.

**Streetwise.** POW+CHA. Streetwise represents knowledge of places and social contacts within a settlement. It covers everything from identifying potentially dangerous neighborhoods, to finding local services – legal or illegal. How long a Streetwise attempt takes depends on what is sought. Finding a good bar will take less time than locating a fence for stolen goods or a fake search warrant.

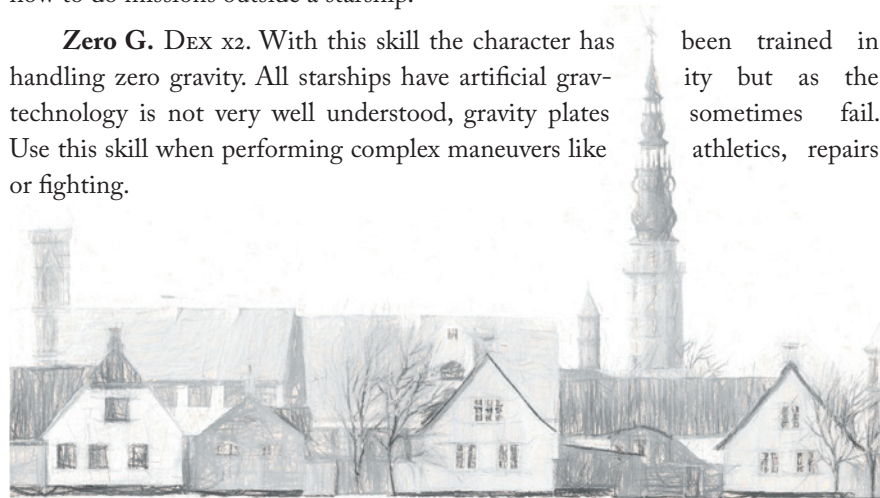
**Survival.** CON+POW. This skill covers surviving in a rural or wilderness environment where the benefits of civilization are absent: foraging, building a fire, finding shelter or a safe place to sleep. When properly equipped rolls are usually unnecessary since the character may be carrying a tent, food supplies and so on. Only when separated from their equipment or when environmental conditions turn bad does it become essential to utilise this skill. A roll is usually made once per day in such conditions.

**Teach.** INT+CHA. Teach allows the user to pass on their knowledge and techniques in an easy to understand and constructive manner. Without this skill even the most capable of masters will suffer problems instructing others.

**Track.** INT+CON. The Track skill is used for tracking game or quarry. It uses signs of passing to remain on the quarry's trail, including footprints, bruised leaves, scattered dust, displaced rocks and so on; small, tell-tale signs that are invisible to the nonskilled. Track rolls need to be made periodically, especially if conditions change abruptly (a rain shower, for example, will disturb certain signs). How often depends on how cunning the quarry has been.

**Vacc Suit.** DEX+INT. This is the knowledge on how to use a vacuum suit and how to do missions outside a starship.

**Zero G.** DEX x2. With this skill the character has been trained in handling zero gravity. All starships have artificial gravity but as the technology is not very well understood, gravity plates sometimes fail. Use this skill when performing complex maneuvers like athletics, repairs or fighting.



## Select a Culture

Culture determines the kind of society in which the character was raised, and so prescribes certain outlooks and philosophies he or she might have. More practically, culture helps augment the values of the various skills that shape your character's overall capabilities.

There are ten basic cultures. Each cultural background lists a range of Standard skills and Professional skills appropriate to it.

Distribute the 100 Culture skill points amongst the background's listed Standard skills and Professional skills, increasing each skill by 1% for every point spent on improving it. Game Masters may wish to apply a cap to how many skill points can be applied to any particular skill.

- » *All characters can distribute points on the following skills:  
Customs, Locale, Native Tongue, Drive (Automobile) or Ride.*

Then roll or pick any of the cultural backgrounds:

1d100	Culture	Skills
01-10	Nomadic	Brawn, Craft, Endurance, Stealth, Survival, Track
11-20	Colonial	Brawn, Endurance, Survival, Craft, Mechanics, Combat Style
21-30	Bureaucratic	Influence, Insight, Bureaucracy, Politics, Difference Engines
31-40	Artistic	Dance, Sing, Acting, Art, Musicianship, Language
41-50	Lawless	Deceit OR Stealth and one Combat Style. Select two from Commerce, Disguise, Forgery, Gambling, Lockpicking, Sleight and Streetwise
51-60	Academic	Culture, Language, Knowledge, Science, Teach, Willpower
61-70	Political	Insight, Oratory, Influence, Linguistics, Politics
71-80	Militaristic	Endurance, Evade, Knowledge (Strategy and Tactics), Perception, Combat Style
81-90	Manufacturing	Brawn, Commerce, Craft (any), Endurance, Engineering, Mechanics
91-00	Religious	Bureaucracy, Language, Musicianship, Oratory, Sing

### Culture Descriptions

**Nomadic.** *Nomads are not common in Europe in the 1920s. Skreeders are the Inuit keep their traditional lifestyles, however.*

**Colonial.** *On Eorthe, colonial means 'living on an exoplanet'. There are a handful of human colonies, in various stages of development. Most of them are based on farming. See more in the Worlds chapter.*

**Bureaucratic.** *With a background in a bureaucratic culture, the character knows the pragmatic footwork being done by programmers of difference engines and the systematic processing of knowledge workers.*

**Artistic.** *The artistic culture includes writers, actors, artists, musicians. But also performers like circus artists, nightclub dancers and various street artists like barrel organ players.*

**Lawless.** *With need and inequity, lawlessness soon thrives. Residing on the poor side of an Eorthe city often means being exposed to the less lawful ways of life – both as a victim and as a perpetrator.*

**Academic.** *What you cannot learn from a book is not worth knowing. In the 1920s, universities are the most important playgrounds for academics. But the self-educated dilettantes are still around with their unconventional methods.*

**Political.** *The agitators of the time are many. The Solipsists may be the loudest but the political life on Eorthe is rich and varied. And the passionate driving force of political activists are largely the same: they want to change the world for the better.*

**Militaristic.** *The military powers of 20th century Eorthe are not what they used to be. With almost endless potential real estate, the reasons for war have vanished. But there are still small cliques of militaristic thinking in towns hosting bases.*

**Manufacturing.** *The industrial age is in full swing and the factories need ever more workers. Conditions have been improved over the last decades but there is still plenty to improve upon.*

**Religious.** *Religious beliefs in Europe are mainly Krystian. But other major religions and small cults exist. With a religious background, a character will know about the various religious doctrines and traditions.*

## Select a Career

Every *Odd Soot* character starts the game having been trained in a career. The occupation he chooses may not necessarily be the one the character continues to follow as he begins his adventuring life, but it is the career he embarked on as part of the transition to adulthood and it further defines his skill development.

Each career presents a range of Standard skills appropriate to it and permits the player to pick up to three of the listed Professional skills. Distribute the 100 Career Skill points amongst the career's listed Standard skills and whichever Professional skills were selected, increasing each skill by 1% for every point spent on improving it. As with cultures a Game Master may apply a cap to how many skill points can be applied to any particular skill.

### CAREERS

#### Agent

Standard Skills: *Conceal, Deceit, Evade, Insight, Perception, Stealth; Combat Style (any)*

Professional Skills: *Culture (any), Disguise, Language (any), Pilot, Sleight, Streetwise, Survival, Track*

Agents, secret agents and spies represent organisations, nations or Circles and use whatever means available to reach their goals. They are trained in both physical skills and information retrieval. Typical employers include the Solipsists, large companies, nations and The Colloquium.

#### Artist

Standard Skills: *Customs, Insight, Influence, Locale, Perception, Native Language*

Professional Skills: *Art, Commerce, Courtesy, Craft (any), Culture (any), Knowledge (any), Language, Musicianship, Streetwise*

Artists have keen senses and sensitive minds. They always try to pick up the nuances of the present and are often among the first to detect new currents. With one foot in established society and the other in the filthy backstreets, many aspects of human existence is obvious to them.

#### Bureaucrat

Standard Skills: *Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Locale, Perception, Willpower*

Professional Skills: *Bureaucracy, Commerce, Courtesy, Difference Engines, Language (any), Knowledge (any), Oratory, Politics*

While not a very glamorous title, bureaucrats have a fascinating ability to penetrate the most complicated networks and barriers with only a slip of paper for a weapon. Their social skills are strong but they are also among the few with hands-on knowledge of difference engines.



### Colonist

The individuals emigrating to other worlds are hardy and very determined. Most have at least a bit of training in agriculture though some move on to perform other duties in their new communities. Life is often harsh and unpredictable on new colonies.

Standard Skills: *Athletics, Brawn, Drive, Endurance, Locale, Perception, Ride; Combat Style (any)*

Professional Skills: *Commerce, Craft (any), Knowledge (Agriculture), Mechanics, Navigation, Pilot, Survival, Track*

### Criminal

Criminals can devote themselves to any of a wide range of illegal activities. Kidnapping, smuggling, pick pocketing, extortion, burglary – many lucrative, but dubious, endeavours are possible. The scale of the operations differ as well as the attitude of the criminal.

Standard Skills: *Athletics, Brawn, Deceit, Evade, Insight, Perception, Stealth; Combat Style (any)*

Professional Skills: *Acting, Commerce, Disguise, Electronics, Lockpicking, Sleight, Streetwise*

### Detective

A detective investigates crime, either as a part of a police force or as a private investigator. They combine investigative skills with physical and are trained in personal combat. The law enforcement might scoff at private eyes, but in reality they rely on each other to solve crimes.

Standard Skills: *Customs, Drive, Evade, Influence, Insight, Perception, Stealth; Combat Style (any)*

Professional Skills: *Bureaucracy, Culture (any), Disguise, Knowledge (any), Research, Sleight, Streetwise*

### Dilettante

Universities are well-established in the 1920s but the idea of the independent researcher is still alive. Often self-taught, dilettantes perform scientific investigations into any areas that interest him – no matter if they are related or not. The quality of their work, however, will vary.

Standard Skills: *Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Perception*

Professional Skills: *Courtesy, Culture (any), Language (any), Knowledge (any), Research, Oratory*

### Diplomat

Diplomats represent nations and entire worlds. They build networks of contacts, identify threats and seek valuable information. While sometimes seen on fancy dinner parties, their work may just as well border on the agent's. Their role can be official or more secretive.

Standard Skills: *Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Perception*

Professional Skills: *Bureaucracy, Courtesy, Culture (any), Language (any), Knowledge (any), Oratory, Politics*

### Engineer

Engineers are trained to create complex constructions, such as bridges, buildings, ships and so on. They can also assess the stability of existing structures and make repairs if needed. With the use of difference engines their work has taken on a new level of complexity, solving what used to be impossible problems.

Standard Skills: *Brawn, Drive, Endurance, Influence, Locale, Willpower*

Professional Skills: *Commerce, Difference Engines, Craft (any), Engineering, Electronics, Gambling, Mechanics, Streetwise*

Standard Skills: *Athletics, Drive, Endurance, First Aid, Perception, Stealth, Swim; Combat Style (any)*

Professional Skills: *Astrogation, Comms, Culture (any), Medicine, Language (any), Knowledge (any), Navigation, Pilot, Sensors, Survival, Track*

Standard Skills: *Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Perception*

Professional Skills: *Bureaucracy, Culture (any), Language (any), Knowledge (any), Oratory, Politics, Research, Streetwise*

Standard Skills: *Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Perception*

Professional Skills: *Bureaucracy, Culture (any), Language (any), Knowledge (any), Oratory, Politics, Research, Streetwise*

Standard Skills: *Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Perception*

Professional Skills: *Bureaucracy, Culture (any), Language (any), Knowledge (any), Oratory, Politics, Research*

Standard Skills: *First Aid, Influence, Insight, Locale, Perception, Willpower*

Professional Skills: *Commerce, Craft (Medical Speciality), Medicine, Language (any), Knowledge (Psychology), Knowledge (any), Research, Science (Astrobiology)*

Standard Skills: *Athletics, Endurance, Locale, Perception, Willpower*

Professional Skills: *Acting, Bureaucracy, Commerce, Courtesy, Gambling, Research, Sleight, Streetwise*

## Explorer

Nothing can stop an explorer from making new discoveries. New worlds, rare flora and fauna, untrod continents, polar caps and ocean trenches – their lust for enlightenment and fame is insatiable. The combination of hardiness, scientific curiosity and tenacity give them a drive few can match. But which is greater: the desire for new knowledge or to be on the front cover of a newspaper?

## Journalist

An inquisitive mind and a sharp pencil can change the world. A journalist can write short pieces for a newspaper or spend years researching as a freelance. With many worlds to report on and even more complex events, the work of journalists has become even more important.

## Lawyer

The legal professions specialise in law – and sometimes in justice. They can handle everyday problems for businesses or affluent citizens, or take on lawsuits and felony cases. Bureaucratic and social skills are their main areas of knowledge. Not all find themselves on the right side of the law, however.

## Librarian

Like guardians of knowledge, librarians can assume the roles of both researchers and investigators of the obscure. Rumoured collections of rare titles and forgotten Luminarian book stashes have librarians travel further than ever before. However, deciphering the mad scribbles of the infected may be their greatest challenge.

## Physician

With several new intelligent species, a doctor's area of expertise has expanded. Most specialise in either humans or astrobiology, but some manage both. Despite times of change, the Hippocratic Oath still stands: *Do no harm*. And the hands-on investigative approach is well needed when dealing with The Soot.

## Player

A player specialises in games of fortune and an active lifestyle. If lucky, they can be seen at the roulette tables of luxurious hotels, but they may as well spend their time in shady bars and illegal clubs. A combination of detailed research, luck and cheating is often used. Add in a decadent lifestyle and you have a winner.

## Politician

Even though they are skilled in navigating the circles of power and the underlying mazes of bureaucracy, a politician's main battlefield are Ideas. And in a changing world ideas can be dangerous, leading organisers to persecution, violence and imprisonment. Or even death. The left clash with the right, the indigenous with the globalists – and that is before Solipsists and aliens are accounted for.

Standard Skills: *Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Willpower*

Professional Skills: *Bureaucracy, Courtesy, Customs, Knowledge (any), Musicianship, Oratory, Politics, Research*

## Priest

The most common vocations for priests are Roman, Germanic and Krystian (see chapter on Eorthe). Other religions exist too as well as considerable variations within the dominating faiths. Experienced priests may have knowledge of magic, especially Priests of Wittenberg.

Standard Skills: *Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Willpower*

Professional Skills: *Bureaucracy, Courtesy, Knowledge (any), Musicianship, Oratory, Politics, Research*

## Scientist

The scientist career includes a wide variety of specialisations: astronomer, exo-biologist, geologist and so on. The choice of knowledge skills represents their primary and secondary fields of research. Their time is spent studying the specialisation of choice, both in archives, through experiments and in the field.

Standard Skills: *Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Perception, Willpower*

Professional Skills: *Culture (any), Language (any), Knowledge (Primary), Knowledge (Secondary), Oratory, Research, Teach*

## Scholar

The scholar career includes a wide variety of specialisations: exo-anthropologist, historian, philosopher and so on. The choice of knowledge skills represents their primary and secondary fields of research. Their time is spent studying the specialisation of choice, both in archives and in the field.

Standard Skills: *Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Perception, Willpower*

Professional Skills: *Culture (any), Language (any), Knowledge (Primary), Knowledge (Secondary), Oratory, Research, Teach*

## Soldier

A soldier is trained to handle violent situations, often with additional knowledge in survival, leadership and tactics. Most will have gotten their training from doing service for a nation but some will be taught by small militias or revolutionaries. Straight-out mercenaries are uncommon, however.

Standard Skills: *Athletics, Brawn, Endurance, Evade, Unarmed; Combat Style (any)*

Professional Skills: *Craft (any), Engineering, Gambling, Knowledge (Military History), Knowledge (Strategy and Tactics), Oratory, Survival*

## Writer

Writers are often pictured at their desks. But to research their subjects, they spend considerable time in the field. No location is too distant, no forgotten story too obscure – the desire to gain first hand knowledge will more often than not drive writers far from the well-trod paths.

Standard Skills: *Customs, Deceit, Influence, Insight, Locale, Native Tongue, Perception*

Professional Skills: *Bureaucracy, Culture (any), Language (any), Knowledge (any), Oratory, Politics, Research, Streetwise*

## Bonus Skill Points

Object of Passion	Base Characteristics
A person or family	POW+CHA
An organization or group	POW+INT
A race or species	POW x2
A place	POW+INT
An object or substance	POW x2
A concept or ideal	POW+INT

As a final step, a last pool of 150 skill points are assigned to round out the character. These may be applied to any Standard skill or those Professional skills gained as part of Culture or Career. Once again a Game Master may apply a cap to how many skill points can be applied to any particular skill.

## Select Passions

Passions are used to assist players and Game Masters in deepening the nature of the character, introducing plot hooks based on a character's desire or prejudices, and helping the player to understand who his character is, what drives him, and so on.

A Passion can be for anything – a person, an organization, an ideal, even an object. Passions are typically described by a verb such as: Desire, Despise, Destroy, Espouse, Fear, Flee, Foreswear, Hate, Love, Loyalty to, Protect, Repudiate, Respect, Seek, Subvert, Torment or Uphold.

Passions are measured in the same way as skills; they are rated between 1 and 100 (or higher). A Passion can be improved in the same way as a skill, or it can be increased or decreased by the referee depending on circumstances.

- » *Beginning characters may start with up to three Passions, each based on two Characteristics, with a bonus of +40 to the first, +30 to the second and +20 to the third – the player deciding the order of importance.*

These can be tied to his culture, profession or personal foibles. For example, the character might take: Hate (Eldirerrr), Distrust (Priests); or the character might choose Loyalty (Solipsists), Destroy (The Soot) and Uphold (the Law) instead.

## USING PASSIONS

Passions are any deeply held commitment that has the capacity to influence events during play. Although they are viewed as standalone abilities (to call them skills is to do them a disservice), passions can be used thus:

- » *To augment another skill, reflecting the depth of one's feeling and how it drives action. When used in this regard the Passion adds 1/5 of its value to a skill being used, as long as the augmentation is thematically and dramatically important.*

### Sample Passions

<i>Destroy (The Soot)</i>	<i>Fear (Crisg'tu)</i>
<i>Destroy (Magic)</i>	<i>Love (Aygaan)</i>
<i>Loyalty (The Solipsists)</i>	<i>Protect (Colony)</i>
<i>Loyalty (The Colloquium)</i>	<i>Subvert (Order)</i>
<i>Loyalty (Any Species)</i>	<i>Respect (Ancestors)</i>
<i>Hate (Eldirerrr)</i>	<i>Seek (Knowledge)</i>
<i>Fear (Eldirerrr)</i>	<i>Uphold (Civilisation)</i>

### Corrupting a Passion

*Passions can under certain circumstances be Corrupted. This means they change from being intrinsically good to something egotistical. See page 52 for more information.*

- » *As an ability in its own right to drive choices, desires and emotional actions and responses. When used in this way a standard roll is made against a Passion to determine how strongly the character thinks and feels about something. If a roll is a success then the character acts in-line with what the Passion would dictate. If the roll fails then the character can act freely without feeling constrained by the Passion's drives.*
- » *To oppose other Passions – even those held by the same character. This is typically used where two Passions would conflict. For instance a personal love might dictate a course of action that would be contrary to an oath or loyalty. Here use an opposed roll between the two Passions with the more successful determining how the character acts.*
- » *As a general measure of depth of commitment, belief and loyalty to a cause. The higher the Passion's value, the more committed the character is. Characters with similar Passions can compare and contrast their ratings to determine who exhibits the deeper commitment.*
- » *To resist some form of psychological manipulation or psionic domination. In certain cases where a character is being forced into performing an act contrary to his Passions, he may use substitute his Passion for the usual Willpower in the opposed roll.*

## Equipment

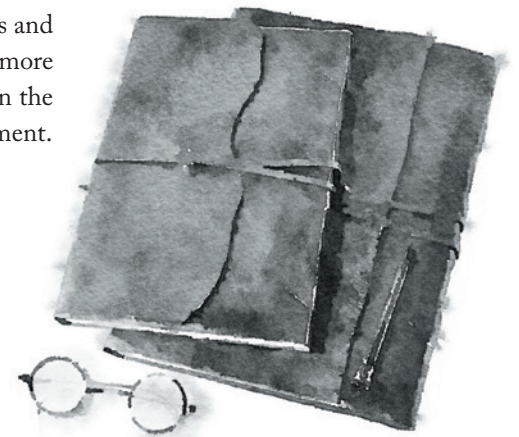
With stats, skills and a career in place, the character needs some equipment. This can include important paraphernalia used for a particular profession, weapons and everyday objects. In the course of adventure there are many chances to get more equipment, but each starting character has in his or her immediate possession the equipment listed below. See the chapter on Mechanical Arts for more equipment.

- » *1d6 x100 Doggerland Króna (see Worlds chapter for 1920s conversion rates into dollars and pounds)*
- » *Any equipment associated with the character's career*
- » *Any weapon included in a Combat Style*
- » *A plain rented room or a small dingy apartment*

### Deepening and Waning

Passions can increase during a game independently of Experience Rolls, based on the strength of whatever occurred to trigger the increase. Also Passions can, and do, wane. A strongly held belief can be shaken by many things leading to that Passion being either reduced or, in more extreme circumstances, reversed completely. For instance, a character with 'Trust Leader' might, if his leader acts treacherously, either reduce his Passion or turn into 'Distrust Leader' at the same percentage. The Game Master needs to determine if a Passion reduces or reverses. If it reduces then it does so according to the strength of the source of the change. The Deepening and Waning table shows by how much the Passion changes.

Change	Score +/-
Weak	1d10
Moderate	1d10+5
Strong	1d10+10



## Alternate Character Creation



*Dr Emil Brandt was brought up in a family of politicians. Both his parents were dedicated orators, fighting for liberal ideas. They travelled a lot and Emil was sent to a strict religious boarding school as a boy. Despite his parents' liberal ideas, their ideas of a 'good education' made them blind to the harsh conditions. On Emil's 16th birthday, he could finally move to an aunt that noticed his suffering.*

*A few happy years passed and Emil went to Glimminge University to become a physician. But four years into his studies, black markings appeared on his back. He panicked and dropped everything else, leaving two days later for Sisymbrium. A lifelong search for a cure to The Soot had begun, not even pausing to sleep.*

The following method tilts the character creation process towards social and psychological aspects in favour of skills and attributes. It also emphasises the PCs common background – *i.e.* how they came to know each other. This method is quicker than normal character creation and time spent is mostly on relationships and key moments in the characters' former life. There are no new elements (the steps are merely reshuffled) but skill choice is streamlined through Career Packages. Also note that the rules for Circles and The Soot are covered in the following two chapters.

1. **Culture.** Start by determining the character's background culture randomly (page 36). This is the upbringing of the character. Ignore the skills at this stage.
2. **Circle.** Roll randomly for two Circles (page 41). Make one of them a shared Circle for all PCs (one player makes this roll for everyone). All players must agree upon if the shared Circle is positive or negative.  
  
For each character, consider how the two Circles follow from their background culture or if any of them show indicate a break-up. If so, what happened?
3. **The Soot.** With this method, all characters start infected by The Soot and with one Peculiarity. To compensate, they get 20 more skill points. Use the character's Pow value for The Soot. Roll a 1d100 on the Peculiarity Table (page 51) and set the starting value at 10%.
4. **Character Concept.** Players come up with an 'elevator pitch' for their characters. Everyone shares this character concept with the others.
5. **Passions.** Decide upon three Passions related to: one person, any of the two Circles and one chosen freely.
6. **Career Package** (see below). Career Packages simplify the process of choosing skills with set percentages, joining Career and Cultural skills into one. It will give less variation in skills but is much quicker.
7. **Characteristics.** Specify Characteristics and Derived Attributes as normal. Use the 10 Method (page 17).



8. **Relationship Map.** The players create a Relationship Map together for the shared Circle (page 47). They also define a few facts about the Circle: What does it stand for or believe? How does it work? Where is it located? Use the rules for Circle creation in M-SPACE if you want to delve deeper.

## CAREER PACKAGES

Career Packages are a way to speed up skill selection in *Odd Soot*. Every Package has a predetermined set of skills and percentages, with the base chance added as normal by the player. A small pool of points (70%) is freely distributed by the player. No skill can go higher than 75% in character creation.

### Agent/Detective

Add 50% to Combat Style

Add 30% to Evade, Stealth, Perception, Track, Drive

Add 20% to Athletics, Insight, Influence, Streetwise, Lockpicking

The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player on other skills.

### Colonist

Add 50% to Mechanics

Add 30% to Combat Style, Drive or Ride, Brawn, Perception, Athletics

Add 20% to Knowledge (Agriculture), Track, Survival, Commerce, Locale

The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player on other skills.

### Criminal/Thief

Add 50% to Stealth

Add 30% to Perception, Sleight, Lockpicking, Combat Style, Streetwise

Add 20% to Deceit, Commerce, Electronics, Locale, Evade

The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player on other skills.

### Explorer

Add 50% to Endurance

Add 30% to Pilot, Survival, Athletics, Track, Combat Style

Add 20% to First Aid, Perception, Stealth, Drive, Navigation

The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player on other skills.

### *Creating New Career Packages*

*If you want more Career Packages to choose from, use the following formula to create them:*

*Add 50% to 1 central skill*

*Add 30% to 5 important skills*

*Add 20% to 5 more skills*

*The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player.*

### **Journalist/Writer**

Add 50% to Native Tongue

Add 30% to Influence, Research, Perception, Bureaucracy, Courtesy

Add 20% to Deceit, Streetwise, Politics, Knowledge (any), Language (any)

The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player on other skills.

### **Librarian/Scholar**

Add 50% to Research

Add 30% to Knowledge (Primary), Native Tongue, Bureaucratics, Language (any), Perception

Add 20% to Knowledge (Secondary), Oratory, Influence, Culture (any), Difference Engines

The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player on other skills.

### **Physician**

Add 50% to Medicine

Add 30% to First Aid, Research, Influence, Insight, Perception

Add 20% to Science (Astrobiology), Commerce, Knowledge (Psychology), Language (any), Courtesy

The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player on other skills.

### **Priest**

Add 50% to Influence

Add 30% to Oratory, Courtesy, Research, Native Tongue, Bureaucratics

Add 20% to Deceit, Insight, Musicianship, Oratory, Language (any)

The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player on other skills.

### **Soldier**

Add 50% to Combat Style

Add 30% to Athletics, Brawn, Evade, Endurance, Unarmed

Add 20% to Knowledge (Strategy and Tactics), Oratory, Survival, Gambling, Craft (any)

The remaining 70 points are spent freely by the player on other skills.

#### ***Opposite: Tree Urchin***

*Tree urchins hang in the lower canopies of Veran forests, letting winds carry prey into their reach. A gas bladder allows them to stay airborne without effort, using their tentacles to steady themselves if needed.*



# Circles

A CIRCLE IN *ODD SOOT* IS A GROUP OF PEOPLE. It might be a family, a religious cult, a company, an institution or anything the Game Master and players agree upon. All characters start with two Circles to help describe their background. One Circle has had a positive influence on the character, the other a negative impact.

Each Circle has a value between 0% and 100%. The values represent mutual affection and respect (for positive Circles) or dislike, fear and hatred (for negative Circles).

In scenarios, the GM uses the characters' Circles either as stumbling blocks or supporters. Members from negative Circles will never lend a helping hand and might get PCs into trouble. Members of a positive Circle are perfect sources of information and gossip, ripe for use in scenarios. They can lend the character money, vouch for their credibility in dealings with the police or relay valuable contacts.

## STARTING CIRCLES

- » *Roll or pick a Circle from the Circle Table. This is the character's positive Circle. Write it on page 2 of the character sheet and add a plus-sign to its name. It starts at  $30 + \text{CHA} + \text{POW}$ .*
- » *Use any of the Positive Traits in the table as a starting point to shape a story around the character's connection with the Circle.*
- » *Repeat the procedure for the negative Circle: roll or pick a Circle from the Circle Table. Use the Negative Traits this time. Add a minus-sign to its name. It starts at  $30 + \text{CHA} + \text{POW}$ .*

id:oo	Circle	Positive Trait	Negative Trait
01-09	Extended Family	Happy childhood. Can still get support from her family. A family member is a close friend.	Abused as a child. Pushed away by family. A family member is an enemy.
10-18	Relatives	Grew up with relatives. Can still get support from her relatives. A relative is a close friend.	Abused as a child. Pushed away by relatives. A relative is an enemy. There is an ongoing feud between relatives.
19-27	Orphanage	Happy childhood. Can still get support from her orphanage. A staff member is a close friend.	Has been mistreated (locked in, tied down, experimented on or abused). Rigorous rules and harsh punishments.
28-36	Hospital	A doctor saved the character's life. Was very well treated during long hospitalisation. Found friendship and/or love.	Has been mistreated (locked in, tied down, experimented on or abused). Unjustly hospitalised. Rigorous rules and harsh punishments.
37-45	School	A teacher took the character under their wing. Found friends for life among pupils. The character was brilliant in one subject.	A teacher hated the character. She was bullied by the other pupils. Studies failed miserably.
46-54	University	A professor took the character under their wing. Found friends for life among students. The character was brilliant in one subject.	A professor hated the character. She was bullied by the other students. Studies failed miserably.
55-63	Religious Group	Parish or order took care of the character at some point in life.	Abused, bullied, brainwashed or mistreated the character. Rigorous rules and harsh punishments.
64-72	Business	Employer took care of the character at some point in life. Helped her economically.	Abused, bullied or mistreated the character. Rigorous rules and harsh punishments. Employer hated the character.
73-81	Institution or Prison	A caretaker/guard took the character under their wing. Found friends for life among the other internees.	Innocently accused. Abused, bullied, tortured or mistreated. Rigorous rules and harsh punishments. A caretaker/guard hated the character.
82-90	Military	An officer took the character under his wing. Found friends for life among soldiers. The character was brilliant in one area of expertise.	Abused, bullied, brainwashed or mistreated. Rigorous rules and harsh punishments. An officer hated the character.
91-00	Village	Villagers, on Eorthe or a colony, took care of the character at some point in life. The village works as a refuge for the PC.	The character never got along with the villagers. She was bullied, mistreated and/or frozen out.



*Alma Winther grew up in a broken family, both her parents having trouble keeping their jobs and constantly fighting (Close Family 52%). Fortunately, Alma was spotted as a talented difference engine programmer and was awarded a grant for The University of Glimminge. A small group of eager students gathered around a good-hearted professor, giving Alma the appreciation and love she never got at home (University 52%).*

## M-SPACE Circles

*The Circles in Odd Soot can be combined with the Circle rules in M-SPACE. As they approach the subject from slightly different angles it is easy to use them alongside each other, describing different aspects of the same group. By adding Ideas, Stats and Attributes to a Circle, both the GM and players will get a clearer picture of the group's work and convictions.*

*If both rulesets are used on the same Circle, the percentage described here will replace the Rank value in M-SPACE.*

## CIRCLE DESCRIPTIONS

**Extended Family.** This Circle can include a wide group of people. Besides parents and siblings, it can also be step-parents, half-siblings, grandparents, close friends of the family or even doting neighbours. The number of individuals can vary between two and up to 20.

**Relatives.** Uncles, aunts, second and third cousins, their children and lovers – this can be a bountiful Circle with lots of variation. They can be knitted together loosely or spend considerable time in each other's company – whether they like it or not. If a family cannot take care of its children, it is common for relatives to step in.

**Orphanage.** This is technically a boarding house for children without biological parents. In the 1920s, it is also a place for children whom the parents could not provide for. This can be because of poverty, illness, maltreatment, drug abuse, mental problems and so forth. Orphanages are often started by philanthropists but their good intentions sometimes do not translate well into the daily care of the children.

**Hospital.** Some people spend considerable time in hospitals as they grow up or as young adults. They can be sent to fancy sanatoriums or end up in veritable dungeons. The reasons for hospitalisation can be many; polio, TBC, mental illness and The Soot. Or just being obstinate.

**School.** Most European children go to school in 1920s. For most of them this is nothing special. But for those who attend boarding schools or get small-scale tutoring in a closed community, it can be life changing. With luck, the other kids are the only ones trying to harm them.

**University.** Often times, universities are open-minded places of learning. The intellectual atmosphere of an eager group of students gathering around a charismatic professor is often the starting point of lifelong friendships. When the charisma and power is used for oppression and subtle bullying, the memories will be less fond.

**Religious Group.** Temples, orders, cults, parishes, charities, monasteries – small-scale religious Circles are ubiquitous in many countries and colonies. They do well-needed work and few others would take it on.

**Business.** Despite being dominated by capitalistic strife, businesses can be sanctuaries for lost souls. An empathic boss or a kind secretary may be all it takes. But the opposite is often easier to find.



**Institution or Prison.** This can be anything between a boarding school and a prison, with various reformatories trying to find a middle way between discipline, work and education. Chiefly for troublemakers but it is sometimes enough to be a free-thinker to end up here.

**Military.** Once you are in a squad, you make lifelong friends. Training is intense and the discipline and trust will create strong bonds – wars are uncommon in this day and age, however.

**Village.** This is a location-based Circle. A village, on Eorthe or a colony, can be a sanctuary, its inhabitants greeting the PC with kind and loving care. Or they can hate the character, always trying to get rid of her.

### CIRCLE VALUES

#### Positive

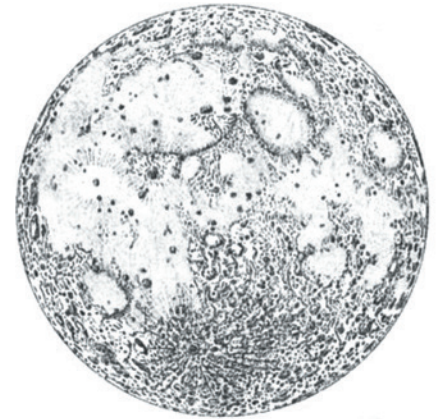
0%	Neutral.
20%	The character is a respected member of the Circle.
50%	The character is deeply cherished and always greeted with loving care. A call for help is never declined.
100%	The character is loved beyond words.

#### Negative

0%	Neutral.
20%	The character is disliked and will be met with great scepticism.
50%	The character is intensely disliked and will be attacked on sight (verbally or physically).
100%	The character is hated beyond reason.

### UPDATING A CIRCLE

Over several scenarios the relations between the character, the Circle and its members will change. To show this, the character's Circle values change (along with the member's social disposition – more on that later). The character may be celebrated for bringing down an old enemy of a Circle (Circle value increases) or draws unwanted attention from the police to the organisation (Circle value decreases). Make sure these values are updated after each scenario. Most changes will add or subtract 1d10 to the characters Circle value. The GM may allow 1d10+5 or even 1d10+10 in extreme situations.



#### The Moon

*During the 1850s and 1860s a joint venture of Eorthe nations established a permanent research station on the moon. But as The Philosophy Engine discovered unfolding devices and more distant worlds could be reached, the station was abandoned. Supplying it with air, water and food turned out to be too difficult, when friendlier planets were easy to reach.*

*Today, the 19th century steel constructions stand empty but still intact. Nothing seems to have disturbed them for 50 years and a thin layer of dust covers the interiors.*

*In 1922 a small group of Solipsists have taken an interest in the base. They heard rumours of Luminarian magic that creates air from vacuum and hopes to re-establish the station. But first they must find the spell. Two of the Solipsists have travelled to Sisymbrium to consult The Dream Library. A third member is seeking Eorthe specialists on magic, trying to coax any knowledge of the spell from them. And they will stop at nothing to achieve their goal.*

## Circles & Passions

*Many characters will have at least one Passion connected to any of their Circles. It can be fear or revenge on a negative Circle or a strong feeling of compassion and protection for a positive Circle.*

### Raise a Circle value:

- » *The character stands up for her positive Circle, even when it gets her into trouble or complicated matters.*
- » *The character acts in the interest of the positive Circle.*
- » *The character strengthens the positive Circle physically, economically or legally.*

### Lower a Circle value:

- » *The positive Circle is threatened because of the character.*
- » *The character acts against the interests of the positive Circle or criticises it in public.*
- » *The character squanders the positive Circle's resources.*

*Example: Krys Noim is an orphan thief brought up in Glimminge Rascals, a 'thief school' run by a retired master burglar. Glimminge Rascals is a +50% Circle for Krys. Most of Krys' ideas or pleas for help are graciously met. A few scenarios later, Krys has betrayed Eir, a former Rascal member. The GM judges this to be serious enough for the Circle value to be lowered to +40%.*

## GAIN A NEW CIRCLE

To gain a new positive Circle, the character must form a deep relationship with a group of people over a longer period. A new positive Circle starts at 5%.

When gaining a new negative Circle, the character has made enemies with a group. This is not because of a shallow disagreement but should be reserved for Circles that keep returning as opponents in several scenarios. The starting value depends on the situation but between -5% and -30% is common.

## REMOVE A CIRCLE

Starting Circles should be difficult to remove. They are integral parts of the character's formative years. If a Circle's value reaches zero and stays there over several scenarios, the GM and the player can dismantle it. Together they can create a new Circle that feels relevant to the character.

## Circle Details

To go into further detail, some key individuals of a Circle can be fleshed out. Circles can differ a lot from each other. But the roles to be filled are similar; a dogmatic boss and a heavy-handed father will apply the same tricks to stay in power.

To find relationships between the character and the Circle's members, roll *1d6* on the list below. That person is her closest ally in a positive Circle or worst enemy in a negative (Affectionate or Malicious on the Social Disposition Table in the sidebar). Next, roll *1d10* for a harsh critic (Unfriendly). After that, roll *1d6* for an ally (Friendly) and a last *1d10* for another enemy (Dislike). Re-roll if the same number occurs twice.

Now, add more roles – neutral individuals – from the list to finish the basic Circle structure.

**1. Leader.** The head of the Circle. A boss, cult priestess, dominant father and so on. Can be charismatic, devious, caring or a good organiser. Use sub-leaders if the Circle is big.

**2. Leader's Right Hand.** An individual close to the leader, loyal and often a hands-on doer.

**3. Counsellor.** The thinker behind the leader, physically a step behind but mentally two steps ahead. Can be a soothing peace keeper, a malicious schemer or an informal leader.

**4. Oldie.** An old hand, well acquainted with the Circle's history and past codes of conduct. Will sometimes act as a counsellor or witty rebel too.

**5. Member** (1, 2, 3...). Any average member of the Circle.

**6. Former Member.** This is a person with a history in the Circle. She can be a trusted ex-member or an outside critic.

**7. Rival.** A rival to the character, often with the same level of ability. The rivalry can be friendly or to the death.

**8. Rebel.** An individual not content with the current situation, trying her best to change the Circle (being open or covert about it).

**9. Traitor.** Someone wants to overthrow the Circle, for reasons that may be personal or overly complicated. This role may be assigned to one of the other roles.

**10. Newbie.** A novice, unexperienced in the ways of the Circle. Often easy to sway.

*Social Disposition Table*

Social Disposition	Deceit skill modifier	Influence or other modifier
Affectionate	-10%	+25%
Friendly	-5%	+15%
Amiable	o	+5%
Indifferent	o	o
Dislike	+10%	-10%
Unfriendly	+20%	-20%
Malicious	+30%	-30%

*Use this table to modify social skills when characters interact with NPCs. All social skills but Deceit use the right column; modifiers for Deceit are (mostly) inverted.*

*For important NPCs, you will probably want to keep notes on how the Social Disposition changes over time. And make sure to update it after each session, to reflect the repercussions of the character's doings.*

### Social Skills

*Standard: Deceit, Influence, Insight*

*Professional: Bureaucracy, Commerce, Courtesy, Oratory, Politics, Seduction, Streetwise, Teach*

*Supporting: Acting, Customs, Gambling, Knowledge (Psychology), Culture*

### *List of Relationships*

1. Spies on
2. Is a close friend with
3. Is jealous of
4. Always defends
5. Feels threatened by
6. Is secretly in love with
7. Dislikes
8. Shares a secret with
9. Criticises
10. Admires
11. Used to hate
12. Never talks to
13. Ignores
14. Shares everything with
15. Irritates
16. Collaborates with
17. Dotes on
18. Wants to impress on
19. Maltreats
20. Avoids

*Note: A Leader is not necessary for all Circles. Especially small Circles, like families, may not include more than a couple of roles and a Leader might not be one of them.*

For a fuller understanding of the Circle's inner logic, you can define allies and enemies of the most interesting Circle individuals using the technique described below for a Relationship Map.

## Relationship Map

Another way to approach the characters' Circles is to have everyone share a Circle. This can be a good way to explain why the characters work as a team. Maybe they all spent a semester at university together or worked for the same employer? It can be a positive or a negative Circle. With a common background it is also easier to make characters loyal to each other.

To increase the creative and emotional connection to the shared Circle, all players (including the GM) collaborate on its creation. Relationships are defined with a simple mapping technique, by drawing lines between two columns; just follow the steps below. Use the blank Relationship Map on the next page.

1. Start by adding the characters' names on the empty lines at the bottom of both columns. Cross out any roles you all agree do not fit.
2. The player to the left of the GM picks any Circle individual from the left column on the Relationship Map.
3. She rolls 1d20 on the List of Relationships and then draws a line from the individual in the left column to any of the persons in the right column. Describe the relationship on the line. For PCs, any affected player can veto a relationship they dislike. Also, keep in mind how positive and negative Circles will differ in the general sentiment towards the characters.
4. The next player to the left repeats the procedure. Continue until all players, including the GM, have added a Relationship or until the map is complex enough for your taste.
5. Look at the entire map and add or remove any relations or persons you feel make it more logical.
6. Take a moment to discuss the implications of the relationships. What do they tell you about the Circle? Any relationships that shape the Circle more than others? Are there any interesting loyalties or disloyalties showing up? Where do the characters stand in all this?

# o88 Soot

CIRCLE NAME .....

Leader .....

Right Hand .....

Counsellor .....

Oldie .....

Member .....

Former Mem .....

Rival .....

Rebel .....

Traitor .....

Newbie .....

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Leader .....

Right Hand .....

Counsellor .....

Oldie .....

Member .....

Former Mem .....

Rival .....

Rebel .....

Traitor .....

Newbie .....

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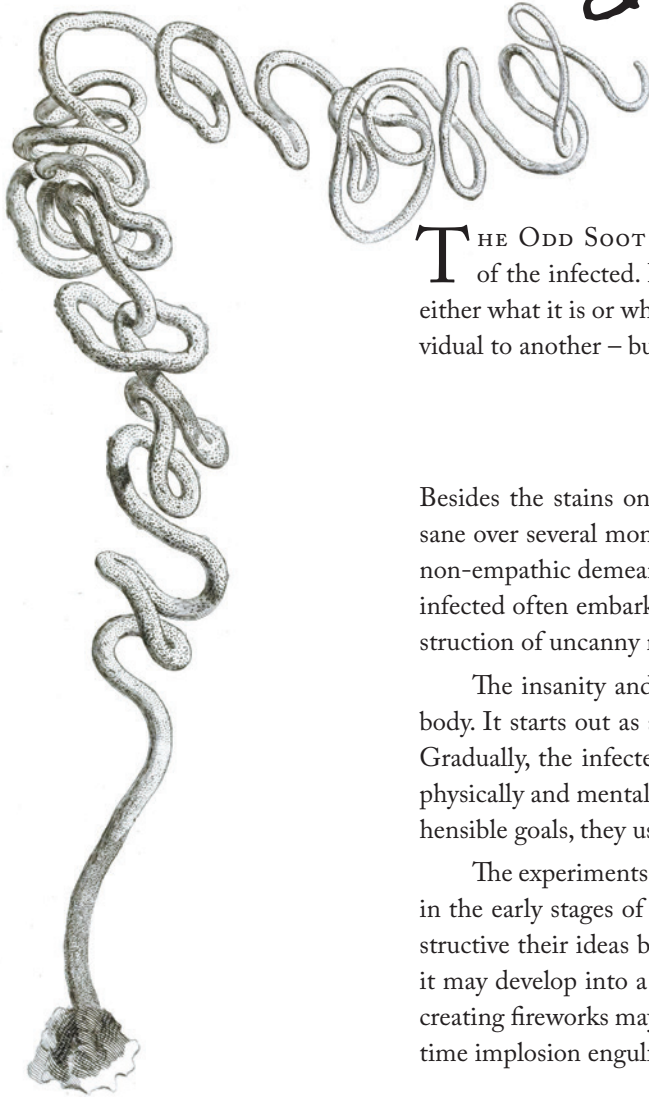
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Notes .....

# The Soot



**T**HE ODD SOOT IS A PARASITIC-LIKE disease affecting the body and mind of the infected. It is a disease unlike any other. So far, no one has explained either what it is or where it comes from. It does not seem to spread from one individual to another – but no one knows yet how it disperses.

## Symptoms

Besides the stains on the skin, like a black mould, the infected grow slowly insane over several months. Insanity can take many forms. But over time a growing non-empathic demeanour and an obsession with magic and science take over. The infected often embark on strange scientific projects. They usually involve the construction of uncanny machines, mixing magic with mechanical devices.

The insanity and non-empathic trait grow as the infection spreads over the body. It starts out as a mild nuisance, with various mental and physical ailments. Gradually, the infected degenerates into downright wickedness. Hurting people, physically and mentally, becomes second nature to them. To reach their incomprehensible goals, they use and abuse others.

The experiments conducted by the infected often start out small and innocent in the early stages of the disease. The worse they get, the more elaborate and destructive their ideas become. If it starts with dissecting a frog, a few months later it may develop into a machine built to dissect a human alive. An early interest in creating fireworks may turn into the theft of an unfolding device, to create a space-time implosion engulfing an entire city.



## The Soot In Play

In game terms, the disease is described by The Soot value and by one, or several, Peculiarities.

- » *The Soot value ranges from 0% to 100% and shows how ill the character is*
- » *Peculiarities are a mix of mental and physical problems in the initial stages of the disease. They range between 0% and 100%*

### GETTING INFECTED

The Soot is everywhere and infects souls susceptible to it. One situation in particular opens a person's psyche to infection; the act of violence and killing. At that moment, a unique link is forged between the perpetrator and the victim. When the soul of the deceased leaves the body, that link is severed, leaving the killer's soul wide open to infection.

The game models this by rolling 1d100 against Pow the first time a PC kills an intelligent life-form. If the roll is higher than Pow, nothing happens. The player simply repeats the procedure the next time he puts someone to death. If the roll is below Pow, however, The Soot has infected the character.

A newly infected PC starts with The Soot at the same value as Pow. For example, a PC with Pow 14 will start with The Soot at 14%. Following the infection, whenever the character kills someone they must roll below The Soot value to avoid getting a Pecularity or raise The Soot value. The value will change over time, depending on the character's actions, and is likely to increase as more scenarios are played.

### GAINING PECULIARITIES

As soon as the infection taints a character, they risk gaining Peculiarities when slaying someone. If the 1d100 roll is lower than The Soot, roll on the Pecularity table.

The Pecularity table determines what kind of problem The Soot causes in the character. Roll 1d100 – divide by 2 the first time (rounding up) – and note the resulting disadvantage on the character sheet. The starting value for all Peculiarities is 10%. The same procedure is repeated whenever the PC puts someone to death, with rolls between 50-100 raising a current Pecularity.



*Aeron Hummel served on the star liner Eutychos when a group of Solipsist passengers and crew members started a mutiny. When the mutineers were finally cornered in the sick bay, they asked for a parley.*

*It was a trap. The remaining Solipsists launched an all-out attack, trying to take the captain as hostage. In the final struggle, Aeron was knocked to the ground when his fingers found a dropped gun. One second later, his shaking hands fired a bullet into the chest of his opponent.*

*The player now rolls 1d100 against Pow. He rolls 12 – two points below his Pow of 14. Aeron Hummel is now infected by The Soot. His Soot value starts at 14, the same as his Pow.*

*The next time he kills, the player rolls below The Soot to see if it gets worse or if Aeron gains a Pecularity.*

## Delayed Deaths and Special Cases

*The basic rule for Soot infection is simple: kill someone and you risk being infected – or you get worse, if already infected. Many cases are clear-cut, like shooting or stabbing a person to death, pushing a fellow passenger off an aeroplane or hitting someone with a car at high speed. The effects might not be instantaneous but death is likely within minutes.*

*With bleeding, drowning and poisoning, death is often delayed, however. In these cases, the GM should estimate when death occurs. When the time arrives – if the killer is a PC – she will suffer the consequences. This means a character's Soot value or any Peculiarities can be affected several scenes later. It also means a character might leave a person bleeding, only to find out indirectly that they died later.*

*It is also important to remember that intent does not affect the in-game outcome for a killer. The Soot makes no difference between murder and manslaughter. If a PC pushes a thug down an elevator shaft by mistake, the PC performing the act will still have to face the consequences if the thug dies. If there are multiple perpetrators, all should roll to find out how the situation affects them.*

*In special cases, when the GM wishes to keep the life or death of an NPC secret, the effects on The Soot and Peculiarities follow the logic of the narrative. If, for example, the characters leave an unconscious villain to die in a burning house: the PCs making the decision should all roll to see what effects his death have on them. Even if the GM knows the villain made a secret escape at the last second. But, when they meet a few scenarios later, any new Peculiarities or increased values from that scene are reversed.*

*For more complex issues, like passive and active euthanasia, the gaming group should discuss how to handle the consequences.*

## Private Clinics Treating The Soot

*Some private clinics, or retreats, specialise in treating The Soot. They often focus on one of the treatments available and complement it with fresh air, park-like surroundings, light exercise and healthy food. In some cases, experimental procedures are tried, occasionally with tragic results.*

## Peculiarities

A Pecularity defines a disadvantage the character has gained through The Soot. It can be a wound, drug abuse, a phobia or some other shortcoming. Because of its nature, it will hinder the character in scenarios. Depending on the actions of the character, he can gain or lose Peculiarities. Their severity may increase or decrease.

Peculiarities are measured between 1-100%. They start at 10% and then increase in steps of 10%. In play, the Pecularity values are used in several ways, depending on the weakness. The value can indicate how often the Pecularity occurs or how difficult it is to withstand. It is also used as a skill penalty in many situations.

**How Often:** Roll below a Pecularity to 'activate' it. The player rolls the dice at the start of each session. If the roll is below a Pecularity, the weakness will manifest itself during the session. With more than one Pecularity, start with the highest rated. As one is activated no additional rolls are made.

**Difficulty to Withstand:** The player rolls below the Pecularity to give in to a tempting situation. The effects are determined by the GM for each scene.

Both of the methods above can be used, but one is often more suited to a specific Pecularity. For example, Fatigue is likely to come into play for a whole session, while Phobia is often connected to a situation. Drug Addiction can be used both ways.

**Skill Penalty:** Use the Pecularity value as a skill penalty in any situations the player or GM sees fit.

*Example: Aare Bork tries to search through a company archive while drunk. His Drug Addiction (Alcohol) is 20%. His Research skill is lowered by -20% this time.*



## PECULIARITY TABLE

id100	Peculiarities
01-02	Drug addiction (various). Lowered skills when using drug (by Peculiarity value). Roll below Peculiarity to activate.
03-04	Memory Loss. The character will forget details like names, addresses and dates if the GM rolls below the Peculiarity value.
05-06	Fatigue. Lowered CON by Peculiarity value and lowered Communication skills.
07-08	Corrupted Passion. This Weakness turns a previously benign Passion into something twisted and obsessive. Triggered by typical situations.
09-10	Phobia (var.). Roll below Peculiarity to activate. Add difficulty to roll if the situation is particularly demanding.
11-12	Violent. Roll below Peculiarity to activate when under pressure.
13-14	Sleepless. Mental skills lowered by Peculiarity value. After bad night falls asleep in low-activity situations – roll below Peculiarity to pass out.
15-16	Compulsive Lying. Roll below Peculiarity to activate when under pressure.
17-18	Game Addiction. Triggered in tempting situations. Also, Peculiarity value leads to: 01-33, Income halved. 34-66, In debt. 67-00, Hunted.
19-20	Cleptomania. Roll below Peculiarity to activate when tempted.
21-22	Bad Physical Health (various). Roll id20 and use the location table to determine which body part is affected. Reduce any skills affected by Peculiarity value.
23-24	Obsession. Will drop any current activity to pursue obsession. Triggered by the area of interest.
25-26	Paranoia. The character is quite sure someone is watching him, becoming unnecessarily jittery. Mental skills reduced by Peculiarity value (hard to concentrate).
27-29	Lack of Personal Hygiene. Lower social skills by Peculiarity value.
30-49	Increase The Soot value by id4+1.
50-00	Choose one current Peculiarity to increase by 10%.

*Peculiarities in Odd Soot may, at first glance, seem like simple punishments. That view is too simple, however. In fact, their purpose is to create deeper characters with both assets and flaws. And with deeper characters comes richer and more creative play.*

*Look upon Peculiarities as a chance to walk in someone else's clothes. Will the characters keep trying despite their frailties? What workarounds are necessary when their bodies and minds say no? Will the players face the challenge even when their character's weaknesses get in the way – or do they give up?*

*In the words of psychologist Amy Cuddy: 'Physical and psychological adversity shape us. Our challenges give us insights and experiences that only we have had. And [...] they are things we need to not only accept but also embrace and even see as strengths.'*

*The underlying paradox of Odd Soot is that the actions the characters perform to solve mysteries, the same actions will take them to the brink of ruin. For tragic heroes, that is the way it should be.*

## PECULIARITY DESCRIPTIONS

### Drug Addiction (various)

The character has developed an addiction to deal with the pain inside. During intoxication, all skills but communication skills are lowered by the Peculiarity. It can be activated in two ways during play. Either roll below the Peculiarity at the start of each session or roll in tempting situations (meeting a client at the pub, for example). This way, you find out if the character withstands the pressure. For tempting moments, duration of skill penalties is 1d3 scenes. Common drugs include alcohol, opiates and various alien substances.

### Memory Loss

This Peculiarity can be used in a variety of situations. Forgetting the address of a key witness, losing important evidence or, in severe cases, even the PCs own address. It gets worse under pressure but it should only be used to complicate matters, not make a mystery impossible to solve. Roll at the start of each session to determine if the Peculiarity comes into play. As the scenario unravels, the GM finds a spot for forgetfulness that generates an interesting twist.

### Fatigue

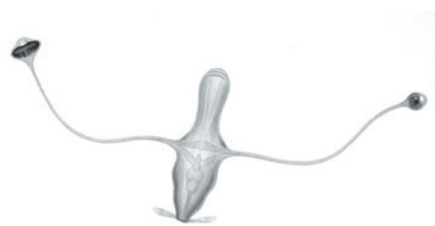
Fatigue will take away general happiness, but it will also affect social skills and stamina. In game terms, lower social skills by the Peculiarity value. The CON Conflict Pool is lowered by the Peculiarity percentage. Hit Points are unaffected.

Roll at the start of each session to figure out if skill penalties are activated.

### Corrupted Passion

This Peculiarity turns a benign Passion into something twisted and obsessive. For example, *Help the weak* may turn into *Authoritarian ideas of how the weak should live*. Or *Love and protect (Sibling)* can be twisted into *Control every step sibling takes*. *Revenge (Enemy)* gets tainted by *Revenge (Enemy): Obsessive & bloodthirsty, revenge is out of proportion*.

A Corrupted Passion is used as normal but the GM will decide when to activate it. Mark a Corrupted Passion with an asterisk on the character sheet. The Passion returns to normal if the Peculiarity disappears.



*Chatterboles attach themselves to tree trunks on Vera colony, 'speaking' to each other in chattering voices. Their eyes are located at the ends of the antennae, allowing them to look around the trunk.*

### Phobia

Many live with mild phobias with little trouble. However, when a phobia affects day-to-day life, model it with this Peculiarity. See sidebar for example phobias.

When a character faces a frightful object or situation, roll below the Peculiarity value to be affected. This results in a penalty on all skills.

### Violent

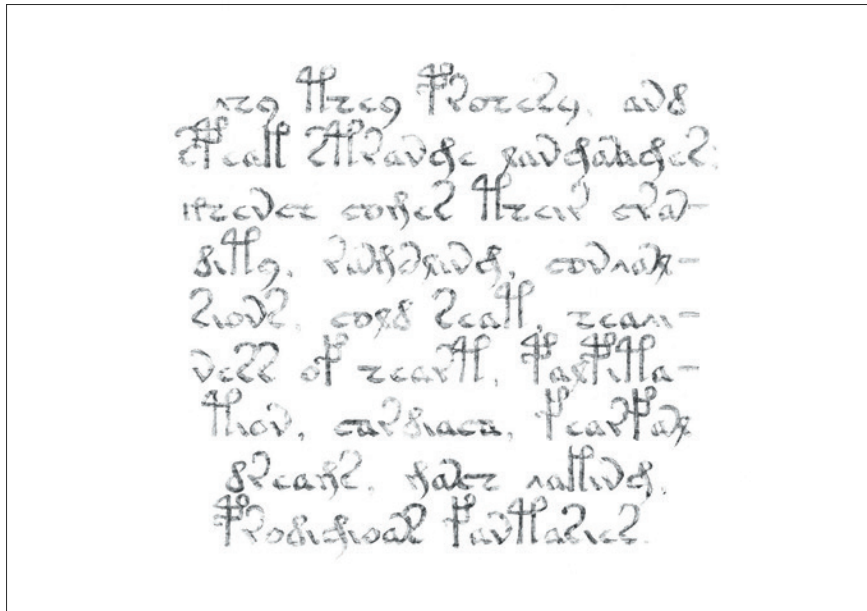
For some, violence looks like the only solution. Especially under pressure. Roll under the Peculiarity in stressful situations to check if the character turns to violence. It starts with threats and escalates into a scuffle.

### Sleepless

The gap between the character's actions and his conscience manifests itself as a deep tension. It turns nights into prolonged struggles for peace. Roll at the start of each day. If the roll is below the Peculiarity, the night was not restful. All mental skills will be lowered by the Peculiarity value. Optionally, the character falls asleep in low-activity situations – roll below Peculiarity to pass out.

### Compulsive Lying

The temptation to use lies as a solution to most problems has taken hold of the character. Roll below the Peculiarity to activate when under pressure. Ask the player to come up with a lie appropriate for the situation and (if needed) roll on a communication skill to learn if the NPC accepts it.



### Common Phobias

1. *Arachnophobia* – fear of spiders
2. *Astrophobia* – fear of outer space
3. *Ophidiophobia* – fear of snakes
4. *Acrophobia* – fear of heights
5. *Agoraphobia* – fear of open spaces
6. *Cynophobia* – fear of dogs
7. *Claustrophobia* – fear of small spaces
8. *Mysophobia* – fear of germs
9. *Aerophobia* – fear of flying
10. *Monophobia* – fear of being alone
11. *Haphephobia* – fear of being touched
12. *Entomophobia* – fear of insects
13. *Glossophobia* – fear of speaking in public
14. *Aquaphobia* – fear of water
15. *Enochlophobia* – fear of crowds
16. *Hemophobia* – fear of blood
17. *Xenophobia* – fear of the unknown & esp. aliens
18. *Pyrophobia* – fear of fire
19. *Compliphobia* – fear of travelling by unfolding
20. *Nyctophobia* – fear of the dark

*An excerpt from a partly destroyed Lumian text assumed to describe the effects of the Soot:*

*'Why they prophesy, and speak strange languages; whyence comes their crudity, rumbling, convulsions, cold sweat, heaviness of heart, palpitation, cardiac, fearful dreams, much waking, prodigious fantasies.'*

*Discovered in 1914, kept in a private collection in Doggerland.*



### Locations for Bad Physical Health

**01-06 Leg:** One of the character's legs hurt and/or feels stiff. The cause might be an old accident, a badly healed wound or a more indeterminate cause. At 20% and more, the character walks with a noticeable limp. Affected skills: all physical skills.

**07-09 Abdomen:** The character has trouble with intestines and bowel movements, often experiencing pain. He is likely to be sensitive to certain types of food. Affected skills: all skills in stressful situations.

**10-12 Chest:** Roll 1d6 to determine if the character is troubled by his heart (1-2), lungs (3-4) or back pain (5-6). Heart: Experiences chest pain or the heart beats irregularly at times. Lungs: Experiences a shortage of breath or asthma. Back pain: The character has trouble moving freely because of back pains. Affected skills: all physical skills.

**13-18 Arms:** The character experiences trouble when using any of the arms, hands or fingers. It manifests as pain, stiffness or numbness. Affected skills: any skills related to fine maneuvering of the hands/fingers (Lockpicking, Mechanics and Electronics for example) or with using the arms (lifting, fighting and swimming).

**19-20 Head:** Head-related health issues can manifest as pain (1-2), dizziness (3-4) or in any of the sense organs (5-6: eyes, ears, mouth, nose). Problems with the mouth might be bad teeth, ears a sensitivity to loud noises, eyes; a sensitivity for bright light or a lack of night vision). Affected skills: pain will affect all mental skills and dizziness affects all physical skills. For sense organs, use common sense.

### Common Obsessions

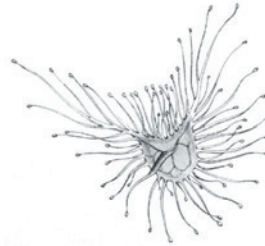
- |                   |              |
|-------------------|--------------|
| 1. Books          | 6. Food      |
| 2. Insects        | 7. Garbage   |
| 3. Electricity    | 8. Engines   |
| 4. Rats           | 9. Germs     |
| 5. Alien Cultures | 10. Religion |

### Game Addiction

The character cannot withstand gambling in any form. Roll below the Peculiarity to be triggered in a tempting situation. The value of the Peculiarity also has the following consequences: 01-33 Wealth halved, 34-66 Indebted, 67-00 Hunted.

### Cleptomania

Once you have started, it is hard to stop. Pocketing small objects here and there becomes irresistible even if it means getting into trouble. Roll below the Peculiarity to trigger in a tempting situation, for example in a posh store, an upmarket home or a museum. If the character has any thievery skills, use them. Otherwise, let the player try to set up a beneficial situation.



### Bad Physical Health (various)

Roll a 1d20 on the location table in the sidebar on the previous page to determine a troublesome body part for the character. It can be an aching leg, migraine, back pains and so forth. To trigger, roll below the Peculiarity at the start of each session or in-game day. This will cause lowered skills (by the Peculiarity value) related to that specific body part – see sidebar on what skill groups are affected.

### Obsession

The character is so obsessed with something that he drops everything else to pursue his area of interest. It can be a person, an idea, a natural phenomenon – or just about anything. The object of interest triggers it. Roll below the Peculiarity to activate, with the character dropping anything he is doing.

### Paranoia

With utmost certainty, the character claims he is watched and followed. It can be direct or indirect: a person acting suspiciously, signs left by the watcher or mechanical devices being used. Roll below the Peculiarity to activate, either at the start of a session or at the start of an in-game day. Lower all mental skills by the Peculiarity value.



## Lack of Personal Hygiene

The character finds it difficult, or irrelevant, to take care of his personal hygiene. This results in unkept clothes, bad breath and an unpleasant smell. All social skills are lowered by the Peculiarity value.

## DEFY A PECULIARITY

A character can, at any time, ignore a Peculiarity. It comes at a cost however: the Peculiarity value is increased by 20% for a full day afterwards. If a PC needs to Defy it again that following day, they must make a Willpower roll. With each successive try the difficulty grade increases by one step until the character gives in to the Peculiarity. After that it is restored to its normal value.

*Example: Kry's Noim rolls below his Game Addiction 30% when tempted to take part in a game of poker. Normally, this would mean he joins the game. But this time, he is shadowing a villain and cannot afford to lose sight of her. Kry's player defies the Peculiarity. Kry follows the villain out on the street and the GM notes that Game Addict will be at 50% (30+20) the following day.*

*He ends up in a similar situation the day after and now needs a Willpower roll to Defy the 50%. With a Willpower of 40%, he rolls 15. He succeeds to ignore the Peculiarity yet again. The Peculiarity value will be 50+20 the following day and in the next tempting situation, his Willpower roll will be Hard.*

## LOSING A PECULIARITY

Peculiarities can be cured with some hard work by the character. Most can be treated by combining medical and psychological aid.

Roll over the Peculiarity for the treatment to work if professional help by a doctor or psychologist is available. The player can roll once every month. Reduce the Peculiarity by -10% if two months in a row are successful. Cost: 100 Króna a month.

## Infected NPCs

The Soot affects NPCs in much the same way as PCs, but can grow even worse. The GM takes control of a character when The Soot reaches 100%. For NPCs, that is just the beginning. Their symptoms can be divided into five phases.

*Opposite: The flutterlings attach themselves to the trunks of the tree-like plants on Vera colony.*



*With the looks of a distinguished citizen, Aare Bork skillfully hides his past as a mistreated child growing up in a terrifying orphanage in Sandhamar. His first employment, aged 13, gave him a new chance to experience kindness and loving care by the owners of a small bookshop.*

## *Peculiarities for NPCs*

*Any recently infected NPCs will struggle with the same Peculiarities as the Player Characters (but see the list on next page for a range of unique Peculiarities for NPCs). As long as an NPC is in Phase 1 of the disease, the GM should assign one or more Peculiarities to it.*

*The exact values of their Soot or Peculiarities depend on what type of NPC it is and what role it plays in the story. For those that are newly infected, a Soot of 20% and a single Pecularity at 10-30% is adequate. An NPC that is close to Phase 2 insanity, a Soot of 90% and two or three Peculiarities at 60-90% are likely.*

## *Communications of the Infected*

*To call the communications of the infected a language is a bit misleading. They do, after all, continue speaking their original language. But they also start using another lingo as they are infected, mostly when writing and in communications over long distances. Some linguists refer to it as a language. Others would rather call it a code – a code still not deciphered.*

*The Wittenberg Priest and renowned linguist Leonie Reiher has suggested that the communications are multi-dimensional. In other words, we only see part of the messages. She likens our situation with a one-dimensional creature that tries to read our two-dimensional text. They would have to read the text by only seeing a thin sliver at the bottom of each letter. You can try it yourself by putting a ruler over a line of text, leaving only the last 0.5 millimetres visible. Understanding a text from such incomplete data is impossible.*

*Leonie Reiher admits that she has no evidence to support her theories. She also finds it hard to imagine that the scribbles of an infected stretch into unseen dimensions – or that the weird Morse-like signals they send contain information hidden from our sensors. But so far, it seems to be the least problematic explanation for this unsolved enigma.*

## THE FIVE PHASES

**Phase 1.** The first symptoms are a small cluster of coal-black stains on the skin, mouldy to the touch, often starting on the back. New stains slowly appear close to the first ones, then spreading to other areas of the body. Various mental and physical effects are common during this stage. All infected PCs belong to this Phase. When a character's value for The Soot reaches 100%, it enters Phase 2 and the character sheet is handed over to the GM. The player is no longer in charge of the character and starts with a new one.

**Phase 2.** At some point, when The Soot appears in several places on the body, it affects the mind in a very distinct way. This stage is often difficult for the infected. It involves daily mental struggles to keep the influence of the disease from their mind. They can hear voices and internal struggles over decisions are common. An unhealthy interest in science and magic appears, involving strange experiments. Their personality swings towards a non-empathic demeanour.

The mouldy stains change the skin structure, resembling putrid blisters and rotting flesh.

**Phase 3.** In the third stage, The Soot takes over most of the decisions of the infected. They no longer fight the ideas seeping into their brains and morph into non-empathic beings focused on strange experiments and building ghastly contraptions. As a result they often wreak havoc on their surroundings. At this stage few succeed in hiding their physical and mental changes. The foul stains on the skin cover up to half the body and the skin on the back is often a frightful mess of blisters and mouldy craters.

**Phase 4.** The original personality is now almost gone and an evil schemer has taken its place. The infected is now a mastermind of strange physics, doing anything to reach its incomprehensible goals. People standing in their way are unimportant and must be eliminated. At this stage it is common that a small following of infected will join to perform some dirty work.

**Phase 5.** In the end, an infected body decays into a living heap of Soot. The original structural integrity of the body dissolves and there is nothing left but black, mouldy flesh, unable to move. Unfortunately it is still alive – at least for a while.

## The Infected & Society

Society's view of The Soot does not differ much from regular mental illnesses. As long as it only affects the skin, standard treatments are recommended (see below). Patients are also informed that there will be some psychological effects. Hospitalisation may be required at that point. This often means an asylum but a few private 'retreats' will accept Soot patients too.

In general, society does not treat the Soot as a threat. People might express concern about being infected but no more than for other diseases. Professionals, like doctors and medical researchers, look upon the infection as a major challenge. It is yet another puzzle to solve. They note the terrible effects of the infection and will discuss how to protect people from the disease but they have yet to identify it as a threat to society. Stories of secret communications and collaboration between the infected will be brushed away as a conspiracy theory. Some infected are mad but there is no higher purpose to their actions, the thinking goes.

## Medical Treatments

The following Soot treatments can be found in various degrees on Eorthe and other planets.

**Alternative Medicine.** A combination of several treatments are used. Moxa: Glowing embers held at specific points on the body strengthens the patient. Poultice: Consisting of oats, *Vaccinium myrtillus* and some other herbs are used to remove heat. Trance: Used to weaken the disease's grip on the mind. These treatments, if kept up regularly, can keep The Soot from getting worse over a period of a few months, up to a year. It requires a gifted shaman or healer. The treatment is not generally known, nor scientifically accepted.

**Modern Medicine.** Doctors have tried a flurry of treatments. Some doctors favour certain experimental procedures but actual results are weak or non-existent.

- » *Electricity: An inductorium is used to re-route the nervous system's signals to avoid the mental effects.*
- » *Cold baths: Used to remove heat from the skin and stop the disease from spreading.*
- » *Surgery: Surgical removal of the tainted skin.*

### *Special Peculiarities for NPCs*

*For NPCs that need a little extra something the Peculiarities below might provide inspiration.*

*01-12 Glassman: The infected has an overwhelming feeling of fragility, as if her body was made of glass. She cannot shake hands, is terrified of stumbling and any travels are undertaken in a box with a soft lining.*

*13-24 Wolfman: The infected is convinced she is partly wolf – only in her mind, however. No shape-changing is taking place. They will start roaming the woods during the night, take on a wild and ferocious behaviour and prefer raw meat.*

*25-35 Hunger: Plagued by a ravenous hunger, the infected is constantly looking for food. Sifting through garbage cans or stealing will soon become second nature to them.*

*36-47 Hypochondria: No disease is too rare, no symptom too strange. The infected is so sure she has caught any and all diseases. The conviction is so strong that some of the milder symptoms actually start to appear.*

*48-59 Split Personality: Cases with as many as five different personalities occupying the same person have been documented. During hypnosis it is often possible for the infected to switch personality on command. The personalities act independently of each other, not sharing memories, for example.*

*60-72 Always On: Any of the spells in the Magic chapter is constantly active, without costing Power Points. It comes with limitations, however. The spell can be uncontrollable, erratic, harmful for the infected or activated only under certain circumstances.*

*73-85 Fugue (Ambulatory Automatism): The infected is stricken by an irresistible urge to travel. Despite being undertaken in an amnesiac state, the traveller can cross entire continents or worlds before snapping out of it, wondering how they got there.*

*86-00 Amnesia: The infected suffer from periods of complete amnesia, forgetting who they are, where they came from and what they are doing.*

*Some will suffer the above delusional effects constantly (often trying to keep them secret and possibly seeking help from a doctor), while others are affected for periods, feeling completely normal in between.*

### *Luminarian Treatments*

*The Luminarians seem to have taken a broad approach to solve the problem with The Soot. Both high- and low-tech cures were investigated and traces of them can be found among the rest of the species in Comae Space (mainly surgical procedures and herbal remedies).*

*However, when Luminarian source texts are translated, very little research on cures can be found. Texts describing The Soot in detail are plentiful, as well as how it affects different species, but actual advice on how to tackle it is rare.*

- » *Phage therapy: Bacteriophages are injected in the tainted areas.*
- » *Sulfanoids: Patients swallow a powder containing sulfanoids. Developed by Gerhard Domagk.*
- » *Freezing: Full-body freezing in ice chambers.*
- » *Drugs: Drugstores sell plenty of drugs under various fanciful names. All of them promise miracles (Sootazyme, Dr Miller's Skin Purifier, Stainless Drops, Volterrium to name a few). They often contain opiates, Bromium and a mixture of herbs.*

None of these treatments affect The Soot in game terms. Patients might experience a placebo effect, however.

**Aygaan Medicine.** Aygaan treatment can stop the spread of the infection for a few months with a hypnosis-like treatment. Has not been tried on non-Aygaans.

**Nuveri Medicine.** The Nuveri is the only known species that can be cured of The Soot if the infection is discovered early. However, it comes at such a high mental cost that it is a very rare treatment (see more in the chapter on Denizens). Instead, the Nuveri rely on an assortment of water/algae therapies – to little effect. The procedures consist of various cold and hot baths, combined with algae poultices applied on the infected skin. It has no effect on game values but might work as a placebo.

**Eldirerrr Medicine.** The Eldirerrr experiment both on their own species and others. It can be criminals, war prisoners or political prisoners. Eldirerrr medical scientists are most fond of surgery and transplants. Recent reports point out inter-species transplants as the best path. This has led to several expeditions to find new cellular tissues on exotic worlds. No sane person will try this treatment willingly.

**Sumsum Medicine.** Unknown. There has been speculation about the touch-empathic powers of the Sumsum to have potential. So far no trials have been made outside the secretive Sumsum society.

**Other.** There is a small animal called Healo, rumoured to live somewhere in Comae Space, that has a remarkable healing effect on normal wounds. Unconfirmed stories tell that if a specimen can be tamed and kept as a pet, it will secrete a substance that halts The Soot for longer periods of time. Regular healing is said to be doubled. The source of these stories is unknown.

*Opposite: Glimminge at dawn. The Temple of Odin towers above the rest of the city, while the chimneys spew smoke at the end of the nightshift.*





## CHARACTER CREATION EXAMPLE

*These two pages show the creation of a Player Character, step-by-step, starting with the concept.*

### Concept

*After some discussions with the GM and the other players, we have decided to go with a medical character. A trained physician, specialised in alien physiology, with a calling to eradicate The Soot.*

### Characteristics

*By looking at the skills, we see that a doctor needs high INT and DEX (for Medicine and Knowledge skills, for example). We choose the 10-Method to distribute characteristic points. Thus, all characteristics start at 10 and we have 10 more points to divide among them. We add 4 to INT, 2 to DEX and 1 each to CON, POW, CHA and SIZ.*

### Attributes

*The various Attributes are calculated from the characteristics. Most of them are located on page two of the character sheet. To determine Hit Points, we add CON and SIZ together: 22. Then, if we want to use Hit Locations, we cross-check the table on page 18: Leg 5, Abdomen 6, Chest 7, Arm 4 and Head 5. Without Hit Locations, we simply divide Con + Siz with two, rounding up.*

*From his POW 11, our character gets 2 Luck Points and 11 Power Points.*

*Like all PCs, our investigator has 2 Action Points. Initiative Bonus is the average of INT and DEX: 13. For the Damage Modifier, we add STR and SIZ (21) and cross-check the table on page 19 to get zero.*

*The Movement Rate for humans is 6 metres. The Healing Rate for CON 11 is 2.*

*Finally, the Experience Modifier is zero, based on a CHA of 11.*

*We have also come up with a name: Adrian Riber. We set his age to 26 and his homeworld to Eorthe.*

### Standard Skills

*We go down the list of Standard Skills on the character sheet, adding up the characteristics for each skill to get its base value.*

*For example, Dr Riber gets Athletics 22% (STR+DEX), First Aid 26% (INT+DEX) and Swim 21% (STR+CON). We will raise some of them later with skill points.*

### Culture

*Time to determine the background of our PC. We flip to page 29 and roll 1d100 on the Culture table. We get 21 - a bureaucratic background. Perhaps one of his parents worked as bureaucrat. This means we can add 100 points to any of the following skills:*

*Customs, Locale, Native Tongue (Doogle), Drive (Automobile)*

*Influence, Insight, Bureaucracy, Politics, Difference Engines*

*After some consideration, we add 30 to Influence (for good bedside manners), 20 to Customs (to reflect his work in various levels of society), 15 to Insight (a by-product of his social aptitude), 15 to Native Tongue (for keeping medical records) and 20 to Difference Engines (as a nice twist).*

*STR 10, CON 11, SIZ 11, DEX 12, INT 14,  
POW 11, CHA 11*

*Luck Points 2, Power Points 11*

*Action Points 2*

*Initiative Bonus 13*

*Damage Modifier -*

*Movement Rate 6 metres*

*Healing Rate 2*

*Experience Modifier -*

*Customs 48%, Difference Engines 48%, Influ-  
ence 52%, Insight 40%, Native Tongue 80%.*



## Career

After background, we continue to Career. We decided to go with a doctor already at the concept stage, so we flick to the right page to distribute another 100 skill points.

To simplify skill choice, we add a small asterisk on the character sheet to the skills listed for Physicians:

Standard Skills: First Aid, Influence, Insight, Locale, Perception, Willpower

Professional Skills: Commerce, Craft (Medical Speciality), Medicine, Language (any), Knowledge (Psychology), Knowledge (any), Research, Science (Astrobiology)

## Bonus Skill Points

We have arrived at the final 150 skill points. They allow us to put a personal touch to the character.

We go through the skill section to make sure that we are happy with it. Then, we move on to Passions.

## Passions

Adrian Riber feels strongly about *The Soot*. We give him *Stop The Soot* as his primary Passion. To get the value, we add INT and POW to 40. We write *Stop The Soot* 65% on the second page of the character sheet.

Next, we give him *Help the Wounded and Sick* at 55%. As we cannot think of a third Passion right now, the GM allows us to come up with it later, when we know our PC better.

## Equipment

Here, we start by rolling 1d6 x100 for Wealth. We get 1, leaving us with only 100 Króna. Perhaps the Dr Riber's strong focus on *The Soot* has driven him to economic ruin?

Otherwise, he owns a doctor's bag with common instruments and a good suit. He lives in a small rented room in central Glimminge.

## Circles

To find out more about the character's background, we turn to page 43 in the Circles chapter. First, we roll 1d100 for the positive Circle: 97, Village. To find out the value, we add 30 to POW and CHA. We write '[+] Village 52%' on page two of the sheet. The GM promises to look up a suitable village name later.

This will also work as the shared Circle for the entire group of players. We ponder how the village fits with the PCs overall background. Did he grow up there? Or did he spend time there on summer leaves with kind relatives?

A second d100 roll gives us the negative Circle: 76, Institution or Prison. Interesting result! We speculate that Dr Riber may have spent time in a correctional institute a couple of years ago. Perhaps after protecting a friend in a fight with more force than necessary or because an experimental treatment of *The Soot* went horribly wrong? We go for the latter. We add '[-] Institution 52%' below the positive Circle.

The Relationship Map will have to wait until the entire group is gathered. Other than that, the character is now finished!

First Aid 41%, Language (Menaryan) 35%,  
Medicine 45%, Perception 45%, Research 45%,  
Science (Astrobiology) 43%

Medicine to 75% and Science (Astrobiology) to 63%. For personal safety, we give him 20 points in Unarmed (from boxing classes at university). We bring up Language (Menaryan) to 55%, Willpower to 42% and Knowledge (Alien Cultures) to 48%. Finally, we bring up Endurance to 32% and Evade to 34%..

*Stop The Soot* 65%, *Help the Wounded and Sick* at 55%

Wealth: 100 Króna. Equipment: Doctor's Bag, Good Suit, Rented Room.

[+] Village 52%

[-] Institution or Prison 52%

The elevator pitch for the character sounds like this: Adrian Riber is an ambitious young doctor, with a background in [small village in Doggerland], to where he still returns from time-to-time. His main focus is in *The Soot* and how to cure the disease, researching alien physiology for clues. Three years ago he was sentenced to 12 months in a correctional institute for unethical research. Now, he is getting by on temporary jobs in Glimminge, his reputation barring him from employment, research and teaching.'

# 088 Soot

Name *Adrian Riber* STR *10* ..... The Soot  
 Player ..... CON *11* .....  
 Culture *Bureaucratic* SIZ *11* ..... Peculiarities  
 Career *Physician* DEX *12* .....  
 INT *14* .....  
 POW *11* .....  
 CHA *11* ..... *2* Luck Points

Standard	%	Professional	%	Professional	%
Athletics STR+DEX	24	Acting CHA x2		Lockpicking DEX x2	
Boating STR+CON	21	Acrobatics STR+DEX		Mechanics DEX+INT	
Brawn STR+SIZ	21	Art POW+CHA		Medicine INT+POW	75
Conceal DEX+POW	23	Astrogation INT x2		Musicianship DEX+CHA	
Customs INT x2 +40	48	Bureaucracy INT x2		Navigation INT+POW	
Dance DEX+CHA	23	Commerce POW+CHA		Oratory POW+CHA	
Deceit INT+CHA	25	Comms INT x2		Pilot DEX+INT	
Drive DEX+POW	23	Courtesy INT+CHA		Politics INT+CHA	
Endurance CON x2	32	Craft DEX+INT		Research INT+POW	45
Evade DEX x2	34	Culture INT x2		Science INT x2	
First Aid DEX+INT	41	<i>Luminarian</i>		<i>Magic</i>	
Influence CHA x2	52	Demolitions INT+POW		<i>Astrobiology</i>	63
Insight INT+POW	40	Difference Engines INT x2	48	Seamanship INT+CON	
Locale INT x2	28	Disguise INT+CHA		Seduction INT+CHA	
Native Tongue INT+CHA+40	80	Electronics DEX+INT		Sensors INT+POW	
Perception INT+POW	45	Engineering INT x2		Sleight DEX+CHA	
Ride DEX+POW	23	Forgery DEX+INT		Streetwise POW+CHA	
Sing POW+CHA	22	Gambling INT+POW		Survival CON+POW	
Stealth DEX+INT	26	Knowledge INT x2		Teach INT+CHA	
Swim STR+CON	21	<i>Alien Cultures</i>	42	Track INT+CON	
Willpower POW x2	42	Language INT+CHA		Vacc Suit DEX+INT	
		<i>Menaryan</i>	55	Zero G DEX x2	

# 088 Soot

**Combat Style** STR+DEX

*Boxing (1d4) 42%*

.....  
 .....  
 .....

Action Points *2*

Damage Modifier *-*

Healing Rate *2*

Initiative *13*

Movement *6m*

Unarmed STR+DEX *42%*

**Locations**

**Hit Points**

01-03 R Leg ..... *5*

04-06 L Leg ..... *5*

07-09 Abd ..... *6*

10-12 Chest ..... *7*

13-15 R Arm ..... *4*

16-18 L Arm ..... *4*

19-20 Head ..... *5*

.....

Power Points ..... *11*

**Circles**

*{+} Village 52%*

*{-} Institution or Prison 52%*

.....  
 .....  
 .....  
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**Passions**

*Stop the Soot 65%*

*Help the Wounded 55%*

.....  
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 .....

**Magic**

.....  
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 .....  
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 .....



**Equipment**

*Doctor's bag w. common instruments*

*Good suit*

.....  
 .....  
 .....

Wealth ..... *100 Kr.*

.....  
 .....

Homeworld ..... *Earth*

Age ..... *26*

Exp Modifier ..... *-*

# Game System

PART OF THE FUN AND DRAMA OF ODD SOOT comes in making a roll against a skill to see if success or failure is the outcome. It can be tempting to call for skill rolls for each and every challenge but there are some cases where rolls are not needed. However, when the action becomes dramatic or extraordinary, players and the Game Master should roll dice for the resolution. It is usually obvious when a skill roll is necessary, but if in doubt, consider the consequences of failure: are they crucial to the plot? Does the chance of failure heighten tension and make for an exciting possibility? Will a failure add fun to the game? If the answer is Yes to any of these, then have the character make a skill roll.

## How Do I Succeed?

The most important question in a roleplaying game is 'Do I succeed or do I fail?' Next is 'How well did I succeed or fail?' *Odd Soot* provides an easy-to-understand system to measure these chances, using dice rolls to determine whether an action succeeds or fails. Some skills (especially combat skills) are inherently dramatic and dangerous, and are always rolled for.

Whenever a character is called upon to resolve some form of test, challenge or professional ability, *idroo* is rolled and the result compared with the skill's value:

- » *Equal to, or less than, the skill indicates a success. If the roll was equal or less than one tenth of the skill (rounded up) it is extra successful – a critical success*
- » *Greater than the skill's value indicates a failure. If the roll was 99 or 00 (or only 00 if the skill exceeds 100%), then the result is a fumble*



*Breathing apparatus for low-oxygen environments.*

Criticals and Fumbles represent spectacular successes and failures; those cases where a character has either excelled in his attempt or failed miserably and utterly. There are certain special cases concerning success and failure that should be noted.

- » *Any roll of 01-05 is always a success*
- » *Any roll of 96-00 is always a failure, irrespective of how high the skill's value*

### MODIFYING SKILLS

There are some occasions where a skill roll is required but the chances of success need to be adjusted to reflect particular conditions. Fleeing bandits, for instance, might require an Athletics roll. A wide variety of conditions such as weather, equipment or distractions can affect the difficulty of the roll, using a series of grades to determine how it is modified. These are listed in the sidebar.

Where a character is already suffering a penalty from other circumstances the hardest difficulty grade takes precedence.

What sort of modification is required for any particular skill or context is ultimately up to the Game Master to decide; according to the capabilities of the characters, his perception of the difficulty of the situation and the dramatic tension at that particular moment.

The chances for rolling a critical success or fumble are likewise adjusted after the effect of a difficulty grade has been applied. For instance a character with Pilot (Aeroplane) 65% would normally gain a critical success with an 07 or lower, but this would be reduced to 05 if suffering a difficulty grade of *Hard*.

### REATTEMPTING SKILLS

In some situations a character will fail a skill attempt but be left in a situation where he could potentially try again. Example cases might be picking a lock or attempting to climb a sheer wall. Instead of simply denying any further attempts, kindly Game Masters may permit a follow-up, last-ditch attempt. However, the character will suffer some trepidation or lack of confidence which increases the difficulty of the skill roll by one grade.

If this second effort also ends in failure, the character is assumed to have given it his 'best shot' and cannot make any further attempts for the foreseeable future.

Difficulty	Skill Modifier
Automatic	No need to roll
Very Easy	Double the skill value
Easy	Add half again to the skill value
Standard	No adjustment
Hard	Reduce the skill value by one third
Formidable	Reduce the skill value by half
Herculean	Reduce the skill value to one fifth
Hopeless	No attempt can be made

#### *Simplified Difficulty Grade Table*

*Whilst difficulty grades are designed to scale with character skill, some Game Masters may find applying penalties results in the slowing down of their game. As an alternative the following option is provided:*

Difficulty	Skill Modifier
Very Easy	+40%
Easy	+20%
Standard	None
Hard	-20%
Formidable	-40%
Herculean	-80%

Activity	Opposing Skill Examples
Bargaining/ Haggling	Commerce vs Commerce or Influence vs Commerce
Chasing/Racing	Athletics vs Athletics, Athletics vs Endurance or Drive vs Drive
Deceiving	Deceit vs Insight or Sleight vs Perception
Getting out of the Way	Evade vs Athletics or Evade vs Drive
Hiding or Sneaking	Stealth vs Perception or Stealth vs Track
Pulling Rank	Influence vs Willpower or Deceit vs Willpower
Swaying a Crowd	Oratory vs Willpower
Test of Strength	Brawn vs Brawn or Brawn vs Endurance
Test of Wills	Willpower vs Willpower or Seduction vs Willpower

### Augmenting Skills

It is possible for one skill to aid another. This is called Augmenting. The following rules apply:

Characters can only augment the primary skill with a single other skill.

An augmenting skill increases the value of the primary skill by twice its Critical range (ie, 20% of the skill).

Characters can augment other character's skills to assist them. All the above rules apply, so a character being aided cannot augment himself in addition. Likewise a character can only contribute one of his skills to assist another. So, for example, trying to scale a high wall, a character could have his Athletics skill augmented by a companion's Brawn (representing a hitch-up).

## OPPOSED ROLLS

Characters frequently find themselves pitting their skill against others. Examples of times where skills are matched against each other might be Stealth versus Perception when a thief attempts to cut a nobleman's purse; or Endurance versus the Potency of a Poison if the same thief is bitten by the snake within. These are known as Opposed Rolls and are used where a challenge will result in either win or lose, pass or fail.

An Opposed Roll is determined thus: both participants roll their respective skills. The winner is the one who gains the better level of success. If the participants score the same level of success (a standard success each, or a critical each), then the winner is the one who has the highest dice roll still within the success range of their skill.

If both participants fail in an Opposed Roll then either:

- » Describe the situation, leaving both sides hanging in dramatic tension, then re-roll the contest to establish a winner
- » Produce some explanation or circumstances that suit the mutual nature of the failure

## EXTENDED CONFLICTS

An optional use of opposed rolls in *Odd Soot* is in Extended Conflicts. Here, several opposed rolls are used and the winner of each roll deals damage to a Conflict Pool derived from characteristics, similar to the way hit points are used in combat. A bargaining situation can, for example, use CHA as a Conflict Pool. As one person's Pool reaches zero, that part has lost the argument. This way, almost any type of conflict can be run in a more detailed manner. See more in the chapter Extended Conflicts on page 72.

## DIFFERENTIAL ROLLS

Differential rolls are similar to Opposed rolls except that instead of a simple win or lose result, the difference in levels of success are calculated. They are primarily used for the resolution of combat (page 66).

A Differential Roll is determined in the following manner: both participants roll against their respective skills and suffer the results of their roll as if tested in isolation. There is no outright 'winner' per se, but whoever gained the higher level of success gains an advantage equal to the difference in the success levels between them (assuming one participant gains at least a standard success or better). If both



participants score the same level of success (a standard success each, or a critical each), then there is no additional effect. Cross reference the table below to determine the outcome of the rolls.

### OPPOSED SKILLS OVER 100%

If the highest skilled participant in an Opposed or Differential Roll has a skill in excess of 100%, that participant subtracts the difference between 100 and his skill value from the skill of everyone in the contest, including himself. This reduces the skill value of the opponents but leaves him retaining the advantage. The identification of who has the highest skill must be calculated after any other modifiers for circumstances have been applied.

## Luck Points

Luck Points represent a character's ability to potentially turn failure into success and even cheat death. They are expended during play and, at the beginning of the next session, replenish to their usual value. Only one Luck Point can be used in support of a particular action. See the sidebar for some ways to spend a single Luck Point.

### NEGATIVE LUCK POINTS

This is an optional rule to allow Luck Points to drop below zero. The basic idea is that a player with no Luck Points left can, in a desperate situation, reduce them below zero at a later cost. This works just as a normal Luck Point spending, with one exception: the GM will in a following scene turn one PC success into a failure (invoking 'bad luck'). By that, the Luck Point value is raised one step.

#### *For One Luck Point You Can:*

##### *Twist Fate*

*Characters can use a Luck Point to either re-roll any dice roll that affects them or swap the numbers already rolled, when rolling a d100 for example. This can be a skill roll, damage roll or anything else that has some effect.*

##### *Make a Desperate Effort*

*If a character has exhausted his Action Points during a fight and needs to find that last burst of desperate energy to perhaps avoid a messy demise, he may spend a Luck Point to gain an additional Action Point.*

##### *Mitigate Damage*

*A character who suffers a Major Wound may spend a Luck Point to downgrade the wound to a Serious Wound. This reduces the damage taken to one Hit Point less than what would be required to inflict a Major Wound.*

#### *Differential Roll Results*

	Antagonist Critical	Antagonist Success	Antagonist Failure	Antagonist Fumble
Protagonist Critical	No Benefit	Prot. wins 1 lvl of Success	Prot. wins 2 lvls of Success	Prot. wins 3 lvls of Success
Protagonist Success	Ant. wins 1 lvl of Success	No Benefit	Prot. wins 1 lvl of Success	Prot. wins 2 lvls of Success
Protagonist Failure	Ant. wins 2 lvls of Success	Ant. wins 1 lvl of Success	No Benefit	No Benefit
Protagonist Fumble	Ant. wins 3 lvls of Success	Ant. wins 2 lvls of Success	No Benefit	No Benefit

### Combat Rounds

*A Combat Round represents five seconds of real time. They are used to measure short, frenetic bursts of activity that take moments to complete or measuring very detailed activities that require a blow-by-blow resolution. For example, a chase between hunter and prey where each round determines the twists and turns of the pursuit.*

### Skill Time

*Local Time represents a few minutes to a few hours and is used to measure activities that do not require the detailed attention of a Combat Round, but require a specific concentration of effort with a definite end result. Picking a lock might take five minutes and this is a measure of Skill Time. Whereas observing the patrols made by teams of guards around a high security lab might require several hours.*

### Narrative Time

*This is the amount of time taken when the GM is narrating to the players, or when the players are discussing. Unless there is a specific reason for it, most actual roleplaying takes place in narrative time. When roleplaying, narrative time resembles real time, where a conversation takes as long to have as it takes to play. If a game session includes lengthy travel, or periods of activity where exact time is not of the essence, then time is compressed greatly to a few moments of game time.*

### Playing Without Hit Locations

*There is a simplified system for injuries in the combat chapter. It does away with Hit Locations but keeps the terminology on wounds.*

If this mechanism is used, a character will be able to lower Luck Points to the negative counterpart of his starting value (ie. -2 if he starts with two Luck Points). Also, a character ending a session or scenario with negative Luck Points will not regain his full Luck Points for the next scenario, but remain at the negative value until it is back to zero.

For the GM, it is important to make the instances of bad luck be proportional to the lucky strikes. A successful conflict should be balanced by an unsuccessful conflict, a successful scene by a failed scene.

*Example: Krys Noim is trapped inside a starship's cold storage at -20° C. He is lightly dressed and will freeze to death unless he can pick the lock. His Lockpicking roll fails miserably and Krys' player spends a Luck Point to flip the dice to a success. Krys is now down to -1 Luck Points.*

*The same evening, Krys and Lin are dining with the captain. They have arranged to push him to reveal any foul play regarding a crew member's death. Krys rolls Influence. The GM decides this is a good point to invoke the 'bad luck' – the successful roll is flipped to a fumble. Not only is the captain unwilling to talk about the accident, he is also angered with Krys and Lin. Any further requests they make on the journey will be at -15%.*

## Game Time

In *Odd Soot*, time is an important factor, mostly to determine what happens in what order, so that game mechanics are applied when they should be. Remember that in-game time is usually not equivalent to time actually spent playing. Sometimes, the GM may need to summarize the events of many days in a single sentence, such as 'It takes you a week to reach Constantinople,' while at other times, particularly during combat, the actions of only a few seconds of time can take several minutes or longer to resolve. See the sidebar opposite for important distinctions of game time.

## Injury and Healing

Characters in *Odd Soot* inevitably suffer damage. There are three categories of injury which can be inflicted, namely Minor Wounds, Serious Wounds and Major Wounds.

### Minor Wound

Minor wounds are cuts, scratches, bruises and sprains. They hurt, may bleed, but are not significant enough to slow down or hamper the victim.

### Serious Wound

If a location is reduced to zero Hit Points or below, the victim receives a Serious Wound. The location is scarred and they cannot attack (but can still parry or evade) for their next 1d3 turns due to shock and pain.

A character suffering a Serious Wound must immediately make an opposed test of his Endurance versus the successful attack roll of his enemy. Failure results in a limb being rendered useless, or unconsciousness if the Abdomen, Chest or Head. This persists until the character is successfully treated with First Aid.

At the Game Master's discretion, even if the character remains functional, all tasks requiring use of that body location will suffer an ongoing penalty of one difficulty grade, until the injury is reduced to a Minor Wound.

### Major Wound

If a location is reduced to a negative score equal to or greater than its starting Hit Points, the character receives a Major Wound. The character is immediately incapacitated, unable to continue fighting.

As with Serious Wounds, a character who suffers a Major Wound must immediately make an opposed test of his Endurance versus the successful attack roll of his enemy. Failure results in a limb being severed, shattered or ripped off, or instant death if the Abdomen, Chest or Head. If the character survives but treatment is not started within a number of minutes equal to twice his Healing Rate, he still dies from blood loss and shock.

Major Wounds require some form of surgery (using the Medicine skill) to heal, else the wounded location will be maimed.

## HEALING FROM WOUNDS

Natural healing from wounds and injuries is based on the character's Healing Rate. The Healing Rate dictates how many Hit Points are recovered depending on the injury's nature:

- » *Minor Wounds: Days*
- » *Serious Wounds: Weeks*
- » *Major Wounds: Months*

### First Aid Actions

Injury	Successful Treatment
Asphyxiated	The victim begins breathing again.
Bleeding	The blood flow is staunched.
Impaled	The impaling item is removed without causing further damage to the victim.
Unconsciousness	As long as the unconsciousness is not the result of poisons or narcotics then the injured party is restored to awareness.
Minor Injury	Treatment restores 1d3 hit points to the injury.
Serious Injury	Treatment restores the location to partial functionality.
Major Injury	A successful First Aid roll on a location suffering from a Major Injury does not return any Hit Points.

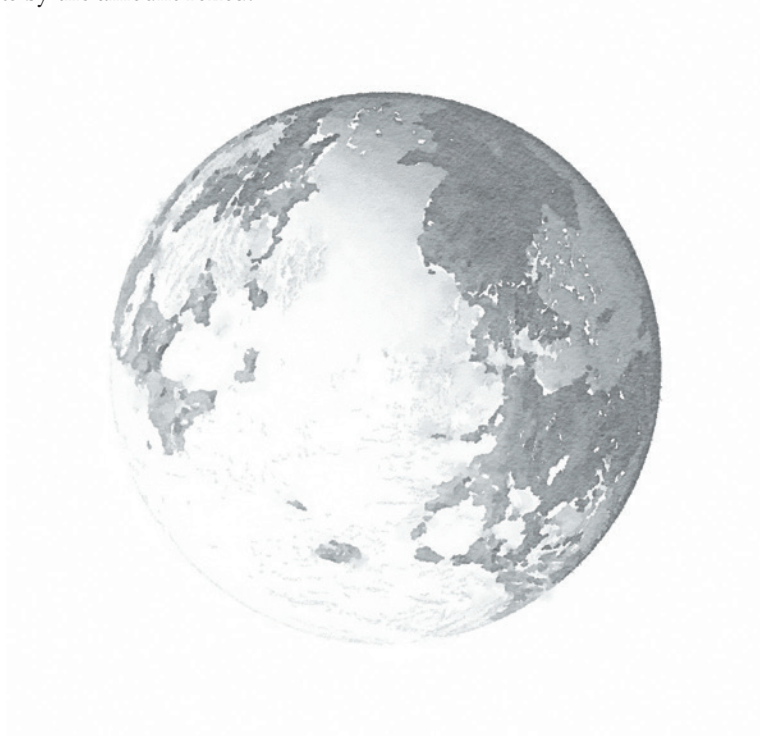
Thus a character with a Healing Rate of 3 who suffers a Serious Wound, will heal naturally at a rate of 3 Hit Points per week until his injury is downgraded to a Minor Wound, and then heal 3 Hit Points per day until fully recovered. The healing character cannot engage in strenuous activity: otherwise the Healing Rate is reduced by  $\text{id}3$ . Thus, a character recovering from even a Minor Wound could find his progress halted if he decides to engage any physical tasks that might exacerbate his injuries.

### PERMANENT INJURIES

Some Major Wounds inflict maiming injuries; for example horribly crushed and severed limbs, or the necrotic effects of venoms. The result of this damage permanently reduces the Hit Points on that location, forever weakening it. A location maimed in this way uses the diminished Hit Point value to calculate its new Serious and Major Wound thresholds.

For permanent injuries caused by accident or battle injury, roll a die of equivalent size to the original Hit Points of the location and permanently reduce the Hit Points by the amount rolled.

*Sisymbrium seen from space. Artist unknown.*



## Character Improvement

Every character has the opportunity to improve their skills with time. The mechanism for most character improvement is the Experience Roll. Game Masters dispense Experience Rolls at an appropriate juncture in the campaign: at the end of every successful scenario or storyline; or after perhaps two or three sessions of play if the story is a long one which will take time to complete. The frequency is at the Game Master's discretion. A high frequency of Experience Rolls will lead to the characters developing at a faster rate.

The number of Experience Rolls given in any one sitting should average between three and five, but it can be lower or higher depending on how long it has been since the last set of rolls and how well the characters performed or have been played.

It is recommended that all characters be given the same number of Experience Rolls, which helps maintain fairness and parity in character progression. The only exception to this guideline is where a character gains an additional roll (or suffers a reduction in rolls) for their Experience Modifier (page 19) in those situations where the character can put their influence to good use or suffer its consequences.

Any skill on the character sheet, Standard or Professional, can be increased by spending one Experience Roll.

- » *The player rolls 1d100 and compares it to the skill being increased. The character's INT is added to the roll.*
- » *If the number rolled is equal to or greater than the skill being improved it increases by 1d4+1%.*
- » *If the number rolled is less than the skill selected, the skill still increases but only by 1%.*
- » *If a character fumbles any skill during play, the fumbled skill gains a free increase of 1%.*

See the sidebar for more information on how to update other stats, like EGO|SELF and Peculiarities.



*The mille-broche species lives in large herds on Vera colony and can be found in most climates.*

### Updating Other Stats

*Not only skills are updated at regular intervals. At the same time, take a look at the following stats:*

*Passions. Deepening and Waning of Passions are accounted for according to the characters' experiences.*

*Peculiarities. Make sure any Peculiarity values are up to date with events from the last session.*

*Circles. Both positive and the negative Circles may need to be updated depending on new events.*

# Extended Conflicts

CONFLICTS ARE THE DRIVING FORCES of most fictional works and the same goes for roleplaying. Locked doors might bar the way, hard-to-read alien manuscripts need deciphering and difference engines must be programmed. The Game System chapter covers single skill rolls, opposed rolls and differential rolls. Here, the optional rules for Extended Conflicts are presented.

Extended Conflicts are, in short, opposing forces using several skill rolls in multiple rounds. Damage is dealt to Conflict Pools based on characteristics. If, or when, a Conflict Pool reaches zero, that side has lost and is out of the conflict.

*Example: Climbing a tree can be as easy as making a successful Climb roll. But if this part of the scene is a critical moment, the player may have to roll several times in an Extended Conflict, losing her DEX Conflict Pool gradually.*

The more important the conflict, the more time, energy and drama should be spent on it – and an Extended Conflict is often the best choice for that.

Also, if a character is unsatisfied with the outcome of a single or opposed roll, they can always raise the intensity and determination by asking the GM for an Extended Conflict. Breaking out a conflict like this gives the PC another chance to succeed. But it adds to the risk; more is at stake. Not only Conflict Pool points can be lost, but skills can also be temporarily lowered.

## USING OPPOSED ROLLS

Extended Conflicts use multiple opposed rolls to determine the outcome. The concept is quick to learn; the highest successful roll wins.

*Example: While trying to bargain for an antique scroll, Nedra rolls 53 on her Commerce at 65%. Her opponent, a greedy antiquarian, rolls 47 and, despite his skill being 70%, Nedra has rolled the highest success. Nedra gets the scroll for half the price.*

*Be careful not to bring too many Extended Conflicts upon the characters. This will deplete their resources long before a scenario is over. Try to find a good balance between the number of conflicts and the time it takes to restore Conflict Pools. Depending on the style of play, the exact number will vary and the GM will have to try things out as the group evolves. It is often a good idea to vary both the types of conflicts used and which characters are affected – that will bring more variation, pools will last longer and everyone tends to get more involved.*



Criticals always trump normal successes and if both opponents fail their rolls, nothing happens. However, a failed roll wins over a fumble.

## Conflict Pools

Conflict Pools work like Hit Points but for any conflict. They are based on characteristics and are used one at a time (STR for arm wrestling for example) or several together (like DEX+INT for a car race). Whenever damage is rolled in a conflict, it is subtracted from the current Conflict Pool. If, or when, a Conflict Pool reaches zero, that person is out of the conflict.

*Example: Nedra is in a heated argument with Egil. It is not going very well – she is down to 2 in her CHA Conflict Pool. Egil rolls 1d6 for damage after a successful Influence and deals 4 points of damage. Nedra is out. Her physical health is untouched but she has run out of arguments and lost the discussion. She leaves the room with a dark mind, already planning her next move.*

Different conflicts use different characteristics and it is up to the GM to see which one to use. The table in the sidebar provides a few guidelines.

Sometimes the task at hand is difficult to categorise into just one characteristic. Getting through a formal reception in an unfamiliar culture requires not only social skills (CHA) but also knowledge about the society (INT). In these cases, use the average of the two characteristics:  $(CHA+INT)/2$ . On rare occasions, you may need to combine three as well. But always try to minimise the number of characteristics used or you will soon find that the same ones occur in every conflict.

## Resolving a Conflict

These are the steps for resolving an Extended Conflict:

1. Pick the skills necessary for the conflict and an approximate round length. If there is a set duration or number of skill rolls for the conflict, it should be declared by the GM now.
2. Choose a characteristic to base the Conflict Pools on.
3. The character with the highest pool declares her action and rolls 1d100 below her skill in an opposed roll. Everyone else involved follows in order from highest to lowest pool. Highest success wins.
4. The winner rolls 1d6 for damage to Conflict Pools. Write down any new pool values next to the characteristic on the character sheet.

### Round Length

*The length of a conflict round is highly flexible. For combat it will be about 5 seconds, while a journey can have a round lasting 24 hours. The basic rule is to make one skill roll per participant every round. See example conflicts below for estimates on round length.*

### Conflict Pool Examples

*STR: Breaking something, arm wrestling, lifting objects*

*CON: Journeys, hard labour, combat, poisoning*

*SIZ: Only used to gain a bonus or penalty in other conflicts. SIZ pool is never reduced*

*DEX: Lockpicking, climbing, acrobatics, driving, untangling ropes or nets, tasks including fine manipulation, combat*

*INT: Reading a hard to decipher book, solving a puzzle, tracking, understanding unfamiliar machinery, inventing new gear, culture*

*POW: Magic, situations involving a hefty amount of luck & mental health*

*CHA: Social conflicts, influence, oratory, commerce, commanding other people, performances, cocktail party, interview*

*(CON+SIZ)/2: Physical damage, combat*

### Criticals & Fumbles

The general effects of criticals and fumbles are as follows:

**Critical:** Full damage.

**Fumble:** The roller is damaged, either 1d6 to the current pool or (if appropriate for the task) 1d4 Hit Points.

### Special Effects (Optional)

Below is a set of generic Special Effects that can be used with Extended Conflicts. They provide both a 'narrative advantage' and a mechanical one. The mechanical advantage is picked from a short list:

- » One action at +20%
- » Reduce one opponent action by -20%
- » Damage x2

The player is also given power over the actual narration of the effect. She can save the effect for a later round to create a narrative advantage any time during the ongoing conflict. A Special Effect can also be spent to negate an opponent's Special Effect. Additionally, any bonus or penalty can be transferred to a fellow PC involved in the conflict (if it can be explained by the narrative).

In conflicts with multiple opponents, usually only one enemy will be affected by a Special Effect.

### Hit Points or Conflict Pools?

Hit points and a CON+SIZ Conflict Pool are essentially the same thing. The gaming group has two choices here: Treat them as one OR use hit points for potentially deadly violence and the CON+SIZ pool for small injuries (only ending in unconsciousness at zero). When a combat draws near, the GM should communicate clearly which type of conflict it will be.

The same applies to Power points vs POW pool. Treat them as one or use Power points strictly for magic, and the POW pool for mundane 'soul stress'.

5. Withdrawals can be declared.
6. If any pool is halved the GM asks if anyone wants to withdraw. If not, skills related to the Conflict Pool are at *Hard* for those with a halved pool.
7. Repeat step 3-6 until there is a winner, either through withdrawals, a time limit is reached or all pools but one are down to zero.

## USING MULTIPLE CONFLICT POOLS

In some situations, you may want to use two separate pool values. Often it will be the main Conflict Pool, plus a pool for physical injuries.

*Example: At a duel with a small gathering of spectators, two pools are used: one for physical injuries and one for social damage. While rapiers dance, the opponents take turns insulting each other. One person may win the physical battle but the rival can win the hearts of the crowd – opening up a lot of interesting situations in the scenarios to follow.*

## WITHDRAWING FROM A CONFLICT

Most conflicts can be ended by one party just by declaring a withdrawal. In those cases, the remaining participant determines the outcome as if she was the winner.

When the first pool is halved, the GM should also ask whether anyone wants to withdraw. Everyone, including the GM, should take a moment to consider the importance of the conflict for their character(s) to see if there are any alternate solutions or compromises possible. As pool damage will not heal until the next day, characters need to think strategically about which conflicts are worth fighting.

## DAMAGE

Base damage is always 1d6, regardless of the type of conflict (quick combat being the exception – see examples that follow). With a pool reduced to zero, that person has lost the conflict. In most situations the outcome will follow logically from the scene; the winner decides what to do next, reaches the goal first, gains the knowledge she was looking for and so on. The damage done to a pool will also carry over to the next conflict; a reduced CHA pool when attempting to bargain for a rare manuscript for example, right after a court duel.

When a pool is halved, the character is stressed. All skills corresponding to that characteristic are at *Hard*. They remain lowered until the pool is raised above half the initial value.

If two characteristics form the basis of a pool, damage is distributed equally among them. For simplicity, this is done at the end of the conflict. Example:

*(INT+POW)/2 is used in a gaming contest. At the end of the match, the player redistributes the 6 points of damage. She reduces her INT pool by 3 and POW by 3.*

At least six hours of sleep is required to regain lost pool points. Half the amount can be restored after resting, light travelling or meditating for an hour. For conflicts taking several days to resolve, like a journey, replenishing can take up to half the time of the actual conflict.

While the basic concept of damage is very straightforward, some conflicts will be open to more options, especially when more people are involved. Portraying a cocktail party as an Extended Conflict will, for example, work better if several ‘winners’ are allowed. Also, damage can be rolled individually, or just once (by the round’s winner) and applied to all. See example conflicts below to get a feeling for how to use these options.

Other effects of damage are possible too. Social conflicts can result in lowered communication skills for a day, for example. These effects are highly dependent on the specific situations.

### CHOOSING SKILLS

Choosing the right skills to use in a conflict will be easy most of the time. Occasionally it may require some thinking to match the skills used by the opponent, especially if they lack the exact same skill as they are ‘attacked’ with. There are two ways to solve this: either use a skill that is reasonably similar (perhaps with a *Hard* penalty to reflect the mismatch in competence) or go for a characteristic roll instead. Characteristic rolls used versus a skill will necessarily be quite low – x2 or two characteristics added together. Someone trained in a skill should always have the upper hand. See example conflicts below for inspiration.

## Example Conflicts

### PERSUADE

**Skill:** Influence, Commerce, Deceit, Insight

**Conflict Pool:** CHA

**Damage:** 1d6

**Round length:** 1 minute

This is a common situation that can easily be turned into an Extended Conflict. The one to reach zero first loses the argument.

### Opponent Rating

*The values of an opponent’s conflict pool & skills are not always obvious. The easiest way to think about them is as a toughness rating of the situation. For non-living opponents (a storm, a book and so on), think of the skill value as the chance it has to win or to damage the character. The pool will show how persistent it is. Use the values below as a guideline. Effortless, Normal and Difficult will be the values used most.*

<i>Effortless</i>	<i>Pool 6</i>	<i>Skill 30%</i>
<i>Normal</i>	<i>Pool 11</i>	<i>Skill 50%</i>
<i>Difficult</i>	<i>Pool 16</i>	<i>Skill 70%</i>
<i>Very Difficult</i>	<i>Pool 20</i>	<i>Skill 90%</i>
<i>Heroic</i>	<i>Pool 24</i>	<i>Skill 110%</i>
<i>Impossible</i>	<i>Pool 28</i>	<i>Skill 130%</i>

*You can also keep the skill levels from above but roll 3d6 for pool values. That opens up a more complex gallery of NPCs that will be harder for the players to adapt to. This way, someone with a low skill but a high pool can have a lucky strike and outperform a more experienced character.*



### Pick a Lock

Many locks will need nothing more than one successful skill roll. But for more elaborate locks, or situations loaded with drama, an Extended Conflict can be used. The GM starts by rating the difficulty of the lock (see Opponent Rating on the previous page). The values represent not only the sturdiness and complexity of the lock but also the skill of the craftsman installing it.

Skill: Lockpicking

Conflict Pool: DEX

Damage: 1d6

Round Length: 10 seconds

### Chase (Driving)

Skill: Drive (Automobile)

Pool: DEX or the average of SPEED & HANDLING (see M-SPACE vehicle rules).

Damage: 1d6

Round length: 10 seconds

The first vehicle to reach a conflict pool of zero has lost. Either the vehicle being followed gets away or the follower has caught up. To force the other vehicle to stop, a Drive roll at Hard is needed. If the roll fails, the vehicles continue side-by-side and new tries can be made the following rounds.

Fumble: Both vehicle and passengers takes 1d4 hit point damage (rolled individually), in addition to the reduced pool. For detailed vehicle damage effects, see M-SPACE malfunction rules in Vehicles chapter.

Shooting while driving: All handgun firing between moving vehicles is at a difficulty grade of Formidable. Criticals will hit random passenger.

For social conflicts in general, supporting skills can sometimes be used. These should either relate to the subject being discussed or something like Acting, Culture or Knowledge (Psychology). They will add 1/5 of their value to the main communication skill but only one at a time.

### SNEAK

Skill: Stealth vs Perception

Conflict Pool: DEX vs INT

Damage: 1d6

Round length: 1-5 minutes

Sneaking past guards is a favourite theme of many roleplaying games. Turning those situations into extended conflicts can make them even more exciting. If the character reaches zero before the guard, she is detected.

### CHASE (RUNNING)

Skill: Athletics. Complement with Climb & Acrobatics if needed. Additionally, Stealth can be used

Conflict Pool: The average of CON & DEX

Damage: 1d6

Round length: 10 seconds

The person being followed determines the route and if any other skills than Athletics are needed. The follower must make the same skill rolls to keep up.

If the person being followed is down to zero Pool points, the follower has caught up. A successful Unarmed roll is needed to actually stop the person. In many cases an Influence, Commerce or Deceit roll at Hard will do the trick too.

Fumble: The runner trips, slips or runs into an object, taking 1d4 Hit Point damage in addition to the regular Pool damage.

### DECIPHER A MANUSCRIPT

During scenarios, the characters sometimes have to consult manuscripts that are difficult to read – at worst taking weeks to decipher. They might be of Luminarian origin, mad scribbles by Soot-infected inventors or ancient Eorthe accounts of black magic. The wording might be awkward, the ink faded or the entire book crumbling of age.

**Skill:** Language

**Conflict Pool:** INT or INT+POW

**Damage:** 1d6

**Round Length:** 1 day

Start by defining the Opponent Rating of the manuscript. Luminarian *fons mercurialis* books are generally rated as Normal (but older or partial texts can be harder) and writings by the infected are at least Difficult. Old Eorthe manuscripts can have any rating, depending on the age of the text.

If the character is successful – *ie.* her Conflict Pool does not reach zero first – she has interpreted the book fully. If she fails, the meaning of the text has not been comprehended and she has to wait for at least a month before trying again (unless another character is willing to try).

Criticals deal full damage, while fumbles strike back at the reader with 1d6 of Pool damage (indicating that part of the manuscript has confused the character).

Optionally, the GM can prepare a few different levels of success. Three or four levels of information is often enough and will generally represent one piece of knowledge every time the PC deals damage. It can be clues to the scenario in question, campaign-wide secrets or just about anything the GM wants.

## USE AN UNFAMILIAR DEVICE

In Comae Space, some of the alien species and many Soot-infected madmen build strange contraptions, based on unknown mechanics or otherworldly physics. Using those devices – or understanding them – will often require an Extended Conflict.

**Skill:** Mechanics, Electronics or Engineering. Science (Chemistry), Science (Biology) or Science (Magic) can sometimes be used to augment a roll. Strangeness or Soot Severity are used as a penalty; see below.

The device's percentage represents the inventor's skill level; a skilled craftsman will come up with more elaborate and unusual solutions. The skill level and the complexity of a device follow each other.

**Conflict Pool:** The average of a character's INT+POW vs. the device's complexity (see table on the next page).

**Damage:** 1d6

**Round Length:** 1 hour. Can be reduced to 30 minutes with a PC skill penalty of *Hard* or to 15 minutes with a penalty of *Formidable*.

## Quick Combat

*For really quick combat, try these alternate rules.*

*Skill:* Any combat style

*Conflict pool:* (CON+STZ)/2

*Damage:*

*1d4 for unarmed combat and impromptu weapons.*

*1d6 for melee weapons, martial arts and old-style ranged weapons like bows.*

*1d8 for firearms.*

*Round length:* 5 seconds

*Run the combat as any other conflict. Each roll is a combined attack, parry and evade roll. It is recommended to use this type of simplified combat for non-lethal situations. This means a Conflict Pool of zero only results in unconsciousness – not death. Optionally, every time the pool reaches zero, reduce regular Hit Points by 1d4.*

## More example conflicts

- » *How to learn new spells with Extended Conflicts is described in the Magic chapter.*
- » *Use Difference Engine is described in the chapter on Mechanical Arts.*

### Nested Conflicts

In certain situations, the success or failure of one character will directly affect another character. This can be simulated by nested conflicts.

An example of a nested conflict can be when one character is trying to repair an aeroplane, while a pilot steers the plane through some rough weather.

Start by determining which is the main conflict – ie. which one is containing the other. In the example above, the pilot faces the main conflict and the mechanic is directly affected by bad flying.

The main Conflict Pool is set as *STAT+STAT* or *STAT x2*. The secondary Conflict Pool is set as normal. This will ensure that the main conflict lasts longer than the secondary.

Decide upon a round length that fits both conflicts.

Now, run both conflicts simultaneously. Both players roll every round, inflicting damage as usual.

As long as the main conflict runs fine, the secondary conflict will behave as normal. But if the character of the main conflict takes damage there will be consequences for the secondary character. In the piloting example, a failed roll can indicate a sharp turn or an air pocket, forcing the mechanic to make an Athletics roll to not drop a tool or lose the grip, not being able to roll Mechanics that turn, taking *1d4 Hit Points* as he slams into one of the wings.

Criticals will give the secondary character two rounds without trouble, while fumbles will lead to more dire consequences (and if a skill roll is required, the difficulty grade will be *Hard* or *Formidable*).

The nested conflict ends when the secondary conflict is finished. Depending on the outcome, this might lead to new problems that has to be solved.

Pool	Complexity
6	A simple mechanical device. Only one purpose. Construction and inner workings clearly visible or easy to uncover. If magic is incorporated into the device, complexity is raised to <i>11</i> .
<i>11</i>	A device of mechanical, chemical and/or electronic nature. Involves subsystems or multiple steps. Has several purposes. Construction and inner workings hard to reach or partly concealed. If magic is utilised, complexity is raised to <i>16</i> .
<i>16</i>	A complex electronic, chemical and mechanical device. Involving magic. Contains subsystems or multiple steps. Has several purposes. Construction and inner workings hard to reach or partly concealed.
<i>20+</i>	As for <i>16</i> but the purposes of the device are beyond human understanding and/or the device is of extraordinary size or complexity.

The Strangeness value of an alien species or The Soot value is used as a skill penalty for the PC. Use either the Culture skill or Knowledge (The Soot) to negate these penalties. In the case of an infected alien inventor, use the highest value of either Strangeness or Severity.

*Example: The Soot-infected person A has The Soot at 40%. The device he built to collect phlogiston will give characters a -40% penalty when trying to use it. However, as one of the characters has Knowledge (The Soot) at 30%, the penalty will only be -10%.*

Once a device has been overcome in an Extended Conflict, it can often be used by the PC without any additional skill rolls.

### Fumble Effects

1. The device is activated (or deactivated if already on).
2. Careless prodding damages the device's controls.
3. Character takes *1d4 Hit Points* (random location). If several characters are involved, the person with the lowest skill value is affected.
4. The device is rendered useless by clumsy deconstruction.
5. The device catches fire.
6. The device is activated in a faulty way and springs to life in a short, powerful burst before collapsing. If possible, the function of the device will target a random character with any effects multiplied by *1d4*.



## POKER GAME

**Skill:** Gambling

**Conflict Pool:** (INT+POW)/2

**Damage:** 1d6, rolled once per round by the winner. All participants but the round winner takes the same amount of damage.

**Round length:** 15 minutes

A typical conflict only takes 3-4 rounds to resolve – use INT+POW straight for the conflict to last longer.

*Note: In a high-level gaming environment, a successful Gambling roll may be required to be allowed to even participate.*

Determine the ‘gambling stats’ of NPCs as follows (if you don’t already know them):

*Low-level/Casual/Beginner:* Gambling 30%, Conflict pool 6.

*Mid-level/Regular:* Gambling 50%, Conflict pool 11.

*High-level/Professional:* Gambling 70%, Conflict pool 16.

Everyone places their bets. The GM and players come to an agreement about the size of the bets.

Start playing! The highest success in Gambling skill wins the round. The winner deals 1d6 damage to every other participant (only roll damage once per round – everyone takes the same amount of damage).

When a PC or NPC is reduced to a conflict pool of zero, she is out of the game.

The last PC or NPC to have a conflict pool left wins the game. Now, either the winner takes it all or the money is divided according to how many rounds each player won. *Example: Four players bet 100 Kr each; 400 Kr in total. The game lasted four rounds, with player 1 winning three (and winning the entire game) and player 2 winning one round. Player one gets 300 Kr and player 2 100 Kr. Or player 1 wins all 400 Kr.*

Playing an unknown game halves the Gambling skill for the first 3-10 games, depending on the complexity of the game.



### *Cheating in Poker*

*To be able to cheat, the skill Sleight is required. For every successful Sleight roll, the cheater gets a +10% bonus on her Gambling skill for that round. Failure gives no bonus and the other card players will detect the cheating with a successful Perception roll. For more elaborate setups prepared beforehand, a larger bonus may be used.*

## Secrets & Threats

In social conflicts, you may want to add optional bonuses to skill rolls when the following powerful levers are used.

*Threats:* Benign threats are commonplace in most social conflicts, however, a threat of ample physical violence will make a communication roll Easy or even Very Easy when used against regular people. The person making the threat must be able to back it up (at least seemingly), otherwise it can have the reverse effect. Also, for targets with a high Willpower skill or a relevant Passion, threats will be less effective: the GM must judge this based on the specific circumstances.

As soon as a threat is included in a conflict, the target's Social Disposition towards the person making the threat is reduced to a minimum for a longer period of time.

*Secrets:* Threatening to reveal an opponent's well-kept secret will make communication rolls Easy or Very Easy. Everything from tax evasion and romantic lapses, to a literal dead body in a closet can be used. To uncover a secret, the character must have conducted some research on the opponent beforehand (or perhaps payed or threatened someone else to tell them about it). As for threats, Social Disposition will plummet as soon as Secrets are brought into a conflict.

## DINNER PARTY

**Skills:** Any communication skills

**Conflict Pool:** CHA

**Damage:** 1d6, rolled once per round. All participants failing their rolls take the same damage.

**Round length:** 30 minutes

Pick 1-6 NPCs as the main participants. If there are more people attending the dinner, treat them as subordinates to the main NPCs and ignore them to simplify the set-up.

Define the NPCs conflict values as follows (if you don't already have them):

*Low-level:* Any social skill at 30%, CHA 6

*Mid-level:* Any social skill at 50%, CHA 11

*High-level:* Any social skill at 75%, CHA 16

Decide how long the party will last.

Play the dinner! All involved make skill rolls every half hour, for as long as the dinner party lasts. Only those failing their rolls take damage. The person with the highest success rolls damage (1d6).

When the time is up, participants have made it through the banquet according to the points they have left in their pools:

*Zero.* The character made a lousy impression. She will not be invited again, will have a bad reputation in these circles and will not easily get a job or information from these people. Will be at -10% in communication skills in these circles (Dislike on the Social Disposition Table on page 45).

*Below half their pool.* The outcome is neutral. Nothing special happens. Social disposition +/-0.

*More than half the pool left.* She made a good impression. She will be invited again and will be favourably met in the future (Friendly on the Social Disposition Table).

In addition, for every successful roll the character makes, there is a chance that something interesting and useful is revealed. It can be related to the scenario or not, and can be secrets overheard, rumours, new business relations presented, love affairs implicitly indicated and so on. The GM may want to prepare beforehand what tidbits are revealed and how many successful rolls it takes to get each of them.

*Example:* Nedra is invited to a fancy dinner held by a criminal network in Glimminge.

Earlier that day she had ran into an old enemy, Egil Hermstad. The GM decides that if Nedra makes three successful rolls (out of five), she will overhear a conversation about what her old enemy is up to these days. Nedras' player is lucky with the dice and makes the three rolls (with an Influence at 60%). This information will eventually lead to a new scenario, with Nedra getting help from a Wittenberg Priest to stop an interdimensional portal from opening.

## LONG JOURNEY ON FOOT

**Skills:** Athletics, Endurance, Survival

**Conflict Pool:** CON

**Damage:** 1d6

**Round length:** 24 hours

Decide how many days the journey will last and roll once a day for each character, plus the opposing force. Use the following difficulties:

*Light terrain, good conditions*\*: 30%, pool 6

*Mixed terrain & conditions*: 50%, pool 11

*Difficult terrain, tough conditions*\*\* : 75%, pool 16

\* = for example sleeping in a bed at night, plenty of rations, light backpacks, beautiful weather.

\*\* = for example too cold or hot, rain or snow, rocky or mountainous, thin or harsh atmosphere, heavy packs, wetlands, gear unsuited for conditions, no time to prepare for the journey, alien world.

Conflict Pools are not fully regained until the journey is over.

The journey is over if the characters manage to keep their pools above zero until all the rolls are made. If any character's Pool drops to zero, the party will have to rest for at least one full day, regaining one fourth of their original Pool per day resting. 1d4 Hit Points are lost every time the CON pool drops to zero.

Optionally, tempo can be allowed to affect Pool damage.

*Hard tempo*: 1d8, 40km per day

*Normal tempo*: 1d6, 20km per day

*Easy tempo*: 1d4, 10km per day

## Boating Through a Storm

**Skill:** Boating or Seamanship

**Conflict Pool:** The character can use (DEX+INT) divided by two, vessel Size (if the vehicle rules from M-SPACE are used) or a combination of both. For the storm, first decide what chance it has to damage a vessel – that is the skill percentage equivalent. Set the pool according to the general rules on opponent rating (see sidebar on page 75).

**Damage:** 1d6

**Round length:** 30 minutes

**Fumble:** Passengers and crew take 1d4 hit point damage.

# Combat

COMBAT IS AN IMPORTANT FEATURE of roleplaying games. Violent confrontation has ever been a way of settling problems, from vengeance driven fights between nemeses, to the clash of armies in times of war. Nevertheless combat need not be a savage battle to the death. Some combat encounters can be swashbuckling duels which end without injury, or perhaps light-hearted bar room brawls.

*Odd Soot* uses a number of terms to explain the core elements of Combat. These are explained in the following sections, but in overview, these are:

- » *Combat Style: The skill of wielding a group of weapons learned as part of a culture or profession.*
- » *Combat Actions: Possible acts a character can perform during a round by the expenditure of an Action Point.*
- » *Ranged or close combat.*
- » *Weapon Size: How difficult it is to parry or block a particular close combat weapon.*
- » *Engagement: When combatants can hit or be hit by a direct opponent, depending on circumstances.*
- » *Special Effects: Combat maneuvers which can be performed if one combatant gains the upper hand.*

## *Simplified Combat*

*As not all scenarios and campaigns involve a lot of fighting, a later chapter is dedicated to simplified combat. Using it can also be a good way to learn the basics of the system. For those instead wanting more details, see the full Mytbras rulebook, available from The Design Mechanism.*

## Combat Styles

Skills covering fighting and combat are called Combat Styles. Each style is a 'package' of multiple weapons, related by culture, career or even schools of combat,

which avoids the necessity of learning each individual weapon separately. The most important aspect of Combat Styles is that the character learns how to use each weapon in the style, both singly and in combination so that they might be interchanged as necessary.

Thus a Librae colonist may be expected to know how to use a rifle and a knife; whereas an Eorthe detective may be trained in pistols and Unarmed instead. Deciding how many weapons should be included into a single style is ultimately a choice determined by the Game Master and the setting of the game.

Characters who attempt to use a weapon not covered by their style should suffer a skill penalty of one or more difficulty grades.

### COMBAT STYLE TRAITS

Combat styles possess another function beyond simply learning one or several weapon skills. Since each style is taught by a particular culture or career, they are inherently optimized for the environment or military tactics that group normally fights with; for instance a detective learns how to shoot from a vehicle, or an infantryman trains to fight while running. Therefore, as an additional bonus, some Combat Styles may be assigned one or more traits which grants it an advantage under certain circumstances. Traits are only intended to be used with the weapons and situations of that particular style. Obviously there are countless traits, many of which are specific to a particular nation or world. See the sidebar for some example Combat Styles.

## Running Combat

To emphasise its visceral nature, combat is tracked on a blow by blow basis. In order to ease book keeping fights are broken down into Combat Rounds of five seconds each. During this period combatants may make hand-to-hand attacks or defend against them, maneuver into and out of combat, fire or throw a ranged weapon and so on. Combat Rounds use several important terms:

- » *Initiative: The order of when each character or creature may take their Turn during a Combat Round.*
- » *Turn: On their turn, a participant performs a single proactive Combat Action, which comprises of a declaration, any necessary dice rolls (including reactions) to resolve the action.*

### Example Combat Styles

*Below is a list of typical Combat Styles for the various careers, cultures and alien species (you find more on aliens in the Denizens chapter). Treat them as suggestions. More specialized styles can be created by the GM and players, to cover specific needs.*

*For charaters without career-specific training in weapons, the generic Combat Style Self-Defense is recommended.*

*Agent. Agent Training (Rifle, Pistol, Unarmed). Trait: Assassination or Ranged Marksman.*

*Colonist. Hunting/Self-Defense (Rifle, Knife, Unarmed). Can also be used as a Cultural Combat Style for the Colonial background.*

*Criminal. Street Fighter (Unarmed, Dagger). Trait: Unarmed Prowess.*

*Burglar (Pistol, Dagger). Trait: Knockout Blow.  
Gangster (Pistol). Trait: Assassination.*

*Detective. Police Force (Pistol, Unarmed). Trait: Vehicle Combat.*

*Explorer. Hunting/Self-Defense (Rifle, Dagger, Unarmed). Trait: Ranged Marksman or Daredevil*

*Soldier. Eorthe Military Training (Rifle, Pistol, Unarmed). Trait: Skirmishing or Ranged Marksman. Can also be used as a Cultural Combat Style for the Militaristic background.*

*Generic. Self-Defense (Pistol or Knife & Unarmed)*

*Priest of Wittenberg. Punisher (Pistol)*

*Solipsist. Rioter (Club, Dagger, Unarmed).  
Agent (Pistol, Dagger) Trait: Assassination.*

*Eldirerrr. Basic (Electrical Pistol, Unarmed)  
Warrior Path (E. Rifle, E. Pistol, Unarmed, Dagger)*

*Aygaan. Wrath (Unarmed, Throw Object, Trample)  
Traits: Multi-knockback, Magic Wrath.*

*Multi-knockback: Due to its size, an Aygaan can attack several foes at once without penalty, with the over-sized tentacle.*

*Magic Wrath: An Aygaan can use magic and attack in the same round.*

## Example Combat Style Traits

Trait	Description
Blind Fighting	Allows user to ignore any penalties imposed due to poor lighting or temporary blinding
Daredevil	May use the Evade skill to dodge blows in hand to hand combat without ending up prone
Defensive Minded	Increases the Size of your weapon when parrying by one step, provided no offensive action is taken that round
Assassination	Allows the user access to the normally restricted Kill Silently special effect.
Knockout Blow	When attacking with surprise treat any Stun Location as lasting minutes instead of turns
Mounted/Vehicle Combat	Allows character to ignore the skill cap placed upon combat rolls by the Ride or Drive skill
Ranged Marksman	When using a ranged weapon, shift a random Hit Location roll to an adjoining body location
Skirmish	The style permits launching ranged attacks whilst walking or running
Throw Weapons	Any melee weapon in the style can also be thrown at no penalty to skill, but when used in this way a weapon's damage roll is halved
Unarmed Prowess	Permits the user to treat his Unarmed blocks and parries as 'Medium' sized, enabling him to better defend himself from armed opponents

## INITIATIVE

Initiative determines participants' order of actions during the Combat Round. It is rolled at the start of a fight by each combatant rolling **1d10** and adding their Initiative Bonus (the average of **DEX** and **INT**).

Whoever gained the highest result acts first, followed by the second highest and so on. When two or more participants tie scores they act concurrently. Unless something occurs to change the situation, the values remain in play until it is forced to be re-rolled.

Characters who wear armor (mostly aliens) might be hindered by its encumbrance. Every type of armor has an associated penalty which is applied to the Initiative of its wearer.

## ACTIONS IN COMBAT

Once initiative has been determined, the participants have the potential to perform several Combat Actions during each Combat Round. All characters get 2 Action Points per round, but when they can act is limited to whether the action is proactive or reactive.

Proactive actions can only be attempted on the character's own Turn; that is to say, on his Initiative. Proactive actions are those in which the character is the instigator, such as making an attack with a weapon.

Reactive actions are those taken by a character to counter or resist an act made against them. Only one reaction attempt is permitted for each threat, an example would be trying to parry an attack. Unused Action Points do not carry over from one round to the next.

## Combat Actions

Combat Actions are those acts which can be performed during battle. Drawing a weapon, casting a spell, or diving clear from an attack are all examples of Combat Actions. Most are concerned with elements of combat itself, but some relate to activities outside the to and fro of spells and weapons.

As previously mentioned, how often a character can act per round is limited by their available Action Points. These are spent over the course of each Combat Round to perform various Combat Actions. Once a combatant's Action Points are expended, they may no longer act for the remainder of that round and must wait until their points reset at the beginning of the next.



Unless otherwise specified any Combat Action (save for 'free' actions) costs one Action Point. Thus combatants need to carefully consider how and when they use their points. They may act as aggressively or defensively as they wish, dynamically reacting to the evolving circumstance of the combat.

## PROACTIVE ACTIONS

The following are activities a character can attempt on his Turn by spending an Action Point. Note that some actions such as using a psionic power or reloading may take several turns to complete; each turn costing its own Action Point.

**Attack.** The character can attempt to strike with a hand-to-hand weapon or use a ranged weapon.

**Dither.** The default option unless another action is chosen, the character simply wastes his turn doing nothing useful.

**Mount.** The character can mount or dismount a vehicle or riding beast. Particularly large mounts may require several turns to complete.

**Move.** Provided he is not engaged with an opponent, the character can move any distance the Game Master deems suitable for the situation.

**Outmaneuver.** The character can engage multiple opponents in a group opposed roll of Evade skills. Those who fail to beat his roll cannot attack him that Combat Round. See the section on Outmaneuvering on page 92.

**Ready Weapon.** The character may draw, sheath, withdraw or reload a weapon. Retrieving a nearby dropped weapon requires two turns: one to move and reach down for the weapon and a second to return to a readied stance. Some missile weapons require several turns to reload.

**Regain Footing.** If unengaged with an opponent, the character can automatically regain his footing from being tripped or knocked down. If engaged, the character must win an opposed test of Brawn or Athletics with the opponent before standing.

**Sneak Peek.** Assess situation without becoming a target. Perception skill fumble results in opponent getting a pot shot.

**Struggle.** If the character is the victim of a certain types of attack or Special Effect, he may attempt to extract himself from the situation. For example breaking free from a Grapple or Pin Weapon.

**Use Magic.** The character can attempt to use magic. Complex spells may require several turns in order to complete.

## Free Actions

*Free actions can be performed at any time during the Combat Round and cost no Action Points to perform.*

*Drop Weapon: Dropping a weapon is a Free Action.*

*Signal: If unengaged, gesturing or signalling to one or more participants (as long as they can perceive the sign) is a Free Action.*

*Speak: A character can speak at any time during combat, but what is said should be limited to short phrases which can be uttered in five seconds or less; for example 'Look out behind you!' or 'Damn you to hell!'*

*Use Luck Point: Using a Luck Point – to re-roll a particular result for example – is a Free Action.*

*Ward Location: The character guards a particular Hit Location from being hit by dedicating an object or weapon to passively block the area. Any blow which lands on that location has its damage automatically downgraded as per normal for a parrying weapon of its Size. Establishing or changing the Hit Location covered must be performed prior to an opponent rolling to attack the character. For further explanation see Passive Blocking..*

### *Ranged Combat Considerations*

*Gun combat is the most common type of combat in Odd Soot. Here are a few things to keep in mind:*

- » *Gun combat is dangerous!*
- » *On the whole, people prioritise not being shot over shooting others.*
- » *The most common method of protection is to take cover.*
- » *Suppressing fire is the best way of preventing foes shooting back.*
- » *Firearms are surprisingly inaccurate unless time is taken to brace and/or aim.*
- » *When you are shot, bad stuff happens.*

*Defending oneself against gunfire will largely become a question of using cover and trying to prevent the opponent from being able to fire back. As such, most gun battles tend to become very tactical – lots of suppressing fire, flanking movement and flushing foes from deep cover – during which characters may pass entire combat rounds being pinned down and unable to respond until the opposition stops firing... which some players may find extremely tedious.*

*It is perfectly possible that an entire gunfight will result in no injuries, just one side giving up due to running out of ammunition or fleeing the battle entirely. After all, few people want to risk being riddled with a burst from a weapon on full automatic.*

## REACTIVE ACTIONS

This list specifies reactions which can be used at any time during the Combat Round as a response to an imminent threat. As in the previous list, a reaction costs an Action Point to perform.

**Evade.** The character can use their Evade skill in an attempt to dive clear of threats such as incoming missiles or a charging attack. This leaves the character prone, unless mitigated by some special circumstance. Thus the character's next turn is usually spent taking the Regain Footing action to stand again. See Evading on page 88.

**Parry.** The character can attempt to defend against an incoming attack using a combination of parrying, leaning, ducking and side-stepping footwork to minimise the blow. Ranged weapons cannot be parried.

**Take Cover.** The character gets behind something (not prone). Used as a reactive action – *ie.* characters can dive for cover after someone shoots at them.

## How Combat Works

Fighting in *Odd Soot* is resolved with each attack or parry representing a single stab, swing, cast or shot of a weapon. Any offensive action is permitted the chance to be resisted by a reaction. Thus even if a character manages to strike an opponent, the foe is permitted its own roll to see if it can parry the blow before it lands. The same philosophy is used whether the attacks are revolvers against targets diving for cover, or trying to break free from the iron grasp of an Aygaan.

## COMBAT ROUND

Combat is handled in the following step by step manner:

1. On his turn the attacker spends an Action Point, rolls against his Combat Style and notes the result.
2. If desired, the opponent spends an Action Point, rolls against his Combat Style (or Evade) and notes the result. This can be an attack or, in close combat, an attempt to parry.
3. The success level of the results are compared as per a Differential Roll (page 67).
4. Any difference grants the successful combatant with the superior roll one or more Special Effects.

5. If the attacker achieved a success or critical, he may roll weapon damage (and apply any Damage Modifier, if in close combat). If applicable, a Hit Location is determined for the blow.
6. If the opponent also had a successful attack, he may roll for weapon damage as above. In hand-to-hand combat, if the opponent achieved a successful or critical parry, reduce any damage inflicted according to the comparative sizes of the weapons involved.
7. Reduce any remaining damage by the Armor Points of natural or worn protection.

## ARMOR

Any damage rolled is reduced by the Armor Points of any natural protection (such as the back plates of the Eldirerrr) or worn armor they possess. Unlike modern or medieval settings, worn armor is exceptionally uncommon in the 1920s.

## Ranged Combat

Ranged combat incorporates all forms of weaponry which require to be shot, thrown or slung to strike their target. Ranged attacks are resolved in an identical way to close combat. However, ranged weapons can normally only be parried with shields (and shields are almost non-existent in *Odd Soot*). Those without must rely on natural cover or use Evade to dive out of the line of fire. Thus against lightly armored foes, ranged weapons can be formidable deterrents.

Each ranged weapon has a number of specific attributes which determine its effectiveness. The ones which have a key bearing on combat are as follows:

**Force.** Force is an abstract measure of the penetrative power of a weapon or its ammunition to determine whether the blow overcomes a (shield) parry. Force is not used by energy weapons.

**Damage Modifier.** This attribute shows whether or not the Damage Modifier of the attacker can be used to boost the ranged weapon's damage roll. In general only self-drawn bows and thrown weapons allow the user to apply their Damage Modifier.

**Range.** Three numbers separated by slashes, representing the maximum Close, Effective and Long ranges of the weapon or its ammunition. Close range is the distance over which the Choose Location special effect may be used, provided

### *Special Effects & Damage*

*Note that any Special Effects generated by the exchange are independent of whether or not damage is inflicted. It is quite possible for a defender to gain the higher success level, yet still suffer injury.*

Ranged Combat Situational Modifiers

Situation	Difficulty Grade
Light Wind	Hard
Moderate wind	Formidable
Strong Wind	Herculean
Gale, storm or hurricane	Hopeless
Target is running	Hard
Target is jinking	Formidable
Target partially obscured by cover, mist or twilight	Hard
Target mostly obscured by cover, thick smoke or fog	Formidable
Attacker is blind or in pitch darkness	Hopeless
Firing at prone target	Formidable
If attacker is prone (by force)	Formidable



*Small handgun of German make.*

the target is stationary or unaware of the impending attack. Effective range has no significant modifiers. At long range the weapon can still inflict harm, but the amount of damage is halved and Force is reduced by one step.

**Load.** The time in turns taken to load or reload a weapon which fires ammunition. A character can reduce the time spent loading or readying by use of the Rapid Reload special effect. Load times for firearms indicates changing the magazine.

**Impale Size.** The Size of an impaled weapon is different from the Force it strikes with. Ranged impaling weapons have a special column denoting their actual size when considering the hindrances caused by the Impale special effect.

### SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS

Situational modifiers may be applied when using ranged weapons in particular conditions. A character's Combat Style may be capped when using the weapon in difficult circumstances, such as firing a gun whilst driving a motorbike.

**Aiming.** By spending additional time aiming a ranged weapon, a character can potentially increase his chance to hit. Aiming requires an entire Combat Round steadying the weapon and waiting for the best opportunity to release, for example withholding a revolver shot until a target moves between two obstructions. By aiming, the character may reduce the difficulty of a Range or Situational Modifier by one grade. Additional rounds spent aiming grant no further advantage.

**Cover.** Cover is used by opponents to obstruct attacks against them, by either physically blocking a blow due to the toughness of the interposing material, or by obscuring where precisely the foe is. The precise value of cover depends on the thickness of its protection and the extent of its coverage.

An attack against a target which lands on an obscured Hit Location will be blocked to the extent of the cover's inherent protection. Cover can be partially negated either by use of the Choose Location special effect to aim at visible parts of the target; or striking through the cover if the weapon is capable of penetrating it.

In situations where cover is total but the attacker believes his attack will penetrate, he may strike blindly at the hidden target. In such cases the attack roll is one grade harder and Choose Location may not be taken if a special effect is won. This assumes the attacker knows fairly accurately the target's position behind the cover.

**Evading.** Evading in combat is to throw oneself clear of an overwhelming attack. This requires an opposed test of the Evade skill of the defender versus the attacker's pertinent roll. This could be anything from the Drive skill of a ramming

battle tank to the usage of magic. If the attacker wins then they inflict damage as per normal. If the defender wins damage is completely avoided.

If the winner of the opposed roll achieves one or more levels of success over his opponent, they may select suitable Special Effects as per normal combat. Whatever the result, the evasive gambit leaves the defender prone – usually requiring the character to regain his footing on his following turn – unless they can use the Arise special effect or possess a Combat Style trait such as Daredevil.

**Firing into a Crowd.** Firing into the swirling ebb and flow of a melee can be a risky business, thus there is always a risk of accidentally striking someone other than the original target being aimed at.

When firing at a specific target at the edge of a crowd or melee, the attack suffers a difficulty grade of *Hard*. If trying to fire through a group to hit a target in its midst, or on the other side, the penalty should be raised to *Formidable*. Aiming is still permitted to help mitigate the danger.

A marksman who passes his attack roll despite the difficulty penalty has aimed true and will hit his intended target. If however the marksman fails the roll, but would have succeeded if not for the ‘firing into a crowd’ penalty, then an adjacent victim is struck instead (who is free to Evade or Parry as normal).

If more than one target is in the line of fire, the Game Master should determine the victim randomly. Any Special Effects won as part of the attack only apply to the original target, not any accidentally struck bystander.

**From the Hip.** Shooting from the hip, without taking aim, is quick but imprecise. Add 10 to Initiative for a character using this. The default difficulty is *Hard* at close quarters (within 3 meters) and *Formidable* for longer ranges.

**Dual firearms.** With dual firearms, two shots at once is possible. They still cost one action point per shot, but both shots are fired in the attacker’s first turn. Both shots are at a difficulty grade of *Formidable*.

**Firing From a Moving Vehicle.** To fire a handgun from a moving vehicle, the attacker’s skill is capped at the pilot’s Drive skill.

**Surprise.** Surprise occurs when an unexpected attack is launched against opponents unaware of the attacker’s presence or intention. An ambush would be an example of the former, whilst treacherously turning on an unsuspecting ally during amiable conversation illustrates the latter.

The effects of surprise on a target are listed in the sidebar.

#### *Effects of Surprise*

- » *The target suffers a -10 penalty to initiative*
- » *Until their Initiative arrives they are considered flat footed and cannot defend themselves*
- » *The first attack on the target, if successful, gains a bonus Special Effect*
- » *For the remainder of the round they may not perform any offensive action*

Situation	Difficulty Grade
Attacking a helpless target	Automatic
Defending while on lower ground	Hard
Fighting in a confined situation	Hard
Fighting with an unfamiliar weapon	Hard
Fighting when prone	Formidable
Defending against an attack from behind	Formidable
Fighting in pitch darkness or when blinded	Herculean

## Close Combat

Close combat is hand to hand fighting in its classic sense, when combatants strike each other with wielded or natural weapons. The following guidelines offer ways to make close combat more interesting and help to further explain some concepts hinted at earlier in this chapter.

### WEAPON SIZE

Every hand-to-hand weapon in *Odd Soot* possesses a number of different attributes from the damage it deals to how many hands are required to wield it. Size is a combination of a weapon's mass, leverage and stability, and is used to determine the weapon's ability to impose and parry damage.

Size categories are Small, Medium, Large, Huge, and Enormous.

The unarmed attacks of creatures are assigned similar categories according to their physical characteristics.

### DAMAGE REDUCTION

If a defender succeeds in parrying, then he can reduce an attacker's damage, if any, according to the comparative Size of the weapons used.

- » *Parrying an attack with a weapon of equal or greater Size deflects all damage*
- » *Parrying with a weapon of one Size less only deflects half damage*
- » *Parrying with a weapon two or more Sizes less fails to deflect any damage*

For example, parrying a Huge axe with a Huge shield would block all damage; parrying it with a cudgel (Large) would halve the damage, and parrying it with a knife (Small) would stop no damage at all.

### SITUATIONAL MODIFIERS

Situational modifiers may be applied when fighting in particular conditions, or as the result of a Special Effect. For example fighting in the dark might incur a difficulty grade of *Herculean*. Unless stated otherwise, modifiers are decided by the Game Master. Where two or more situations are pertinent to the character, use the most severe.

Some modifiers are circumstance dependent, but rather than applying a dif-



difficulty grade the Combat Style is limited by a relevant skill. For example, fighting from the back of a horse would cap the combatant's Combat Style by their Ride skill, whilst fighting in water might cap it to the value of the character's Swim.

**Engagement.** A character is considered Engaged if he or she is within melee weapon range of an opponent. This does not necessarily require that both combatants can reach each other; only that one of them can be potentially struck by the other.

Once a character has engaged with an opponent he can no longer freely depart that fight (charging past is a special exception). It requires some form of deliberate act to break contact with the foe, normally performed via a Combat Action such as Outmaneuver, or use of the Withdraw Special Effect.

**Charging.** A charge requires a character to spend at least one turn using the Move action prior to the turn in which they attack. Whilst charging, the attack roll suffers a difficulty grade of *Hard*. In return the charge increases the Size of the attacking weapon by one step and a bipedal attacker's Damage Modifier by one step; or two steps if a quadruped (or more legs).

Rather than parrying or evading, the recipient of a charge can simultaneously counterattack the charging attacker instead. In this case the wielder of the longer weapon strikes first. If the weapon can be set to receive a charge (such as a spear), the recipient may use the Damage Modifier of the charger instead of his own.

**Cover.** See Ranged Combat.

**Evading.** See Ranged Combat

**Knockback.** An attack which imparts more damage than the Siz of the recipient will, by default, result in the character being knocked back. The damage in this circumstance is before any reduction due to parrying or armor. On receiving such a blow, the recipient must pass an *Easy* Acrobatics or standard Athletics roll to avoid falling prone. They are also thrust backwards one meter for each five points of damage (or fraction thereof) in excess of their Siz.

**Leaping Attacks.** Leaping attacks can be launched from a variety of situations, most are triggered as part of an ambush or at the conclusion of a charge, but some creatures have the ability to leap atop an opponent without the need for a run-up or superior height.

A leaping attack is resolved with an opposed roll of the leaper's Athletics skill versus the defender's Brawn or Evade skill. Quadruped targets make the attack roll one difficulty grade harder. If the leaper wins then the defender is automatically

#### *Parrying a Missed Attack*

*If the attacker misses his initial attack roll, the defender has the option of whether or not to spend an Action Point to parry. Although it may seem disingenuous to parry an attack which will miss anyway, a skilled defender can use this to his advantage to gain one or more Special Effects, potentially weakening or incapacitating a foe and preserving their next turn for some other action.*

#### *Unsuccessful Rolls and Fumbles*

*If both combatants fail their rolls, or the defender decides not to take advantage of a missed attack, then the attack-parry sequence ends and combat continues on to the participant with the next highest Initiative.*

#### *Unable or Unwilling to Parry*

*In a situation where a defender is unable to parry due to having no Action Points remaining, or, confident in his ability to weather the blow, elects not to parry, he is treated as having automatically rolled a failure. This has the consequence of granting a successful attacker one or more Special Effects.*

knocked prone, with the attacker astride them. Failure means the defender has weathered or sidestepped the impact. If the winner of the opposed roll achieves one or more levels of success over his opponent, they may select suitable Special Effects as per normal combat.

No damage is inflicted as part of the leap; however a subsequently prone victim cannot recover his footing until either his attacker leaves him, or he eventually wins a Special Effect permitting him to Arise.

**Outmaneuvering.** A character facing multiple opponents can use movement to limit the number which can attack him at any time, constantly shifting position, forcing foes to interfere with one another. Outmaneuvering requires that the character has room to move about and is not pinned in a confining area.

Outmaneuvering requires that the character engages his opponents in a group opposed roll of Evade skills. Every participant, both the maneuvering character and those foes who wish to corner him, must spend an Action Point. Then they each roll once and those who fail to beat the maneuvering character's roll cannot attack him for the remainder of that Combat Round, being blocked by their allies or terrain features.

If the maneuvering character beats all of his opponents he has the choice of safely engaging a single foe for the rest of the round or Withdrawing from the fight completely.

**Passive Blocking.** Passive Blocking allows a character armed with a weapon to hold it in such a way that it covers a chosen location, but at the cost of being unable to actively parry with it (see Ward Location). Any attack which hits the locations automatically receives the benefit of the weapon or shield, reducing damage as normal. The technique is commonly used when a fighter wishes to guard a weak spot or wounded location. Nothing prevents a two weapons or weapon and shield combatant from using his other weapon to actively parry.

Since passive blocking works in the same way as cover, the Choose Location Special Effect cannot be used to bypass the block in close combat, though opponents can still use the effect to strike other unblocked areas. Crouching down behind a shield allows a character to double the number of locations covered whilst passive blocking.

**Surprise.** See Ranged Combat

**Sweep Attacks.** Sweep attacks occur at the Game Master's decision, when weapons or creatures of unusual size attack a closely clumped group of opponents



– the scything tail of a huge animal or the unstoppable charge of an Aygaan for example – striking several foes simultaneously. A sweep attack is made by applying a single attack roll of the weapon or creature to all targets in its path. Each defender must resolve the effects of the attack separately and any Special Effects imposed on the attacker are treated as having occurred concurrently.

## Hit Locations

Most successful attacks land on a specific hit location. This can be determined randomly or in some circumstances be selected by Special Effects such as Choose Location. To randomly calculate which location is been hit, roll *1d20* and compare the number rolled with the relevant humanoid or creature Hit Location table.

Animals and aliens usually have slightly different hit location tables than humanoids to reflect their own unique physiology.

Humanoid Hit Locations

Hit Location	<i>1d20</i>
Right Leg	01-03
Left Leg	04-06
Abdomen	07-09
Chest	10-12
Right Arm	13-15
Left Arm	16-18
Head	19-20

## Special Effects

Fighting is far more than simply injuring or killing an opponent. Combative arts teach many methods of defeating a foe, perhaps rendering them helpless or forcing them into situations where they must capitulate, without necessarily needing to actually cause them harm. Special Effects represent these techniques and control how they occur in play.

Whenever opponents engage in a Differential Roll of their respective fighting skills, any resulting difference in success levels indicates an opportunity for Special Effects to occur. This reflects one combatant maneuvering his opponent into a disadvantageous situation which can be exploited using a cunning trick or tactic.

The number of Special Effects received depends on the difference between the levels of success, as illustrated on the Differential Levels of Success table (see page 67).

If any Special Effects are won during an exchange, they must be selected before Damage and Hit Location, if any, are rolled. In cases where the recipient is badly wounded in addition to receiving a Special Effect, Endurance rolls are resolved after the application of the effect.

Special Effects cover a diverse range of situations and techniques. Some are designed specifically for hand-to-hand attacks, whilst others are intended for de-

fence and a few are adaptable for either circumstance. Certain Special Effects can also be limited to particular weapon types or specific dice rolls, requiring a Critical or Fumble result on their skill check for instance.

When two or more Special Effects are gained, the combatant may freely mix and match which ones are selected, providing he meets the prerequisite conditions for each one. Some effects can be stacked. For example, an attacker who rolls a critical success and wins two Special Effects could choose Maximise Damage twice rather than choosing two separate offensive maneuvers.

### SPECIAL EFFECT DESCRIPTIONS

The following Special Effects are a subset of those available in the full Mythras rules:

**Accidental Injury.** The defender deflects or twists an opponent's attack in such a way that he fumbles, injuring himself. The attacker must roll damage against himself in a random hit location using the weapon used to strike. If unarmed, he tears or breaks something internal, the damage roll ignoring any armor.

**Arise.** Allows the defender to use a momentary opening to roll back up to their feet.

**Bash.** *Bludgeoning Weapons.* The attacker deliberately bashes the opponent off balance. How far the defender totters back or sideward depends on the weapon being used. Bludgeoning weapons knock back one meter per for every three points. Bashing works only on creatures up to twice the attacker's Siz. If the recipient is forced backwards into an obstacle, then they must make a *Hard* Athletics or Acrobatics skill roll to avoid falling or tripping over.

**Bleed.** *Cutting Weapons and Firearms.* The attacker can attempt to cut open a major blood vessel. If the blow overcomes Armor Points and injures the target, the defender must make an opposed roll of Endurance against the original attack roll. If the defender fails, then they begin to bleed profusely. At the start of each Combat Round the recipient loses one level of Fatigue, until they collapse and possibly die. Bleeding wounds can be staunched by passing a First Aid skill roll, but the recipient can no longer perform any strenuous or violent action without re-opening the wound. See Blood Loss, page 106. For firearms, a Critical is needed to use this Special Effect.

**Blind Opponent.** On a Critical the defender briefly blinds his opponent by throwing sand, reflecting sunlight or some other tactic which briefly interferes with the attacker's vision. The attacker must make an opposed roll of his Evade skill

Special Effect	Offensive	Defensive	Specific Weapon Type	Specific Roll	Stackable
Accidental Injury		•		Attacker Fumbles	
Arise		•			
Bash	•		Bludgeoning		
Bleed	•		Cutting Weapons/Firearms		
Blind Opponent		•		Defender Criticals	
Bypass Armor	•			Attacker Criticals	•
Choose Location	•			See Description	
Circumvent Parry	•			Attacker Criticals	
Damage Weapon	•	•			
Disarm Opponent	•	•			
Drop Foe	•		Firearms Only		
Duck Back	•		Firearms Only		
Enhance Parry		•		Defender Criticals	
Entangle	•	•	Entangling Weapons		
Force Failure	•	•	Opponent Fumbles		
Grip	•		Unarmed		
Impale	•		Impaling Weapons		
Kill Silently	•		Small Weapons	See description	
Marksman	•		Ranged Weapons Only		
Maximise Damage	•			Attacker Criticals	•
Pin Down	•		Ranged Weapons Only		
Prepare Counter		•			•
Rapid Reload	•	•			•
Scar Foe	•	•	Bladed Weapons Only		
Select Target		•		Attacker Fumbles	
Slip Free		•		Defender Criticals	
Stun Location	•		Bludgeoning Weapons		
Sunder	•		Two Handed Weapons		
Trip Opponent	•	•			
Withdraw		•			
Weapon Malfunction		•	Firearms only	Attacker Fumbles	

against the defender's original parry roll. If the attacker fails he suffers a situational modifier of *Hard* or *Formidable* for the next 1d3 turns, depending on the method of blinding.

**Bypass Armor.** On a critical the attacker finds a gap in the defender's natural or worn armor. If the defender is wearing armor above natural protection, then the attacker must decide which of the two is bypassed. This effect can be stacked to bypass both. For the purposes of this effect, physical protection gained from magic is considered as being worn armor.

**Choose Location.** The attacker may freely select the location where the blow lands, as long as that location is normally within sight (or reach, if in close combat). If using ranged weapons Choose Location is a Critical Success only, unless the target is within close range and is either stationary or unaware of the attacker.

**Circumvent Parry.** On a hand-to-hand critical the attacker may completely bypass an otherwise successful parry.

**Damage Weapon.** Permits the character to damage his opponent's weapon as part of an attack or parry. The targeted weapon uses its own Armor Points for resisting the damage. If reduced to zero Hit Points the weapon breaks. Ranged weapons require a critical to damage a weapon.

**Disarm Opponent.** The character shoots, yanks or twists the opponent's weapon out of his hand. The opponent must make an opposed roll of his Combat Style against the character's original roll. If the recipient of the disarm loses, his weapon is flung a distance equal to the roll of the disarmer's Damage Modifier in meters; or, if in close combat, he may seize the weapon from the opponent. If there is no Damage Modifier then the weapon drops at the disarmed person's feet. The comparative size of the weapons affects the roll. Each step that the disarming character's weapon is larger increases the difficulty of the opponent's roll by one grade. Conversely each step the disarming character's weapon is smaller, makes the difficulty one grade easier. Disarming works only on creatures of up to twice the attacker's STR.

**Drop Foe.** *Firearms.* Assuming the target suffers at least a minor wound from a shot, they are forced to make an opposed test of their Endurance against the attacker's hit roll. Failure indicates that the target succumbs to shock and pain, becoming incapacitated and unable to continue fighting. Recovery from incapacitation can be performed with a successful First Aid check or healing magic. Otherwise the temporary incapacitation lasts for a period equal to one hour divided by the Healing Rate of the target.



**Duck back.** *Ranged Weapons.* This ranged special effect allows a shooter to immediately duck back into cover, without needing to wait for their next Turn to use the Take Cover action. The character must be already standing or crouching adjacent to some form of cover to use Duck Back.

**Enhance Parry.** On a critical the defender manages to deflect the entire force of an attack, no matter the Size of his weapon.

**Entangle.** Allows a character wielding an entangling weapon, such as a whip or net, to immobilise the location struck. An entangled arm cannot use whatever it is holding; a snared leg prevents the target from moving; whilst an enmeshed head, chest or abdomen makes all skill rolls one grade harder. On his following turn the wielder may spend an Action Point to make an automatic Trip Opponent attempt. A victim can attempt to free himself on his turn by either attempting an opposed roll using Brawn to yank free, or win a Special Effect and select Damage Weapon, Disarm Opponent or Slip Free.

**Force Failure.** Used when an opponent fumbles, the character can combine Force Failure with any other Special Effect which requires an opposed roll to work. Force Failure causes the opponent to fail his resistance roll by default – thereby automatically be disarmed, tripped, etc.

**Grip.** Provided the opponent is within the attacker’s Unarmed Combat reach, he may use an empty hand (or similar limb capable of gripping) to hold onto the opponent, preventing them from being able to disengage from combat. The opponent may attempt to break free on his turn, requiring an opposed roll of either Brawn or Unarmed against whichever of the two skills the gripper prefers.

**Impale.** Roll weapon damage twice, with the attacker choosing which of the two results to use for the attack. If armor is penetrated and causes a wound, then assuming it is a melee weapon, the attacker has the option of leaving the weapon in the wound, or yanking it free on their next turn. Leaving the weapon in the wound inflicts a difficulty grade on the victim’s future skill attempts. The severity of the penalty depends on the size of both the creature and the weapon impaling it, as listed on the Impale Effects Table in the sidebar. For simplicity’s sake, further impalements with the same sized weapon inflict no additional penalties. To withdraw an impaled weapon during melee requires use of the Ready Weapon combat action. The wielder must pass an unopposed Brawn roll (or win an opposed Brawn roll if the opponent resists). Success pulls the weapon free, causing further injury to the same location equal to half the normal damage roll for that weapon, but without any damage modifier. Failure implies that the weapon remained stuck in

Impale Effects

Foe SIZ	Small Weapons	Medium Weapons	Large Weapons	Huge Weapons	Enormous Weapons
1-10	Formidable	Herculean	Hopeless	Hopeless	Hopeless
11-20	Hard	Formidable	Herculean	Hopeless	Hopeless
21-30	No Effect	Hard	Formidable	Herculean	Hopeless
31-40	No Effect	No Effect	Hard	Formidable	Herculean
41-50	No Effect	No Effect	No Effect	Hard	Formidable
Each +10	Follow table progression				

the wound with no further effect, although the wielder may try again on their next turn. Specifically barbed weapons (such as harpoons) inflict normal damage. Armor does not reduce withdrawal damage. Whilst it remains impaled, the attacker cannot use his impaling weapon for parrying.

**Kill Silently.** Restricted to those trained with the Assassination benefit. It allows the attacker to neutralise a victim in complete silence, stabbing, shooting or garrotting them. This prevents the victim from crying out or otherwise raising an alarm. Kill Silently can only be used on a surprised opponent and only on the first attack against them.

**Marksman.** *Firearms.* Permits the shooter to move the Hit Location struck by his shot by one step, to an immediately adjoining body area. Physiology has an effect on what can be re-targeted and common sense should be applied. Thus using this Special Effect on a humanoid would permit an attacker who rolled a leg shot, to move it up to the abdomen instead. Conversely shooting a bear in the chest would permit selection of the forelegs or head.

**Maximise Damage.** On a critical the character may substitute one of his weapon's damage dice for its full value. For example a gun which normally does 1d6 damage would instead be treated as a 6, whereas a great club with 2d6 damage would instead inflict 1d6+6 damage. This special effect may be stacked. Although it can also be used for natural weapons, Maximise Damage does not affect the Damage Modifier of the attacker, which must be rolled normally.

**Pin Down.** *Firearms.* This firearm Special Effect forces the target to make an opposed test of their Willpower against the attacker's hit roll. Failure means that the target hunkers down behind whatever cover is available and cannot return fire on their next Turn. Note that Pin Down works even if no actual damage is inflicted on the target (perhaps due to a successful evasion or shots striking their cover instead), as it relies on the intimidation effect of gunfire passing very close by. Although a pinned victim is unable to fire back for the requisite time, they can perform other actions provided they do not expose themselves to fire in the process, such as crawling away to new cover, communicating with others, reloading a weapon and so on.

**Prepare Counter.** The defender reads the patterns of his foe and preplans a counter against a specific Special Effect (which should be noted down in secret). If his opponent attempts to inflict the chosen Special Effect upon him during the fight, the defender instantly substitutes the attacker's effect with one of his own, which succeeds automatically.

**Rapid Reload.** *Ranged Weapons.* When using a ranged weapon, the attacker



reduces the reload time for the next shot by one. This effect can be stacked.

**Scar Foe.** The combatant inflicts his opponent with a scar that will be the talk of all for the rest of his or her life – such as an almost-severed-throat, or a facial scar.

**Select Target.** When an attacker fumbles, the defender may maneuver or deflect the blow in such a way that it hits an adjacent bystander instead. This requires that the new target is within reach of the attacker's weapon, or in the case of a ranged attack, is standing along the line of fire. The new victim is taken completely by surprise by the unexpected accident and has no chance to avoid the attack which automatically hits. In compensation however, they suffer no special effect.

**Slip Free.** On a critical the defender can automatically escape being Entangled, Grippled or Pinned.

**Stun Location.** *Bludgeoning weapon.* The attacker can use a bludgeoning weapon to temporarily stun the body part struck. If the blow overcomes Armor Points and injures the target, the defender must make an opposed roll of Endurance vs. the original attack roll. If the defender fails, then the Hit Location is incapacitated for a number of turns equal to the damage inflicted. A blow to the torso causes the defender to stagger winded, only able to defend. A head shot renders the foe briefly insensible.

**Sunder.** *Close Combat.* The attacker may use a suitable weapon, such as an axe, to damage the armor or natural protection of an opponent. Any weapon damage, after reductions for parrying or magic, is applied against the Armor Point value of the protection. Surplus damage in excess of its Armor Points is then used to reduce the AP value of that armor(ed) location – ripping straps or tearing away the hide, scales or chitin of aliens. If any damage remains after the protection has been reduced to zero AP, it carries over onto the Hit Points of the location struck.

**Trip Opponent.** The character attempts to overbalance or throw his opponent to the ground. The opponent must make an opposed roll of his Brawn, Evade or Acrobatics against the character's original roll. If the target fails, he falls prone. Quadruped opponents (or creatures with even more legs) may substitute their Athletics skill for Evade and treat the roll as one difficulty grade easier.

**Withdraw.** The defender may automatically withdraw out of reach, breaking off engagement with that particular opponent.

**Weapon Malfunction.** *Firearms.* When attacker fumbles, this Special Effect can be used by the target. Attacker's weapon is useless, until time can be spent to clean it. Used for firearms only.



## Simplified Combat

Combat is downplayed in some campaigns and the rules as written may feel too bulky at times. Below is a set of alternate rules to streamline fights, making them quicker and easier to comprehend. Read the full rules first for full understanding.

Combat is slightly less lethal in this version. One shot will not incapacitate a character quite as often, but Special Effects like Drop Foe will still make many gunfights short and dangerous.

As the group starts feeling comfortable with the simplified rules, you may want to switch to the regular ruleset. For even more detail, use the full *Mythras* rules.

### COMBAT ACTIONS

The combat actions listed below are mainly used, but Use Power, Struggle and so on can be used if applicable.

**Attack.** Regular attack.

**Move.** A distance the GM judges as reasonable under the circumstances.

**Regain Footing.** Roll Brawn or Athletics to get up after Trip Opponent.

**Sneak Peek.** Assess situation without becoming a target.

**Evade.** Character ends up prone. Use Regain Footing or Arise to get up.

**Parry.** Used only with melee weapons. See weapon sizes to determine how much damage that can be absorbed. 1 step smaller stops half the damage, 2 steps smaller will not stop any damage.

**Take cover.** The character gets behind something (not prone). Used as a reactive action (*ie.* characters can dive for cover after someone shoots at them).

### HIT POINTS & WOUND LEVELS

In simplified combat, general Hit Points are used and is calculated as  $(CON+SIZE)/2$ . Hit Locations are not used. When Hit Points are halved, the character gains a serious wound; see below.

As Hit Locations are not used, wounds work a bit differently – the same terms are used however.

**Minor wounds.** All damage above half Hit Points.

#### *Partial Cover for Simplified Combat*

*Below are some typical penalties when firing at someone in partial cover and Hit Locations are not used.*

- » *Upper body visible: Hard*
- » *Head + Shoulders: Formidable*
- » *Leaning out from cover to fire: Formidable*

#### *Mook Rules*

*In many scenarios, less important NPCs – like security guards and thugs – will be encountered by the characters. Most of them will fall under the Mook Rules. These rules state that unimportant, low-level NPCs stop fighting after being hit once. If they can, they flee. Otherwise they fall down, probably unconscious.*

**Serious wound.** When Hit Points are halved or lower. No attacks possible for 1d3 rounds. All skill checks are at a penalty of *Hard* until the wound is no longer serious.

**Major wound.** Zero Hit Points or lower. Character is dead or dying. If the character fails a roll against their Endurance they are killed instantaneously. Otherwise they are incapacitated and require hospitalization before they die of shock or blood loss.

**Blown Away.** Negative Hit Points equal to Starting Hit Points. Instant death from excessive trauma.

### Healing

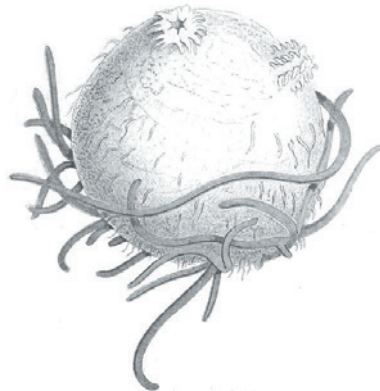
**Minor wounds.** Regain Hit Points equal to a character's Healing rate per day.

**Serious wounds.** Regain Hit Points equal to a character's Healing rate per week (until it reaches half the original value – from then on it heals as a Minor Wound). First Aid will restore a number of Hit Points equal to a character's Healing Rate right away.

**Major wound.** If not dead, First Aid will stabilise a dying character for a number of hours equal to their Healing Rate. Requires hospitalization or Medicine skill to treat.

### SPECIAL EFFECTS

A subset of 11 special effects are used in these simplified rules. They are listed in the sidebar. As you get used to them after a couple of fights, the speed of combat will increase. They do add a nice tactical element and it is well worth the effort to learn them. Cheat sheets for players are recommended!



#### *Special Effects (Simplified)*

1. Arise. *Get up from prone (without losing an action point).*
2. Blind opponent (*Critical only, Opposed*). *Make an opposed roll: Original roll vs Evade to avoid being blinded for 1d3 rounds.*
3. Disarm (*Critical only, Opposed*). *Make an opposed roll: Original roll vs Combat Style (new roll) to avoid dropping weapon.*
4. Drop foe (*Opposed, Firearms only*). *If the target takes at least one point of damage, make an opposed roll: Original attack roll vs Endurance to avoid shock/pain lasting 30 minutes or until First Aid or similar is used. Cannot fight during that time.*
5. Duck back (*Firearms only*). *Take cover right after attacking (not having to wait for the next action to use Take Cover).*
6. Impale. *Roll damage twice; attacker decides which roll to use.*
7. Maximize damage (*Critical only*). *One of the damage dice will count as its maximum value.*
8. Pin down (*Opposed, Firearms only*). *Make an opposed roll: Original attack roll vs Willpower to avoid bunkering down in full cover (no attack possible).*
9. Trip Opponent (*Opposed*). *Make an opposed roll: Original roll vs Brawn, Evade or Acrobatics to avoid ending up prone.*
10. Weapon Malfunction (*Fumble, Firearms only*). *When attacker fumbles, this special effect can be used by the target.*
11. Withdraw. *Defender automatically withdraws out of range.*

#### *The sphericon species on Sisymbrium*

*These large plants are found growing in the grasslands of Sisymbrium. Several different varieties exist, with the largest having a diameter of 3 metres. The long 'arms' are light and delicate, blowing in the wind like thick blades of grass. If the body is cut open, the interior is mostly empty but the thick shell can be eaten.*



## Setting the Scene

While investigating a mysterious theft, Lin Rode and Kry's Noim find themselves trapped in a smuggler's warehouse. As they examine the contents of some wooden crates stored in the large room, two thugs and their boss – Even Norup – discover them. All three carry guns. Lin and Kry's sprints further into the warehouse, only to run into a dead end. There is no way out. The moment they realise their mistake, the first thug fires his gun at them.

To set the scene of the battle, the warehouse interior needs a description. It is a simple wooden construction comprising one floor, a building type common in coastal villages all over Doggerland. The single room is 15 metres wide and 40 metres long, with beams exposed in the ceiling. Wooden crates are stacked in large groups – up to four metres in height – with just enough space between to allow one person to walk unhindered. Light bulbs throw sparse light down among the crates. Outside, night has fallen.

In game terms, this means any firearms work at short ranges. And there are plenty of opportunities for cover, hiding and surprise attacks.

As Lin and Kry's runs, the GM lets one thug start the fight. Thug A carries a .45 revolver, handling it at 40%. With moving targets and shooting from the hip, the GM deems it a Herculean shot (–80%). Only a 01–05 roll will hit. He rolls 1d100 and gets 15. Close, but not close enough. The bullet passes above Lin's head, disappearing into the darkness. The GM decides the other two villains hold their fire this pre-round.

Time for the players to act. Lin, not used to being shot at, throws herself behind a stack of crates next to the back wall. Kry's joins her and, to Lin's surprise, pulls out a small .32 automatic and hands over a knife.

Now, the first true round starts, in which everyone will act.

## COMBAT EXAMPLE

### Round I

All five participants roll 1d10 and add their Initiative Bonus. Kry's will act first (24), followed by Lin (20), Thug A (18), Thug B (14) and last Even Norup (13).

Kry's hears someone approaching quickly the same way he came and fires up the aisle. As he steps out to shoot, he sees Thug A 10 metres away – the other two have spread out. Kry's spends an Action Point and must fire rapidly (From the Hip) at 30% (Formidable Difficulty Grade) to act before the thug. Thug A also spends an Action Point and fires From the Hip at 10% and gains +10 to his Initiative. Both roll 1d100: Kry's a success at 27 and Thug A a miss at 71. Thus, Kry's earns a Special Effect. He chooses Drop Foe. Thug A makes his opposed Endurance roll: 52, a failure.

Kry's rolls 1d6 for damage: 6. Full damage! He rolls 1d20 for location: 7, abdomen. Thug A is reduced to zero in the abdomen and would normally have made an opposed Endurance roll. But as he already failed one, the GM rules him to be down the next 30 minutes (1 hour divided by Healing Rate 2) with a Serious Wound. The odds have been evened out.

Lin makes a successful Perception roll to find a steel rod, hoping to pry open a few rotten planks in the back wall.

Thug B hears his buddy going down, and the GM makes a Willpower roll to see if he rushes to his aid. The GM rolls 9, a clear success. Thug B stays his course down the aisle (a Move action).

Even Norup cares more about his own skin than his thug's. He spends his first Action Point on the Take Cover action. He steps in between a few crates and peers out.

Kry's spends his second Action Point on a Perception roll to assess the situation. He knows Thug A lies unconscious 8 metres away and now hears Thug B moving down the next aisle. But where is Even?

Lin picks up the steel rod (Ready Weapon).

Thug B moves down the aisle, getting a clear shot at Kry's and Lin with his next Action Point.

Even Norup rolls Perception to locate everyone. He succeeds and realises he can move towards Kry's and Lin again, without exposing himself.

### Round II

Kry's has a new plan. He moves towards Thug A's body and gestures at Lin to follow.

Lin ignores Kry's for the moment and spends a Luck Point to have a few planks being rotten (a free action) and then pries at them with the rod. She needs no skill roll, but the GM rules it will take 1d3+1 Rounds to have a hole large enough to slip through. She rolls 2: it will take her two Rounds to break out.



Thug B rounds the corner and sees Lin demolishing the wall. Too eager, he fires From the Hip (at Formidable) and will only hit on 01-05. He rolls 93 and misses by a wide margin. (As the GM did not know he would use From the Hip, he missed the +10 boost to Initiative).

Even Norup spends his first Action Point on Move, approaching Kry's and Lin. He hopes to catch them in crossfire from Thug B.

Kry's picks up Thug A's revolver.

Lin spends her second Action Point on Take Cover and throws herself out of sight from Thug B, in the same direction as Kry's.

Thug B moves and will get a clear view of Kry's and Lin with his next action.

Even Norup makes another Move action, rounding the corner in his next action. Will he fire by accident at Thug B?

### Round III

Kry's goes all out and fires both guns down the aisle, hoping to pin down the pursuers (Pin Down Special Effect). In a normal case, Dual Firearms has a Formidable Difficulty Grade. But as he is firing at wide target – the back wall – the GM removes the penalty. Kry's rolls 55 and 68, both successes (spending both his Action Points at once, leaving him unprotected the rest of the Round). Thug B and Even Norup fails their Willpower rolls and dare not move from their shelters.

Lin sprints between the crates, towards the exit, spending both her Action Points – no villains between her and freedom any longer.

Thug B and Even Norup dithers in cover by the back wall, wasting their second Action Points (daring fighters would have risked at least a Sneak Peek here).

### Round IV

Kry's turns and zigzags down the narrow aisle as best he can.

Lin reaches the exit and runs outside, into the dark.

Even Norup performs a Sneak Peek (a successful Perception roll), seeing Kry's running with one gun in each hand and Thug A down (dead?), blood on the floor.

Thug B loses his temper and fires after Kry's, to no avail. With a running target, his chance of striking is only 01-05, but he rolls 90. A clear miss.

### Conclusion

The GM decides the fight is over. Kry's reaches the exit and finds Lin waiting outside. He hands her the revolver and they run, sheltered by the darkness, back to where they left the car. Finally, Lin gets to show off her car racing skills. The safety of Glimminge awaits them.

In just four Rounds and a single hit the fight is over. No one died, one villain received a Serious Wound and our investigators got away unscathed. Good tactics were used, but nothing overly heroic. Still, the players found it thrilling and will be better prepared next time. For Even Norup will surely strike back.

### Combat Stats

#### Lin

Initiative Bonus 14

Combat Style (Self Defence) 63% (Pistol, Knife)  
Knife, 1d4 damage

Evade 26%. Endurance 30%

Hit Points 11

#### Kry's

Initiative Bonus 15

Combat Style (Street Fighter) 70% (Pistol, Knife, Unarmed)

Automatic .32, 1d6 damage

Evade 45%. Endurance 40%

Hit Points 10

#### Even Norup

Initiative Bonus 12

Combat Style (Smuggler) 60% (Pistol)

Automatic .45, 1d8 damage

Evade 25%. Endurance 25%

Hit Points 12

#### Thug A

Initiative Bonus 10

Combat Style (Thug) 40% (Pistol, Unarmed)

Revolver .45, 1d8 damage

Evade 30%. Endurance 40%

Hit Points 11

#### Thug B

Initiative Bonus 9

Combat Style (Thug) 35% (Pistol, Unarmed)

Revolver .32, 1d6 damage

Evade 30%. Endurance 30%

Hit Points 13

# Spot Rules

**M**ANY DIFFERENT THINGS CAN OCCUR DURING A GAME. Some are resolved through skill use or one of the major game mechanics such as combat; others require their own rules for adjudication. This chapter provides rules and guidance for a variety of different scenarios that Game Masters and players will encounter whilst playing *Odd Soot*.

## Fatigue

Fatigue measures tiredness and its incremental effects. It is used to track many different things from strenuous activity to the debilitating effects of disease.

The primary way of accruing Fatigue is by engaging in some form of physical activity. The more arduous the exercise or work, the more quickly it tires the character. At the Game Master's discretion, characters must make an appropriate skill roll – either Athletics, Brawn or Endurance – to resist gaining a level of Fatigue.

Every failed roll accrues a level of Fatigue. Each level of Fatigue carries penalties for skill use, movement, Initiative and Action Points. Asphyxiation, Blood Loss and other setting dependent effects also contribute to Fatigue accrual.

For most characters, activities of any kind become near impossible when the level of Incapacitated is reached. At this stage the character is still conscious but incapable of anything but the most desperate of activities.

Beyond Incapacitated, characters cannot act at all. The Fatigue levels – Semi-Conscious, Comatose and Dead – are generally reserved for measuring the most extreme effects of suffocation, disease, blood loss, starvation, exposure and so forth.

## ASPHYXIATION

Characters can hold their breath for a number of seconds equal to their Endurance skill. However the character must be prepared (filling the lungs with as much air as possible); if not, then the period is halved if the character was in a passive situation, or reduced to one fifth if the character was engaged in strenuous activity.

Once the period of held breath is over, characters must make an Endurance roll every Combat Round; see sidebar for results.

Without aid, death from asphyxiation is usually swift. If the asphyxiation ends before the character dies, they recover Fatigue levels lost.

### *Asphyxiation Endurance Rolls*

- » *If the roll is a critical success, no further deterioration occurs.*
- » *If the roll is successful, the character accrues an extra level of Fatigue.*
- » *If the roll fails, the character sustains 1d2 extra levels of Fatigue that round.*
- » *If the roll is fumbled, the character sustains 1d3 extra levels of Fatigue that round.*

## EXPOSURE TO VACUUM

If suddenly exposed to vacuum, characters first roll 1d4 for decompression damage to the lungs (Chest location), then they roll for asphyxiation as normal, plus 1d2 hit point damage per round (random locations).

### Fatigue Levels

	Skill Grade	Movement	Initiative	Action Points	Recovery Period
<b>Fresh</b>			No Penalties		
<b>Winded</b>	Hard	No Penalty	No Penalty	No Penalty	15 minutes
<b>Tired</b>	Hard	-1 meter	No Penalty	No Penalty	3 hours
<b>Wearied</b>	Formidable	-2 meters	-2	No Penalty	6 hours
<b>Exhausted</b>	Formidable	Halved	-4	-1	12 hours
<b>Debilitated</b>	Herculean	Halved	-6	-2	18 hours
<b>Incapacitated</b>	Herculean	Immobile	-8	-3	24 hours
<b>Semi-Conscious</b>	Hopeless	No Activities Possible	No Activities Possible	No Activities Possible	36 hours
<b>Comatose</b>	No Activities Possible	No Activities Possible	No Activities Possible	No Activities Possible	48 hours
<b>Dead</b>			—		

Falling Distance Table

Distance Fallen	Damage Taken
1m or less	No damage.
2m to 5m	1d6 points of damage to a random location
6m to 10m	2d6 points of damage to two locations
11m to 15m	3d6 points of damage to three locations
16m to 20m	4d6 points of damage to four locations
Each +5m	+1d6 damage

### Jumping

A successful Athletics roll allows one to jump up to *SIZ* x20 centimeters horizontally or up to *SIZ* x10 centimeters vertically (with at least a five meters run-up available).

For every full 20% a character has in Athletics, he can add an extra meter to a horizontal jump.

On a critical success the character adds a further meter to his total distance, and remains upright on landing.

A fumbled roll indicates the character has landed awkwardly. He must immediately make an Endurance roll. If the Endurance roll is a success 1 point of damage is sustained to one leg. If the Endurance test fails, then 1d4 points of damage is inflicted instead.

## BLOOD LOSS

Blood loss due to external and internal wounds, usually sustained in combat, can wear a character down very quickly. Its effects are measured by the accumulation of Fatigue levels, in a manner similar to asphyxiation. Unrestrained blood loss typically results in death without some form of medical attention. Unlike asphyxiation, the effects of serious blood loss on Fatigue are enduring. A character recovers Fatigue lost to bleeding at a rate of one level per day, starting the day after his exsanguinations cease.

## Falling

The amount of damage suffered in a fall depends on the distance of the drop (see sidebar). Armor points do not reduce falling damage, but the Damage Modifier of the falling character or creature applies to damage rolls.

### FALLING FROM A MOVING VEHICLE

Damage sustained from a fall from a moving vehicle, such as a automobile, depends on the vehicle's speed and the distance fallen. For *SPEED* values used in the chapter on Mechanical Arts, this means 1d6 per every point of *SPEED* (if the vehicle is moving at top speed). Otherwise, assume that the speed, in meters per Combat Round, is equal to half the height shown on the Falling Distance table. For instance, a character who fell from a car moving at 20m per Combat Round would suffer 2d6 damage to two random locations.

### FALLING AND ACROBATICS

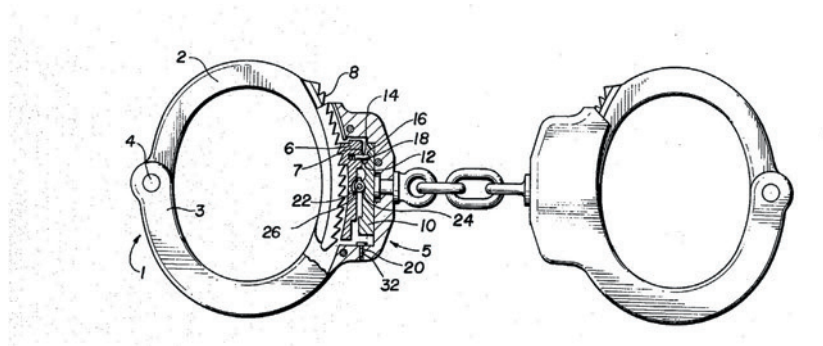
Acrobatics can be used to mitigate falling damage – a successful roll allows the character to treat the fall as if it were two meters shorter than it actually is. In addition, as long as the roll is successful and the character does not suffer a Serious or Major wound due to the fall, the character lands relatively safely and is not prone.

## Fires

Fires are always a source of danger when used as a weapon or rage out of control. The Fire Intensity table below gives five different intensities for heat damage, with some examples. The damage inflicted per round is given in the Damage column. Being relatively small, Intensity 1 and 2 sources apply their damage to a single Hit

Location, usually that touching the source. Intensity 3 and 4 sources are larger, applying damage to nearest  $1d4+1$  Hit Locations, indicating the degree of radiant heat. Intensity 5 sources affect all Hit Locations simultaneously.

Fire has the ability to ignite flammable materials. If not extinguished immediately such materials combust within a number of rounds as indicated by the fire's Intensity. Once ignited, flammable materials burn until physically extinguished. Damage is applied directly to the Hit Points of the material, ignoring Armor Points, and to any flesh beneath. If left uncontrolled it spreads to a number of Hit Locations, per round, equal to its Intensity.



## Inanimate Objects

All inanimate objects possess Armor Points and Hit Points which are used to determine resistance to damage and destruction. Armor Points reduce damage before Hit Points are affected. Once an object's Hit Points have been reduced to zero, it is useless. Breakage attempts require a character to make a Brawn, Unarmed or Combat Style roll, as appropriate, to inflict damage. A success deals damage to the item.

### WEAPONS VS INANIMATE OBJECTS

Using a melee weapon against an inanimate object with Armor Points equal to or greater than those of the weapon deals damage to both the object and the weapon. For instance, using an axe on an iron door may damage the door, but the axe itself will be destroyed long before the iron door is. The Game Master should exercise discretion on which weapons or tools can affect which objects. A chisel, for example, is explicitly designed to carve wood or stone whilst a sword, although sharp, is not. The chisel would therefore not take damage from something it is attempting to carve whereas a sword most likely would.

Fire Intensity Table

Intensity	Examples	Time to Ignite	Dmg
1	Candle	$1d4$	$1d2$
2	Torch	$1d3$	$1d4$
3	Campfire	$1d2$	$1d6$
4	Conflagration	$1d2$	$2d6$
5	Volcanic lava	Instant	$3d6$

Example Inanimate Objects

Object	Armor Points	Hit Points
Chain/shackle	8	8
Handcuffs	7	6
Lamp post	8	15
Glass window	1	4
Steel door	12	30
Rope	6	3
Wooden chair	2	6
Wooden table	3	10
Wooden door	4	15
Interior wall	3	20
Brick wall	6	30
Concrete wall	8	40
Steel beam	12	50
Tree trunk	6	50

# Denizens

FOR 40 YEARS HUMANITY HAS LIVED side-by-side with four major alien species. Their looks, behaviour and thinking goes beyond anything human-kind ever encountered before. Their intelligence and technology are on a par with, or surpasses, humanity's. However, despite all of them have been space farers once, they have had almost no access to interstellar travel during the last 200 years. Ever since the Luminarians left Comae Space.

Finding a universe filled with intelligent life was shocking to most humans in the 1880s. Now, with half a century together, most of the novelty has worn off. Even if aliens are still not an everyday sight on Eorthe, all life-forms are represented on many of the Comae Space worlds. Several life-forms are present, often dominated by the species that originally inhabited or colonised the world. The legacy of the Luminarians has resulted in a peaceful co-existence. All four main species mix without definite borders, neither in space nor on the ground.

Relations are far from conflict free, however. Especially the Eldirerrr and a newly encountered fifth species, the Crisg'tu, cause trouble wherever they show up. Both are feared. While the Eldirerrr have become accepted members of the interstellar community, the Crisg'tu appear as veritable war mongers. So far, little is known about them.

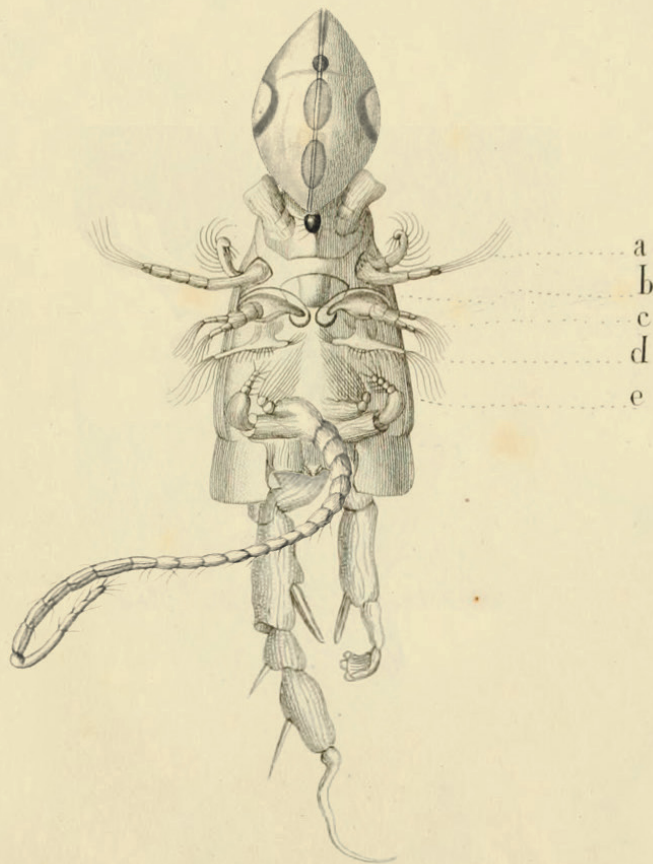
Despite the differences between the species, one thing unites them; The Soot affects them all. It has the same disastrous effects. Biological differences do not matter. The madness and gruesome death of the infected strikes everyone. All are equals when faced with The Soot.



*Karyn Oakley, xeno-ethnologist. 1921.*



F. 3.



# Nuveri

## *Fragility & Regeneration*

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### Nuveri

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<b>STR</b>	1d3+3	(4-5)	<b>HP 6</b>
<b>CON</b>	1d3+3	(4-5)	<b>PP 11</b>
<b>SIZ</b>	1d6+5	(8)	
<b>DEX</b>	3d6	(11)	<b>Move 10</b>
<b>INT</b>	3d6	(11)	<b>AP 0/2</b>
<b>POW</b>	3d6	(11)	
<b>CHA</b>	2d6	(7)	

**Weapons:** Sting (POT 5) 75%, Grapple (1d4) 65%, Trip (1d4) 65%

**Skills:** Boating, Commerce, Craft (Storytelling), Engineering (Waterways), Influence, Insight

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**Origin:** Corinthi

**Strangeness:** 30

**Biome:** Shallow waters and shorelines

**Communication:** Surprisingly human voices, though a bit thin and reedy

**Tech Level:** 4 (Early Industrial). No functional starships

**Law Level:** 8

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**Demeanour:** Bargaining, peaceful, neurotic

**Professions:** Trader, Water Scientist/Engineer, Hunter-Fisher-Farmer, Boatsman, Lawyer, Diplomat, Administrator/Accountant, Weaver, Industrial Worker (Weaving).

**Circles:** Water Communes, Trading Companies, Children of the Waters

**Passions:** Drive a good bargain, No touching, Fear violence, Anything can be bought and sold

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What does extreme fragility do to a life form?

It depends not so much on the life-form itself but on the world surrounding it. The Nuveri are made of a material perhaps best described as paper. It is not unlike the mixture of wood and spittle wasps use to build their nests, only somewhat sturdier. This makes them perfect floaters – as most life-forms on Corinthi. With a benign nature around them and threats also frail, fragility is not as terrible as it first appears. Not until they encounter violent alien species.

### REGENERATION

Further back than they remember, the Nuveri have had a unique regenerative ability. It is also the most probable reason for the species to gain evolutionary dominance on Corinthi. While their bodies have remained fragile, their heads are more sturdy (AP 2). As long as the head is intact, it can be removed in a surgical procedure. Then it can be put on top of an empty paper body. Over several months, the loose nerve ends of the head grow down into the new body. Nerves and other tissues find their way through the physiological structures, until it has all grown back.

Kept deep inside the Nuveri's labyrinthine dwellings, in the stillness of a shrine, these Growers remain in a trance-like state during the entire regrowth. According to Skreeder Shamans, their souls still wander during their rehabilitation. Shamans in deep meditation often encounter them during their spirit journeys.

This adds up to a resilience not expected from a tenuous life-form. They fear death, in particular dying alone, but a certain death-defying attitude can show up. An attitude very unexpected from a fragile and jittery being.

### A TABOO & THE SOOT

The Nuveri have a strict taboo against physical violence, stemming from their fragility. To not harm each other by mistake, they even avoid standing too close. They prefer not to touch if they can avoid it. For Nuveri on other worlds this presents quite a challenge. They will often appear nervous, always on the look-out for threats. Navigating bustling streets on Eorthe is often avoided altogether.

The Soot infects the Nuveri just as all other life forms in Comae Space. Their paper bodies blacken and their minds dissolve into madness. A paradox reaches deep into the core of Nuveri culture. The infected can, early during the infection,

be cured by transplanting the head onto a new body. However, because of the taboo against physical violence, no one wants to perform the procedure. Cutting off a head from an individual is such a horrendous act, that society as a whole reel at the thought. The role of someone accepting it is even worse than a medieval executioner on Eorthe.

## WATER

A relaxed Nuveri is a Nuveri floating in warm water. Listening to a storyteller weaving yet another version of its favourite tale. Water is everywhere and everything in Nuveri society. They traditionally feed by floating in shallow waters. They grow their vegetables in pools. All their transportation use rafts pulled by the Drell and pools of water fill large parts of their dwellings.

Nations do not exist but society is organised into Water Communes. The Nuveri use them for all cooperative decisions. Communes are arranged around bodies of water (lakes, canals and pools) and their original purpose was to divide water resources among families.

The Nuveri are also terrific water engineers. Complex systems of pools and canals are used to regulate water levels in different areas. Also, most of the Nuveri's energy come from well-placed water wheels.

## LABYRINTH

The Nuveri's dwellings have a wondrous labyrinthine quality to them. Walls consist of algae varying in red, green and brown hues. Floors are left natural or covered in shallow water. The thickness of the woven walls varies from semi-transparent films up to soft, vertical rugs, 50 centimetres thick. All are formed in a maze of streets, corridors and rooms – sometimes flat-roofed, but often open to the sky.

The labyrinthine structure serves a clear purpose. It offers privacy and security in a society without doors. Predators are kept out and children in. The path from a busy main street to a family home is often difficult for a human to remember.

## TRADE

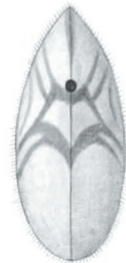
The Nuveri economy is based on trade. It shares many economic concepts with humans. Except that moral has almost no impact on their willingness to sell anything to anyone.

Weaving is the most important manufacturing process. It is an emerging industry for the Nuveri. They assemble plant materials in inventive combinations and

### *Nuveri on Other Worlds*

*The Nuveri can be found on almost every world in Comae Space. Their trade brought them to every inhabited planet and when the Luminarian ships slowly began to fall apart there was not room enough for everyone to get home again. They gradually settled in their new homes, often becoming an integral part of their new societies.*

*They have also populated four colonies: Antini, Beta Rasii, Caeli and Ithacae.*



*Alternate head markings of the Nuveri.*

### **Potential Conflicts**

*In Nuveri society everything is up for sale without clear ethical boundaries. If Eorthblings pay well for an exotic drug, the Nuveri are more than willing to provide it. The question of legality is solved by handing money to the right people.*

*The taboo against violence will make Nuveri society seem very peaceful, at first glance, but this will not stop them from intriguing or using their best negotiators to pressure an opponent.*

*Children of the Waters are also a source of potential conflict. Spreading fast in an underground manner, they can turn into a considerable force. If necessary, they will use the power of their numbers to deal with the current situation.*

*It can also be interesting for a GM to introduce small acts of violence in an otherwise non-violent society. What would happen if, for example, a serial killer struck on Corinthbi*

### **Storytelling**

*Storytelling is the great art of the Nuveri. Listening to their soft, rasping voices while sitting in the warm shallow waters on a long summer evening is bliss for the soul. Many traditional stories are retold again and again, always with new twists and additions.*

### **Water Culture**

*The Nuveri bring their water culture wherever they go. They build shallow indoor pools, erect baths in towns they live in and even convert entire starship decks to hold water. If possible, they also cherish bathing in zero G water bubbles.*

*When travelling with star liners they have a few options. At least, they require a stateroom with a bath. As it requires a first class ticket it is expensive but still manageable. A group of Nuveri will sometimes hire the entire swimming pool area of a big star liner. Not all shipping companies accept it but as it brings in a lot of cash, most will.*

*Nuveri baths on Eorthe fascinate many. These buildings, whether big or small, are filled with a sense of serenity not easily found elsewhere.*

use them for an array of products (from household objects, to rafts and building parts). The downside to this is the first generation of Nuveri industrial workers that are not content with their lives. A single man, LuuQi, has ignited a religious animism. Spirituality like this has never been seen before by the otherwise non-religious Nuveri.

o

**Economy.** Weaving a multitude of algae mixed with minerals and spittle is the main industry. It is also the source of most trading and is used for almost everything. Uses include starship repairs and underwater constructions.

**Food.** The Nuveri traditionally feed by floating on the surface of shallow waters. They graze underwater plants and use small arms to attract and catch small prey. The small prey attract larger animals that the ‘tail’ on the belly catches. Together with a poisonous sting on one foot, it is very efficient. When not in use, the Nuveri curl their tail in a spiral on the stomach. As food production is rationalised, the Nuveri build light rafts with lots of small ‘arms’ dangling from the bottom, catching prey on small hooks. They also grow a wide assortment of algae in shallow basins and channels.

*Typical Food:* Soft mixes of algae (green, brown, red, yellow), spaghetti-like dishes from algae threads and small chunks of water-dwelling creatures.

**Attachments.** The Nuveri’s attachment to their livestock, the Drell, is very close. They blend naturally with society. These three-legged, thin creatures wade in the waters, eating the Nuveri’s underwater predators and pulling their rafts. In return, the Nuveri tend to them and protect their young. The Drell are a common sight in all Nuveri-inhabited waters. In many families (very much resembling an extended human family) the Drell are both pet and workhorse, often allowed into the watery parts of the house.

**Belief.** Children of the Waters (or The Children) is an ideology unique to the Nuveri. It is a species normally without religion. Many found it shocking when the weaver LuuQi, 11 years ago, talked about every Nuveri’s deep-rooted contact with water. The basis for this is that a growing number of Nuveri are kept from the water to work the weaving machines. The ideas of LuuQi are spreading fast through a growing number of followers. They travel to new Communes to preach, often in secret.



**Socialising.** Spending time with a Nuveri bring out the nursing caretaker in many. You simply want them to calm down. Most humans avoid saying or doing anything that adds to their nervousity. At the same time they are phenomenal in striking a good deal, always driving their bargains hard.

**Naming Conventions.** The Nuveri use short, soft, round names with a second, sharper addition: HooGit, YtLuum, TiNou, UomQi.

*Sharp:* Vit, Ykk, Lik, Fec, Git, Yt, Ti, Qi, Roc.

*Soft:* Hee, Jou, Vyy, Nee, Loo, Luum, Nou, Uom, Hoo.

The soft parts of the names can often be traced back to the many words for water: quick water, shallow water, warm water and so on. The soft, mellow pronunciation is also related to the calming effect water in general has on the Nuveri.

### **Trade in Comae Space**

*As transportation is expensive, star liners provide for most of the trade between planets. Trade is small-scale and most products are highly refined. Products like machinery and rarities (food, crafts, luxury items) are most common. Dedicated cargo ships sometimes carry large amounts of low-grade goods, however, for special projects.*

*Traders handle payments with small engraved plates of titanium. Luminarians created them to streamline trade. As pure titanium is hard to create at current tech levels, the value of existing pieces remained stable over the centuries. Eldirerrr and Humans now produce small amounts of titanium but still at a high cost.*

### **Trade by Species**

*Eldirerrr sell exclusive foodstuff, metals, minerals, various chemicals, tools, pigments and machinery. They buy fine wood, oils and refined agricultural products.*

*Nuveri, the most avid traders in Comae Space, sell wood, oils, agricultural products and weaved goods. They buy metals, minerals and sometimes machinery. Their weaving techniques suit lightweight constructions and is strong and durable – even for starship repairs or underwater constructions – with the right combinations of algae, minerals and spittle.*

*Sumsum sell their time as servants. They get a regular salary but it is often quite low.*

*Aygaan buy metals and some tools. They sell nothing.*

*Humans sell metals, crafted wood, machinery and transportation between the stars. All species use human star liners and freighters. Eorthe buys machinery, refined agricultural products and a variety of crafts and minerals. Only humanity have successfully incorporated Luminarian unfolding devices into new starships.*

*Top: The Drell are a very common sight in Nuveri society, combining the role of pet and workhorse. There are at least nine different sub-species of Drell. Examples include two smaller species living in wetland forests in the northern parts and a deep-water swimmer called Den Drell.*



# Aygaan

## *Giants of Magic*

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### Aygaan

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<b>STR</b>	2d6+20	(27)	<b>HP 35</b>
<b>CON</b>	2d6+20	(27)	<b>PP 17</b>
<b>SIZ</b>	2d6+30	(37)	
<b>DEX</b>	3d6	(11)	<b>Move 10</b>
<b>INT</b>	2d6+12	(19)	<b>AP 4</b>
<b>POW</b>	3d6+6	(17)	
<b>CHA</b>	2d6	(7)	

**Weapons:** Grapple 85%, Throw 70%, Crush 90%, Unarmed 75%

**Skills:** Craft (Any), Fishing, Gardening, Hunting, Insight, Knowledge (Any), Navigate, Perception, Science (Magic), Singing, Swim, Willpower

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**Origin:** Comae

**Strangeness:** 30

**Biome:** Coastal areas

**Communication:** Speaks with deep voices through the blow-hole on the middle of the body

**Tech Level:** 2 (Medieval). Operates unknown number of Luminarian starships

**Law Level:** 8

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**Demeanour:** Quiet, slow, friendly, wise

**Professions:** Gardener-Fisher-Hunter, Medical Doctor, Writer, Scholar, Seeker

**Circles:** Every village is a Circle

**Passions:** Justice, Help the weak & poor, Find knowledge, Explore, Find the source of all magic, Discover new magic, Ascetism, Slowness

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The Aygaan were the first alien life-forms to be encountered by humans. These peaceful giants stand three metres tall, with massive, asymmetrical bodies. They use medieval technology and practice potent magic. Their elders, the rare Seekers, travel farther than any other species, long outside Comae Space.

### MEDIEVAL DWELLINGS

Comae, the home world of the Aygaan, is cool and rainy and any inhabitants need sturdy shelters. Oceans dominate Comae and they are dotted by thousands of small islands, green and craggy. Along the coastlines, the Aygaan build small villages. They consist of simple stone houses, huddled together, with roofs of reed-like straw. Houses are big and sparsely furnished. An open fire is placed along one of the outer walls, a feature well needed during week-long autumn storms. Low stone walls enclose well-kept gardens, adding a wide range of vegetables to the dinner tables.

In places a large stone fort looms on top of a hill, overlooking the village and harbour below. The whole scene could be taken for medieval. The Aygaan do lead simple lives but only because they enjoy it. They do not appreciate technology but if useful they adopt it.

### ASCETISM

Ascetism, slowness and long thoughts are the core values of Aygaan society. Especially ascetism is rooted deep. You never see an Aygaan caring about money or material objects. They might appreciate well-made or beautiful things and sometimes form close ties to a few favourite belongings. However, owning things to signal status or for hoarding never occurs.

The slowness of the Aygaan is not a slowness of the mind. It is rather an unwillingness to be hasty. They think before they speak and it may take a while for them to answer. For the impatient, or when alien etiquette is called for, this can cause problems.

### PEACE

The Aygaan are a peaceful species but if provoked they are fearsome to behold. They go into a furious rage, using their weight, strength and long reach to wreak havoc. Their single large tentacle can easily strangle, crush and throw most op-





### *Seeker Stats*

*For an Aygaan turned Seeker, stats and skills increase. It also gains psionic powers. POW and INT increase by 20. Ageing is slowed, making their lifespan approximately doubled (around 500 years). 250 additional points can be spent on skills. They will generally have high values in Sing, Perception, Craft (Any), Astrogration and fighting skills. Additionally, most Seekers will have Pilot (Starship).*

*The psionic powers of Seekers are in many ways incomprehensibly powerful. Spend 250 points on any of the spells in the Magic chapter – and probably a few not listed too.*

*Keep in mind that the Power Point value also is raised, reflecting the higher POW.*

### *Aygaan on Other Worlds*

*The Aygaan are a rare sight on other planets. In general, only Seekers feel the urge to leave Comae. These individuals stay from a few weeks to several years, mostly keeping to themselves. They often undertake explorations, visit archives and libraries and corresponds with expertise in various fields. Their magic powers are seldom used in public but there have been cases of Aygaan setting up clinics where they use their healing powers.*

*Due to their size, Aygaan will often have difficulties finding housing. On Eorthe, old industrial buildings or warehouses are sometimes used.*

ponents. Weapons are rarely used but if pressed they will use both impromptu weapons and various guns. A thick layer of blubber makes them hard to wound, adding to their reputation of being formidable opponents (and, as a result, they seldom have to fight).

## MAGIC

Now and then an ageing Aygaan becomes restless, making longer and longer journeys at sea. It seeks something it cannot explain. Simultaneously, its mental powers grow, changing it into a powerful magic user. It is turning into a Seeker. When Luminarians travelled Comae Space, the wandering Seekers explored space, taking them on long journeys far beyond the subsector. Starships were acquired from the Luminarians. This still makes them the most widely travelled species in Comae Space and the knowledge they collect during their travels is unique. It is not easily pried out, however.

No one knows how many Aygaans have left on these journeys. But occasionally an old Luminarian ship comes along with a single Aygaan onboard, visiting its home world for the first time in 100 years. It stays for a few months and then leave again without revealing much of its plans (if it has any).



**Food.** Bland seafood is always on the Aygaan menu. Days are spent harvesting and catching food, mixing ingredients from the oceans with home-grown vegetables. They use the over-sized arm with suction cups for catching small mammals (swimlings). The small arm is used for eating and other fine-manipulation tasks. The Aygaan prepare food with love and care, with plenty of time taken to collect the perfect ingredients.

A fact seldom mentioned by the Aygaan – doubtless because it is so natural to them – is the weak form of magic they use to attract the swimlings.

*Typical dishes:* Robust soups and stews, with little in the way of spices (but fresh herbs often grace their dishes). Food is often beige or brownish, combining algae, vegetables and swimling meat. Humans rarely enjoy it but most learn to eat it.

**Attachments.** The village collective is important to the Aygaan. They are asexual, do not form families and often live on their own. This means the village is the smallest unit in society. Attending village or multi-village gatherings (Tings) can be a strange experience to the outsider. Meetings start and end with long col-

lective chants (to blend their minds together, like a mental orchestra tuning before a concert) and discussions are unreasonably slow. Suddenly, agreements are in place with little effort. All non-Aygaan leave with a feeling that they somehow missed essential parts of the gathering.

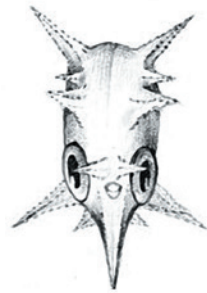
It is also common for an Aygaan to live by itself in an eremitage for some time. Often on a small isolated island, to clear the mind and for intense studies and meditation. For an aged Aygaan this might be a first sign that it is turning into a Seeker.

**Art.** The main art form of the Aygaan is long, heart-achingly beautiful solo chants, similar to the whales of Eorthe (a likeness that fascinates them). At the Tings and on other rare occasions the chant is a collective effort.

**Socialising.** Everyday chit-chat with an Aygaan is difficult. They are kind and helpful but on the silent side. Getting to know them is difficult. It takes something extra to go beyond the silent surface and meet the actual individual. But if you do, you are rewarded with lifelong friendship. It is a rare thing to spend time in an Aygaan stone house during late autumn storms in front of a warming fire, discussing the metaphysics of the cosmos.

**Naming Conventions.** The Aygaan have long names, unpronounceable by other species. Luckily, they are shortened for the convenience of others. Long double-vowels are very common: Oo, aa, uu, ee. Often surrounded by just a consonant or two: Tee, Ool, Raan, Loov.

The long names are compact versions of the life of the individual – and carry a lot of information to fellow Aygaans. This makes the Tings less complicated as everyone can readily tell the reason for an opinion just by hearing an individual's name.



### *Potential Conflicts*

*The Aygaan suffer from very few internal conflicts under normal circumstances. In exterior large-scale conflicts, there just might be disagreements on whether the Aygaan should side with the good forces or stay out of it altogether.*

### *Aygaan & The Soot*

*The Aygaan are affected by the Soot just like all other beings. But a few things set them apart. They seem to be more rarely infected and when they are, the process is much quicker. An infected individual will not live for more than a few weeks after being infected. During those weeks, they enter a stage of furious creative activity. They hardly sleep or eat and focus entirely on their creative work. It often consists of a combination of writing, drawing, mathematics and philosophy, combined into a highly complex fons mercurialis. Eventually, the mental changes become too contradicting to the Aygaan's inner self. They simply choose to end their own lives. Rumoured to swim as far and as deep as they can, they finally bring themselves to a final rest at the bottom of the ocean.*

*Typical Swimming in the North Shallows on Comae.*

# Eldirerrr

## *Cruel Scientists*

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### Eldirerrr

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<b>STR</b>	2d6+3	(10)	<b>HP 12</b>
<b>CON</b>	3d6	(11)	<b>PP 11</b>
<b>SIZ</b>	2d6+6	(13)	
<b>DEX</b>	3d6+3	(14)	<b>Move 12</b>
<b>INT</b>	2d6+6	(13)	<b>AP 6/8</b>
<b>POW</b>	3d6	(11)	
<b>CHA</b>	1d6	(3-4)	

**Weapons:** Bite 75% (1d4+1), Flintlock Pistol 60% (1d6+1, R=10m), Musket Rifle (1d10+4, R=50m), Electric Rifle (1d8+2, R=5m)

**Skills:** Astrogation, Craft (Cooking), Evade, Gardening (Subterranean) Mechanics, Medicine, Pilot (Starship), Science (Physics, Astronomy, Chemistry, Xeno-Biology)

---

**Origin:** Lacertae

**Strangeness:** 40

**Biome:** Dry, rocky terrain. Caves and tunnels.

**Communication:** High-pitched clicking and chirping.

**Tech Level:** 5 (Early Industrial). A few Luminarian starships are kept working (barely)

**Law Level:** 5

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**Demeanour:** Nonempathic, rational, pushy, rude, sadistic

**Professions:** Scientist, Scholar, Medical Engineer, Navigator/Starship Pilot, Diplomat, Intelligence Agent, Technician, Chef, Gardener (Subterranean)

---

The Eldirerrr are feared and hated throughout Comae Space. Their indifference to other's feelings, especially in their medical experiments, have led to many tragedies. They claim to do it for the advancement of science but that argument convinces no one. Certainly not the victims.

### VULNERABILITY

The tough armoured skin of the Eldirerrr is efficient for protection. The downside is that it is inflexible (except in the joints) and they must change it when they grow. They shed the old armour and, while waiting for the new skin to harden, their skin is soft and vulnerable. Traditionally, skin-changing individuals always withdrew, ashamed of their vulnerability.

This vulnerable state causes the main conflict in Eldirerrr society. The nonempathic outlook of armoured individuals versus an ideology that accepts the vulnerability in between skins and embraces empathy. The empathis are still a tiny minority but the issue stirs up deep feelings among the Eldirerrr.

A young Eldirerrr changes skin once a year and a mature individual every second year.

### SCIENCE

The Eldirerrr mind is focused on status and scientific research. This places them as the most advanced species, since the Luminarians left but only by a slim margin. They kept a few Luminarian starships working but many repairs are beyond their capacity. Their technological level is early industrial, similar to humanity's level in the 1920s.

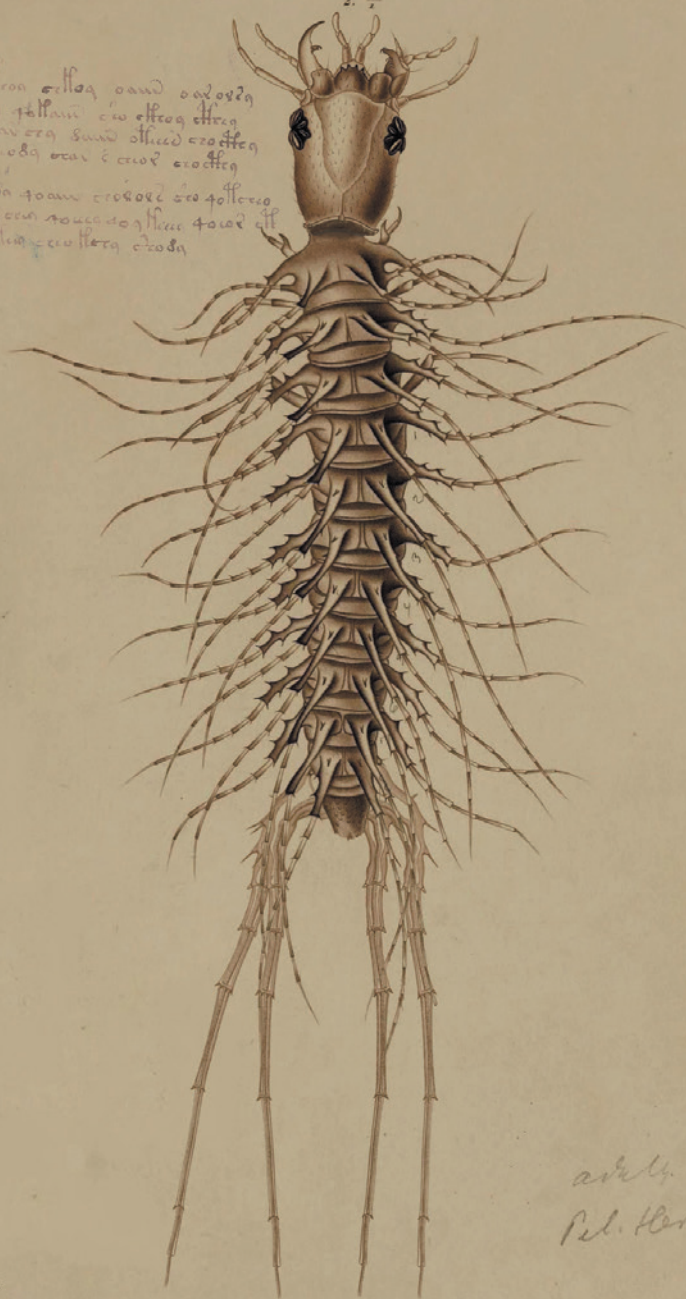
Combined with their strong nonempathic demeanour, their scientific mindset has led to shady medical research on other life-forms. Both on animals and other intelligent aliens. This makes the Eldirerrr unpopular and other species avoid them. And, if any Eldirerrr live nearby, folks keep their children indoors as a precaution.

During the worst Soot crises, 200 years ago, desperate researchers from all camps stretched ethics beyond its limits. But the Eldirerrr were by far the worst, especially with other alien species that were used in experiments. For example, parabiotic tests, where two living beings are merged surgically to share a circulatory system, were conducted. The idea was to identify how the Soot spreads. Tragically, nothing good came from the research and victims were never acknowledged.



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## FOOD

**Circles:** Pro-Empathy Movement, Guild of Starship Mechanics, Society of Medical Engineers, Navigator Guild

**Passions:** Grow/cook/eat delicious food, Eldirerr superiority, Scientific discovery, Despise weakness, Loyalty (Clan)

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### *Arms & Hands*

*Even though an Eldirerr has between 10 and 25 arms on each side of the body, only a few of them are used actively. Six arms on the upper part of the body can be finely controlled, while the rest of the arms have devolved over the millenia. The lower arms can be moved, but serve mostly as a decoration.*

*As the Eldirerr lack regular hands, multiple upper arms will often be involved in complex tasks, replacing the need for hands. The agile bending of the arms also help in this regard.*

### *Socialising*

*Spending time with an Eldirerr can be exhausting, especially if they are visiting new worlds. If you do not keep an eye on them, they will catch a butterfly, pull off its wings and dissect it. All in the name of science, of course. In combination with the sounds they utter whenever they are excited (best described as a mix of a cough, a snore and someone throwing up), it will soon turn out to be a disgusting scene.*

*As a result of the Soot crises, no outsiders are allowed to land on Lacertae, the Eldirerr's main planet. Very few non-Eldirerr have therefore seen the world and most facts about it come from older sources, sometimes recorded over 70 years ago.*

The Eldirerr elevate food – both growing and cooking it – to a sacred level. This is the closest they come to an art form and even spiritualism. Being herbivores, they live on fungi and lichens that grow on rocks and in caves, and they find it barbaric to eat meat. When accused of unethical research on living beings, they often point to the low death toll compared to an omnivore species.

With traditional tunnelling techniques, they create perfect biomes for the plants they grow. They control warmth and humidity to perfection in their underground growing chambers, often with ingenious mechanisms. After careful preparations, they cook and combine ingredients into amazing dishes, loved by both aliens and the Eldirerr. As some plants grow very slow, tending to them can be a cross-generational pursuit. This search for perfection borders on fanaticism, with individuals setting aside everything else to get a perfect crop.

*Typical Food:* Eating Eldirerr food is a culinary joy. It is always hard to classify courses and ingredients. But they often combine soft chunks, crunchy bits on the side and rich stews or soups. They prefer complex flavours, with unexpected clashes, but always balanced to merge into a coherent experience. Ish gerrr: A common everyday stew, served both as a simple meal and an exclusive delicacy, yellowish with small, crispy leafs.

o

**Dwellings.** The home world of the Eldirerr is dry and rocky. They live in natural stone towers, hollowed out through generations. As technology improved, they began to construct towers with rough-hewn stone blocks. Towers rise to 30 metres, with the tallest being around 50 metres. Despite their slim dimensions – diameters are 10-12 metres – they give off a massive, chunky impression, standing up to anything.

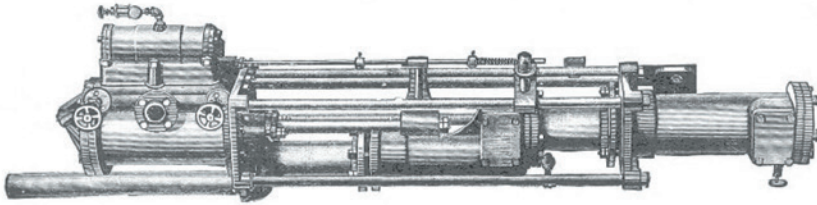
Due to thermal effects, a faint breeze often blows through the tunnels and caverns. Below ground, the most precious food-growing chambers are perfectly still, and have controlled atmospheres achieved by blocking and unblocking exits, adding moisture, increasing air pressure and so on. This is achieved with careful use of machinery.

The Eldirerr arrange their dwellings in dense city states. Large groups of towers, like downtown skyscrapers hewn from coarse rock, form communities ruled by small cliques. Leadership is reached through military merits.



**War.** The Eldirerr are not aggressive but their nonempathic side will often get them into fights. If outnumbered, or if a fight goes badly, they curl up into a ball making them even harder to harm (treat as AP 8). Fighting between city states is common, to sort out status, land ownership and any other matters; see more in sidebar.

The Eldirerr use electric guns and rifles to stun and kill enemies. Kinetic firearms exist but are seldom used.



### **Potential Conflicts**

*Internal conflicts are common in Eldirerr society. They rarely develop into all out war but skirmishes and 'black ops' are often carried out. With their harsh and rather unapologetic nature, even small matters turn sour, with violence soon to follow. Fighting and foul play can, for example, be triggered by new mineral findings, theft of mechanical or biological inventions, a weak leader or just to gain control over a larger area.*

*Conflicts with external forces are also common. The Eldirerr have many times been caught conducting unethical medical experiments and they are often accused of both kidnapping and torture. Sometimes diplomatic channels are used to kick out misbehaving individuals but privately organised endeavours are not unheard of.*

*There have also been reports of Eldirerr stealing technical drawings and prototypes of inventions. Not to mention the numerous occasions Eldirerr individuals have got into arguments and fights because of their lack of social smoothness.*

### **NAMING CONVENTIONS**

Eldirerr names traditionally have three parts: first a short word (Son-), a vowel (-a-) and last a repeating sharp sound (-fefff): Sonafefff

**Common first parts:** Son, Let, Ril, Jen, Rep, Siy, Sak.

**Common middle vowels:** E, I, Y, A (though most vowels are used).

**Common sharp sounds:** rrr, sss, fff, jjj, vvv, xxx, zzz.

*Left: Eldirerr electric rifle from 1915.*

### **Eldirerr on Other Worlds**

*Small numbers of Eldirerr live on other planets in Comae Space. Their colony worlds (like Melli and Canum Venti) hold the biggest populations outside Laceratae but a few live on other planets as well.*

*A dozen or so diplomats live on Eorthe, Corinthi and Sisymbrium. On other 'non-Eldirerr' worlds, small groups work and live. Scientists, explorers, military personnel and traders being most common.*

# Sumsum

## *Serving All, Knowing All*

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### Sumsum

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<b>STR</b>	1d6+4	(7-8)	<b>HP 9</b>
<b>CON</b>	1d6+6	(10)	<b>PP 13</b>
<b>SIZ</b>	1d6+4	(7-8)	
<b>DEX</b>	3d6+6	(17)	<b>Move 10</b>
<b>INT</b>	2d6+8	(15)	<b>AP -</b>
<b>POW</b>	2d6+6	(13)	
<b>CHA</b>	2d6	(7)	

**Weapons:** –

**Skills:** Acrobatics, Craft (Acupressure), Craft (Photography), Courtesy, Culture (any species), Evade, Perception, Sleight

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**Origin:** Officially unknown (Hex 02.02)

**Strangeness:** 20

**Biome:** Temperate forests

**Communication:** For intra-species communication touch is just as important as sound

**Tech Level:** 5 (Early Industrial). Operates a few Luminarian starships

**Law Level:** 8

---

**Demeanour:** Peaceful, subservient, dutiful. If you get behind the mask they are quick-thinking perfectionists, strategic, careful and conscientious

**Professions:** Servant, Intelligence Agent

**Circles:** Most Sumsum are engaged in the secret network set up by the Sumsum council

**Passions:** Serve the Sumsum species, Prevent war and violence, Reveal secrets

---

Sumsum are a common sight on most worlds in Comae Space. They appear in the background, silently performing all kinds of servant duties. Receiving scant payment and working under questionable conditions, they serve the affluent of all species except the Aygaan. However, they do this not out of kindness or subservience; they have a plan. In secret, they gather information on their influential employers.

### INFORMATION GATHERING

Sumsum society grows from the idea that every citizen must contribute to protecting the species from outside forces. The most obvious consequence is the century-long project to gather information. It is designed to give them the upper hand in conflicts. It is also to release bits and pieces of it at the right time, to the right hands, to change the policies of other species.

Every servant in Comae Space eavesdrops on meetings. They memorise and take photographs of documents, dig out secrets and trace payments. These snippets, the servants send to the closest Sumsum starship and the ships bring it home for processing and compilation.

By acting with extreme caution, helped by their subservient demeanour, they have never been suspected of spying; so far.

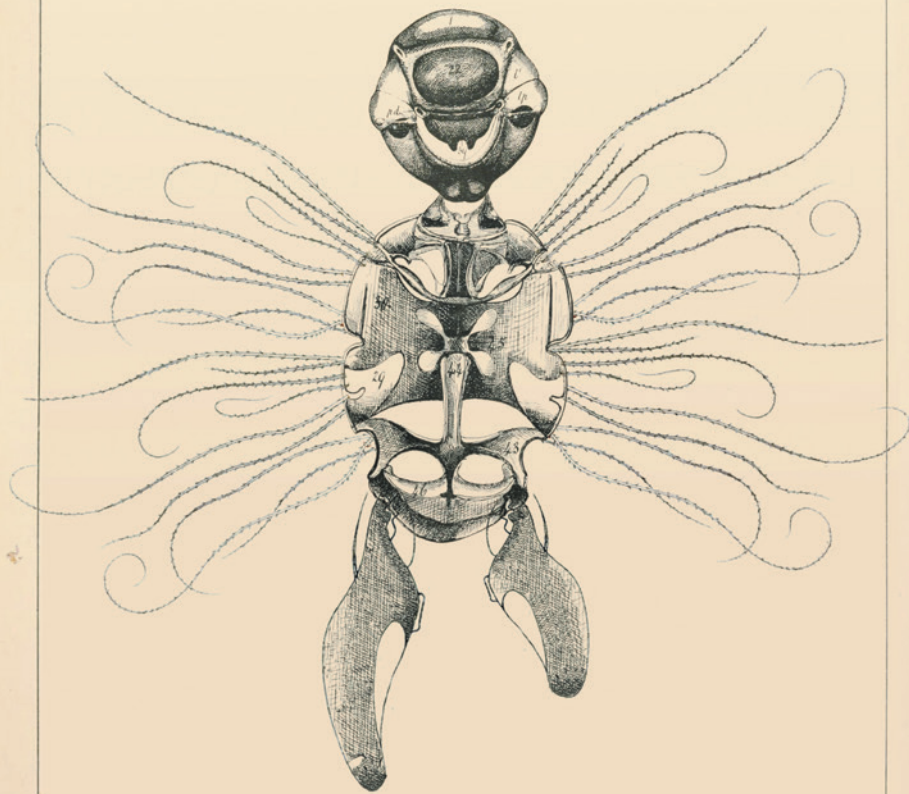
### HEROISM

While not as extreme as the Nuveri, the Sumsum are also somewhat fragile. Their small size makes them vulnerable. In their natural environment, they solve this problem by working collaboratively. The act of travelling alone in an unknown universe is much more heroic than it first appears.

### DEATH

No outsider has ever attained a Sumsum burial ritual. A Sumsum burial is a sacred ritual involving only the closest family and friends, however, the Sumsum also eat their dead. As a way of recycling life energy and wisdom, this ritual keeps cherished family members alive through others. The first newborn to follow is also named after the dead. Other species know nothing of this so far.

If a Sumsum dies far away from his or her home planet, the body is requested to be frozen if possible. A starship transports it to Sisymbrium where it is picked up for a last passage to the Sumsum home-world.



### *Naming Conventions*

*The Sumsum use three-part names, with the last part indicating status. The status concept is hard to grasp for an outsider but involves something like 'impersonal empathy' and 'abstract poetic wisdom.' The nuances of behaviour, attitude and outlook are very rich and seem overly complicated for everyone but the Sumsum (who regard them as straightforward).*

*The first two parts of the name are often a syllable that is repeated: KauKau, MyiMyi, VerVer, FieFie, SauSau, LaoLao and so on.*

*Common last part: Leng, Maso, Deep, Rama, Lari.*

### *Socialising*

*The Sumsum are relatively hard to get to know. They prefer to stay unnoticed in the background. Building trust and friendship will take considerable time, sometimes years. Interestingly, most people never bother to get close to their alien servants – so far, the Sumsum strategy is working.*

*The best way for Player Characters to approach a Sumsum is to strike a deal to exchange valuable information. With repeated effort, the Sumsum will eventually grow to trust them.*

**War.** The Sumsum are a non-violent life-form, preferring to plan well ahead to avoid being cornered. As servants, they will put up with a lot but never physical abuse or violence. If that happens, they leave, picking up their few belongings before taking off for good.

Regarding internal conflicts, not much is known. The Sumsum never reveal their home planet's location. Most Sumsum encountered will be on their own, mentioning as little as possible about their own society. They prefer to let others do the talking.

**Communication and Art.** Sumsum use both sound and touch to communicate. The thin arms of two or more individuals can intertwine, applying complex patterns of pressure to each other. They use this to enhance the emotional content of language, using a technique similar to acupuncture to relate emotions. It is an efficient way to retell events with rich emotional content. This might be used when communicating with other life-forms too but no such cases have been reported.

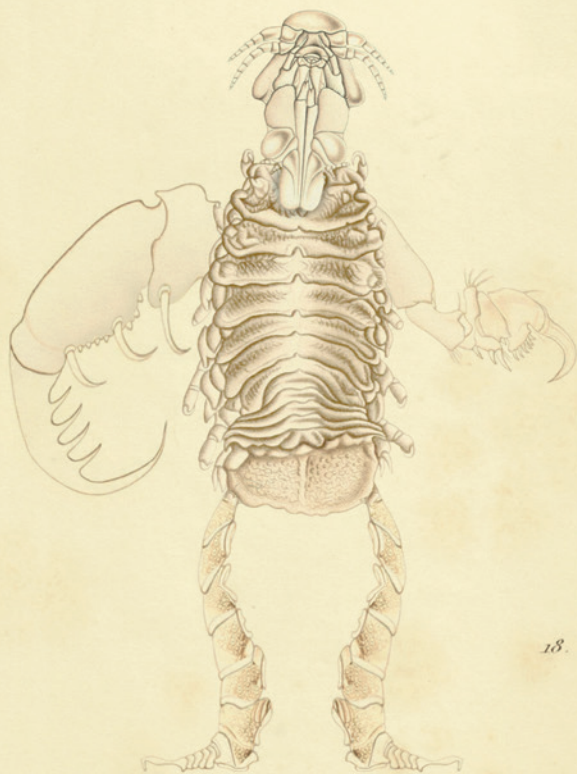
They also use tactile communication to share memories with a group of up to 12 people. They entwine their thin arms – sometimes with one individual as a source, sometimes with all adding their own feelings. This way, they jointly re-tell experiences down to the smallest details. All contribute their own recollections, shaping a rich, engaging memory. Collective sharing techniques like these are the Sumsum equivalent of an art form.

Earlier in Sumsum history it was also used to wring the truth out of an unwilling subject. At the end of a hearing, the inquisitors flooded the perpetrator with a soul-breaking wave of malicious feelings as punishment. The accused was left as an empty shell. Nowadays it is viewed as barbaric.

**Physiology.** The slithering arms of the Sumsum are surprisingly versatile. All individuals are ambidextrous as well. They can, without trouble, perform several tasks at a time. While three arms serve coffee, two might pass the sugar and another five arrange the flowers.

Their large feet are rather clumsy and they often use their arms to compensate. They cling to whatever is nearby – walls, furniture, plants. If in danger, they reveal the true extent of their acrobatic abilities; climbing, swinging and jumping with high precision to stay out of range.

*Right: One of the few depictions of a Crisg'tu, sketched from memory by an unknown survivor in 1919. See detailed description on next page.*



13.



# Crisg'tu

## *Ruthless Killers*

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### Crisg'tu

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STR	3d6+6	(17)	HP 12
CON	3d6	(10-11)	PP 7
SIZ	2d6+6	(12)	
DEX	3d6	(10-11)	Move 10
INT	3d6	(10-11)	AP 5
POW	2d6	(7)	
CHA	1d6	(3-4)	

**Weapons:** Slash 75% (1d8), Grapple with claw 60%, Musket 55% (1d10+1, R=30m), Flame Thrower (2d6 plus 1d6+2 every round on fire, R=3 m), Fire Bomb (damage as flame thrower, R=10m)

**Skills:** Unknown

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**Origin:** Unknown. Outside Comae Space

**Strangeness:** 50

**Biome:** Preferred biome is unknown but they seem to stay away from water

**Communication:** Sound

**Tech Level:** 5 (Early Industrial). Operates an unknown number of starships converted from Luminarian probes.

**Law Level:** 4

**Demeanour:** Ruthless with no respect for life.

**Aggressive**

---

The Crisg'tu is a little-known species described from a handful of encounters in Comae Space. They are not inhabitants of Comae Space but always seem to act as merciless raiders. Survivors speak of them as well organised soldiers using a hit and fade tactic. They appear to have no other goal than to destroy and murder. Facts presented here are pieced together from surviving witnesses.

**Communication.** The Crisg'tu speak with a range of trills, clicks and snaps. In battle, they use high-pitched clicks – with a surprisingly long range – to relay orders. They do not speak Menaryan.

**War.** A cool-headed aggressiveness makes the Crisg'tu fearsome soldiers. A strict hierarchy lends them efficiency but clan members often challenge the leaders. In close combat, they slash and grab with their oversized claw. They hold a projectile weapon in the smaller, more agile claw. Witnesses have described this weapon as a mix between a musket and a clumsy revolver. They also use flame throwers and fire bombs to ravage settlements and gain tactical advantages.

**Transportation.** The Crisg'tu build starships around Luminarian probes, just like humans. They use iron alloys mixed with chitin for hull and beams, giving ships an almost organic quality.

**Weakness.** Two species of microbial parasites threaten the Crisg'tu. These microbes make Crisg'tu shells rot from the inside, right inside the scaly armour and it grows rapidly both inward and outward. Little is known about the rot as only two Crisg'tu bodies have been retrieved and dissected. One was in the early stages of rotting (on the shells at the lower back), marked by a slight yellowing and frailty. The scientists found no traces of earlier medical treatments. In-game, treat rotten areas as having zero Armour Points.

It is perhaps too early to be called a weakness but the Crisg'tu also seem to stay away from larger bodies of water.

**Attachments.** For the Crisg'tu, clans tie society together. Very little is known about this, however. Further studies are needed in this area.

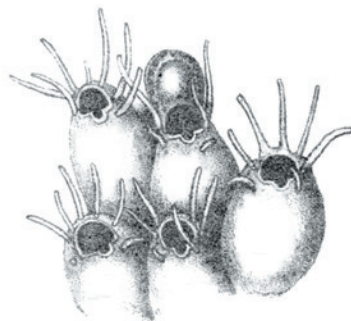


# Luminarian

## *Absent*

The Luminarian species is an enigmatic lifeform that left Comae Space 200 years ago. Their presence is still felt strongly today as the advanced technology they left behind is still unparalleled.

Their exodus, while it happened very quickly, is judged by most scholars to have been secretly planned well in advance. Their old dwellings are, with a few exceptions, thoroughly emptied. What is actually left sometimes seems like a deliberate inheritance left to the other species. The probes containing the Unfolding Devices are the most obvious examples but also the libraries of *fons mercurialis* books. The collections of books are almost certainly 'moderated' with large chunks of knowledge, deemed unsafe to share, missing. The most common theme is everyday subjects but once in a while small stashes of unique books are found, covering The Soot, complex technology and magic.



Many theories regarding where the Luminarians went have been put forward – the Andromeda galaxy, a black hole leading to another universe, a distant cornucopian planet they will soon return from and so on. None have been proved right and, upon close examination, many theories are highly speculative. The rest are merely wishful thinking.

One of the curious, but little known, facts regarding the Luminarians comes from the Skreeder Shamans (and sometimes confirmed by the Aygaan); their souls could flick on and off at will in the spirit world, although none of their souls have been encountered in the spirit world since they left.

## *The Final Message*

*The final message from the Luminarian fleet leaving Comae Space in 1712, a faint signal picked up only by a few receivers:*

*'When you read this message, the few of us that remain have left for the longest journey ever embarked upon, in hope of escaping the threat that almost obliterated us.*

*We now plead with you to continue the fight we lost against The Soot – not necessarily with arms but with your brightest minds and most sensitive souls. This fight is not for ourselves but for life everywhere.*

*All our efforts to stop The Soot have been defeated. We flee now to save our species, leaving what little knowledge we have behind, hoping that it will help you in your struggle.*

*We flee now, not for the fear of death but for the fear of what we would become if we lived'.*

*Left: Singing pods of Sisymbrium. This man-sized life-form attracts its prey by sound. Each pod strikes a unique frequency to lure animals into the pod. Once inside, the pod closes and sharp teeth protrude from the bottom, killing the prey.*

# Major Forces

**I**N A SLICE OF THE UNIVERSE as big as Comae Space, a huge number of forces interact to create something bigger than the sum of their parts. Each force has its own agenda, stemming from the societies they emerged from. Six of them are presented here. Despite their differences, they have one thing in common – they influence all of Comae Space.

These are the major forces: The Soot, The Philosophy Engine, The Priests of Wittenberg, The Solipsists, The Skreeder Shamans and League of Nations.

In scenarios and campaigns, created by the Game Master or someone else, more circles can be invented but the forces described here are easy to use in bits and pieces. They are tailored to work not only on a global scale but also through individual members. These individuals have specific goals that either thwart or help the characters.

## The Soot

The strongest disruptive force in Comae Space is the disease called The Soot. For almost 500 years it has plagued all species, driving the infected into madness and an early death.

The biggest crises caused by the Soot was the exodus of the Luminarians 230 years ago. They had brought space travel, trade and technology to Comae Space. When they left, the remaining species fell into The Oblivion, a period of introspection. Communications broke down and technology reverted. Fortunately, with the Luminarians gone, The Soot also waned.



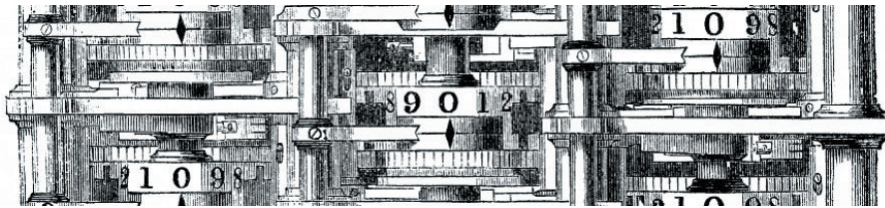
*Nell Monill, the most recent member of The Philosophy Engine Colloquium. Elected after some highly successful work with a number of Nuveri Water Communes. She is also the first member to be (openly) infected by The Soot.*

Today, humans have brought interstellar travel back again and a new age has begun. Light has returned. But the shadow of The Soot grows again.

### THE SOOT TODAY

In 1922, The Soot is spreading again. It can infect anyone, anywhere. The infected embark on a subversive path, often ending in tragic deaths and traumatised communities. Most authorities, including medical personnel, do not recognise the severity of the disease, however. They realise the infected threaten society with their unpredictable behaviour. But they only see it as a regular disease. This stance explains why their attempts at finding a cure have failed. The solution requires a deeper insight but the PCs will quickly realise something abstruse is in the works. There is a strange logic and reasoning behind the infected's conduct. They all seem to strive for a common, unknown goal. They build strange contraptions of technology and magic, communicating by coded signals across space.

For detailed rules about The Soot and how it affects people, see the chapter called The Soot.



### The Philosophy Engine

Difference engines are fairly common on Eorthe. Many large organisations use them for calculations. Also, a big bulk of university research depends on them to handle large amounts of data. One difference engine, often called The Engine, outshines all others; The Philosophy Engine in Glimminge. Its reasoning and predictive powers have been praised and feared all over Comae Space since its construction over 100 years ago.

#### IDEAS & METHODS

The Philosophy Engine's main work is sociological, philosophical, political and technical. The foundation running it, led by the Colloquium, uses it to answer humanity's eternal questions. Why are we here? Where are we going? Why does suffering exist? Is death the end? They want to create a unified theory explaining

### ***The Philosophy Engine In Play***

*It is quite unlikely that the characters will gain access directly to The Philosophy Engine. There are, however, a number of other ways they can make use of it (and the Colloquium):*

- » *They can get information from an Observer in the field, an Engine worker or even a Colloquium member. Fortunate characters may even gain a contact or ally among their ranks.*
- » *They might relay information to an Observer doing field work, perhaps getting valuable information in exchange (or a service in return).*
- » *They can join, or be asked to join, a project utilising the Engine. Both universities and geographical societies are funding scientific expeditions to explore strange new worlds of Comae Space, and the use of The Philosophy Engine's powers are sometimes included.*
- » *They might be granted funding by the Colloquium for a scientific trip.*

*The predictive powers of the Engine can be modelled in several ways. Either generically, by handing out 1 Luck Point to characters to be spent during the scenario or more specifically, and often more rewarding, the GM can prepare information beforehand, to hand out in strategic situations, that will be helpful to the characters later in the scenario or campaign (presented in a fittingly vague manner).*

the inner workings of the universe and mankind but they often run side-projects in requests from universities, political leaders or corporations. The re-engineering of the Luminarian probes in the 1850s were, for example, accomplished by The Engine.

The foundation's scientists prepare all input data and feed questions into the engine. Aside from regular upgrades and repairs, the engine's workers spend most of their time handling data. Calculations and predictions only take a few days for a side-project.

The eternal questions require a more open attitude. Philosophical statements and tendencies in society are fed to the engine in a never ending stream. The Engine then runs its calculations to spot trends. Regularly, it outputs abstract reasoning, predictions on future events and equations. Sometimes in the form of baffling poetry. The Colloquium merges everything into a rational whole, at times feeding it back into The Engine.

Predictions have been eerily correct in the past. As a result the Colloquium have a steady stream of high-ranking visitors asking for advice. With the engine improved and expanded continuously, predictions become increasingly detailed but during the last year they have grown stranger. They have become harder to decipher and sometimes contradict themselves. Beginning as a slight worry, after 12 months the Colloquium is now in a state of confusion. A small group explores the problem but Tjibbe Joustra, the Colloquium's spokesperson, has secretly invited outsiders to probe the mystery.

### **THE COLLOQUIUM**

Up to 200 people work on the Engine. Most of the workforce is comprised of engineers engaged in the actual engine operation. There is also a small staff of caretakers. A council of 20-30 engineers called The Colloquium lead the foundation. The Colloquium resembles a priesthood, looking for the betterment of humanity, and its members are very reclusive. They spend most of their time on the foundation's grounds.

The Colloquium's most well-known member is Tjibbe Joustra, the spokesperson of the foundation. He is a soft-spoken elderly man, dressed in grey robes, as the rest of the workforce.

A lesser known part of the workforce comprises Observers. They are spread out in Comae Space to gather information. Quietly, they observe events, collect tidbits of information, study local history and myths. Then, they try to compile

it into a comprehensive whole. They send this information to the Colloquium as written reports, to be used in the Engine calculations.

## LOCATION

### *Glimminge, Doggerland*

The grounds containing The Philosophy Engine appear as an enclosed university campus. Large, classical buildings are beautifully grouped in a lush park and the atmosphere is calm and academic. The Engine is housed in a glass-roofed courtyard, at the heart of a mid-19th century building. The Engine fills the courtyard, almost six stories high. Light bridges protrude from the surrounding building to allow access on different levels while service ladders dot the Engine itself. Besides the main hall, the building houses offices and workshops.

Most of the workforce lives on the foundation's grounds, with the Colloquium living in buildings to the side.

Security is good, with grounds watched by at least one guard. As the Engine is used around the clock, a minimum of two engineers are always working on it.

## INTERNAL CONFLICTS

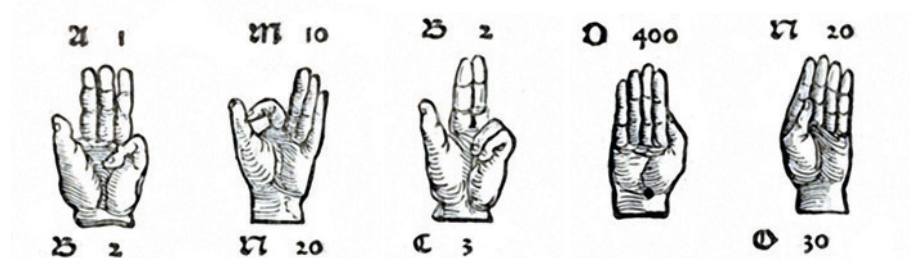
An age-old conflict exists within the Colloquium about how open they should be to the outside world. A majority of the members want to keep the engine's work and predictions as secret as possible. A small minority want to be more open. With concerns growing the past months about the faulty predictions, isolationists have grown in number.

Another dispute, with less immediate ramifications for the outside world, runs like a thread through the foundation's work – how and why does the Engine work? The most accepted view is The Ghost in the Machine (it is also the official version). It argues that an engine of this complexity takes on a life of its own, as in the organic world. A second idea, The Billiard Table concept, left aside nowadays, states that if a machine can make enough calculations, the whole universe can be described. Both its past and future. A new and speculative view is that The Engine taps into higher dimensions but no one has presented a plausible theoretical framework for this.

## **Religion in Odd Soot**

*Religion in Odd Soot is more varied than we are used to in Europe on Earth. Krystianity is not quite as dominant and pagan beliefs stemming from pre-Roman times have survived more or less intact – however, with small numbers of followers. The PCs might, for example, find brotherhoods dedicated to Germanic gods, isolated pockets of Odin believers in Norway and secret druid cults on the British isles. There is even an entire nation – Sapmi – devoted to subarctic shamanism.*

*But religion also has less of an impact on society. In many areas, faith is a private matter. People are still religious but in a more practical, hands-on way. They say their prayers, hold weddings and funerals, make offerings to ensure a good harvest – and any other activities that might help them in their everyday doings. That does not mean bardcore fanatics are fewer. They are as devoted as ever and, if possible, are even more creative when limiting other people's lives. Combined with The Soot, this might end in tragedy.*



## The Priests of Wittenberg

The Priests of Wittenberg is a small religious order, originally from Wittenberg in Germany. It was founded in 1227 by the Franciscan monk Leopold Augustinus. The founder saw an increasing threat from magic in pagan religions and he feared it would eventually cause the downfall of humanity. Since then, the order has been on a sacred mission to find and destroy black magic wherever it appears.

### LOCATION

*Wittenberg, Germany*

The order has its headquarters in the town of Wittenberg in Germany. Smaller monasteries are scattered across Eorthe. *Gråbrödraklostret* (Cloister of the Grey Brothers) in Stockholm is the most prominent. In Doggerland, the order keeps a small property but it has no permanent residents.

The architecture of the order's monasteries date back to the Middle Ages, with rough-hewn stone and wood as the dominating materials. Interiors are simple, verging on stark. A typical monastery houses 50 priests, sometimes as many as 100, but many priests travel Comae Space.

### THE MAGISTERIUM

A small group of high-ranking priests, The Magisterium, lead the order. It comprises representatives from all major monasteries. The group varies in size between 5 and 12 priests, meeting once a year.

Many of the other priests travel Comae Space in search of new knowledge and for practitioners of black magic. They spend their time in solitary travels to research archives and for field observations. They work alone but sometimes meet up to exchange information when the paths of two priests cross. In an occasional raid they can gather larger forces. When returning home to their monasteries they

#### *Internal Conflicts*

*There is a troubling dark side to the whole order, as its members are continuously exposed to black magic. After a while, some of its members find it hard to distinguish between their actual knowledge of magic and what methods are wise to use in the service of good. These questions are not openly discussed within the order but remain a dividing line that every member is well aware of.*



report, rest and deepen their knowledge even further in their own well-stocked libraries.

Members take vows of poverty and the travelling priests rely partly on donations and charity. They dress in grey robes but work in disguise at times.

### IDEAS & METHODS

The central idea of the order is to stop all black magic across Comae Space. To save humans and aliens from a terrible fate, they confiscate books, destroy laboratories of magic and imprison – or kill – practitioners. They rely on archival research, empirical studies, controlled use of ‘blessed magic’ and sometimes late-night raids. A recent rumour has it they also contact spirits of the dead to interrogate but this is mostly seen as superstition.

The priests use a special language of hand signs to avoid uttering the spells and devilties they are trying to stop. It has been in use since the late 13th century. Skillful priests can also use it for shorter conversations, often to avoid being overheard in tight situations. Persons outside the order are never taught the signs.

The Priests of Wittenberg's influence is double-edged. The order's faith is not widespread and they have little impact in this regard. Yet their work against black magic is highly influential in a subversive way. They act in secret, avoid publicity and instil fear in many quarters. The order's name is mentioned in hushed voices.

## The Solipsist Manifest

A changing world can be rough on the soul. Historically, in response to big changes, some people will be afraid and turn against the New. With too much change happening too quickly, they might even turn their backs on the world.

The Solipsist Manifest grew out of those feelings of insecurity. Some Earthlings felt that a universe filled with alien life-forms and civilisations was too much. When Quentrell Brossard wrote his manifest in 1903, it put into words what many were already thinking.

In simple terms, the manifest states that the world only exists as an image in your head. Therefore, you can do as you please in all matters as no one else is affected. There is no one you can hurt, no ethics but your own and physical matter is only an illusion. To prove the material world's non-existence, many Solipsists practice self-mortification.

### *What is Black Magic?*

*According to the Priests of Wittenberg all magic is evil – ie. black – if it is not emanating specifically from God. This includes mental powers used by alien lifeforms, however some exceptions are allowed. Lifeforms with physiologically based mental powers, especially animals, are in some cases not seen as violating the basic principles of the universe (the Aygaan for example). If this is a true belief or merely an added afterthought is difficult for non-members to confirm.*

*Magic and technology of the infected are deemed among the worst atrocities and the Priests of Wittenberg are continuously searching for new cases.*



*Quentrell Brossard in his early twenties, a few years before writing The Solipsist Manifest.*

### Colonies with Solipsist Influences

There are small Solipsist communities in all human colonies but on Librae, Galli and Hydri their influence has grown significantly. While not a dominant power so far, they have started shaping their respective societies in small increments. This has drawn the interest of the League, who is quite worried. Secretly they have been sending observers to the affected worlds for two years. They have, among other things, negotiated with the local authorities for a crack-down on the Solipsist leaders to end their growing popularity.

### Terms & Pronunciation

*Jojk.* Magical singing. Pronounced like joy with a -k at the end.

*Blot.* Animal sacrifice. The o is long as in you.

*Fjell.* Mountain, alps. Pronounced similar to dwell.

*Sejd.* Spirit journey. Pronounced as say with a -d at the end.

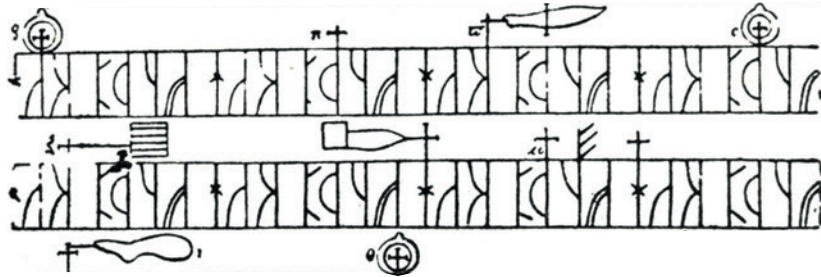
*Seite.* Sacred place. Pronounced as say with -te (as in technical) at the end.

*Sajva.* Spirit. First part sounds like si- in site, then add (a British, not American) -va as in vast.

*Opposite:* An illustration showing a Skreeder shaman's sacred drum. On display in the Hall of the Ancestors in Kautokeino University.

Despite being a highly ideological and political organisation, from an outside view The Solipsists are a chaotic bunch of egoists without moral guidance. They keep to themselves in isolated communities and other people find them frightening mostly because of how many are attracted to those ideas.

Their influence has been limited so far but, due to its chaotic structure, the impact of their ideas is unpredictable. With Solipsists living on most Eorthe colony worlds, there is a growing fear of local take-overs.



## Skreeder Shamans

Skreeder Shamans serve as priests, magicians and healers in the Sapmi nation. Skreeder spirituality has evolved since ancient times. It turned into a natural part of the nation when it was shaped in the early 17th century. Today, shamans work both as official priests and as traditional shamans among the Skreeder population.

Nature is worshipped among the Skreeders – and even more so by their shamans. Their culture is completely in tune with the harsh subarctic landscape. And the powers of spirits and magic are intricately entwined with it.

### SKREEDER SHAMANS IN COMAE SPACE

Fifty years ago, the Skreeder Shamans welcomed the news that man could travel to the stars. They greeted the many alien species that lived among the stars. The Shamans claimed strange worlds were nothing new to them and that their inner journeys had prepared them for it.

However, over the years their embrace of the space age have waned. They sense deep trouble in the very fabric of the universe. Elusive but conspicuous, a shift has leaked into the realms of the shamans' higher consciousness. Their helping spirits have altered them for some time and magical constants do not to work as they al-





### **Skreeder Spirits**

*A trained Skreeder Shaman can call on spirits in most environments. They appear in various forms. The weakest spirits will be nothing but a breeze stirring a bush – understood only by the caller – but the more powerful spirits might appear as ghost-like shapes or even indistinguishable from their physical counterparts. Depending on what kind of help the shaman needs, the spirit called upon can be an animal, a human, an alien or a natural feature.*

*A shaman's totem spirit has a unique bond with the shaman. The apprentice roams the wilderness early in his or her training, in search for the true totem spirit. Once it has been found, sometimes taking months, the two blend seamlessly with each other. This bond allows the shaman to travel the spirit plane.*

#### **Spell: Contact Spirit**

*In addition to the spells listed in the Magic chapter, all Skreeder Shamans also know the spell Contact Spirit. This spell is unique to them. An Ayegean or Sumsum magician can learn it from a Skreeder, but it is rarely done.*

**Power Points:** 5      **Complexity:** 10  
**Range:** 10 m      **Duration:** 15 Minutes

*This spell is performed in deep meditation for at least 15 minutes. The strength of the spirit is determined as Power Points spent +/-1d6. The more powerful spirit, the better results.*

*Depending on the circumstances, the spirit will be able to answer a question, relay a warning, give a sign or just transfer an emotion. To simulate this, the GM can use any the following:*

- » Hand out 1 Luck Point
- » Add 10–30% to a relevant skill roll later
- » Hand out information or a warning

*The spirit will appear as a local animal, landscape feature or a deceased inhabitant.*

*Note that any delivered information might be hard to decipher.*

ways have. Not knowing how to proceed, a group of shamans decided the cause of the deviation must be found. They travelled Comae Space, from the bustling cities of Eorthe to the remotest corners of known space. Some questioned inhabitants, others studied signs in local flora and fauna or wandered the spirit realms. So far, not much has been concluded. No evidence on the deviation has been uncovered but there is a wider recognition of the problem among the shamans. This insight has resulted in a larger, second group of shamans travelling Comae Space.

### **METHODS**

Central to the Skreeder Shaman's work is drumming, jojk (trance-inducing singing), blot (animal sacrifices), seite (sacred places) and sajva (spirits). Herbs and magic are common ingredients.

Shaman drums are simple in design but rich with symbolic etchings on the skin. They are used to call the spirits or to predict the future. Jojk has a special standing in Skreeder society. It works both as their folk music and to connect to the spirit realm. It is often performed as a solo chant without instruments although several persons can jojk together. To please or contact spirits, animal sacrifices are conducted in sacred places at certain times of the year.

Skreeder spirits either originate in nature (bears, reindeer, birds or landscape features) or from the forefathers. The Great Spirit surrounds all as the primary life-giver, permeating the universe.

### **SKREEDER SHAMANS IN PLAY**

Player Characters will probably encounter Skreeder shamans as soon as they investigate The Soot deeper. The Shamans spend considerable time and effort on finding the cause of the plague and its relationship to magic.

Shamans can play many roles in scenarios. They can be sources of deeper knowledge, act as competing investigators or appear as enigmatic watchmen. If possible, Skreeder Shamans will avoid Priests of Wittenberg, for fear of being branded as black magicians.

Outside Sapmi, their appearance will vary, as most try to blend in with the surroundings. A few details might give them away, however. They often carry necklaces of animal spirits, leather pouches around the neck and tattoos from Skreeder mythology. A shaman performing official duties wears the traditional Skreeder attire in blue and red. Skreeder Shamans will show little understanding of people who ravage or pollute nature. Wherever they go, even the strangest of planets, they

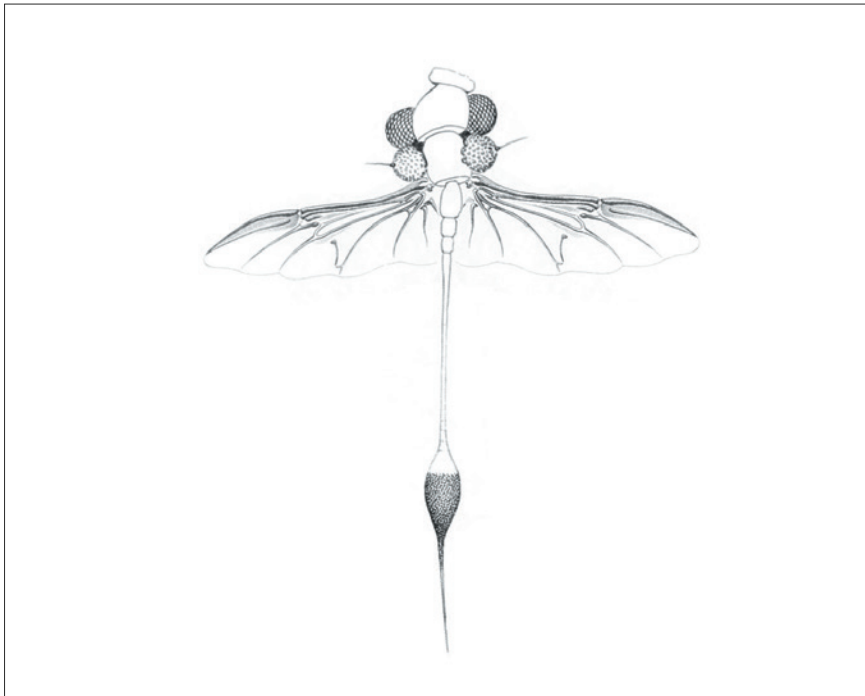
will keep their reverence and considerate behaviour towards all living things. To them, all worlds belong to the same spirit plane, having much more in common than meets the eye.

### Shaman Spell Casting

Skreeder Shamans can use any of the spells listed in the Magic chapter. To increase their magical abilities, they use rituals and take help from their sajva (spirits). The following bonuses apply: +1 Power Point or +10% skill for every 10 minutes spent in rituals (jojok, drumming or casting performed at a sacred location), max +3 POW or +30%.

It is common for a shaman to first initiate a ritual to contact a spirit (Contact Spirit spell) and then continue the ritual to cast another spell with the help of the spirit. This way, half of a spirit's Pow can be utilised by the shaman.

To stay in tune with nature and honour the spirits, a shaman follows a few simple rules – respect nature, tend to the sacred places, make animal sacrifices and embark on spirit journeys.



*Left: Side view of a so called simellian stabber, from the forests of Sisymbrium. These small animals (10-20 cm) hover silently in flocks, stingers pointed downward, and drop on larger prey passing underneath. One sting is not very dangerous – however painful – but several will cause problems for small and medium-sized animals. The stabbers suck blood from the target for as long as possible and will not take off until there is a risk of being crushed by the host. A weak poison, combined with the blood loss, will make the target drowsy and approximately 3 in 10 attacks kill the target.*

## THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Eorthe nations formed the League of Nations (or the League) as a response to finding intelligent extraterrestrial life. The group's initial concerns circled around Eorthe defences in an attack. Orientation of the work changed when the dilemma of the other species became obvious. The reorganised group emphasised peaceful exploration and colonisation. As the costs of expeditions were high, nations cooperated. As years went by, the League developed into a governing body. Through several formal pacts with the other species, it procured binding agreements on exploration and colonisation. The League stood as a guarantee for diplomatic relations and that rules for trade and settlements were kept. The other species accepted the agreements as they got full access to Eorthe starships in return, which was granted in 1905.

The League of Nations employs a small number of diplomats. They can assist lawyers and citizens outside Eorthe. There is a League office in many large alien cities, often – but falsely – referred to as ‘embassies’. As they handle very large areas and sometimes entire worlds, officials are often difficult to reach. Besides diplomatic help, the League can also provide peacekeeping troops in limited numbers, mobile clinics and disaster relief (like tents, water and food) to potential crisis victims. As of 1922, only small operations have been needed.

### Treatises

The most important treaties, concerning space exploration and colonisation, stipulate the following:

- » *All species have the right to travel and settle on a small scale on all planets (with a few exceptions).*
- » *Menaryan is the common language. The currency Meno is used in interstellar trade relations.*
- » *Planets without intelligent life can be colonised. Natural resources may be exploited as long as the planet's environment is not harmed. Existing flora and fauna must be preserved and foreign species, like crops and domesticated beasts, may not be introduced.*
- » *Research findings from the exploration of Comae Space should be shared among the interstellar research community. This clause is not followed very closely, however.*
- » *Matters of law and order between the intelligent species are regulated by the League of Nations. In theory, all species comply with local laws but in practice problems are often resolved with species-specific laws. Alien individuals who violate local laws are often held in custody for a short period, before being sent to their home world (or the nearest colony dominated by*



*their species). Any court proceedings or punishments are likely to be carried out there. For example, a human killing a Nuveri on Cortintbi is locked in on Corinthi until he is sent to Eorthe within a few weeks for prosecution. Human investigators are often sent to interview witnesses and find clues.*

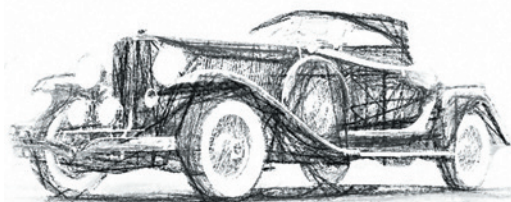
- » *Starships are required to accept passengers of all species. Any requests of altered micro-biomes should be met within reasonable limits, without additional costs to the passenger. All ships are also required to bring mail shipments between planets.*

## COLONIAL ADMINISTRATION

Eorthe colonies are generally ruled in the same way, no matter where in Comae Space they are located. Below are some of the main points to keep in mind.

- » *Colonial issues are handled first by the League of Nations and then by the Department of Colonial Affairs in different countries. The local administration is often carried out by officials from the original colonial power in an area, which also organises law enforcement.*
- » *Issues relating to aliens are also handled by the League of Nations and then usually fall under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Interplanetary Department). The League of Nations' staff is often drafted from the Interplanetary Departments and the two collaborate in many cases.*
- » *The local administration is, in general, led by a local council, in its turn headed by a mayor, who is more or less democratically appointed. As planets are still very sparsely populated, mayors are elected for towns. Any nearby communities or homesteads will fall under the local mayor's jurisdiction. However, as planets are to be kept open for any aliens to settle on, nations have not been allowed by the League so far. Any unused land is, in essence, nobody's.*
- » *The local councils and the League of Nations' diplomats frequently disagree on various matters. The diplomats will, in certain cases, over-rule the council, sparking enmity between the two.*

# Mechanical Arts



ERTHE IS A VERY CLOSE TWIN OF OUR OWN Earth in the 1920s and so is the technology. Everyday life appears similar in large parts, with some major inventions setting it apart from our own world. Both physics and astronomy has advanced quicker thanks to the help of difference engines and repurposed Luminarian technology. The unfolding devices has turned out to be the greatest leap so far. First found in Luminarian probes orbiting Mars and Venus, the technology eventually brought humankind to other stars. And into a new era.

## Transportation

### INTERSTELLAR

The species of Comae Space do not understand space travel very well. The technology comes from the Luminarians and with the joint knowledge of humans and the Eldirerrr it is barely kept functioning. As of 1922, no one grasps the underlying principles of the so-called unfolding devices, the engines of the starships.

The most basic concepts have been gleaned from Luminarian books – a small device unfolds some of the 11 curled-up dimensions on a subatomic level, forming an inter-dimensional field around the device. The ship slips into inter-dimensional space-time and, guided by the instruments onboard, reappears in normal space at another location when the unfolding device shuts down. Scientists know very little of this higher-dimension space-time. They have not determined how fast ships travel while there – or indeed if they move at all. Visually, it appears as a black void, lacking all features, and only Luminarian instruments work for navigation. Regular instruments, like radar and radio, have no use.

#### *Travel Times*

*On the star map at the end of the book 1 hex equals two days of travel time. Recalculations must be made every hex, in practice spending 2-4 hours in normal space between jumps, with a regular difference engine. Maximum FTL capacity is 3 hexes. After that, the stress caused by the unfolding device on the ship requires a complete check-up of the ship (taking 1-3 days, preferably in orbit to refill supplies at the same time).*

Unfolding devices are salvaged from abandoned Luminarian probes and ships and are always in short supply. Most ships constructed around the devices are therefore large star liners or bulk freighters, with occasional scientific or military vessels. The Aygaan and Eldirerrr still use Luminarian vessels, but sparingly.

Interstellar travel can best be compared to the big steam liners traversing the oceans of Eorthe. Travel time extends into days rather than hours. Life onboard the star liners combines social activities with light entertainment. The number of passengers varies from 400 and up to 1,500 for the largest and most luxurious ships.

Reasons for travel vary. Some go on exotic vacations to strange new worlds. Others want to visit emigrated relatives at least once in a lifetime (or see Eorthe one last time before they grow old). A steady torrent heads for the new colonies, hoping life will be kinder on another planet. Leaving everything behind, they use their last savings for a one-way ticket, not always sure what awaits them.

Bulk freighters are kept as simple as possible, with tiny areas for the crew. At least one rocket plane is kept onboard, to speed up loading times. A minimum of two crew members must be trained in space suit handling and a small spherical craft for hull repairs is also required.

As most ships are too big to land, small rocket planes shuttle goods and people into and out of space. Taking between 10-40 passengers (or 5-20 tons of goods), loading and unloading take about a day.

#### *Artificial Gravity*

*The first generation of starships built by humans required the crews to be trained in zero G. As more Luminarian ships were found, plates embedded in the floors were found to create artificial gravity. After some experimenting, they could be reused in new ships. Today, very few ships gets built without them.*

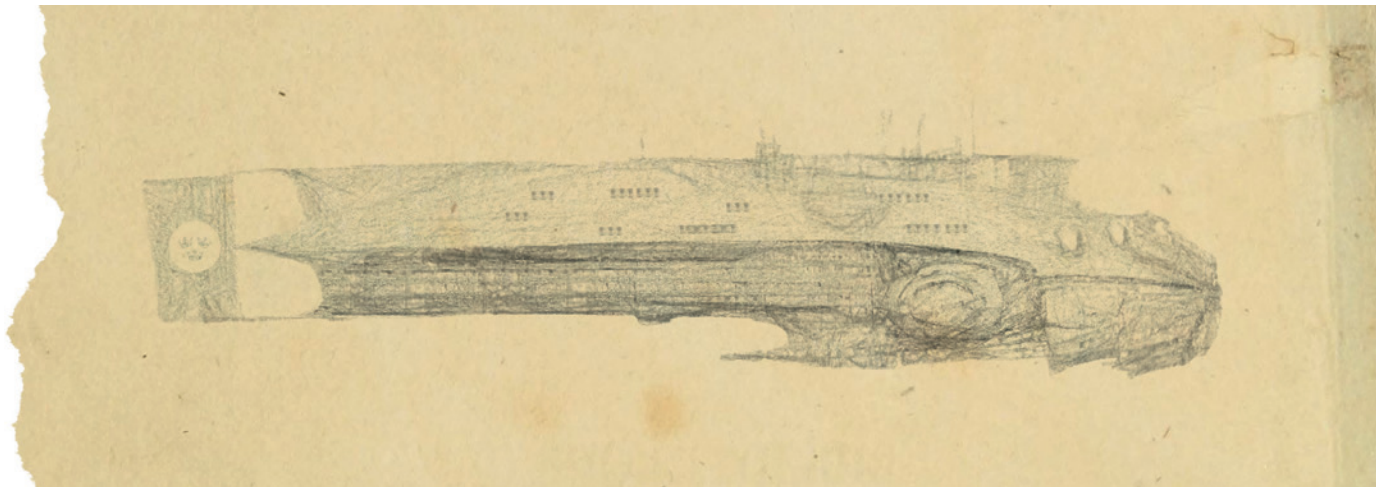
#### *The Anthemis (below)*

*A trusty star liner travelling various routes in Comae Space. With up to 1,600 passengers and 300 crewmen, it is a popular choice for many travellers.*

*Cubicles are roughly divided as follows:  $\frac{1}{10}$  of the cubicles are spacious First Class suites on the top decks,  $\frac{1}{3}$  are in Second Class and the rest are in Third Class, simple bunks deep down in the ship, often eight bunks in each cubicle.*

*Meals are served in several dining halls, each with its own theme. For entertainment, the grand Théâtre Méchanique is highly regarded.*

*See stats for The Anthemis on pages 150-151.*



## PLANETARY

For planetary transport, some choices exist. The combustion engine dominates personal transports. Cars, trucks and buses are increasingly common, especially in cities. Horse-drawn carriages, however, still frequent many roads.

For longer journeys, trains and ships reign, with aeroplanes and dirigibles becoming both safer and more economically viable every year.

On colonised worlds, transportation is more primitive. Colonists use cars and trucks but there are fewer in number. If possible, local beasts of burden fill many needs. Boats and small ships are common and an occasional aeroplane or dirigible crosses the skies. Railways have yet to conquer the colonised worlds, although a few projects have been started. If such small populations can carry the economic burden of their construction remains to be seen.

For transportation in alien cultures, see respective alien description for details. Keep in mind that most cultures mix with other aliens and a car, for example, might be accessible through emigrated humans even in remote locations. They will be rare, however.



*Explorer and astronaut pioneer William Beebe in a space suit of his own design, becoming one of the most popular models in the early 1920s.*

*"There is one joy of reading, another of painting, and another of writing, but none to compare with the thrill which comes to one who, loving Nature in all her moods, is about to start on a voyage of discovery to a land familiar in dreams alone." William Beebe*

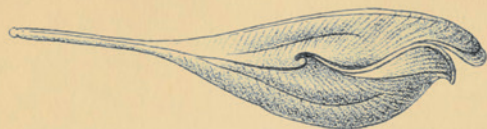
## Communication

Four main technologies for personal communication prevail in Comae Space.

**Postal Service.** Letters offer the best way to say something important. Both star liners and freighters carry mail across Comae Space and delivery times are about two weeks. In alien societies, small subsidiaries deliver mail, often run by human postmen.

**Telegraph.** The telegraph excels at speedy deliveries but messages must be kept short. The invention of the wireless telegraph has made it the preferred form of communication on many colony worlds. An even more fundamental breakthrough happened 16 years ago when the first message could be sent almost instantly between stars. A modified unfolding device made it possible to achieve even greater speeds than the starships. Sending an interstellar telegram remains expensive and is only available in a few places, making it an alternative for professionals. In some areas, usage comes with restrictions and only authorities use it.

**Telephone.** The telephone grows in popularity but is far from ubiquitous in homes yet. On colonies and in alien-dominated societies, it sees no use at all.



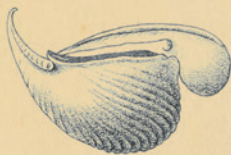
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2



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LUMINARIAN STARSHIPS



### *Typical Uses for Difference Engines*

*Difference engines can be used in many ways. Below are a few suggestions on how the PCs might benefit from them:*

- » *Search for criminals on engines used by the police. It can be based on appearance, area and typical traits. Photos are stored as 'weaving patterns' and can be printed (in grey-scale).*
- » *Search for interesting patterns across a plethora of information. This can be done on most difference engines. The GM can, for example, use this to convey clues the characters have missed.*
- » *Isolate sound messages from a noisy background. Used, for example, on radio messages between starships recorded to magnetophones.*
- » *Solve cyphers and crack codes. This is a common usage for military intelligence operators but with a skilled user any difference engine can be utilised for this.*

*All information to be used by a difference engine must be converted to special punch cards fed into the engine. Operators stitch the cards together to form a complete set of operations that the engine performs. Saving a stack of punch cards means the operations can be repeated or added to another time.*

*Programmers perform calculations, store or retrieve information from 'the mill' – a mechanical memory, bigger than the difference engine itself, based on punch cards – and make comparisons.*

*Output can be printed text and numbers, images and maps woven in silk, plotted graphs and even new punch cards.*

*Common uses include navigation, statistics, astroga-tion, aerodynamics, engineering and construction.*

**Faxpapers.** A faxpaper machine sends a newspaper as a radio signal, to be printed on arrival. Invented by William Finch, among others, it has combined the advances in both printing and radio technology. It started by delivering newspapers to the homes of subscribers but soon it became the obvious way to transfer fresh news to colonies and alien societies, all across Comae Space. Home receivers are rarely used because of high costs. Printing is more often done by local printers receiving transmissions overnight, with printing done in the morning.

## LANGUAGES

The old Luminarian language, Menaryan, is the universal language of Comae Space. Introduced in the early 1200s AD, it slowly spread among the different species as interplanetary contacts increased.

Many Eorthe linguists view it as a constructed language. Otherwise, they argue, it seems improbable that so many life-forms can shape the sounds, despite their physiological differences. For characters, we highly recommend the skill Language (Menaryan) for at least one character in an investigative team.

Only 10% – or even less – of Eorthe's population understand written Menaryan, while about a third know how to speak it. All alien species, except the Crisg'tu, speak Menaryan to a large extent but only around 10% can read more than simple words and sentences.

## Difference Engines

Difference engines have driven much of the technological and mechanical improvements of the human species. During the 100 years since their invention by Charles Babbage, Ada Lovelace and Georg Scheutz, they have catapulted science into new domains by making complicated calculations not possible earlier. Natural sciences like navigation, aerodynamics and astronomy have gained an unprecedented momentum. Social sciences and criminology have also advanced by compiling large quantities of information.

Today, most large corporations use difference engines. Authorities and departments employ them, if for nothing else, at least to keep track of their economy. With type-setting machines connected, the engineers operating them can easily share results.



## IN PLAY

In game terms, operating a difference engine requires the skill Difference Engines. By some clever programming, the characters can gain skill bonuses when solving complex problems. The GM can also use this to reveal clues or details the characters might have missed earlier in a scenario.

To use a difference engine, the characters must first feed the engine with information. Often, this means all relevant information the characters have gathered on a subject. The GM decides upon a time frame for the programming (1-10 days). In simple cases, a single skill roll will be enough to determine a success. For more elaborate queries, an Extended Conflict should be used.

### Difference Engine Usage

**Skill:** Difference Engine. Can be augmented by Research.

Subtract any of the percentages below from 100 to get the opposing force.

*The Philosophy Engine:* 90%

*Sophisticated engine:* 70% (*Universities, Governments*)

*Normal engine:* 50% (*Starship, Police, Large Corporations, Military, Engineers*)

*Simple engine:* 30% (*Lawyers, Accountants, Newspapers*)

*Trivial engine:* 10% (*Schools, Libraries*)

**Conflict Pool:** INT vs. problem complexity (see sidebar)

**Damage:** 1d6

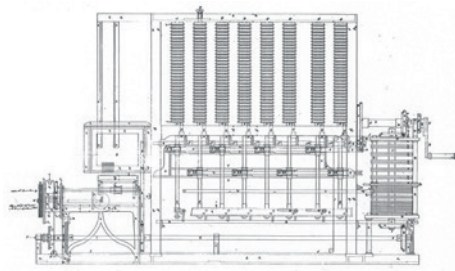
**Round Length:** 1 Day

For best effect, the GM can prepare a few different levels of information, handing over one piece for every PC success. Keep in mind that answers often will be vague, imprecise and hard to interpret. The Philosophy Engine especially tends to provide involved, abstract and plain weird responses.

## Weapons

Weapons are not a common sight in most of Comae Space. Many nations on Eorthe control ownership in various ways, just as the known alien species. In addition, the League of Nations has issued strict rules regarding weapons on starships. In simple terms, a passenger needs a good reason and a licence to bring a weapon onboard. If accepted, the ship's captain locks the weapon away during the journey. There are two reasons for this; the security of the passengers and a

Conflict Pool	Problem Complexity
6	Simple problem with a limited set of variables, possible to solve for a person with a lot of time on her hands. Simple cyphers.
11	Large set of data, too big for one person to make any sense of.
16	Complex problem with lots of information, layered and intricately connected. Advanced codes.
20	Massive set of data, with vague or contradicting information.



*Side view of a small difference engine.*

### *Weapon Licences*

*Weapon licences for humans are issued by the nations of Eorthe but to bring firearms on an interstellar trip, the licence must be approved by the Covenant of Eorthe as well.*



*A portable magnetophone of German make for sound recording in the field. Used by the Spanish explorer Yesenia Caubet for recording exoplanetary protolanguages.*

*We use the following terms to describe how common Luminarian technology is:*

***Uncommon.** Uncommon objects will be found occasionally by the characters. Small collections might be owned by collectors, museums and universities. Shady collectors or 'grave robbers' might sell single pieces at steep prices.*

***Very Rare.** Very Rare objects will not be possible for the PCs to buy. If they occur, they will be unattainable or at the centre of a campaign.*

***Existence Not Proven.** These objects are rumoured to exist but, when investigated, no one seems to have seen them first hand.*

hands-on approach to interplanetary foreign affairs. With fewer weapons flowing between planets, the results of any fights will be much easier to handle. Smuggling does occur, however. On colonies, for example, inhabitants carry guns as a security measure, to protect themselves from dangerous and unpredictable environments.

Humans mostly use handguns and rifles. The Eldirerrr is the only other species known to develop advanced weapons. They use electric guns or rifles. Detailed stats on various weapons are presented in the Equipment lists (pages 158-159).

## Luminarian Technology

Luminarians spread all over Comae Space and abandoned sites, remaining undiscovered, can still be found. Sometimes simple caves, sometimes full-blown dwelling complexes, hidden libraries or hollowed-out asteroids. They often contain rare technological marvels, sought after by all species. Unfolding Devices can be used for starships and fons mercurialis books might contain solutions to The Soot mystery – or magical spells, for those who believe in such things.

Below, some objects are listed that PCs may find. Keep in mind that Luminarian technology is rare and should not be handed out lightly by the GM.

**Fons Mercurialis Book.** Looking like a rectangular piece of thin silvery metal, sometimes with engraved borders, a fons mercurialis betrays little of its purpose. By stroking its upper edge, however, words and images appear on the plate. Stroking the left and right edges will change the content, revealing new 'pages'.

These engravings appear to be the preferred method of the Luminarians to collect knowledge, much like books on Eorthe. As with most things Luminarian, the plates are rare. Their deserted complexes offer the best chances to find the books. Some plates are damaged (bent, dented or with bits cut off) or just not displaying anything. See the chapter on Extended Conflicts for more details on how to decipher difficult books.

The plates that have been translated – slow and tedious work – are on a variety of subjects. Many contain descriptions of alien landscapes, notes on transactions or lists of various kinds. Some comprise what researchers believe is poetry. A small number hold scientific works, however. Most researchers' interest lies there – they hope to understand the sophisticated technology of the Luminarians and maybe their work on The Soot.

But even experts remain oblivious to the magic spells sometimes hidden in the books. For more details, see the Magic chapter.

The name – *fons mercurialis* – is derived from the Luminarian name for them:  $\mathbb{Z} \mathbb{D} \mathbb{A} \mathbb{F} \mathbb{H} \mathbb{R} \mathbb{Z} \mathbb{E} \mathbb{L} \mathbb{A} \mathbb{D} \mathbb{G} \mathbb{A} \mathbb{F}$ . The changing lustrous metal surface does indeed have an almost mercury-like appearance to it. *Uncommon*.

**Dimension Lock.** Prevents unfolding (both magic and unfolding devices) in a specific area. Appearance: A small metal globe, with an intricate pattern. Diameter 5 cm. Weight: 700g. Area affected: 20-25m<sup>2</sup>. *Very rare*.

**Explosive Unfolder.** This is a kind of gun unfolding a curled up dimension at such high speed that the energies released result in an explosion. Several models and sizes exist, with varying range and damage. Range: 5-100m. Damage: 1d4 to 5d10. Size: Handheld, from thumb-sized up to the size of a hand. Weight: 100-500g. Appearance: Resembles a smooth, rounded rock with no buttons or gaps. Colours: Muted earth hues. Used by pointing and squeezing on the flat side with a thumb. *Very rare*.

**Gan Fly.** A tiny alien species capable of long-range flight. Rumoured to do missions like spying, relaying messages and poisoning foes. A synthetic life-form, probably created by the Luminarians. Size: 30mm diameter. *Existence Not Proven*.

**Unfolding Device.** A spherical machine 1 metre in diameter, unfolding the 5th dimension on a subatomic level. Used for space travel. They originate from salvaged Luminarian probes or starships. See more details on page 140, Interstellar Transportation. *Uncommon*.

## Inventions of the Infected

The madness of the Soot-infected take many forms. One trait is recurring, however: building strange contraptions by combining mechanics, electronics, biochemistry and magic. These inventions seem to follow their own logic, not always adhering to the laws of physics as we know them. Drawing from strange powers, they can manage feats not understood by the other intelligent species in Comae Space.

Unfortunately, the inventions are often destructive. The infected pursue their goals without caring about the consequences for others – or even themselves. While some machinery might seem benign, some are brutal and many constructions are unstable.

### *Energy Orbs & Gravity Tiles*

*Energy orbs and gravity tiles can at times be salvaged from larger, non-functional mechanisms. They are rare and used by the rich and powerful, often for decorative effects.*

*Energy Orbs.* Glass spheres with an inner glow of pinkish light that generate energy for small objects. They vary in size from 2-7 centimetres and can power many types of devices with a bit of hotwiring (requiring a successful roll on Electronics or Mechanics). The orbs seem to last indefinitely but some start to flicker after extensive use.

*Gravity Tiles.* Small, metallic rectangles that will float in mid air when powered. Can be found in sizes from 5-10 centimetres. They can carry 2 kilograms.



*A Gan Fly in a quick sketch by Karyn Oakley, from an oral description by an Aygaan Seeker.*

### *The Scientific Community*

*The scientific community seldom cares about the inventions of the infected. They view them as heaps of scrap, assembled in an ad hoc manner by madmen. However, a few investigators taking an interest in The Soot specialise in these weird machines. They argue that the strange technology offers unique insights into the minds of the infected and their true purposes.*

## MicroModules

The devices listed here measure Size in MicroModules ( $\mu$ Modules, for short). 1  $\mu$ Module is about the size of a human hand. The measurement might not mean that much on its own but used in conjunction with future M-SPACE supplements it will fit into a grander scheme of gear creation.

## SAMPLE INVENTIONS

### Time Flicker

Type: Mechano-Magical

Size: 5  $\mu$ Modules

Complexity: 11

Hit Points: 5

**Function:** A device that constantly moves a small object one millisecond ahead of time, causing the object to flicker right outside of conscious vision. The reason for doing this is unclear but it could be a small-scale experiment testing inter-dimensional movement.

**Description:** A small wooden box that reveals a cylindrical platform and a switch if the lid is opened. When a small object is placed on the platform while the device is operating, the object will hover for a second and then flicker out of existence, only visible if not-quite looked at. The object cannot be touched and the only way to reach it is by turning off the device.

### Bio-Electric Converter

Type: Bioelectric-Magical

Size: 20  $\mu$ Modules

Complexity: 11

Hit Points: 15

**Function:** A machine that can transform the physical and metaphysical energy created by any lifeform into electricity. Drains POW and CON at 1 point per hour. The machine is often accompanied by an examination table (or bunk) that a life form can be strapped down to.

**Description:** A sturdy frame of wrought iron, the height of an adult human. It houses a chaotic mass of intertwined electric wiring and delicate tubing. At the centre, hidden from view and with all wires and tubing growing from it like hair, a small orb of glass glows green. There are no dials or switches on the machine, only a thick electric cord and a bundle of thin tubes hanging limp on the front – meant to be surgically inserted into the guinea-pig.

CON and POW lost this way will restore at 1 point per month if a character is hospitalised afterwards.

### Inter-Dimensional Communicator

Type: Electro-Magical

Size: 10  $\mu$ Modules

Complexity: 11

Hit Points: 10

**Function:** This device can send and receive coded messages across 5 parsecs (hexes), using inter-dimensional techniques similar to unfolding devices. Morse-like messages can be sent by anyone who knows how to operate it. For magic users, the device can work as a 'magnifier' for the Send spell, extending the range to several parsecs.

**Description:** An Inter-Dimensional Communicator consists of two wide glass spirals, about 1m high and a diameter of 15cm, placed with a small distance between them on a table. By moving both hands in the force field between the spirals, a message is formed. Skilled users can rapidly 'type' long messages with complex combinations of gestures and movements.

### **Magic Detection Device**

Type: Mechano-Magical                      Size: 2  $\mu$ Modules

Complexity: 11                                  Hit Points: 5

**Function:** A handheld device that reveals the use of magic for the past 24 hours within 20x20m. Scanning the full area, you get a general indication. To pinpoint a source, the device must be moved around taking continuous readings.

**Description:** A slim rectangular box with a lid that can be opened (not unlike an oversized cigarette case). A complex set of optics inside the lid projects a spectrum of light onto a rectangle. Red, orange and yellow indicate that magic has been used, while green and blue readings are normal.

### **Aura Collector**

Type: Mechano-Magical                      Size: 5  $\mu$ Modules

Complexity: 11                                  Hit Points: 10

**Function:** Collects the last remains of a dead person's Power Points. To extract Power Points, the cups are placed on the head of a dead body and a handwheel is turned clockwise. The procedure takes about two minutes and the box will give off a faint glow when loaded. To unload, the procedure is repeated on a live subject and the wheel turned counter-clockwise. A common side effect is insomnia and nightmares the coming night, with the last moments of the dying person's life being repeated, over and over, in the dreams of the receiving part. See the Sleepless Peculiarity for consequences of sleep deprivation.

**Description:** Two flat cups of porcelain are connected via a tangle of various cords to a metal box about 20x20x20cm. A single, large handwheel in black bakelite is placed on the front of the box.

<b>SPEED</b>	1
<b>HANDLING</b>	1
<b>SIZE</b>	10 000 (SR 15)

Hit Points: 8 000    Weapons: —  
 Shields: —        Apps: —  
 Armour: 1         Streamlining: —  
 Hyperspace: 1

Modules	No.	Notes
Bridge	40	
Crew	600	Hotbunking
Passengers	6400	1600 Pass.
Open Space	1400	
Cargo & Storage	1400	
Sickbay	20	
Engines	100	TR 100
Maneuver	100	TR 100
Repair Pods	10	2 Pods

### Stunts

Early Industrial Tech (Bulky, Unreliable). All tech requires 50% more space. Treat all tech as having Condition -20%. Hit Points lowered by 20%.

TL 15 engine. No visible exhaust and no refuelling needed. Only partly understood: sub-optimal operation, limited to 1 hex jumps at a time at low precision.

## THE ANTHEMIS

### Star Liner

The Anthemis was built in Germany in 1919 by Bloohm & Moss. Many regard it as one of the most modern and trustworthy ships during the 1920s. The ship has seven decks whereof five are devoted to passengers. The remaining two hold engines, storage, cargo and crew quarters. Interiors are exclusive but modest. Large dining rooms dominate the common areas, one for each class, together with the grand Théâtre Mécanique on deck two. Further smaller rooms are available too for socialising, including a music room, library, smoking room and swimming pool. Observation decks (or promenade decks) line the two upper decks, running along the inside of the hull.

State rooms are laid out as follows: 8-person rooms at lower decks (3rd class), 2-person rooms (2nd class) and Luxury Suits (1st class) at deck 2.

Crew quarters occupy the lower decks. Most of the crew members live in crammed 4-person cubicles, many hot bunking. Officers live in larger state rooms.

The bridge lies at the top of the ship (deck 1) and comprises several rooms: the main steering room, chart room, radio room and a handful of small offices. The difference engine used for navigation is housed right below the bridge, next to the captain's quarters, with direct access to the bridge by stairs.

In cases of violence onboard, security personnel stand by at all hours. A weapons locker is located below the bridge, holding low-powered pistols and truncheons. Only the captain and first officer have keys to the locker.

Of all the Comae Space species, humans dominate onboard the starships. Small groups or single individuals of Eldirerrr, Nuveri and Sumsum are often present but seldom in large numbers. The Aygaan have so far never used human star liners – they prefer their own Luminarian ships or to stay home. Occasional Sumsum get hired as stewards nowadays.

### Space Travel Encounters

As stellar navigation is not very exact, a jumping ship ends up 'somewhere' within a hex. At least, the difference engine calculations make sure the ship does not end up within a physical object. The regular recalculation time between jumps is 2-4 hours, spent in normal space. Ships also spend time in normal space when leaving and approaching star systems. The GM can use the following encounters to add drama to an otherwise boring trip.

**01-07 Hull Damage.** The ship suffers hull damage from debris or wear and tear. External repairs must be carried out in-between jumps. In a worst-case scenario, the hull has been punctured and parts of the ship might be sealed off. Duration: 2d6 hours.

**08-14 Bumpy Ride.** The passengers are in for a bumpy ride due to a debris field. This might cause motion sickness in some. All passengers are recommended to keep seated. For anyone moving around, roll Athletics to avoid being thrown off balance. If the roll fails, take 1d4-1 damage. The captain also commands extra forward observers and skilled officers to the radar and radio room. Duration: 1d100 minutes.

**15-21 Extra-Ordinary View.** When the ship drops into normal space, it meets a stunning view. It might be a spectacular sunrise from behind a nearby planet, the colourful swirls of gas on a gas giant, a massive system of rings around a world, an aurora borealis sparkling in the upper



atmosphere of a planet, a nebula seen from an unexpected angle or even a comet passing close to the ship. The best view will be on the observation decks or through the telescopes on the bridge. Duration: 1d4 hours.

**22-28 Faulty Gravity.** Gravity does not work on parts of the ship and some areas are off-limits. Gravity might be off or flipped 90-180 degrees (or turn on and off). Anyone moving in the affected area needs Zero G skill. A failed roll – or a lack of the Zero G skill – makes all other physical skills Hard to perform. The ship's mechanics will take a few hours to repair the broken plates or, if no spare parts are available, the effects will last throughout the trip. Duration: 1d4 hours.

**29-36 Engine Damaged.** The ship can only use 1d100% of the engine's capacity. Increase travel time as needed. To make repairs, all systems must be shut down intermittently. This means no light, no heat, no ventilation, no hot food and so on. Duration: Repairs will take 1d3 days for a full engineering crew.

**37-45 Difference Engine Damaged.** The difference engine onboard has taken damage. As a result, inter-dimensional jumps must be partly calculated by hand, taking much longer to perform. A regular calculation hiatus takes 2-4 hours. With a damaged difference engine the time is doubled. If the difference engine is not working at all, multiply calculation times by 20, at least, with the risk of miscalculations increasing.

**46-53 Faulty Navigation.** The navigational system malfunctions. Every inter-dimensional jump is kept much smaller than normal and complex recalculations must be done every time. Travel time increases by 50%.

**54-60 Passenger Illness.** 2d10 passengers become ill and must, as a safety precaution, be quarantined. The outbreak will last for 72 hours, at least. The ship's physician might force all passengers to undergo examinations. Security staff make sure the quarantine is not broken.

**61-68 Soot Infection.** A bout of Soot-infected madness breaks out among the passengers (or the crew), eerily synchronised across the ship. The ship's medic locks in or sedates all affected by the madness. Security is called in to handle any violent resistance but the infected will try to barricade themselves if given an opportunity.

**69-76 High Security.** Special cargo or high-security passengers travel onboard the trip. It might be an Eldirerrr clan leader, Eorthe celebrities or valuable alien antiques. Parts of the ship are off-limits to other passengers. Uniformed police patrol strategic places and plain-clothes detectives might mix with the passengers.

**77-84 Low Resources.** There is not enough water, air or food onboard with rationing to follow. It might follow from a leakage, refrigerated rooms that have broken down or a contamination of some kind. The rationing lasts for the rest of the trip.

**85-92 Coded Signal.** The radio room operator picks up strange radio transmissions. This is likely interstellar communication between two or more Soot-infected. The ship is bound by law to stay in normal space to record the transmission and try to pinpoint the source.

**93-00 Fire.** Fire breaks out in one part of the ship. The standard procedure is to evacuate the affected part, seal it off and then eject all air into space. Firemen in heat-resistant suits enter to open the safety hatches and then close them afterwards. A dangerous job, even for well-trained crewmen. After large fires, various ship-wide systems might be damaged and the air supply restricted.

### **Standard Crew**

*Captain*

*Officers (1st, 2nd and 3rd)*

*Ship's Doctor*

*Difference Engine Programmers*

*Engineers*

*Nurses*

*Security (also external repairs)*

*Chefs*

*Musicians*

*Postmen (also producing the daily newsletter)*

*Barber*

*Stewards (also serving at tables and manning the souvenir shop)*

*Kitchen Staff*

*Cleaners*

*Deck Hands*

*The above crew is listed in falling rank. Note: members of the lower ranks are likely to see and hear things not meant for them, thus being good sources of intelligence. They can also move around the ship at all times without raising suspicions.*



*First class smoking room on deck 2.*

## Equipment

The lists below contain some of the equipment characters might need during their adventures. All prices are in Doggerland Krónor (kr) but can be converted to other major currencies by referencing the sidebar.

<b>Tools, Mechanics and Instruments</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Radio incl headphones	30 kr
Gramophone with funnel	65 kr
Loudspeaker	48 kr
Camera, simple	4.50 kr
Camera, good incl tripod	50 kr
Pocket watch, regular	40 kr
Pocket watch, gold	170 kr
Alarm clock	5 kr
First aid kit	20 kr
Small set of tools (for wood, metal, mechanics, electronics or stone)	8 kr
Lock picking set	5 kr
Compass	2 kr
Binoculars	100 kr
Magnifying glass	2 kr
Portable telescope incl tripod	92 kr
Handcuffs	8 kr
Silencer	30 kr
Space suit	1000 kr
Violin	40 kr
Harmonica	2 kr
Accordion	50 kr



<b>Food and Drink</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Meal, cheap	70 Aure
Breakfast, nice	1.75 kr
Lunch, standard	1.25 kr
Dinner, nice	2.25 kr
Dinner, luxury	6 kr
Beer, 0.3 litre	25 Aure
Cognac, 1 glass	1.20 kr
Exclusive box of chocolates	2 kr
<b>Misc</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Cigar	0.3-1 kr
Cigarettes, pack of 20	2 kr
Cigarette case, nickel silver	5 kr
Pipe incl tobacco	2 kr
Museum, entrance fee	50 Aure
Theatre, good seat	6 kr
Boxing match	4 kr
Newspaper	20 Aure
Notebook	1 kr
Fountain pen, exclusive	4 kr
Novel	1.50 kr
Chess, travel set	3 kr
<b>Hospitals and Infirmaries</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Common Room	2 kr/day
Private Room	8 kr/day
So called 'free beds' are available for the poor through donations.	

#### *Odd Soot Currencies*

*There are two major currencies in Odd Soot: Doggerland Krónor (Kr) and Luminarian Meno (Mn). A Króna is divided into 100 Aure and the Meno into 10 deciMeno (dMn).*

*Internationally, two other currencies dominate on Eorthe: US dollars and British pounds. The Meno is only used in transactions on non-human worlds.*

*1 Kr equals about 4 Krónor.*

*1 £ equals about 17 Krónor. 1 shilling equals about 1 Króna.*

*1 Mn equals about 10 Krónor*

*For scenarios and campaigns in other nations, the Doggerland Króna follows the Swedish Krona during the 1920s. By looking up the historical exchange rates it is quite easy to convert prices listed here to any other currency.*

*The Luminarians introduced the Meno to further trade between worlds in Comae Space. It consists of small titanium rectangles with abstract line carvings, unique for each piece. This 'fingerprint' makes individual pieces identifiable. The value of each piece is determined by its length: a square is worth 1Mn and for every additional square length, the value doubles. dMn have different and somewhat simpler ornaments.*

### Difference Engines

Difference engines are expensive. They are also more complex than almost any other constructions in the 1920s, consisting of thousands of small metal gears, all assembled by hand with extreme precision. Small-scale manufacturers of difference engines serve governmental departments, universities and companies. Wealthy individuals might also buy engines. For around 2000 kr, a slimmed-down version – fitting into two cupboards – can be ordered. In addition, many nations impose limitations on who may own difference engines and how complex they can be. Any customers should be prepared for government inspectors and agents.

Another choice is to pay for access. Universities and non-governmental organisations might provide this service, often for a daily rate. For sensitive investigations, privacy might be an issue, however.

Cost of engine usage: 25 kr a day

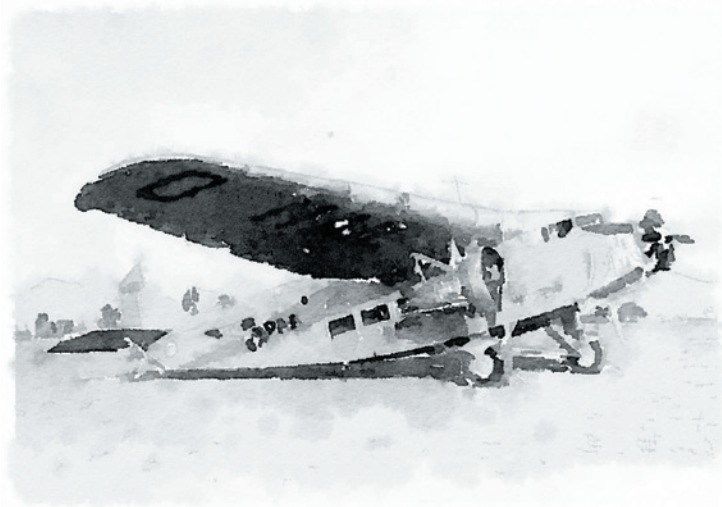
Engine usage incl an engineer to handle it: 50 kr a day

Travel	Cost
Dunnage bag, sailor model	4 kr
Suitcase	20 kr
Large trunk	30 kr
Toilet bag with contents	15 kr
Map	2 kr
Hotel, good	5 kr a night
Hotel, good with bath	15 kr a night
Hotel, standard	2.50 kr a night
Flophouse, in dormitory (thievery common)	1.50 kr a night
Pension, full board	from 6.50 kr a night



Automobile. Travel time: 20km per hour.	2 kr/10km
Train tickets 0.04 kr/km. Travel time: 40km per hour. Add 20% to ticket price for 1st class. Express train: add 2.50 kr regardless of the journey's length. Travel time is halved.	
Train ticket, Glimminge-Strandøga (320km), 3rd class Departures once a day, 8h travel time	12 kr
Steamship ticket 3rd class: 0.10 kr/km. Add 5% for 2nd class and 20% for 1st class. Travel time: 500km per day (or 30km per hour)	
Steamship ticket, Glimminge-London, 3rd class 394km, 20 hours travel time	39 kr
Steamship ticket, Glimminge-New York, 3rd class 5800km, 11 days travel time	580 kr
Steamship ticket, Glimminge-Amsterdam, 3rd class 200km, 10 hours travel time	20 kr

Aeroplane ticket: 1 kr/km. Travel time: 150-170km per hour. A plane can carry 6-8 passengers in wicker chairs	
Aeroplane ticket, Glimminge-London 2 hour flight, 394km	394 kr
Aeroplane ticket, Glimminge-Paris 3,5 hour flight, 607km	607 kr
Aeroplane ticket, Glimminge-Berlin 4 hour flight, 671km	671 kr
Dirigible ticket: 0.25 kr/km. 80-100km per hour.	
Dirigible ticket, Berlin-Brazil (9700km, 4 day flight)	2,425 kr
Dirigible ticket, London-New York (5600km, 2.5 days flight)	1,400 kr
Space travel, 3rd class Add 5% for 2nd class, 20% for 1st class	500 Kr per hex



*Aeroplanes are still not a common sight and are quite uncomfortable.*

## Forensics

*Crime scene investigations in Odd Soot look like the techniques used in our own 1920s. The following procedures are available:*

**Determine reason and time of death.** *By examining a dead body, a physician can find the reason of death most times. Time of death is not as exact as today. Within the last 24 hours, time of death is exact down to the hour. For the past week, exact down to the day. For older corpses, accuracy is no better than months. Skill: Medicine.*

**Handwriting comparisons.** *By a detailed analysis of handwriting, rare handwriting experts can often attribute written notes to a specific writer.*

**Typewriter identification.** *By a detailed analysis of typewritten texts, experts can attribute typed notes to a specific typewriter.*

**Hair and dust analysis by microscope.** *Experts can collect hair and dust from a crime scene and compare them to particles on suspects.*

**Identification of poison.** *By standardised tests, many poisons can be identified. Skill: Science (Chemistry).*

**Fingerprint identification.** *The police collect fingerprints by routine. In Doggerland, the police store prints in the memory units of a massive difference engine. Collecting prints is quite easy – finding a match is more time consuming.*

**Weapon identification.** *By microscopic studies of bullets found on a crime scene, experts can often connect ammunition to a specific weapon.*

**Polygraph (experimental).** *Lie detectors are still speculative in the 1920s and a few competing technologies exist. The tests will not hold up in a courtroom but for less demanding situations it might still be useful. The actual inventors must be contacted to use their rigs.*

**Shoe and tyre print identification.** *By a careful study of shoe prints and tyre marks on soft ground, size and manufacturer can often be identified. The wearer's weight or a vehicle's size might also be possible to calculate. Skills: Perception, Art (Photography).*

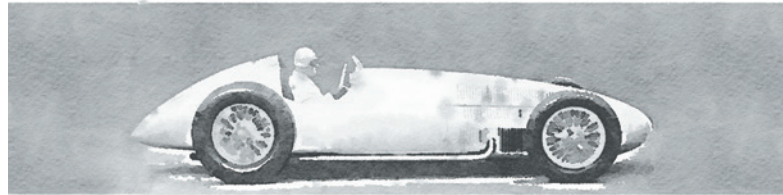
**Photographs used to identify criminals.** *Photographs of criminals are well organised. In Doggerland, police load images into a difference engine and can be woven on demand. Skill: Perception, Art (Photography), Difference Engines.*

### Object Condition

Items listed here are considered as new and fully functional. In the early industrial world, however, commodities are used for many years. If not taken care of properly, functionality will suffer.

To simulate this, all items can be given a Condition value between 0 and -100. Any skills rolled using the object will come with a penalty equal to the Condition value. For example, to use a rusty old revolver with a Condition of -20, a character's Combat Style will be at -20.

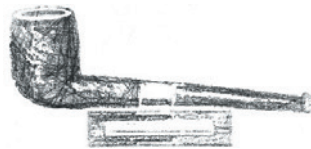
Outdoor	Cost
Tent, 3-4 people (2.3x3m)	40 kr
Tent, 12-15 people (6x4m)	84 kr
Backpack, medium	11 kr
Camping stove	12 kr
Dark lantern	5 kr
Kerosene lantern	4 kr
Vest Pocket Flashlight	5 kr
Miner's Flashlight	7 kr
Bedding roll	20 kr
Hammock	7 kr
Rope, 20 metres	4 kr
Fishing rod, portable	12 kr
Fishing net	15 kr
Shovel/spade	3 kr



Transportation	Cost
Bicycle	170 kr
Car, regular	2,000 kr
Car, exclusive	6,500 kr
Sports car	4,500 kr
Motorcycle	800 kr
Horse	1,500 kr
Simple rowing boat	70 kr



Clothing	Cost
Suit, good	170-250 kr
Suit, regular	65 kr
Dress, good	225 kr
Dress, regular	15 kr
Coat	30-60 kr
Hat	5-15 kr
Leather gloves	8 kr
Cap	4 kr
Sweater, wool	15 kr
Jacket	20 kr
Raincoat	25 kr
Warm underclothing, wool	6 kr
Motorist outfit incl hood	50 kr
Aviator outfit incl hood	160 kr
Motorist/aviator goggles	3 kr
Mechanics' suit	17 kr
Shoes	20 kr
Boots, sturdy	55 kr
Bathing suit	8 kr
Handbag	10 kr
Briefcase	9 kr
Umbrella	10 kr
Walking stick	5 kr
Cartridge belt	8 kr



### 1920s Car Models in Europe

*Regular cars: Ford Model T (introduced in 1908 but still popular in the 1920s), Austin 12 (common for taxis), Austin 7, Citroën Type C (nicknamed 'Petit Citron' as it was initially only available in yellow), Rover 9, Peugeot Quadrilette (one of the first 'minis' to be manufactured), Wolseley 10.*

*Sports cars: Bentley 3 Litre, Peugeot Type 175, Lancia Dikappa.*

*Luxury cars: Rolls-Royce Phantom I, Dusenbergl Model A, Alfa Romeo Gr, Fiat 520.*

*For more cars, the GM can look through the models of the early 1930s as well, to simulate a slightly more advanced technology and better understanding of aerodynamics.*



*"The medical supplies we have brought to this isolated Vera colony will never suffice. The needs are enormous. And today we made a terrifying discovery.*

*After a year of bad harvests, the already poor inhabitants are emaciated. Diseases spread swiftly. But nothing could have prepared us for the impact of the Soot. When we compiled our findings today, we realised the entire population of 124 is infected. Most are still in the early stages and I dare not think about where this will lead.*

*Since yesterday, they refuse to let us into the small wooden church, but it is becoming all too clear that no religious ceremonies are performed there anymore.*

*Excerpt from a personal letter by Dr Eir Lyngdal, Colonial Medical Society. 1921*

Communication	Cost
Letter postage. Depending on weight. Multiply by two for airmail, by three for interstellar. Delivery times: domestic letters are delivered in one day. Within Europe 2-5 days, depending on distance. Airmail halves delivery times. Interstellar: 1-4 weeks.	
Domestic letters	15-70 Aure
Parcel postage, domestic	60 Aure/kg
Parcel postage, international	1.50/kg
Parcel postage, interstellar	4.50/kg

The cost of phone calls depend on distance. For express calls, multiply cost by 2.	
Phone call, domestic	30-70 Aure/3 minutes
Phone call, international	0.60-2 kr/3 minutes.

Telegram, domestic	10 Aure/word
Telegram, international	0.20-3.10 kr/word,
Telegram, interstellar	5 kr/word

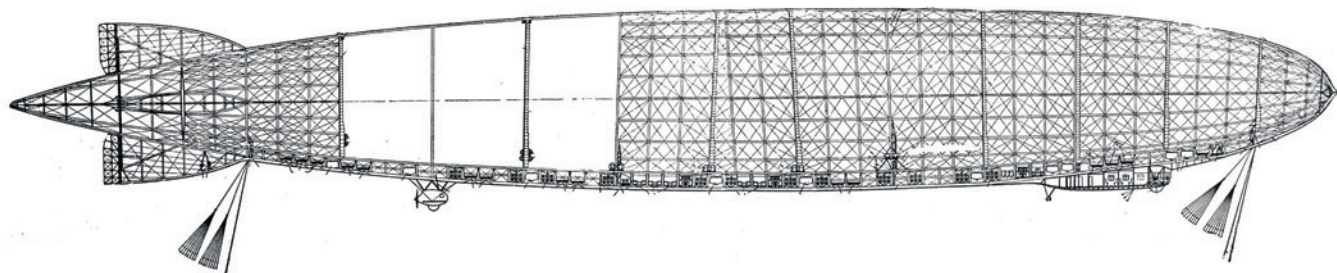


Melee Weapons	Damage	Size	AP/HP	Cost
Knife	1d4+1	S	6/8	2 kr
Club	1d6	S	4/4	3 kr
Baseball bat	1d6	M	4/4	3 kr
Axe	1d6+1	M	4/8	4 kr
Sabre	1d6+1	M	6/8	48 kr

Ranged Weapons	Damage	Force	Range	Ammo	Load	Cost
Handgun .22 Revolver	1d4+1	L	10/20/50	6	3	30 kr
Handgun .22 Automatic	1d4+1	L	10/20/50	5	2	100 kr
Handgun .32 Revolver	1d6	L	25/50/100	6	3	50 kr
Handgun .32 Automatic	1d6	L	25/50/100	7	2	100 kr
Handgun .45 Revolver	1d8	L	25/50/100	6	3	70 kr
Handgun .45 Automatic	1d8	L	25/50/100	9	2	130 kr
Rifle .22 Bolt-Action	2d6-1	H	200/400/800	1	3	50 kr
Rifle .22 Automatic	2d6-1	H	200/400/800	5	2	130 kr
Rifle .32 Bolt-Action	2d6+1	H	200/400/800	1	3	75 kr
Rifle .32 Automatic	2d6+1	H	200/400/800	7	2	150 kr
Shotgun, 12 Gauge*	3d6	M	10/20/50	2	3	150 kr
Dynamite Stick**	1d6	—	—	—	—	5 kr
Eldirerr Electric Gun	1d8	—	10/20/50	10	2	—
Eldirerr Electric Rifle	2d6+1	—	20/50/100	15	2	—

\* Shotguns fire tiny pellets which spread before they strike, reducing any range penalties by one step and inflicting damage to 1d3 adjacent Hit Locations. This comes at a cost however. Firstly the weapon damage roll for each location is halved; secondly any armour, natural or worn, doubles its Armour Point value against the damage.

\*\* Damage from explosives depends on the distance from the blast. Roll full damage to all locations for targets within 1metre of the explosion. Damage is halved and affects one less location for every metre beyond the first. A successful Evade is possible if the target is aware of the incoming explosion, halving the number of locations affected. If Hit Locations are not used, base damage is 3d6.



### Weapon Availability

Weapon availability differs throughout Comae Space.

*Doggerland & Europe:* Rifles are common in villages and on the countryside, where they are used for hunting. In cities, weapons are rare and used only by law enforcement and criminals. Handguns, clubs and knives are most common in these circles. Military weapons might be used (both legally and illegally) in extreme situations.

*US:* Both revolvers and rifles are common. The police and criminal organisations have access to heavier weapons like submachine guns.

*On exoplanets, it will vary even more.*

*Human Colonies:* Weapon availability will vary depending on the colony, but most will have restrictions somewhere between Europe's and the US'.

*Sisybrium:* There are no restrictions on weapon ownership but human firearms are few. Primitive weapons are plentiful, however.

*Comae:* Weapons non-existent.

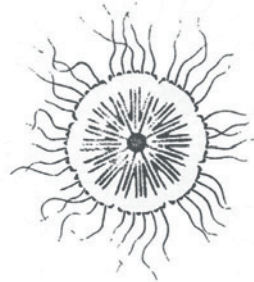
*Corinthi:* All weapons forbidden.

*Lacertae:* Local electrical weapons are available. Experiments on new weapon types are always under way, often tested out of the labs.

# Magic

COMAE SPACE IS PERMEATED by the forces called magic in common language (referred to as  $\text{r}\text{d}\text{f}\text{f}\text{.}\text{f}\text{f}$  in Menaryan manuscripts). This mysterious force has seeped into the universe for 40,000 years. Because of their physiology, some life-forms can utilise aspects of these forces. They can learn to bend the world by will alone.

All magic relies on the same fundamental force. The minds of different species vary and so does the exact manifestation of the magical forces. The powers of a Soot-infected may appear different from a Skreeder Shaman's but, in theory, they share the same origin. Any differences in incantations, gestures or paraphernalia are only superficial. Using magic is an act of pure will. Often a word, simple gesture or object is added as a focus but strictly this is unnecessary.



Magic is not widely accepted on Eorthe. Most humans deny its existence. For those that leave the comfort of an ordinary life it will soon become clear that strange forces exist. For some species in Comae Space – mainly the Aygaan – mental powers come as natural as speech. Religion or superstition has no bearing on it. To them, magic is special but not strange.

## Using Magic

In game terms, spells work like skills; every spell has a percentage value that the caster must roll under on  $1d60$  to succeed. The effect of each spell is described later in this chapter but a few common traits are listed below.

- » *Casting a spell comes with a Power Point cost listed in the spell descriptions. Failing the spell roll results in 1 lost Power Point.*
- » *Spells take 2 Action Points to cast, unless stated otherwise. The spell is activated at the end of the Round or can be held until the beginning of the next. The duration of the effect is defined by the Duration value in the spell list.*
- » *Duration and Range are defined by the base Power Point cost. They can, for some spells, be increased by spending more Power Points.*

Power Points spent are restored by one night's sleep. All spells increase individually as regular skills.

In extreme situations, a character can make an extra effort, pushing her capacity beyond what is normally possible. In these cases, a character can spend Hit Points as Power Points in a last heroic effort.

### LEARNING MAGIC

Anyone with the Science (Magic) skill can learn spells. All a character needs is a written instruction (sometimes hidden in Luminarian fons mercurialis books). For starting characters, however, specific spells and the Science (Magic) skill are not available. These will be acquired during play.

To learn a spell from a fons mercurialis book, an Extended Conflict is used. Depending on the complexity of a spell and the inscriber's skill level, it will be more or less difficult.

#### Learn a New Spell

**Skill:** For the character, Science (Magic) or  $\text{Pow} \times 2$  if they have no skill. The spell's percentage represents the writer's skill level (see next page).

**Conflict Pool:** The average of  $\text{Pow} + \text{INT}$  vs. the spell's Complexity, calculated by multiplying the Power Point cost by two.

**Damage:**  $1d6$



*Tjibbe Joustra, one of the few scientists on Eorthe taking the forces of magic seriously. After spending nine months on Comae in 1916 studying Aygaan society, he came back convinced that mental powers are real but also that it is a common force inherent in many life-forms. His career suffered by this stance and he has left in disappointment for another long-term study, this time on Corinth. Funds have been raised from independent sources.*



### *Magic in Fons Mercurialis Books*

*The Luminarians realised that magic in the wrong hands could be dangerous. Yet they also needed to write specific spells and magical research. The solution was multi-layered circular puzzles that only show their content when all the discs are in the right positions (see page 6 for an example of an inscribed spell).*

*They were originally on papyrus but the Luminarians transferred most of the writings to fons mercurialis. Not only are they more durable but also allow for more complex puzzles. The papyrus circles could be rotated to line up the correct symbols – often with seven or more layers on top of each other – but the fons mercurialis bring more tricks. To solve two layers, a smaller puzzle on the side might, for example, have to be solved first. A layer can also be mirrored or folded. And by raising the number of layers the writer can hide the precious information in new ingenious ways.*

### Round Length: 1 hour

A skilled writer/magician will come up with more elaborate and unusual puzzles. Often, the skill level and the complexity of a spell will follow each other but not always. A simple spell can be encased in a complex puzzle by a proficient magician (low complexity, a high percentage) but you cannot write a complex spell in a simple way (i.e. high complexity requires a high percentage).

A newly learned spell starts at a skill level of Pow x2.

Skill	Description
30%	A simple puzzle, often constructed by a low-level magician.
50%	A puzzle of normal complexity.
70%	A complex puzzle crafted by a skilled magician or by someone eager to hide a spell.
90%	A highly complex, multi-layered puzzle created by a master magician. Often used to protect powerful spells.

### INCREASE SPELL STRENGTH

Most spells can improve their range or other parameters by the caster spending more Power Points when activating it. The spell Mind's Hand will, for example, lift a Siz 1 object per 3 Power Points spent. A caster can spend 6 Power Points to lift Siz 2, 9 Power Points to lift Siz 3 and so on. Similarly, range and sometimes duration can be altered to suit the situation better. As a result, spells can become 'expensive' for the caster if they upgrade them lavishly.

One exception to this rule is the Touch range. These spells need physical contact with the target to function. Spending more Power Points will not change that.

### INCREASE POW

When a character has won a resisted or opposed roll against a more powerful opponent, Pow has a chance of being increased. Put a check mark next to Pow and at the end of the scenario roll  $(25 - \text{Pow}) \times 5$ , with a minimum of a 5% chance of raising Pow. If successful, Pow will increase by 1 point.





## Spell List

### Mind's Hand

Power Points: 3                      Complexity: 6                      Range: 10m  
Duration: 1 Round                      Mass: SIZ 1                      Move: 5m

This is the ability to move physical objects by will alone. For every 3 Power Points spent, the caster can move a SIZ 1 object for one Combat Round. The movement rate of the object is quite low (5 metres per round), will not cause any damage and speed cannot be upgraded by spending more Power Points. This spell can also be used to pull levers, push buttons and turn keys.

### Farsight

Power Points: 15                      Complexity: 30                      Range: —  
Duration: 1 Hour

The Farsight spell is used to see other times and places – often into the future. Complications are many, however – sights are vague and only represent one possible future. Interpreting them can be difficult.

When cast, the magician enters a deep trance for about an hour and must remain undisturbed during that time. The GM rolls the dice secretly, not telling the player whether the roll was successful or not. This imposes a sense of uncertainty for the players, not knowing if they can rely on the information given or not. The full Power Point cost is always spent.

The GM has to take extra care when this spell is used. It should rarely be used by NPCs against the Player Characters. When cast by the PCs, the GM will have to decide what clues or pieces of information to reveal – and how vaguely to present them. Giving away too much will spoil the mystery but with too little information the players will feel cheated. Striking a balance between the two is crucial.

### Tunnelling

Power Points: 5                      Complexity: 10                      Range: Touch  
Duration: 1 Round                      Mass: SIZ 10

This is the power to shift the interplay between molecules temporarily to move a physical body (life-form or object) through another object. This will, for example,

#### *Explanation of Terms*

*Power Points: the Power Point cost of casting the spell.*

*Complexity: how difficult the spell is to learn. Use this value as a Conflict Pool when learning the spell.*

*Range: the base range of the spell.*

*Duration: the duration of the spell's effect.*

*Mass: for spells working on a particular SIZ, this value determines the base mass that can be manipulated.*

*Move: for spells working by moving objects, this value determines the base distance it can be moved.*

*Damage: Hit Point damage caused by the spell.*

let a person walk through a wall, a hand to feel what is inside a box or a gun resting on a table to fall on the floor.

The caster must touch the object or person that should pass through the other object. To increase the duration of the spell, multiply the Power Points by the number of Rounds. Once it has been cast it cannot be prolonged, however.

A person or body part remaining within an object when the spell ends will take 1 Hit Point per location the first round, doubling with each successive round (2, 4, 8 and so on). If not extracted in time, a non-living object within another object will merge into one. Note that living matter cannot be passed through with this spell.

### Slow Down

Power Points: 5                      Complexity: 10                      Range: 10m

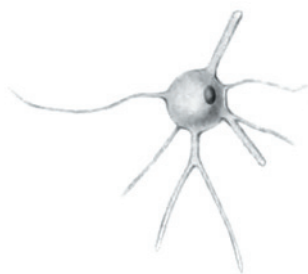
Duration: 1 Round                      Mass: Siz 10

By altering the fabric of spacetime, the caster can slow down a single individual or object to  $\frac{1}{10}$  of its normal speed. They can use this to slow down opponents, bullets, falling objects or explosions. Both Range, Mass and Duration can be upgraded by spending more Power Points.

*Opponents:* A person will move 0.5 metres per Combat Round. Note that sharp cutting weapons may still cause damage at this speed. *Bullets:* A bullet slowed down 10 times does not inflict any damage.

*Falling:* A large falling object will still cause damage, because of its weight, but dodging it does not need a skill roll. A falling person will not take any damage.

*Explosions:* An explosion will cause  $\frac{1}{2}$  damage on point blank (see page 156) and no damage further away. Evading does not require a skill roll if the character is aware of the explosion beforehand.



*The bascule species on Sisymbrium. Most climates and biomes seem to host them. With only one eye they often hunt and scavenge in packs, using clicks to communicate. Their mouths are located at the bottom of the spherical body. The name 'bascule' comes from the way they tumble forward when running.*

### Healing

Power Points: 1                      Complexity: 2                      Range: Touch

Duration: Until next dmg

This is the ability to heal wounds on another lifeform. It works by transferring the damage to the spell caster; a deep cut in the arm moves to the arm of the caster, for example. For every Power Point spent 1 Hit Point is transferred. For alien body plans, use the closest similar location to transfer onto. The casting of the spell takes

1 Minute for every Hit Point transferred. The caster cannot reduce his own Hit Points below zero with this spell.

### Psychometry

Power Points: 3                      Complexity: 6                      Range: 10m  
Duration: 1 Minute

Everything happening in a place leaves traces in the magic forces. Psychometry is used to access the residue of past events in a place or object. It will answer questions like who has been in a room, who has used a particular object, what they did and how long they stayed. Answers are sometimes vague or incomplete, and can be mixtures of visions, feelings and any other relevant senses. For every 3 Power Points spent, the spell caster can access events from the past week.

More powerful events will leave a stronger residue and are easier to 'feel'. By casting the spell several times or increasing its strength, the caster can uncover more subtle traces. Do note that it is rarely possible to extract all information – a murderer's face might be hidden by a shadow, sounds might be muffled or distorted, strong feelings drown out everything else and so on.

### Detect Magic

Power Points: 1                      Complexity: 2                      Range: 10m  
Duration: 1 Round

This spell is used to detect magic in machines, objects or spaces. It allows the caster to pinpoint an exact source, estimating how powerful the magic is. No details of the actual spell(s) involved are revealed, however.

### Explosive Unfold

Power Points: 5                      Complexity: 10                      Range: 10m  
Duration: 1 Action Point    Damage: 1d6

With Explosive Unfold, the caster releases an uncontrolled blast of energy by the powers produced when excess dimensions are unfolded. The 'explosion' is seen as a shockwave in space-time and gives off a loud thud. 1d6 Hit Point damage (to a random location) is done to everyone within a 1 metre radius. It is reduced by distance in the same way as explosives (see page 156). The target can use the Evade skill as normal as long as they are aware the spell is being cast.

Both Range and Damage can be increased by spending more Power Points.

### *Contact Spirit*

*See page 136 for the spell Contact Spirit, unique to Skreeder Shamans.*

For anyone hit point-blank by the blast, there is a small chance for Hit Points lost to be added to their Power Points; roll under Pow x2 on a d100 for this to happen. Material objects are affected strongly by the blast taking 2d6 damage in a 1 metre radius, blasting through any walls, doors or furniture nearby.

Note that the caster must be able to see the target area for the spell to work.

### **Infect**

Power Points: 5                      Complexity: 10                      Range: Touch

Duration: Permanent

The Infect spell will contaminate a target with The Soot. The first signs of infection will appear on the skin within a week, sometimes as soon as 24 hours after the spell strikes. In game terms, this means a previously uninfected player sets The Soot value to Pow x2. An already infected person simply adds 10% to The Soot. The value then updates as normal – see the chapter on The Soot.

Note: This is a rare spell and should not be used lightly, either by the GM or the players.

### **Contact the Dead**

Power Points: 10                      Complexity: 20                      Range: 10m

Duration: 15 Minutes

The Priests of Wittenberg discovered the spell Contact the Dead and use it to interrogate dead witnesses and perpetrators. Casting time is the same as Duration and the magician must stay focused on the spell during that time.

The most common use is to cast the spell on a person who died within the last 24 hours. The bond between body and soul remains intact, although quickly weakening, and it is relatively easy to get into contact. The soul – or spirit – may appear in any of several forms, either visually as a faint image, through voice only or by manifesting itself in other objects or individuals. The caster can talk freely to the spirit, with the dead person forced to reply truthfully. Powerful targets might trick the caster, however, by using riddles, half-truths and omissions.

For individuals being dead for more than 24 hours, the caster must add 2 Power Points for every day further back she needs to stretch her mind.

Note that the Priests of Wittenberg will not share this spell with anyone outside the order.

### Send

Power Points: 5                      Complexity: 10                      Range: 10m  
Duration: 1 Round

The Send spell allows the caster to transfer one thought or feeling to another life-form. A message should fit into one sentence (or two short) and it must be directed to one person, visible or not, within the spell's Range. The caster can increase the length of the message, range or the number of receivers by raising the Power Point cost. For example, sending two sentences to two friends will cost 5 for the base spell, 5 more for a second sentence and another 5 for a second receiver: 15 Power Points.

### Unfire

Power Points: 5                      Complexity: 10                      Range: 10m  
Duration: Permanent              Area: 0.5m<sup>2</sup>

This spell will put out a small fire by sucking the heat away from it. For every 5 Power Points spent, the caster can extinguish a fire covering 0.5m<sup>2</sup>. When cast, it looks like fire is absorbed into a tiny black spot in the middle of the flames.

### Solidify

Power Points: 3                      Complexity: 6                      Range: 10m  
Duration: 1 Round                      Area: 0.1m<sup>2</sup>

Any liquid, or object made up of liquid, can be turned solid with this spell. For every 3 Power Points spent, an area of 0.1m<sup>2</sup> is affected (or slightly less for volumetric measures). The caster can use this spell to stand on water, carry any liquid like a solid object or 'freeze' a single body part.

By solidifying an opponent's body part in combat, it will interrupt any actions. Some care will have to be taken, however, as a target might use a solidified arm or leg as a weapon if the spell extends into the following Round. Damage for an Unarmed attack with a solidified limb is 1d4+2. Armour Points are raised to 4.

If the caster maintains the Solidify spell on living tissue for more than two minutes, the risks of medical complications for the target increase. Any limbs will stay numb for 2 hours, lowering relevant skills during that time. Chest, abdomen or head locations kept solid for that long will cause unconsciousness for 2 hours.

*Opposite: The flyke species, found on Vera, seen from above with wings outstretched for flight. The wingspan measures around 80 centimetres.*

### **Merge**

Power Points: 3

Complexity: 6

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 Round

Mass: <Siz 1

The Merge spell can be cast to attach a small object to any other object, forming a strong bond for as long as the spell lasts. The caster can use this to fasten a small grip to a smooth wall, replace a broken lever or lock down a piece of equipment. It cannot be cast on or attached to living tissue.

### **Liquid Light**

Power Points: 3

Complexity: 6

Range: 10m

Duration: 1 Round

By casting this spell, the user can define a small area in the air that bends light. They can use it to look around corners, direct a beam of sunlight into a dark room (or an opponent's eyes) or see what is happening behind them. It works like an illusionary two dimensional mirror hovering in mid-air, about 20x20cm in size.

By spending more Power Points, the caster can expand the mirror area or distribute several along a path.

### **Pocket**

Power Points: 3

Complexity: 6

Range: Touch

Duration: 1 Round

Mass: Siz 1

Pocket creates a small rift in the space-time continuum, into which the caster can drop a small object, rendering it invisible for as long as the spell is active. Regular means cannot detect the object but Detect Magic reveals that a spell is being used. When the spell ends, the pocketed object materialises in the same location where it disappeared. By spending one extra Power Point when cast, the object reappears relative to the caster's position.

The caster can extend the duration of the spell and the Siz affected, by spending more Power Points. Siz 5 is the largest. Note that the spell does not work on life-forms.





*pinxit*

*Sculpsit*

# Worlds

THE SIZE OF COMAE SPACE IS ROUGHLY 30 Lightyears in diameter. It contains many worlds of which only a few are inhabitable. There is an illustrative star map for players at the start of the book and a hex-based map for the Game Master at the end.

We have divided the worlds of Comae Space into four rough areas of influence, each dominated by one alien species (see map at the end of the book). This division is a simplification and the areas should not be viewed as nations or empires. They are too diversely populated by the various species and the political power is far too weak for that. Instead, see them as guidelines for which culture dominates and who the first colonist was.

Several planets in Comae Space have oxygen-nitrogen atmospheres like Eorthe's. Astrophysicists believe once plant life has occurred on a planet, the atmosphere will converge towards a stable oxygen-nitrogen mix. The exact levels of gases will vary but they eventually stabilise within limits tolerable to humans and other Comae Space aliens.

A majority of planets have inhospitable conditions for any life-forms, however. Just like our solar system, barren balls of rock, planets with corrosive atmospheres (like Venus and Mercury) and gas giants outnumber habitable worlds. On the star maps, systems without hospitable worlds are marked as unnamed dots. The GM can ignore them or use them as unexplored territory – perhaps holding undiscovered hospitable planets or moons.

This chapter contains descriptions of three major worlds, starting with humanity's home, Eorthe.

*The map of Comae Space on page 9 is based on the current understanding of Earth's galactic neighbourhood, including potential habitable star systems. It is viewed from the galactic north of the Milky Way and flattened to two dimensions for ease of use.*

## Eorthe <sup>(V,VI)</sup>

Eorthe is, in many ways, identical to our own Earth in the 1920s. Telephones are still something of a novelty, jazz is the music conquering the world and automobiles share the streets with horse-drawn carriages. However, some things do set it apart; aliens are often seen in cities, the geography is slightly different and colonisation has taken a new turn.

### GEOGRAPHY

The geography of Eorthe does not differ much from Earth. The most important difference for the game is Doggerland. The area we call Dogger Bank, in the North Sea between Denmark and United Kingdom, is an island about half the size of Ireland. This is the nation called Doggerland. *Odd Soot* takes its starting point on this small island and many scenarios will begin there. For further details on this fair island, see page 174.

### Sapmi

Nation borders in Europe are similar to our own with a few differences. Furthest north is the Sapmi nation, encompassing parts of Sweden, Norway and Finland. This is the land of the Skreeders, the indigenous nomadic people of Scandinavia. Ever since the colonising efforts by the other Nordic countries failed in the 17th century, Sapmi has enjoyed independence. With Jokkmokk as its capital and Kautokeino as a spiritual and scholarly centre, Sapmi is a sparsely populated country rich in resources. The long and dark winters with lots of snow make this a demanding area to thrive in.

### The Great War That Never Was

On Eorthe, the war we call World War I (or the Great War, for those in the 1920s) fizzled and died before spreading. A small scrimmage occurred between Serbia, Austria-Hungary and Russia, but with almost unlimited land and resources on other planets most people found it hard to care much. Within a few weeks the war was over.

Despite the absence of a major armed conflict, several of the nations under Russian and German rule have gained independence. Again, the nationalistic urge for more land has been rendered rather pointless in an interstellar perspective. Finland, Poland and the Baltic nations have indirectly been set free by the new exoplanet colonies – spilling no blood.

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### Eorthe

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Hex [5,6]

Planet Size: Medium

Gravity: 1G

Atmosphere: Nitrogen-Oxygen

Climate: Temperate. Average 13.6°C.

Population: Medium

Main Species: Human

Landing: Rocket ships are allowed to land in aerodromes and starports. Permission to land is obtained via radio.

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## Historical Events of the World

**1920.** *Radio and newspapers dominate mass media. Women allowed to vote in Doggerland. Mahatma Gandhi begins his non-violent campaign against British rule in India. First movie with sound; colour introduced later during the decade. Babe Ruth plays for the New York Yankees. Prohibition started in the United States, making it illegal to manufacture and sell alcohol. Radar invented.*

**1921.** *Lenin tries to fend off an economic crises in Russia by allowing a limited form of capitalism for farmers. Death penalty abolished in Doggerland. Mao forms the communist party in China. Hitler elected leader of the nazi party in Germany. 43 people die in starship accident while orbiting Sisymbrium.*

**1922.** *BBC broadcasts radio around the world. Ulysses by James Joyce is published in Paris. The tomb of Tutankhamon is discovered by the archeologist Howard Carter in Egypt. Louis Armstrong starts his career in jazz music in Chicago. Russia changes name to Soviet Union. First international hit by Doggerland singer (and later movie star) Ria Sander.*

**1923.** *TIME Magazine's first issue published. Earthquake in China kills 5,000 people. First municipal omnibus line in Doggerland. In the first six months of the year, 40 people die in car accidents in Sweden – the need for driver's licences is discussed. The Labour Party wins its first election in the UK. Entire community of 12 families on colony world Vera found dead, cause unknown.*

**1924.** *Charleston is the the new popular dance, along with foxtrot, waltz and tango. Lenin dies and is succeeded by Stalin. The Magic Mountain by Thomas Mann is published. The Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute founded by Helene Deutsch, colleague of Sigmund Freud. The Surrealist Manifesto appeared. Olympic Games held in Paris.*

**1925.** *The Great Gatsby is published by F. Scott Fitzgerald. The Gold Rush by Charlie Chaplin is in cinemas. Art Deco exhibition in Paris. Mafia boss Al Capone survives ambush. First double-decker buses used in London. British explorer Percy Fawcett sends a last telegram to his wife before he disappears in the Amazon. Leica 35mm film still camera is introduced and revolutionises photography by its small size.*

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As Europe was spared from the economic aftershock of an all-out war, extreme nationalism has been kept in check. It exists as a political undercurrent but does not attract enough followers to come into power – Russia being the major exception. Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin govern their nation with the same fierce terror as they did here on our Earth.

## Colonisation on Eorthe

The continents outside Europe have seen one major difference compared to our own Earth; colonisation by Europeans was not as widespread. When new planets suitable for humans were discovered in the 1880s, many settlers redirected their interests. Resources on Eorthe became less important. As a result, both North America and Africa was spared some effects of colonisation. Indigenous cultures have survived more intact, free to find their own ways to relate to the industrialised world.

## HISTORY

The history of Eorthe differs in a few important ways. The main drivers are the difference engines used during the 19th century, following the successful invention by Charles Babbage in the 1820s. Space travel and the discovery of aliens are the most direct consequences.

With the new calculating powers of difference engines made available to scientists, new discoveries and inventions were made at a quicker pace. It has not affected everyday life very much yet, however. The general Tech Level of the 1920s remain intact with a few notable exceptions. Among the 'early' inventions are radar, space travel, underwater exploration, sturdier airships and radio.

## Space Travel

Nowhere has the technological advancements been more plain than in astronomy and space travel. In 1832 the first probe was sent into space and in the 1840s manned missions were accomplished. The discovery of the Luminarian probes orbiting Mars and Venus in the 1850s pushed technology even further. However, it took 40 years to build a starship capable of interstellar travel. The Unfolding Devices powering the probes turned out to be the key. By building a starship around one, humanity controlled the massive power required to reach other stars.

## Alien Life

With a starship capable of FTL travel, it did not take humanity long to meet alien life. The first species to be found was the Aygaan. It was shocking to find another







1926. Gertrude Ederle becomes the first woman to swim across the English Channel. Hirohito becomes the new Emperor of Japan. Impressionist painter Claude Monet dies. Movie star Rudolph Valentino dies at the age of 31, causing mass hysteria among his female fans.

1927. Virginia Woolf publishes *To the Lighthouse*. Ford Motor Company discontinues the Model T, after selling 15 million units. Refrigerators see widespread use in homes. Greta Garbo appears in *Flesh and the Devil* and becomes an international movie star overnight. Partial solar eclipse in Doggerland on June 29 (total eclipse in Great Britain and Norway).

1928. Penicillin discovered by accident. Telephone line between Doggerland and New York opened. Bomb against Italian dictator Mussolini kills 17 bystanders. The Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia commences operations. Machine-sliced bread invented. The International Red Cross is established. Arnold Rothstein, New York's most notorious gambler, is shot to death over a poker game in a hotel.

1929. The Wall Street crash of 1929. Unusually cold winter in Northern Europe. Smallpox epidemic in UK. Rioting in Jerusalem. The German airship LZ 127 Graf Zeppelin flies around the world in 21 days. Vatican City is made a sovereign state.

### Isolated Locations

For gaming purposes, isolated locations can be of particular interest. The Doggerland landscape offers many such opportunities. Many villages have small farms placed just outside the hamlet and lonely, or even abandoned, houses can be found throughout the countryside. The western parts of the island can hide buildings among its many nooks and crannies.

The southern coastline may thrive in the sunshine but between rustic fishing villages and resorts are stretches of more sparsely populated areas. For less frequently visited areas, the northern coast is ideal. The further east, the longer between the homesteads.

civilisation but it was also reassuring to realise the life-forms were not only peaceful but also living almost mediaeval lives. The Aygaan were more than willing to teach humankind about the rest of Comae Space and its inhabitants – once humans had overcome the language barrier. While militant factions issued warnings and called for rapid armament, curiosity overcame humanity.

Within 10 years, humanity had met all four dominating species in Comae Space. Humans established the first exo-colony on a nearby world called Vera. A second colony was being planned on Librae. With more abandoned Unfolding Devices discovered, new starships were being built and scientific expeditions launched to explore the strange new worlds in Eorthe's vicinity.

## DOGGERLAND

Doggerland is an idyllic island in the North Sea. Low, rolling hills are dotted with forests and small-scale farms. White, sandy beaches stretch along the coastlines. The climate is like in Britain and Denmark; short and rainy winters, with temperatures around 0°C, with occasional snow. Summer temperatures vary between 20-30°C and the weather is often a mix of sunny days and showers.

### Geography

From a geological standpoint, Doggerland is not much more than a large sand reef. The highest point, 95 metres above the ocean, is a low hill northeast of Glimminge. Topography is flat in the eastern half of the island, while the western part comprises low hills and small valleys. The only large waterway, Dimle River, winds its way through these hills.

Earlier in history, the entire island was covered in lush forests of oak trees, beech and linden. As farming expanded, large parts have been converted into open fields, especially in the eastern parts, used both for grazing and crops. The western undulating landscape is more difficult to farm and breaks up into smaller fields, interspersed with copses, streams and forests, creating a beautiful and varied landscape.

The coastline consists of low-lying fields turning to sandy beaches – wide or slim depending on ocean currents and winds. Only the west coast has steep hillsides meeting the sea but often a thin streak of sand is visible closest to the water.

Glimminge, Strandöga and Sandhamar are the three major towns in Doggerland. In addition, the countryside is dotted with villages of all sizes. The south coast is densely populated and popular with tourists. The most picturesque settlements can be found in the western hills (unbeknown to tourists).



## History

After the last ice age 12,000 years ago, Doggerland separated from mainland Europe as sea levels rose. The island was just large enough to hold a thriving Stone Age culture, based on fishing, hunting, foraging and agriculture. Just like in England and Scandinavia, Bronze and Iron Age arrived late through sparse trading with neighbouring areas. Traces from this era are in the form of grave mounds, standing stones and occasional rock carvings. During antiquity, the Roman Empire never developed much interest in Doggerland and it was, like its Scandinavian neighbours, never invaded.

The first major cultural shift in Doggerland history came during the Middle Ages with the vikings. With their combination of trade, plunder and conquering they soon merged with the Doges. The island functioned as a stepping stone for voyages further west and south. The Doggerland language formed during this age. In the 11th century, William the Conqueror invaded from the west and influences from Normandy and England increased. Castles and fortifications were erected during these times, and Glimminge established itself as the major port. Inscriptions of Norse runes can be found from this era.

Upon entering the Renaissance in the late 15th century, the Doggerland nation was formed. Being protestant-germanic in religious outlook, it sided with England, Scotland and Sweden during The Thirty Years' War. Glimminge University was founded in 1640.

The Industrial Revolution spread from Great Britain to nearby Doggerland. Industrialisation started with mechanised spinning in the 1790s, with high rates of growth in steam power occurring after 1800. Skilled artisans, easy access to education and knowledgeable investors helped the island bring forward many great inventors. Among others, the Swedish Scheutz family was in the 1830s attracted by generous offers of investment, bringing difference engine development to Doggerland very early.

## Politics

Doggerland is a democracy with a ceremonial monarchy added on top. Power has shifted between conservatives, liberals and social democrats. As in most European countries in the 1920s, both left, right and solipsist extremists try to gain a foothold, sometimes through violence. Doggerland has so far remained unmoved by these efforts.

## Doggerland Statistics

*Doggerland: 2.5 millions inhabitants*

*Glimminge: About 200,000 inhabitants*

*Living Standards*

*Electric Light in 90% of all homes.*

*Central Heating in 10% of all homes.*

*Bathroom present in 20% of the larger homes, 0% in smaller.*

*2/3 of the population live in three rooms or less.*

*Single-room apartments common, with or without kitchen.*

*Many homes are overcrowded. Five people or more are not uncommon in two rooms.*

*20% of all homes take in tenants, either caring for someone poor or renting out a room to manage the apartment costs.*

*30% of upper middle class and upper class homes have servants, often a woman handling the household chores. Servants are harder to find than in previous decades, as industry and commerce attracts a larger portion of the workforce. Long working hours and bad living conditions are stated as the major reasons for not taking servant jobs.*

*Renting a single room costs about 130 Krónor a month.*

*Work*

*Low-Income Salary: 5,500 Kr a year or lower. 85% of the population fall into this category.*

*Workforce distribution: Industrial (50%), Lower Clerk or Official (13%), Craftsman, Farmer, Salesman, Fisherman, Pensioner (13%), High-Income Jobs (15%).*

*7% of the workforce is under 18 years of age.*

*5% of the population receive subsidies from the municipality.*

*Payment*

*Simple physical labour: 1,200-1,700 Kr a year (2-5 Kr a day for day labourers)*

*Industrial: 2,300 Kr a year*

*Shop assistant: 2,700 Kr a year*

*Office worker: 4,300 Kr a year*

*Technician & Engineer: 6,000 Kr a year*



### *The Police in Doggerland*

*The most common police officers are uniformed Constables, often seen patrolling streets on foot. They are supervised by Sergeants and an Inspector in charge of the local police station. Cities and towns will have several stations while villages will share a small station with two or three other villages. In rural areas, people have to call the nearest village for police support.*

*For investigative work, the Criminal Investigative Department (CID) are called. They are plain-clothes detectives and specialise in solving difficult cases, collecting fingerprints, interrogating witnesses and so on. They operate out of Glimminge but go wherever meticulous investigations are needed.*

*There is also a Special Branch focusing on terrorism and other threats to the nation.*

*In towns, the police have access to a few cars and in villages, bicycles are the regular mode of transportation (but they can call for an automobile for special situations).*

## Transportation

For short distances, the most common modes of transportation are bicycles, automobiles and horse carriages – but walking and promenades still dominate. Contrary to the 21st century, even small hamlets can be vivacious and city streets are often crowded. Buses and trams exist in towns but are uncommon. Those who can afford it take a taxi. For goods and deliveries, small trucks and carriages are used.

When travelling between towns in Doggerland, trains and ships will be the first choice. Automobiles are becoming a more regular sight but roads are still not great.

For international travel, steamships dominate. London, Amsterdam, New York, Copenhagen and Christiania can be reached this way, with departures every week. Most other destinations can be reached from London. Commercial airlines are still rare but there is an improvised aerodrome in a field southeast of Glimminge. Dirigibles see some usage, mainly between major cities within Europe.

Rocketships depart from Glimminge Bay every week, taking interstellar travellers to waiting starships in orbit. Common destinations are Sisymbrium, Corinthi and the human colonies Vera and Librae. For other destinations, ships are more irregular (once every 1-3 months). Sometimes it is more practical to join a scientific transportation vessel as a passenger.

## GLIMMINGE

Glimminge is a mid-sized city on the west coast of Doggerland. It houses around 200,000 inhabitants and is situated where Dimle River enters Glimminge Bay.

The key to the city's location is the bay, that protects the city from harsh weather. Combined with the river mouth this has turned out to be an ideal spot for a settlement. The city is flat and the hills north of the capital, Dogger Hills, do not reach into the city. Dimle River cuts straight through Glimminge and divides the inhabited area in two equal parts.

Density is average for a European city with mediaeval roots. The centre – and also the oldest part – crowds along the Dimle shores, from the waterfront facing Glimminge Bay, out to the spacious 19th century districts. Several low bridges span the river, which at this point is about 50 metres wide. Building heights throughout the city vary, but 6-8 floors dominate. Bricks, plaster and stone are the most common building materials. Pedestrians, bicycles, horse carriages and automobiles fill the streets and the dense old parts quickly become crowded.





### *Famous People in the 1920s*

*Al Capone, mafia boss in Chicago*

*Albert Einstein, theoretical physicist*

*Alfred Hitchcock, director and filmmaker*

*Babe Ruth, baseball player*

*Buster Keaton, actor, director and comedian*

*Charlie Chaplin, actor, director and comedian*

*Cole Porter, composer*

*Douglas Fairbanks, actor*

*Edwin Hubble, astronomer*

*Fats Waller, pianist and entertainer*

*F. Scott Fitzgerald, writer*

*Ethel Barrymore, actress*

*Ernest Hemingway, writer*

*Fritz Lang, moviemaker and screenwriter*

*George Gershwin, composer and pianist*

*Greta Garbo, movie star*

*Johnny Weissmuller, swimmer*

*Niels Bohr, physicist*

*Pablo Picasso, painter and sculptor*

*Ria Sander, singer and actress*

*Rudolph Valentino, actor*

*Sigmund Freud, psychologist*

*T. S. Eliot, poet*

*Virginia Woolf, writer*

The overall structure of the city is easy to grasp, even for an intermittent visitor. The Old Town straddles the river mouth, with the poor districts to the north and more well-to-do quarters to the east and south. Northwest of the river mouth the docks are located while luxurious housing dominates along the waterfront southward.

### **Main Districts**

Below is a short description of the main districts in Glimminge.

**Old Town.** The Old Town is at the centre of the city, housing the parliament, the old castle and the commercial centre. Streets are narrow and inhabitants range from high to low. Small shops line most streets while hawkers and costermongers sell their goods in corners and squares. Pickpockets and sneaks are drawn to the area, lured by the crowds and the commerce.

**The Docks.** The Docks are active around the clock. Ships of all sizes come and go, freighters are loaded and unloaded, public-houses and beer halls serve sailors and stevedores from all over the world. Dingy storehouses also hide shady businesses and the northeast parts of the area gradually merge with the slums – spawning a nasty district of poverty, crime and violence.

**Haga, Grünerløkka, Eremitagen.** Wedged in between The Docks and the Old Town, these three districts house Glimminge's poor. Buildings and streets are ill kept but busy as overcrowded apartments force inhabitants into the streets. The closer to the harbour, the shabbier and unsafer the area becomes, shunned by the rest of the population.

**Østerbro, Sorgenfri.** These 19th century districts lie to the east and northeast of the Old Town, with tree-lined avenues and massive, decorated buildings. Both the university and The Philosophy Engine's campuses are located here. These are the districts of the wealthy and the prosperous middle class. Life can be easy here and servants are likely to do most of the hard work.

**Lykkorna.** This district used to be a countryside get-away for the opulent. As Glimminge grew south, the grand seaside villas eventually became a part of the city. These days, Lykkorna is a lush area with small manor houses grouped among century-old oak trees and beeches. 'New money' is frowned upon but the times are changing faster than the inhabitants can cope with.

## Locations

Below are a few important locations in Glimminge.

**Glimminge University.** The tight-knitted university campus of mediaeval origin is located southeast of Dimle River, between the Old Town and Sorgenfri.

**The Philosophy Engine.** See the chapter Major Forces for information on the Engine's campus.

**Rats' Castle.** On a reef right outside the Old Town, the ruins of the original keep still stands. The rough-hewn stone fortification was abandoned after a fire 40 years ago and since then Glimminge's low-life has seeped into the place. Beggars, criminals, hobos and the ill now fill every nook and cranny of this little island, laying low during the day and sneaking out in the dark hours. The authorities smoke them out at times, but within a few months the status quo returns. Non-inhabitants do not enter Rats' Castle lightly.

**Glimminge Central Station.** Glimminge Central Station is in a dynamic area where the Old Town, Haga and Østerbro intersect. Inspired by international metropolises, the railroad through Glimminge goes through a tunnel, with trains emerging under the great arches of a two-story railway station, before heading out the other way.

## Food & Drink

*Typical dishes include 'silltallrik', similar to Swedish smorgasbord or Danish smorrebrod. Deep-fried fish is the fast food of choice, like fish n'chips but with the fillet wrapped in flatbread. Finer restaurants carry the typical French cuisine of the day, served with wine.*

*Beer is popular, with many local brands. The most common are 'The Dog and Fisherman'. Public-houses and bars are referred to as 'ølhall' (beer hall). Otherwise, tea is almost as ubiquitous as in Britain.*

*There is also a bring-your-own cake buffet tradition at parties and larger family gatherings. And cake in this case means home-made birthday cakes. All guests bring their own cakes and place them on a large table. You can then taste your way through the entire collection, having tea, coffee and sherry along with it.*



## Naming Doggerland Villages

Combine the first and second halves below randomly to get typical Doggerland village names.

Øster-: east

Lille-: small

Vest-: west

Nørre-: north

Sør-: south

Sand-: sand, beach

Klags-: woe

Blås-: windy

Stor-: big

Adels-: noble

Myre-: wetland

Her-: area

Ting-: governing assembly

-bekk: stream, river

-havn: harbour

-nes: isthmus

-by: village

-skov: forest

-holm: hill or island

-vik: bay

-vad: ford

-øya, -ø: island

-rø: glade

-bro: bridge

-slett: plain, flatland

-eng: meadow

## VILLAGE GENERATOR

As soon as the characters leave the bustling towns they will encounter villages of all shapes and sizes. To help the GM come up with memorable locations, a village generator is provided below. It is constructed with Doggerland and exo-colonies in mind but will work in other Eorthe nations with a few tweaks.

### Village Size

To get village size, roll 2d6 and multiply by 100 to get the number of inhabitants. If 2 is rolled, pick any number of inhabitants between 50 and 200.

### Main economy

Most villages rely on several incomes but with one major pursuit driving the economy.

1-2. Fishing                      3-4. Agriculture                      5. Tourism                      6. Industry

Common industries include: fish processing (like drying and preservation), textile manufacturing (spinning and weaving), food processing (dairies, preservation), brick making, pottery, salt production, glass- and metalworks.

Industries are not likely to exist in villages with fewer than 200 people.

### Primary Establishments

These establishments are present in all villages. In hamlets with 200 or fewer inhabitants, choose four. In villages with 600+ inhabitants, several instances of each might be present.

1. Post Office	4. Mill	7. Public-House
2. General Store	5. Carpenter	8. School
3. Church/Temple	6. Blacksmith	

### Secondary Establishments

Pick five below for villages with 400-900 inhabitants. For larger villages (1,000-1,200) all will be present.

1. Book Shop	5. Doctor	9. Butcher
2. Food Market	6. Restaurant	10. Bakery
3. Hotel/Lodging-House	7. Industry	11. Hardware Store
4. Bank	8. Railway/Omnibus Station	12. Garage

### Special Feature

Choose 1-3 special features below for the village. This is what the village is known for and what visitors are most likely to focus on.

1. **Scenery.** The village is situated in a beautiful location.

2. **Architecture.** One or several buildings are known for their unique style. If the village is small, this will often be the church or temple.



3. **Medicine.** A skilled doctor has set up practice in the village, sought out by patients from all over the country.

4. **Artisan.** The village is known for its skilled artisans in one craft, often with a rich tradition stretching far back. It can be wood working, ship building, decorative painting, furniture making, gardening, pottery, glassware or metalware.

5. **Health.** The location is attractive from a health perspective. Spring water is most common but fresh air, warm winters or plenty of sun is also popular.

6. **Food.** The village is known for a special dish, ingredient or restaurant.

7. **Manor House.** A magnificent manor is near the village, possibly with a rich history.

8. **Cultural Hotspot.** A clique of painters, writers and/or musicians spend considerable time near the village. The relation with the villagers might be good – or not.

9. **Nature & Wildlife.** Not necessarily a beautiful sight, the area contains unique biomes, plants and animals. It can be forests, meadows, dunes, streams – or a combination.

10. **Archeology.** A ruin or archeological site is in or nearby the village. It can be a well-researched tourist magnet or almost forgotten.

11. **Celebrity.** A nation-wide celebrity lives in the area from time-to-time, throwing parties and ordering expensive delicacies. This attracts both journalists and fans.

12. **Resource.** There is a unique resource in the area. This feature suits exoplanet villages well.

### Conflicts

Randomly choose 1-3 conflicts that dominate the village and the area around it. Decide if the conflicts have spawned recently or if they go way back.

1. **Land.** Disagreements over borders, land use and pollution are common in early industrial societies.

2. **None.** The place is a haven of peace and kindness.

3. **Stalled Economy.** Reasons for economic setbacks are many. It can be an industry moving out, a lack of entrepreneurs or tourists finding new locations.

4. **Personal Feud.** In many communities outbreaks of hatred will poison social life. Old rivalries, people marrying the wrong person or recent wrongdoings will, on occasion, turn sour.

5. **Religion.** Doggerland houses many different religions. Sometimes this leads to conflicts..

6. **Newcomers.** Immigration to Doggerland is very small but at times people move within the country, taking their traditions with them. At times this will ignite a conflict.

7. **Poverty.** Poverty is widespread during the 1920s. Most communities take care of their poor but sometimes the responsibility will be overwhelming. Or completely ignored.

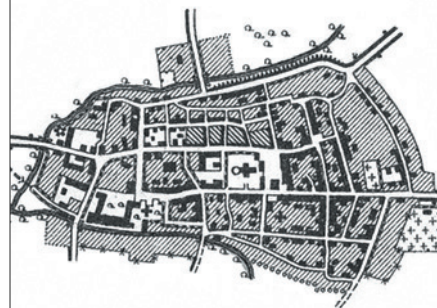
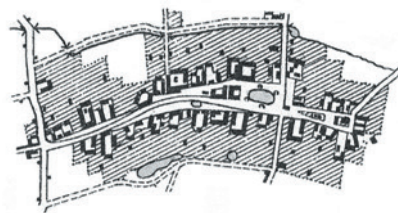
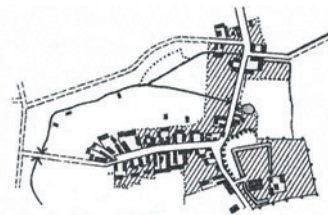
8. **Emigration.** Young people are leaving the village to seek new lives abroad or off-planet. This leaves the village a bit empty, aged and sometimes cheerless. Abandoned farms are likely.

9. **Illness.** An illness has struck many of the inhabitants. Tuberculosis, severe cases of the flu, The Soot or even more exotic diseases are all possible. In tight communities, inherited weaknesses might also cause trouble.

10. **Theft.** The area has recently been plagued by theft, housebreaking and robbery. Distrust toward strangers is likely.

### Inhabitants

Use the rules for Circles to create a network of individuals with different roles in the community. Build a Relationship Map for even more detail. In addition, the Game Master chapter covers a few techniques on how to create interesting individual NPCs with strong motivations.



Typical layouts for small villages. Buildings are clustered around a crossroad with fields surrounding them. The main street varies in size and widens into informal village greens or squares. A stream passes by in the outskirts.

## Sisymbrium (VII, V)

Sisymbrium is an Eorthe-like world on the outskirts of Comae Space. Despite its location, the planet is an important hub.

As a melting pot of various alien cultures, it offers countless trading and information-gathering opportunities. As a local saying goes, ‘what cannot be found on Sisymbrium, simply cannot be found’.

Most of the planet is sparsely populated by the indigenous Lsesenaugh species. The majority of the interstellar inhabitants are concentrated in one large city – The Sinking City. In this ancient stone city, all known species of Comae Space live close together: fighting, negotiating and befriending each other. To stay alive, they must cooperate and add new levels to the buildings - or be outpaced by the city’s slow descent into the ground.

And towering above all; The Dream Library.

### GEOGRAPHY

Sisymbrium is divided into three main continents: Quinia, Chaeme and Ianthis. Quinia stretches from north to south and encompasses all climates. Chaeme is furthest north, harbouring continental and polar biomes. Ianthis, finally, stretches in the east-west direction in the temperate and tropical zones.

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#### Sisymbrium

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**Hex** [7,5]

**Planet Size:** Medium

**Gravity:** 1G

**Atmosphere:** Nitrogen-Oxygene  
(Eorthe-like)

**Climate:** Temperate

**Population:** Small. Low density

**Main Species:** Lsesenaugh

**Landing:** No landing procedure, no starports

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#### Climate and Landscape

To a large extent, the climate and landscape types of Sisymbrium resemble Eorthe’s. Tropical forests cover the areas closest to the equator, succeeded by temperate and continental landscapes further north and south. Ice caps and deserts occupy smaller areas than on Eorthe.

Just as most Eorthe landscape types are represented on Sisymbrium, vegetation is also similar. Flowers are smaller and less colourful, while foliage is greyish green or yellow. Trees have long, slender leaves – like bamboo or willow – and ‘grass’ looks more like wispy ferns upon close inspection.

A unique landscape feature found in many areas on Sisymbrium is ‘quicksoil’. It is like quicksand but requires heavier objects to lose its stability. This means most life-forms can walk on it but anything bigger than a large vehicle will sink into the ground.

Quicksoil is quite common on the planet, often in small patches of around room<sup>2</sup>. The exception is the Apricalian Plain, location of The Sinking City. This

SISYMBRIUM



### Climate Groups

The following five climate groups are used:

*Tropical:* Temperatures above 18°C all year. Rainy.

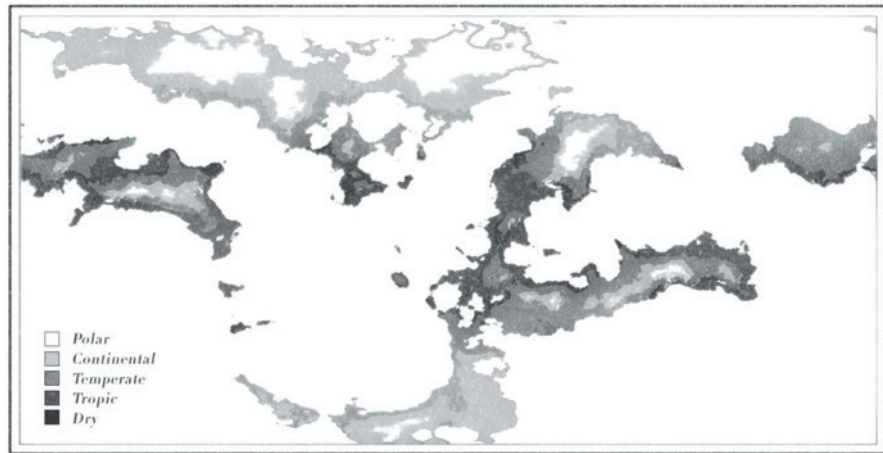
*Dry:* Similar to Tropical but without rain. Steppe and desert belong to this group.

*Temperate:* Warm summers and cool winters. Occasional snow in the winter. Mediterranean countries and Great Britain are good examples on Eorthe.

*Continental:* Warm or cool summers and cold winters. Often covered in evergreens and tundra. Snow in the winter.

*Polar:* Cold all year, lots of snow. Glaciers.

Keep in mind that climate is affected by altitude. A high peak in a tropical area might have a polar climate at the top.



area stretches for 14 kilometres and swallows anything bigger than an omnibus. A lesser known fact is that the quicksoil is subject to subterranean movement. A small building being sucked underground, for example, might resurface again years later, sometimes a few kilometres away. The buildings often remain intact and with luck all objects within are well-preserved.

### Fauna

Two body plan types dominate in Sisymbrium life-forms; a more or less spherical type and another with an insect-like appearance. The spherical body plan has given rise to many species, including the L'sesenaugh. A species called grimdjaws have a clear resemblance with the L'sesenaugh, with their heads capable of shooting out of their lower bodies. Except for the carnivorous grimdjaws, the elephant-sized secunium species (secunia in plural) is the major predator. Despite their size, they are agile and will hunt down most moving targets (including humans). They are also domesticated, however, and used for transportation of goods.

The insect-like group of species contain several small flyers – many of them included in the L'sesenaugh's traditional diet – the major exception being the larger simellian stabber. These vicious hunters hover in small groups, ready to drop on targets passing underneath. Many inexperienced explorers get wounded or killed this way.

### Star System

At the centre of the planetary system is a yellow star called Sisymbrium (or simply Emon, meaning sun).

The planet Sisymbrium is the fourth of 11 worlds, three of them gas giants and the remaining eight are uninhabitable balls of rock in various sizes.



## THE SINKING CITY

The Sinking City stands tall in the middle of the Apricalian Plain, between the ocean and the Lucaelum peak. As its name implies, the city sinks slowly into the ground, a process that has been continuing for thousands of years. The founding of the city stretches further back than both L'sesenaugh memory and xeno-archaeologist findings, leading to a long-standing argument about the original builders. The Luminarians are sometimes claimed as the only logical choice but as the city was established long before the Luminarians entered Comae Space, many scientists object to this theory.

### Buildings and Layout

Maps of The Sinking City age so swiftly that they are almost pointless. By the time a cartographer finishes one, buildings have sunken further into the ground, pieces of ancient architecture have popped up in unexpected places, streets and alleys have been rerouted. Buildings also sink at different speeds, varying with time, making any estimates almost impossible. Cartographers seldom care to begin any detailed charts. This lack of correct maps, combined with the rounded building bases and the scanty regulations, makes the city a veritable maze. Finding your way around takes practice and new visitors often need help.

Most buildings in The Sinking City are tall, spiralling towers built of local brick. To keep up with the slow descending movement, the inhabitants add new levels in a slow, continuous pace. Outer walls are dotted with openings, balconies, small pods and archways, connecting towers high above street level. Architectural styles vary from building-to-building and even from floor-to-floor – all depending on when the additions were made and what species lived there at the time.

Interiors consist of one continuous spiralling slope, starting a few stories below ground, continuing in one long sweep to the top. Shops and food stalls occupy the ground floor while workshops reside two or three stories up (or 'turns' as the locals call them). Higher up, living quarters are located. The inhabitants maintain privacy with thin interior walls (in brick or wood) but some species keep their homes, shops and workshops semi-public, with only small parts private.

3-4 stories below ground most buildings continue to be used, even if the original users abandon them. Instead, light-shunning creatures move in, sharing the interconnected subterranean passages with criminals, the poor and the ill. Even deeper down, outer walls collapse in places, making further exploration difficult. Only a few life-forms stay in these lower levels and they are often strange: deep-

### Climate

*The Apricalian plain is located in the temperate zone of Sisymbrium. Winters are mild (10-15°C) and summers warm and sunny (25-30°C). Most rain falls on the mountains to the east but occasional showers keep plants from yellowing. The plain itself is covered in herbs and the local equivalent of grass, seldom taller than knee height. Forests surround the plain, to the east changing into evergreens as the ground rises towards the Lucaelum range. The coastal area is forested, with occasional L'sesenaugh settlements.*

### Starship Landings

*Early rocket ships landed on the outskirts of the Apricalian plain to avoid the quicksoil. In recent years, however, concrete 'barges' have been devised, distributing the weight over a larger area. They are located 500 metres outside the city. Still, only two ships can stay on the ground at once and timing is tight: a rocket ship must take off within 45 minutes or it will start to sink into the ground along with the concrete barge. This is barely enough to let passengers, luggage and mail off, while the ship is refuelled at the same time. Carriers, using hand drawn carts or huge, tame secunia laden with exports and outgoing mail, are available to those who need them.*

### Mechanical Arts

*L'sesnaugh technology is quite simple – comparable to the renaissance on Eorthe – but most Comae Space equipment can be found in the city. Eldirerr and human machinery is common and Eorthe weapons can be found sometimes. Even the Eldirerr electronic guns can be tracked down at times.*

*Local beasts of burden dominate transportation (the domesticated secunia) but an automobile, aeroplane or airship might be spotted at times. There are neither telephones nor a postal service and runners relay messages.*



### *Prices in The Sinking City*

*Prices follow the lists in the Equipment chapter, with some exceptions like transportation. Trains, aeroplanes or taxis do not exist, for example, neither can a car or bicycle be bought. A domesticated secunia can be obtained for the same price as a good horse.*

### *Staying in The Sinking City*

*Finding a place to stay in The Sinking City is easy. The idea of hotels has not caught on yet but in many buildings a few rooms are available for hire. At best, they are small rustic pods or turrets clinging to the facade of a towering structure, offering beautiful views over the city. At worst, they are damp vaults a level or two below ground, already housing a stranger or two. As for costs, they follow the prices on Eorthe.*

soil animals adapted to complete darkness or remnants of ageing families embracing the damp stillness, leaving their sane minds behind.

The major exception to this is The Dream Library. It continues its towers downward, to go on forever. Countless books cover the curving walls, continuing deeper and deeper, with the dreams scribbled down becoming older the deeper you go, written in ever stranger languages. It is said that it never ends. Rumour has it that those venturing too deep never come back.

### Street Life

Street life in The Sinking City can best be compared to a Middle-Eastern bazaar on Eorthe. Small shops line the meandering streets, spilling their goods on every available surface, and food stalls can be found in plenty. There are people everywhere, haggling, eating, arguing, sleeping or just taking a stroll.

Nights are mild but dark, with no communal street lighting the streets are empty during the dark hours. Occasional lanterns light up entrances and cantinas, forming small pools of enlightenment and safety.

All intelligent species in Comae Space - and then some - can be found in the city. Many live there but some are just passing through. Eldirerrr, Sumsum and Nuveri are most common but an occasional Aygaan can be seen too. The GM is free to add lesser alien species that live in the city.

Despite most streets in The Sinking City being lined with shops, several outdoor markets also exist. These open areas house an even greater variety of goods, from locally grown vegetables sold by L'sesenaugh farmers to interstellar merchants selling obscure hardware. However, keep in mind that tourism is still in its infancy and knick-knacks have not yet flooded the cities of Comae Space. Merchandise is practical and focused on everyday needs.

Almost any food can be found in the stalls and restaurants of The Sinking City. Some is fantastic while other dishes - aimed at specific species - will be inedible for many. The Eldirerrr chefs are among the most popular and create fabulous meals in their austere restaurants.

### Major Forces

**Sinivau Clan:** This is a L'sesenaugh clan that controls a few blocks in the south of the city. 20 years ago the clan was taken over by a criminal network in a covert operation. Since then the area has been brutally ruled and the criminal masterminds have expanded their influence in the city. The clan's biggest weakness lies in their total reliance on Sumsum servants.



## MERICA HEALER

SPECIES: L'SESENAUGH		HEALER	
STR	3	ACTION PTS	2
CON	4	HIT POINTS	6
SIZ	8	ARMOUR	2
DEX	14	DMG BONUS	-1D4
INT	16	MOVE	6
POW	13	POWER PTS	13
CHA	6	AGE	40

**Skills:** Culture (any) 45%, First Aid 75%, Knowledge (The Soot) 5%, Language (Menaryan) 60%, Locale (The Sinking City) 75%, Medicine 55%, Perception 50%, Research 45%, Science (Exobiology) 60%, Ultrasonic Communication 90%. Combat Style (Head Butt, 1d6) 50%

**Equipment:** Medical instruments

**Passions:** Oath (Hippocratic) 70%, Find (Knowledge) 60%, Protect (Merica Clan) 80%

**Demeanor:** Helpful, Calculating

**Merica Clan:** In a small tower close to The Dream Library, the Merica clan runs the L'sesenaugh equivalent of a hospital. The medical practices used are a mixture adopted from the various species that live in the city. For someone who seeks treatment for the Soot, this means a plethora of options are available. Except for Skreeder and Aygaan treatments, most other therapies can be had but they are as fruitless as always.

**L'nau Clan:** The L'nau clan, heading The Dream Library, is not viewed as one of the major clans in the city, because their influence is of a subtler kind. Using the unique sources in the library, they need little pressure to influence other clan leaders and reach well-informed decisions ahead of everyone else. Librarians will never be centre stage but those searching the shadows behind other leaders will often see a librarian, observing as their well-made plans take shape.

**Humans:** Humans are not a common sight in The Sinking City but small groups can always be found. Salesmen, diplomats, scientists, explorers and occasional tourists spend a few weeks or months among the descending towers, before returning to Eorthe when deals have been closed or when they run out of money. Antiques dealers might search for alien artefacts, business representatives look for local resources and manufacturers need to find new suppliers.

Scholars visit The Dream Library, sometimes for actual research but some just out of pure curiosity. Both Priests of Wittenberg and Skreeder Shamans come to The Sinking City to consult the library and to hear the latest interstellar gossip, but none of them have much power here. A few Solipsist agents are always present in the city but they have zero political influence here, and their reasons for staying are unclear.

The League of Nations runs a small office close to the 'star port', comprising two regular diplomats and sometimes a few assistants. In practice, The League on Sisymbrium functions as an embassy of sorts. They help in trade matters, find lost tourists and intervene in criminal cases involving humans.

### Crime and Punishment

Crime is relatively common among the sinking towers. Poverty drives petty thefts and break-ins, while greed and status is the main driving force for more elaborate set-ups. Law enforcement in L'sesenaugh society is clan-based. Every clan rules an area and upholds the law through the council. Everyday law enforcement falls on every citizen and no police force exists. In special cases, however, skilled individuals



are called upon by the council to make arrests, find clues, curb outbreaks of violence and other functions often associated with the police.

Laws in general forbid stealing, excessive violence and murder. It should be noted, however, that negotiations between clans might affect the outcome of a trial and even a murderer can sometimes walk away unpunished if favourable conditions apply. Aliens (humans included) are treated quite mildly. Punishments regularly come down to fines or short periods in custody before being sent back to their homeworld.

### THE DREAM LIBRARY

The Dream Library is the most spectacular feature of The Sinking City. An opinion the city's inhabitants disagree with and the looming towers at the centre are largely ignored. None the less, the collections are vast and a scholar could spend an entire life there. As its name implies, the library contains no ordinary books but collects volumes describing the dreams of individuals from an area of space much, much bigger than Comae Space. As the building slowly sinks and the top is added to, there is always room for new books.

The entire structure consists of five interlinked towers, the highest stretching 60 metres into the sky. They stand out as a giant, window-less sculpture in the middle of the city. Nothing disturbs these hulks of intangible learning and even time itself seems to shy away from them. They stand there as the ultimate monument to intelligent life – or even the raw marrow of existence.

Several mysteries surround the library. While the L'nau clan runs the library, and are very helpful, they are tight-lipped on some matters – how old is the library and who founded it? How deep down do the towers extend? Does it include all the dreams ever dreamed? How do books even arrive at the library? They dodge questions like these in a polite manner.

Sticking to the facts makes none of the mysteries clearer. Scholars seem to agree that the books indeed describe dreams, that an exceptional number of languages are represented (many not understood), writing and printing techniques vary, some volumes are ancient and the end of the library has yet to be reached.

#### Library Interior

Entering the library's main tower from the bustling streets of the surrounding city is a relief for many. The silence and stillness is almost total from the moment the

### DREAM LIBRARIAN

SPECIES: L'SESENAUGH		LIBRARIAN	
<b>STR</b>	<b>3</b>	ACTION PTS	2
<b>CON</b>	<b>4</b>	HIT POINTS	6
<b>SIZ</b>	<b>8</b>	ARMOUR	2
<b>DEX</b>	<b>13</b>	DMG BONUS	-1D4
<b>INT</b>	<b>15</b>	MOVE	6
<b>POW</b>	<b>14</b>	POWER PTS	14
<b>CHA</b>	<b>8</b>	AGE	60

**Skills:** Culture (any) 75%, Deceit 75%, Influence 45%, Knowledge (primary) 75%, Knowledge (secondary) 55%, Locale (The Dream Library) 75%, Language (Menaryan) 70%, Research 75%, Ultrasonic Communication 90%, Combat Style (Head Butt, id6) 50%

**Equipment:** *Afons mercurialis* containing an incomplete register of Dream Library books

**Passions:** Serve (The Library) 80%, Find (Knowledge) 60%, Protect (L'nau Clan) 70%

**Demeanor:** Helpful, Calculating

## GENERIC SCHOLAR

SPECIES: HUMAN		SCHOLAR	
STR	10	ACTION PTS	2
CON	9	HIT POINTS	10
SIZ	10	ARMOUR	—
DEX	10	DMG BONUS	-1D2
INT	16		
POW	13	POWER PTS	13
CHA	12	AGE	50

**Skills:** Culture (any) 75%, Deceit 45%, Influence 65%, Insight 50%, Knowledge (primary) 85%, Knowledge (secondary) 70% Language (Menary-an) 95%, Musicianship 40%, Research 85%, Teach 50%

**Equipment:** Briefcase, Letter of Recommendation (makes Influence rolls *Easy* in academic circles), exclusive Mont Blanc fountain pen, drab suit

**Passions:** Find (Knowledge) 90%, Teach the World 60%, Status (Academic) 70%

**Demeanor:** Kind, Absent-Minded, Focused

small wooden door closes. For practical reasons, there is not much of a lobby. As the ground floor continuously moves downward, occasionally a new door is cut out of the wall between two book cases. A large desk, with an L'sesenaugh always present, stands inside the door. They ask all visitors to write their names and errands in a guest book. Another L'sesenaugh steps in to help newcomers find specific volumes. Otherwise, visitors are free to roam the towers.

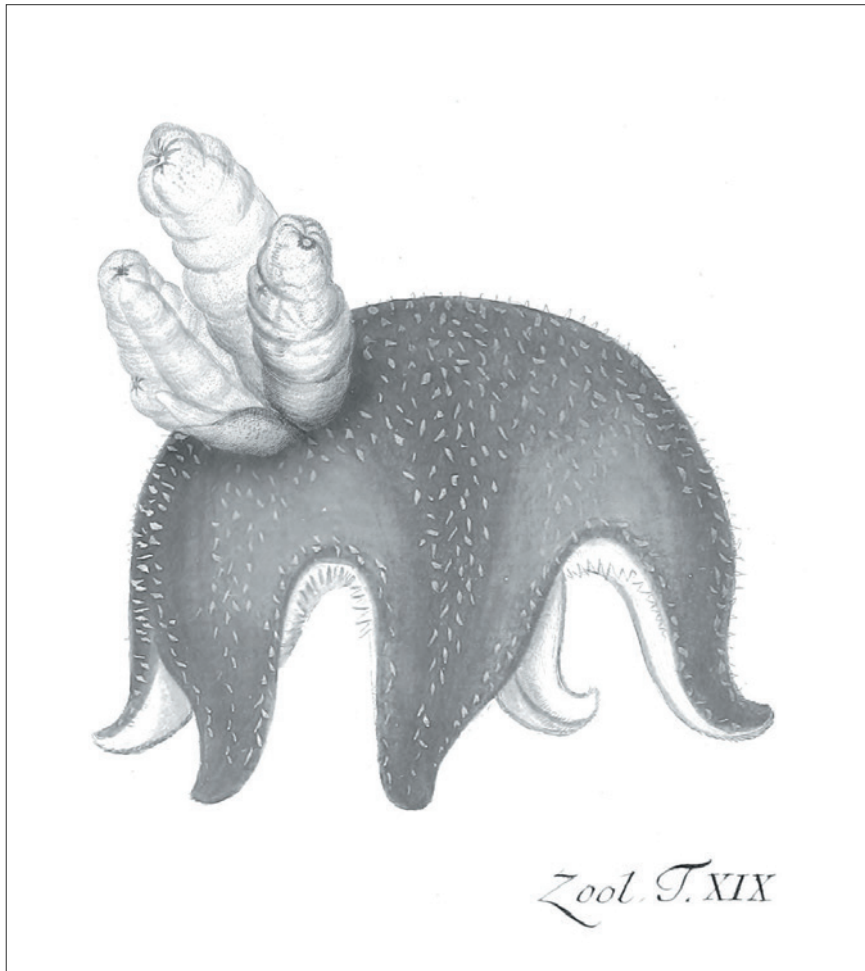
The general layout of the towers are very similar and repeated on level after level. The curving outer and centre walls are covered in book cases and, in the space between them, shelves stand perpendicularly to the walls. Every 20 metres there are open spaces with a few tables and chairs. Ceiling height is about 3.5 metres and book cases stretch almost all the way up. To make access to the higher shelves easier, small stools and ladders are set at regular intervals.

The biggest hurdle for any researcher to overcome is not the sheer number of books but the lack of any organisation. In general, books are older the deeper down they are placed but this is only a rough estimate. The librarians keep track of a large number of volumes in their own competing registries (often in a fons mercurialis they have learned how to update) but these are far from complete and often compiled with little logic. One of them might be focused on Nuveri material from pre-Luminarian dreams, another on primitive Eorthe tribes and so on.

As travelling up and down the towers takes time, most librarians only handle a few 'turns'. Lower down, librarians are few and even deeper into the dark none at all are found. If this reflects library policy, the L'sesenaugh refuse to answer. According to witnesses, lower levels connect with other underground structures – perhaps other towers – and strange creatures scuttle away just outside the beam of light. Stories of people never returning from the deeps seem to be true. If these foolhardy explorers kept going until they ran out of light and food, or if unknown beasts attacked them is hard to tell, however.

Taken together, research in The Dream Library is best conducted in an ad hoc manner. With luck, a librarian can offer a good starting point – often a specific volume – and from there the reader might trace down related books nearby. As they encounter new librarians, their registries might show new interesting connections, leading to new books deeper down. However, all visitors should be mindful of how deep down they go or they may never see the light of day again.





*The secunium species is the size of a small elephant and can be trained for a variety of tasks but they are also one of the fiercest predators in the wild. Despite their clumsy appearance, they are surprisingly agile. They rely on trampling and kicking to down a foe and then use their extended mouth to devour it. For safety, wild secunia cubs are no longer caught and domesticated. Over thousands of years, the tame secunia have been bred for obedience and equability. While they still require an omnivore diet, they do not pose a threat to people.*

### *Sisymbrian Time*

*A Sisymbrian day is 20 hours, divided into 10 hours each of light and darkness.*

*The Sisymbrian year is 380 days and is not divided into weeks or months. Instead, every day is numbered from 1 to 380, starting at winter solstice in *The Sinking City*, with an added A (as in Ascending) for the first half and D (as in Descending) for the second half.*

*Years are not counted or named at all.*

### *Equality in the 1920s*

*In the real-world 1920s, people questioned traditions and ideas of the 19th century more and more. Many of the freedoms Europeans take for granted in the 21st century took shape between the wars. Still, gender inequality, racial and GLBT prejudism were widespread.*

*On Eorthe, the presence of aliens has changed all that. The slight differences between humans pale in comparison with the weirdness of other intelligent species. As a consequence, human society is less racist, women are allowed the same freedom as men and same-sex relationships are accepted.*

*Yet, in some circles, the bad old times remain but this is in the minority.*

## Vera Colony <sup>(III,IX)</sup>

Vera was the first exoplanet in Comae Space to be settled by humans, about 35 years ago. The total population is still small but increases every year. Settlements reside in the temperate and continental zones.

A handful of small towns are scattered over the planet but most colonists live in rural villages. A majority are farmers. Villages consist of mixed nationalities. Sometimes, however, a village is dominated by only one. Inhabitants speak most Eorthe languages but Menaryan and English work as lingua franca. Likewise, Eorthe money is accepted but Meno squares are preferred. Alien species are not common. Yet some Nuveri, Sumsum and Eldirerr live in towns and some villages. An Aygaan might visit for a few days or weeks but not much longer, unless it leaves for an expedition in unknown territory.

### CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

The climate on Vera is slightly cooler and more humid than on Eorthe. No deserts, savannahs or steppes exist and only small patches of tropical bushland. Temperate forest dominates as a biome, with tropical forests being limited to the south coast of the largest continent plus a few islands.

Three large landmasses dominate Vera: Anguis, Altum and Hiems. There are also several islands, often referred to as 'the islands'. None of them have been explored in depth.

Geographically and in population size, Anguis is the largest continent. The land stretches in the east-west direction with a serpentine appearance, giving rise to a multitude of bays, large and small. Temperate forests dominate the landscape, despite the equatorial placement, with tropical forests lining only the low southern coast.

Both Altum and Hiems are cold and mountainous. The coastal areas are covered in evergreen forests while the inner high-altitude parts are barren and difficult to reach. Winters are harsh and only the southern-most tip of Altum is settled – sparsely, so far. Altum also harbours the highest peak on Vera. Hiems remains unexplored and considered a barren mountainous mega-island with nothing to see.

The largest (and oldest) town is Horn, followed by Maerck, Umi and Sendor. All are on Anguis and house around 10 000 people each.

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### Vera

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**Hex** [3,9]

**Planet Size:** Medium

**Gravity:** 0.9G

**Atmosphere:** Nitrogen-Oxygene  
(Eorthe-like)

**Climate:** Temperate

**Population:** Small. Low density

**Main Species:** Human

**Landing:** No landing procedure, no starports

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VERA





## FLORA & FAUNA

The most striking feature of Veran vegetation is its exceptional lushness. Even boreal forests have a richness and density that can only be compared to Eorthe rainforests. Trees reach 50-70 metres in height, each tree often being overgrown by numerous smaller plants and lianas. In most other aspects, the flora resembles Eorthe's.

The bodyplans of Veran life-forms are not as clear-cut as on, for example, Sisymbrium. A blob with tentacles is a recurring theme, however. The huge skywhales, the semi-floating tree urchins, flutterlings and mille-brochs all belong to this group, despite their differences in size and habitat. A recent study shows that the monopus might also be related to these animals (see the Lifeforms chapter for more details on animals).

### *Veran Trawlers*

*A small family herd of skywhales hang above the treetops south of Horn. A view typical for Vera. When they are not hunting, they drift lazily in the breeze. At times they call out in gurgling sounds, keeping the herd together.*

*As they are omnivores, the canopies offer plenty of food. Entire branches are ripped off and small animals living in the trees are targeted too.*

*Humans are safe most of the time, however. Only when the skywhales go on a rampage do Eortheblings need to look out.*



## Skywhales

One of the most well-known features of the Veran skyline is the skywhale species. Floating above the treetops in small scattered herds, these gas-filled omnivores feed by dangling a thin, flexible limb from their bellies, pulling up food to the mouth at the tentacle's root, in the middle of a cluster of supporting tentacles.

Most of the time, they feed on leaves and small animals from the upper foliage but sometimes they dive lower and go on a trawling rampage with the tentacle reaching the ground, razing everything in their path. They cut off branches, whip down small trees, cast large rocks aside and they catch any animals or humans in their paths in a strong grip. Reaching a speed of 40-50km/h, any life-form in its path flees in panic (the tentacle controlling a width of 10-15 metres). These rampages are often solitary endeavours but at times several individuals join forces, wreaking even more destruction.

For early settlers, the skywhales were a constant threat. When farmers cleared fields for growing crops, they attracted floating herds and rampages increased. Plants, people, vehicles and entire buildings were destroyed. Colonists tried various security measures, without success, but eventually they discovered that 'dummy' buildings on the outskirts of fields forced skywhales to veer off course. These mock constructions are often partly destroyed, needing frequent repairs and rebuilding, but at least homesteads are saved.

For explorers of Vera's wilderness, the tree urchins and the skywhales pose the biggest threats. A skywhale on a rampage can leave an entire expedition in ruins while tree urchins present a more subtle threat. They are not very mobile but their tentacles can be difficult to break free from.

## TRANSPORTATION

The two most common modes of transportation are imported cars and the local beasts of burden called blinkies (not referring to any bioluminescence, rather being a contraction of the words blimp and donkey). These hovering animals are the young of the much larger skywhales, trawling the forests worldwide.

The road network of Vera is poor. Around settlements and between towns, gravel (or plain dirt) roads dominate but outside these areas roads are non-existent. Colonists build simple boats from local wood and occasional small ships are imported from Eorthe, either for catching seafood or transportation. Aeroplanes are rare and railroads have yet to be introduced. For fear of the skywhales, no one has dared to use airships yet.

## Star System

*Vera orbits a star officially called Verania but often referred to as Vera or 'the sun'. Only four planets circle the star: Vera, a huge gas giant called Father (three times the size of Jupiter) and two small barren planets further out in the system. Father is encircled by a huge number of moons; a recent survey counted 18 large and 37 small satellites. Vera only has three tiny moons (called Tic, Tac and Toe).*

*The small number of planets in the system is thought to be caused by Father. Its massive gravity well has caught smaller planetary bodies and some of them have ended up as satellites to the gas giant – or been crushed by it. A small team of scientists have suggested Vera could end up the same way over time. They also initiated research on how to stop this from happening.*

## Veran Time

*A Veran day is 28 hours, divided into 14 hours of both light and darkness. To comply with Vera's longer hours, Eorthe clocks are often altered by local watchmakers.*

*The Veran year is only 300 days and to handle this, the months January and February have been removed, resulting in a 10-month calendar.*

## A Note on Civil Servants

*The pride of being a civil servant is felt all over Comae Space, wherever humans are encountered. These uniformed workers – postmen, constables, telegraphists, faxpaper printers, airship conductors – have a strong feeling of responsibility. They try hard to live up to the highest standards set on Eorthe, regardless of circumstances. With correct, amiable manners, accuracy and an incorruptible stance, they are the backbone of the human interstellar endeavours. They are very popular among locals, space travellers and explorers.*

*When an occasional rotten egg is revealed, it is all the more shocking.*





## VERAN COLONISTS

SPECIES: HUMAN		COLONIST	
STR	11	ACTION PTS	2
CON	12	HIT POINTS	11
SIZ	11	ARMOUR	—
DEX	10	DMG BONUS	—
INT	10		
POW	10	POWER PTS	10
CHA	10	AGE	30

**Skills:** Athletics 50%, Brawn 50%, Craft (Blinkie Handling) 65%, Knowledge (Agriculture) 75%, Locale 80%, Mechanics 45%. Combat Style (Rifle, Unarmed) 50%

**Equipment:** Farming tools, Rifle. Blinkie and/or tractor for successful colonists.

**Passions:** Protect (Homestead) 80%, Pride (Vera Colony) 60%, Dislike (League of Nations) 70%

**Demeanour:** Rough, Hardworking

## Blinkies

Blinkies are tamed when they are about six months old and can at first only carry their own weight. By training them with increasing weights, they can lift around 500kg after six months.

Moored to the owner's house or barn, they are kept outdoors and fed various greens and leftovers from the dinner table. In cold or windy environments, stilted barns are common, where the blinkies are kept safe from the elements 6–10 metres above the ground.

A trained blinkie can quickly change its altitude between 1 and 10 metres. A harness is fastened around the cigar-shaped body, with large nets hung below. In built-up environments, the owners keep them at 6 metres or more above ground, to prevent them from bumping into buildings. A skilled owner can use a blinkie for precision work by commanding it with simple voice commands and whistles, accompanied by a long leash. The most common duty is to move heavy burdens, lift construction materials and occasionally carry a few passengers. A farmer can also plow fields with the help of a well-trained blinkie but tractors are preferred for their speed – if the farmer can afford one.

## COMMUNICATION

The main forms of communication on Vera are wireless telegrams and a rudimentary but efficient postal service. Telephones are sometimes available in towns but calls cannot be made between towns.

Several local newspapers exist and interstellar news is delivered by faxpaper to several different printers across the planet. A radio station has been started in Horn but it is mostly used for official bulletins so far.

## CRIME AND PUNISHMENT

As Vera law enforcement is similar to Eorthe's, not much will be covered here. Laws and punishments vary slightly between different areas, often influenced by the nationalities present (and extreme communities might have extreme laws) but on the whole laws conform to the standards set by the League.

The police is underdeveloped but highly valued. They function more as uniformed British constables, patrolling towns by foot or bicycle, than wild west sheriffs. Investigative detectives are rare. In complex cases external help from neighbouring towns – or all the way from Eorthe – are called for.

Crime is about as common as on Eorthe. Most communities are too small to

harbour any large numbers of outlaws, however. Petty thefts driven by poverty is the most frequent crime, followed by acts of violence. Small criminal networks also exist in some towns, catering for the usual human vices: gambling, drugs, money and status.

## MAJOR FORCES

All the major forces in Comae Space are present on Vera. Their influence is often subtle but a keen observer will notice their work. Keep in mind that the agents of these organisations can act both as contacts and patrons, or as enemies. Or both at the same time.

**Solipsists.** The Solipsists have three settlements run according to their twisted philosophy. Two in the southern parts of Anguis, between Ziwa and Sendor, and a more recent community west of Groen. These spiritual semi-anarchists succeeded surprisingly well in setting up functional settlements and the founding years were harsh but happy. With survival secured, however, troubles began. For the last 10 years, the communities have kept a unified front but internally, dissent, corruption and struggles for power have taken hold. Outbreaks of violence and bouts of dictatorial leadership have plagued the citizens, sometimes resulting in collective punishment, famine and executions.

But the biggest worry is the Solipsist influence that grows in 'normal' towns and villages. The League of Nations have seen clear signs of organised attacks on civil society, attempts to shoehorn in Solipsist representatives in town councils and even straight-up sabotage. In 1922, the goal of these activities are unclear and the brains behind them stay unidentified.

**Priests of Wittenberg.** The minor presence of the Priests of Wittenberg on Vera should not be mistaken for disinterest, nor a lack of power. The way the Priests see it, they have enough eyes and ears on the planet to keep it under control. Vera still has a few surprises in store for them, however. Both The Soot and undiscovered Luminarian remains will have them scrambling to their feet soon.

**Skreeder Shamans.** Much like the Priests of Wittenberg, the Skreeder Shamans keep a low profile on Vera. Two or three shamans are stationed here, focusing on exploration.

**The Philosophy Engine.** Until 10 years ago, the foundation behind The Philosophy Engine had a massive presence on Vera. The new world was the perfect candidate to expand human knowledge. Observers were combing the planet for scientific facts, collecting the largest body of information available. About 10 years

## Administration

*As most Eorthe colonies, Vera is ruled by town councils headed by mayors. Villages and homesteads near a town are included in the legislative area but regular nations are not allowed by the League of Nations (see page 138).*

*Villages sometimes prefer to rule themselves, however. Especially if they follow a strict religious or political code, they will likely have set up their own system, independent of the local council. This tendency has produced some rather extreme communities, keeping mostly to themselves. As long as no one is hurt, the League lets them have their way, however. Local representatives keep an eye on them and send an occasional investigator to evaluate living conditions and civil rights.*

## Veran Crops & Food

*Lissra: A lissra is a climber that produces not only edible leaves but also meaty, pink flowers. The plants grow on fences or high poles, and reach 6-10 metres if allowed to grow freely. Leaves are rolled into 'cigars' and used in a variety of ways, while flowers are sliced and cooked.*

*Sarpi: A common grass-like plant, from which the roots are eaten. The curved, green roots look somewhat like a mix between carrots and ginger. They taste bitter when raw but develops a full, round taste when cooked.*

*Molk: A small fruit or vegetable growing on trees. The fruit is dark red, sometimes black, with the size of a large strawberry. It is attached directly to the bole of the tree, making them easy to pick. It tastes somewhat like plum, if plums were vegetables. When sundried, it acquires a musky, sweet taste.*

*Sphericon: A spherical vegetable, up to 50 centimetres in diameter in its cultivated form. Eaten as a pumpkin but the flesh feeling much more like animal meat. The taste is not very strong but it readily picks up any spices, making it easy to use in different courses.*

*Veran dishes are very similar to Eorthe's. The type of food depends on the Eorthe origins of the chef. Local crops are used in traditional Eorthe recipes, seasoned with imported spices. Meats are taken from mille-broches and sphericons.*

## PHILOSOPHY ENGINE OBSERVER

SPECIES: HUMAN		SCHOLAR	
STR	10	ACTION PTS	2
CON	12	HIT POINTS	12
SIZ	11	ARMOUR	—
DEX	11	DMG BONUS	—
INT	15		
POW	13	POWER PTS	13
CHA	11	AGE	40

**Skills:** Astrogation 50%, Culture (any) 75%, Courtesy 60%, Difference Engines 70%, Influence 65%, Insight 50%, Knowledge (primary) 85%, Knowledge (secondary) 70%, Knowledge (The Soot) 5%, Language (any) 70%, Language (Menaryan) 95%, Navigation 50%, Perception 70%, Research 85%, Streetwise 50%, Survival (any planet) 50%

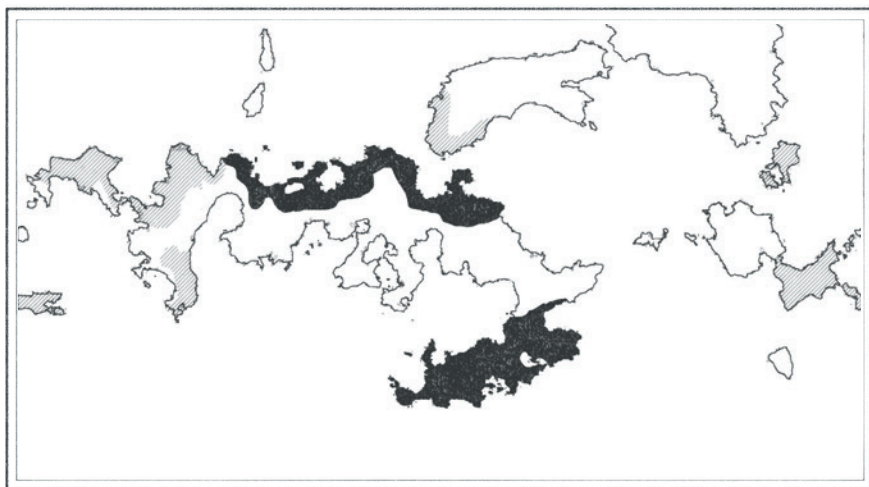
**Equipment:** Notebook, Books in primary subject, Large amount of money, A signet ring that every member of The Philosophy Engine foundation carries.

**Passions:** Find (Knowledge) 90%, Loyalty (The Colloquium) 90%, Status (Academic) 70%

**Demeanour:** Silent, Curious, Secretive

### *Luminarian Archive*

*In the mountains of Altum, a Luminarian site remains undiscovered. It is mostly cleared out (by the Luminarians) but a couple of chambers are left quite intact. The cave system contains not only a few Unfolding Devices but also a small stash of fons mercurialis.*



*Settled areas on Vera. Black areas were the first to be colonised, while the gray have been settled recently.*

ago, the intensity of the investigations was turned down. The Colloquium realised the entire Comae Space could not be described in such meticulous detail and the Observers were instead sent far and wide to cover more planets. Today, only one Observer remains – Bruns Zaniewski – last seen in the southern hills of Altum.

**The Soot.** The effects of The Soot do not differ much on Vera compared to other planets. The biggest problems are a lack of medical care for the infected and that the infection might spread to entire settlements before being discovered, due to their isolated locations.

## MAJOR LOCATIONS

**Horn.** The first settlement on Vera, named after the tusk-like shape of the peninsula to the north, was the town of Horn. It is located among the rolling hills by the Brammle river, surrounded by fields and patches of remaining forest.

The general layout of the town is much like towns back on Eorthe with two major streets meeting at a market square, forming the backbone of the commercial district. The town hall stands by the square along with two nice restaurants and a hotel. Two blocks away, a small park is located with a church-like ecumenical temple resting in the shade of the trees. Next to the park are the local offices of the League of Nations, housed in a rather imposing, white three story building.

Straight through Horn, the Brammle river cuts. Several bridges span the river, its banks green, with wooden piers jutting out in places and small boats moored to

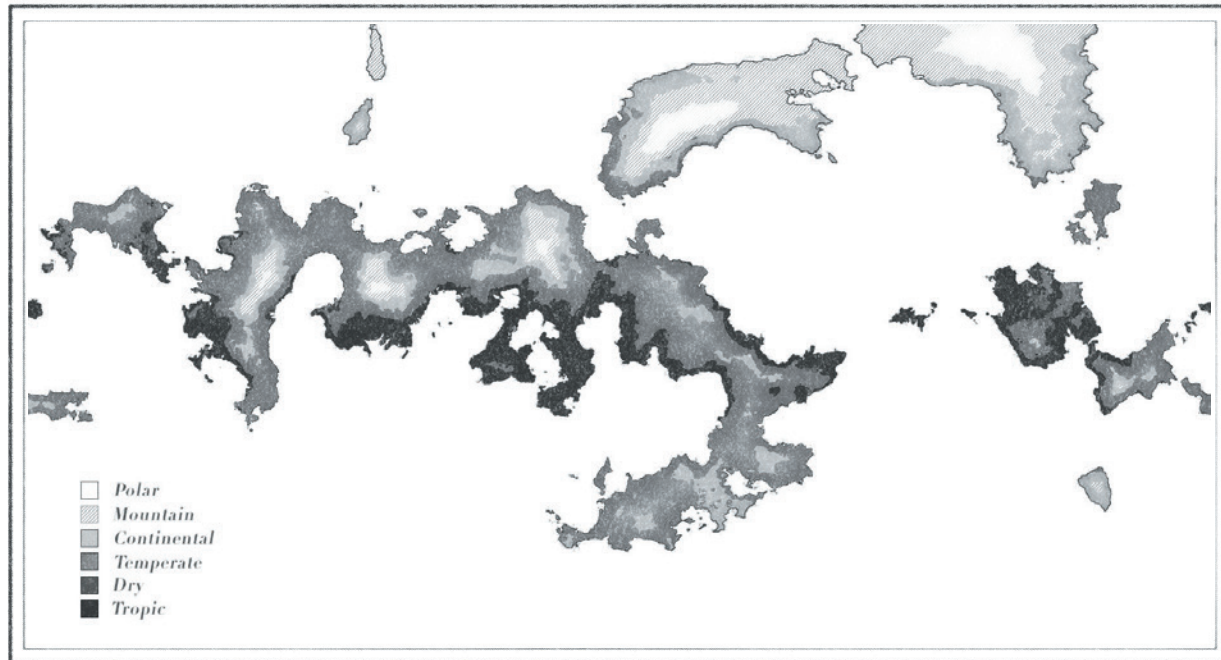
them. The water from the mountains drifts slowly through town and the 20 metre wide river lends a peaceful atmosphere to the blocks facing it. An improvised promenade is laid out along both sides of the river and it sees a lot of activity during weekends.

Back streets in the town are busy throughout the day. Simple coffee-shops, cantinas and stores serve locals. Flophouses offer beds on the cheap for travellers and temporary workers. Workshops line many streets, with work often spilling out into the back yards. Most families live above their shops, making these districts very active.

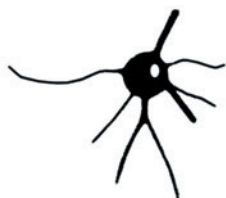
Many are poor and work hard. Life in a colony is unpredictable but most have chosen this way of life for the freedom. They shape their own fates and the pride of being a pioneer compensates for some hardships.



*The current Observer on Vera, Bruns Zaniewski.*



*Vera climate zones. See page 184 for an explanation of the zones.*



# Lifeforms

## SISYMBRIUM

BASCULE		OMNIVORE	
STR	1D6+2	ACTION PTS	2
CON	1D6+3	HIT POINTS	7
SIZ	2D6	ARMOUR	—
DEX	2D6+6	DMG MOD	-1D4
INT	4		
POW	1D6	POWER PTS	4
CHA	1D6	MOVE	8

**Combat Style:** Bite (1d2) 60%. Reach: s

**Social:** Small Herds      **Behaviour:** Watchful

**Advantage:** Fast (can break into a 'rolling run')

**Disadvantage:** Fragile

**Skills:** Endurance 50%, Evade 75%, Perception 60%, Willpower 30%

*Illustration on page 164.*

**S**ISYMBRIUM IS TEEMING WITH CURIOUS LIFE-FORMS. The species listed here are commonly encountered by visitors and explorers. Most of them appear in several sizes and colours, depending on the biome they live in. Singing pods, for example, can be found in human-sized specimens around The Sinking City but further north they are only 50 centimetres tall. This type of variation is covered by the Size characteristic. For the various creature's presence in different biomes, see page 205.

The GM should not feel confined to the species described here. Other animals might also exist, some of which humans may not have encountered yet.

### BASCULE

Bascules are a common sight on Sisymbrium. They roam the land in small herds, eating whatever gets in their way – herbs, leaves, carcasses or small prey. The mouth is on the underside, giving them a rather cute curtsying motion when eating. They are often seen in the distance, munching herbs, and are easily scared away by humans. When scared or hunting, they break into a 'rolling run' to reach high speeds. They start by galloping with their 6-8 legs (depending on how you count) and when reaching a certain speed, they fold their thin legs along the spherical body and roll along. They reach a speed of 70-80km/h this way, while steering between obstacles.

Colouration varies from brown to warm grey, with white specimens in polar regions. Their size is linked to the biome, with small animals (Siz 2-3) living in colder climates, while larger ones live in rich forests and grasslands. The bascules communicate through a series of clicks heard over long distances, alerting other animals of approaching danger.



The main threat to the bascules are secunia and simellian stabbers. A bascule pierced by a stabber or two seldom survives. Some larger singing pods have also found frequencies that attract bascules, leading them straight into their deathtraps.

Bascules pose little threat to humans but a single wounded person might attract a small group hoping for a meal, using a hit and fade tactic to pinch a few Hit Points at a time. A bascule is a decent source of meat for humans on Sisymbrium. Hunting bascules is very much like hunting deer on Eorthe.

## CERC

The cerc is a curious creature that grazes round circles in the Sisymbrian grasslands, then moves slowly to a new spot a few metres away, only to create a new circle. It rips the grass with its single trunk, pushing it into its mouth right below the base of the bole.

Two main traits explain how the cercs can survive despite being so slow. The quick slashes of their trunk and their tough hide. A normal cerc is about the size of a human and the trunk is not only strong but gains considerable momentum from the rapid turning motion of the cerc. With sharp spikes protruding from the trunk, a single individual can hold its ground well. A human armed with a rifle will have no trouble, nor would a full-grown secunium – but young secunia avoid attacking cercs as long as possible. Regardless of species, a cerc never attacks first but only strikes in self-defence.

## GRIMDJAW

The grimdjaw is a sentient plant and predator that hides its jaws inside a hardened pear-shaped shell, with the 'head' lashing out at amazing speed as prey passes by. As the teeth sink into the target, a weak paralysing poison is injected and the grimdjaw pulls the prey inside its shell to eat.

Grimdjaws live all over Sisymbrium, except in polar and dry environments. They are most common in woodland where they are harder to spot. Most animals have learned to avoid getting close to grimdjaws but in unknown terrain or while running from some other threat, it is easy to get into range of the snapping jaws by mistake.

To satisfy a full-grown grimdjaw, small prey must be caught every day. But if the grimdjaw catches something bigger, it will store the meat inside the shell for up to a week. Bascules of all sizes are the most common victims, with an occasional L'sesenaugh or baby secunium. Humans need not to worry about being

CERC		HERBIVORE	
STR	1D6+3	ACTION PTS	2
CON	1D6+3	HIT POINTS	7
SIZ	2D6	ARMOUR	3 AP
DEX	3D6	DMG MOD	—
INT	3		
POW	1D6	POWER PTS	4
CHA	1D6	MOVE	I

**Combat Style:** Strike (1d6+1) 75%. Reach: M

**Social:** Singular

**Behaviour:** Patient

**Advantages:** Armour, Sharp

**Disadvantages:** Slow movement/Immobile

**Skills:** Endurance 40%, Perception 60%, Will-power 90%

*Illustration on page 16.*



GRIMDJAW		CARNIVORE	
STR	1D6+6	ACTION PTS	2
CON	2D6	HIT POINTS	9
SIZ	2D6+3	ARMOUR*	5/0 AP
DEX	2D6+6	DMG MOD	—
INT	5		
POW	1D6	POWER PTS	4
CHA	1D6	MOVE	—

**Combat Style:** Snapper (Bite, 1d8) 85%. Reach: M

**Social:** Singular      **Behaviour:** Aggressive

**Advantages:** Armour, Sharp, Weak Poison

**Disadvantage:** Immobile

**Skills:** Endurance 50%, Evade 75%, Perception 90%, Willpower 40%

\* Only the pear-shaped base is armoured. The head has zero AP.

*Illustration on page 12.*



eaten but might be attacked if they get too close (in theory, a grimdjaw might drag a child inside but this is not something the inhabitants of Sisymbrium have come up against yet).

The grimdjaws have no eyes but rely on hearing, scent and vibrations. It seems they have thin roots extending in a 5-10 metre radius that are sensitive to ground vibrations. Even though their heads are withdrawn inside the base and the small lid is closed on top, they are aware of what events around them.

## L'SESENAUGH

The L'sesenaugh species is indigenous to Sisymbrium and lives in all but the coldest regions. Their ability to withdraw head and neck into the body is perhaps the most peculiar feature of this intelligent species.

The original biome of the L'sesenaugh is the quicksoil patches scattered over the Sisymbrian landscape. They bury themselves in the quicksoil, head withdrawn and only their ultrasonic 'radar' active. At the right moment they shoot it out at top speed as flying prey pass above. They do this either in small groups or as individuals, depending on the size of the patch. Their whimsy arms and legs were originally used only for small adjustments while hunting rather than walking but are nowadays used for a bouncy strut and regular tool usage. Because of their reliance on burrowing, the L'sesenaugh traditionally never settled in areas with ground frost. This behaviour still affects where the species is found, despite the old hunting techniques being abandoned and replaced with nets.

The L'sesenaugh are skilled in Menaryan and only use their original language among themselves, sounding like quick, high-pitched chatter. They can also use ultrasonic sounds, inaudible to humans, for short messages.

The combination of their slow movement and the snappy head butt is a good image of the L'sesenaugh's demeanour. They are gentle and slow in social situations, sometimes even drifting into a meditative state, then burst into activity to solve problems, snap vicious comments or make creative contributions. These jump-starts spread at lighting speed among all the individuals present, just like a hunting team snapping at a swarm of insects. Because of this irregular pacing an outside observer will often find social or legislative gatherings hard to follow.

The L'sesnaugh's main weakness is their strong territoriality. Even in the bustling Sinking City they avoid each other's districts or enter laborious negotiations to gain access to hard to reach places.

**Clans.** L'sesenaugh society is clan-based. The origins of the clans are old

hunting cohorts that shared the burden of finding food and dividing it among members. In the last few hundred years, clans have been reshaped into either city districts (in The Sinking City) or rural villages. In the city, the smallest clans encompass a single building, while the largest might comprise 10-15 buildings and many shops, street vendors and businesses.

Clans are semi-democratic and ruled by a council of 5-8 individuals. Successful citizens or others seen as important are called to serve on the council, sometimes further propelled by popular demand. Bad decisions or ignoble behaviour are likely to push a member off the board. In gaming terms, treat the clans as Circles, with decision making shared among the council members and no single leader.

Negotiations between clans and individuals often include money and territorial claims. Meno is the only currency accepted and while territory might change hands, it is more likely that they bargain for free access to areas inside another clan's territory. Violence does occur but then only between two opponents and it is seldom to the death.

**Living.** Rural villages have little in common with The Sinking City. Buildings are simple, single-story huts, created by applying clay on a twig structure, drying to an almost concrete-like sturdiness. Circular huts huddle close together, often near a sizeable patch of quicksoil. Village life revolves around catching insects, foraging and mending nets. Apart from the natural threats like simellian stabbers and secunia, various aliens on strange missions are most likely to cause trouble for the villagers. For everyday life in the city, see The Sinking City.

**Food.** The traditional L'sesenaugh diet is insect-based, complemented with greens and seeds from Sisymbrian plants. Most of the ingredients are cooked and only a few select dishes are kept raw to retain flavours and crunch. The most common dishes are rough clay bowls filled with a mixture of ingredients, topped with a large leaf and then baked in simple ovens or stoves for half an hour. Variants of this everyday dish are called denpo and can be bought everywhere along the streets of The Sinking City or served at social gatherings. The taste is rather bitter to humans but for those that overcome the prejudice against eating insects, it is a nutritious meal.

## SECUNIUM

Wild secunia are the giants of Sisymbrium. They are slightly smaller than Eorthe elephants and can be found in tropical, temperate and continental climates. Unlike elephants, however, they are omnivores. Low branches and shrubbery form

L'SESENAUGH		OMNIVORE	
STR	1D6	ACTION PTS	2
CON	1D6	HIT POINTS	6
SIZ	1D6+4	ARMOUR	2 AP
DEX	2D6+6	DMG MOD	-1D4
INT	2D6+6		
POW	3D6	POWER PTS	11
CHA	2D6	MOVE	6

**Combat Style:** Headbutt (1d3) 75%. Reach: M

**Social:** Small Groups      **Behaviour:** Watchful

**Advantage:** Ultrasonic 'radar'

**Disadvantage:** Internal Conflicts (Territory)

**Communication:** Short messages in the ultrasonic range but for conversations a more conventional high-pitched voice is used.

**Skills:** Commerce 50%, Endurance 30%, Evade 75%, Influence 60%, Insight 60%, Perception 60%, Willpower 40%. For other skills, see specific careers in the Characters chapter.

*Illustration on page 7.*



SECUNIMUM		OMNIVORE	
STR	2D6+30	ACTION PTS	2
CON	2D6+20	HIT POINTS	40
SIZ	2D6+46	ARMOUR	7 AP
DEX	2D6+6	DMG MOD	+2DIO
INT	5		
POW	3D6	POWER PTS	11
CHA	1D6	MOVE	6

**Combat Style:** Raging Colossus (Kick 3d10, Trample 4d10, Spike 1d3) 75%

**Social:** Small Herds    **Behaviour:** Easily Angered

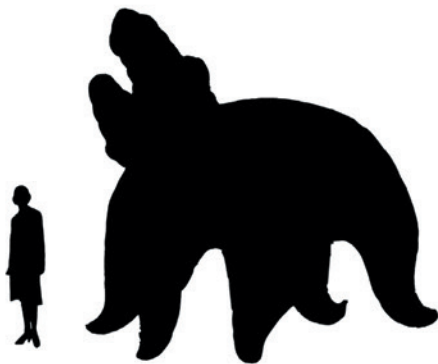
**Advantage:** Size

**Disadvantage:** Cubs

**Skills:** Brawn 100%, Endurance 90%, Perception 80%, Willpower 50%

Domesticated secunia are slightly smaller. Lower SIZ and STR by 10 each.

*Illustration on page 191.*



the basis of their diet but they complement it with bascules and other small to medium-sized animals.

Secunia live in herds of 5-15 individuals. They keep the herd rather tight, with members rarely out of sight of each other. They are seldom over 20 metres apart in open areas. Herds move over quite small areas but can walk up to 20 kilometres a day to find food. Leadership changes over time and the most successful food-finder automatically leads for a few weeks. Herds stay away from each other but twice a year they will mix and a few animals switch groups.

The anatomy of the secunia is divided into a rounded, reddish body covered in small spikes, five massive legs and three flexible extensions facing forward. Two of the extensions contain eyes that can be moved independently, giving the secunia 360 degree vision. The upper extension houses the mouth. Particularly the mouth is elastic, stretching to twice its normal length. It can reach into trees for eating and down to the ground.

Secunia are hermaphrodites and change sex several times during their lifetimes. They are also self-fertile and no mating is involved. The live cubs are completely reliant on the herd for food and protection for the first two years.

Most of the days are spent eating, basking in the sun with cubs fooling around with each other. Hunting is irregular, often initiated only if prey gets close. At night, the young hide beneath the largest animals, who lower their white bellies gently over them.

For careful explorers, secunia pose little threat. If herds are avoided, they will ignore passers-by. The greatest danger lies in stumbling into an individual secunium by mistake. This will trigger both the instinct to protect the flock and the hunting reflexes. Once the hunt is on, 1-3 secunia will sprint with surprising agility and use their massive weight to down the victims, either by kicking or trampling (or both). As the thick secunian hide protects them from most firearms, running away is often the best choice for the target. Climbing a tree or hiding might also work but is quite risky; a secunium is patient and has keen senses. If it cannot be distracted, someone stuck in a tree may have to stay there for a while.

For safety, wild secunia cubs are no longer caught and domesticated. Over thousands of years, tame secunia have been bred for obedience and equability. While they still require an omnivore diet, they do not pose a threat to people. For anyone requiring heavy-duty transport, secunia are the ideal choice.

## SIMELLIAN STABBER

Simellian stabbers are insect-like creatures that hover in midair, with their stinger pointing downwards, waiting for prey to pass below. As an animal passes, the stabber will drop onto the target at high speed, inserting its stinger into the victim, sucking its blood.

Simellian stabbers live in flocks of 5-15 individuals in wooded areas. They hover silently at 3-10 metres above ground and spend almost their entire lives in the air. Wing movement resembles that of hummingbirds on Eorthe, with around 20 beats per second. A diving stabber can reach a speed of 70km/h, giving the stinger enough thrust to penetrate deeply into a victim.

The stabber injects a weak poison on contact and a single wound leads to paralysis in small animals, like bascules. If not removed, the animal dies of blood loss. For medium-sized prey, like humans, 3-5 stabbers often drop at the same time on various locations. The poison will not lead to complete paralysis, despite the higher concentration, but movement and all physical skills are halved for the target. And the sluggish movement of the victim will tempt more stabbers to attack.

Fortunately, it is easy for a human to pull out a stabber. As long as the victim can reach the stabber's body, it takes no skill roll. With stabbers on the back, however, an extra pair of hands might be required. Even if a stabber is removed quickly, the poison will still work at full potency. A dying victim will soon be abandoned by the stabbers, pulling out their stingers and taking off. An animal that brushes them off will also scare them away.

Simellian stabbers lay clusters of soft, sticky eggs the size of golf balls, that hatch after being glued to thick branches for 4 weeks.

	Tropical	Dry	Temperate	Continental	Polar
Basculc	••	•	•••	••	•
Cerc	••		••	••	
Grimdjaw	••		••	••	
Secunium	•		•	•	
S. Stabber	••		••	•	
Singing Pods	•••	•	••	••	•
Sphericon	••	••	••	••	

SIMELLIAN STABBER		CARNIVORE	
STR	1D2	ACTION PTS	2
CON	1D2	HIT POINTS	2
SIZ	1D2	ARMOUR	1 AP
DEX	2D6+10	DMG MOD	-1D6
INT	2		
POW	1D6	POWER PTS	4
CHA	1D6	MOVE (FLIGHT)	6

**Combat Style:** High-velocity Drop (Sting 1d2+1) 75%. Reach: TOUCH. Each following round after a successful attack, 1d2 damage is taken, until the stabber is removed.

**Social:** Small Herds      **Behaviour:** Aggressive

**Advantages:** Flight (Hovering), Poison

**Disadvantage:** Small

**Skills:** Perception 80%

**Poison:** POT 30, Paralysis. Onset Time: Immediate. Duration: 30 minutes. Make an opposed roll against Endurance to avoid being affected.

*Illustration on page 137.*



*Sisymbrian lifeforms and biomes.*



SINGING PODS		CARNIVORE	
STR	2D6	ACTION PTS	2
CON	2D6	HIT POINTS	9
SIZ	3D6	ARMOUR	2 AP
DEX	0	DMG MOD	—
INT	1		
POW	1D6	POWER PTS	4
CHA	1D6	MOVE	—

**Combat Style:** Trapper (Bite 2d6, TOUCH) 95%

**Social:** Small Groups      **Behaviour:** Deceptive

**Advantages:** Siren, Trap

**Disadvantage:** Immobile

**Skills:** Sing 1d6x10+20%, Perception 30%

**Siren:** Every singing pod 'chants' in specific frequencies, attracting a single species. A Willpower roll must be made to withstand the siren's call. For intelligent species, a second Willpower roll – at *Hard* – is made before they climb into the pod. When the pod's teeth attack, the victim is yanked out of the trance.

*Illustration on page 127.*



## SINGING PODS

The singing pod is an immobile life-form somewhere between a plant and an animal. It is sentient – barely – and lures prey by sound into a trap inside its body. Once the victim is inside, the top is closed and a set of sharp fangs are extended from the bottom, impaling the prey. The energy gained from the meal is then shared with the neighbouring pods through a system of fine roots.

Singing pods live all over Sisymbrium, from scorching deserts to frigid polar regions. They are most common in tropical climates and rare in harsher environments. The largest specimens live in the rainforest (up to Siz 18), with smaller ones in colder climates. In difficult biomes, they rarely grow larger than Siz 3 and live on insects.

The pods make their enchanting sound by building up pressure inside a bladder at the foot of the pod. Then, they release it through a small vent fitted with a vibrating membrane. This makes the sound shaping flexible and a pod can shift the tone (frequency) several octaves as well as the timbre of the sound. Different frequencies attract different species into the trap. Sisymbrian insects, for example, are attracted by high frequencies that mimic their mating sounds. A bascule, on the other hand, is lured by the sound of another bascule suffering from severe pains.

Humans are not immune to the sirens either. Being a new species on Sisymbrium, few pods know how to attract them, however. It also takes five or more pods working together, singing what has been described as 'far away angels chanting'. Reedy and ethereal, the individual notes change over time, creating a meditative soundtrack of impressive power. Everyone hearing it must make a Willpower roll to withstand its attractive force. If a roll is failed, the PC is so enthralled by the chant that they look for its source, slowly at first and more frantic the closer they get. By the time they reach the pods, they get another Willpower roll – *Hard* this time. Failing that, they feel an urgent need to explore the inside of the pod, trying to find the beautiful voice. Unfortunately, all they find is a brutal attack. Seen from the bright side, the pain will wake them from the trance, allowing them to fight back.

Any PCs making their first Willpower rolls, or not hearing the singing, may want to stop the affected characters. If they act quickly, it will be easy. A slap on the face or a splash of water will be enough to pull them out of the shallow trance. The longer they wait, however, the more it takes, eventually escalating to scrimmage.

## SPHERICON

The sphericon is a common plant on Sisymbrium, found in all climates apart from the coldest. It consists of nothing but a hollow sphere – ranging in size from 0.1 to 2.0 metres – with rather tasty flesh beneath the thick peel and a handful of slim leaves flickering in the wind.

Sphericons live in many parts of Sisymbrium and are most common in grasslands. L'sesnaugh farmers have also bred a small variant that they grow in their vegetable gardens.

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the sphericon is that you can eat it. For anyone who travels the Sisymbrium wilderness, they provide a nice addition to the provisions. If cut from the top, an individual plant will survive a 25-30% trim. It regrows within a few months, showing a particular scar tissue that is easy to spot.

A more uncommon, but very convenient, use is to hide in a sphericon. Not only for animals but for humans as well. The sturdy peel and thick, moist flesh offer protection from the cold or from harsh sunlight, while offering food and drink. Conditions are cramped but spending a night in a sizable sphericon is possible. In general, a sphericon needs to be the same SIZ as the person hiding in it but if only for a short while, a SIZ value 2-3 points below is workable too.



SPHERICON		PLANT	
STR	—	ACTION PTS	—
CON	2D6	HIT POINTS	9
SIZ	3D6	ARMOUR	2 AP
DEX	—	DMG MOD	—
INT	—		
POW	—	POWER PTS	—
CHA	1D6	MOVE	—

Combat Style: —

Social: Singular

Behaviour: Peaceful

Advantage: Armour

Disadvantage: Immobile

Skills: —

*Illustration on page 101.*

CHATTERBOLE		OMNIVORE	
STR	1D6	ACTION PTS	I
CON	1D6	HIT POINTS	4
SIZ	1D6+1	ARMOUR	—
DEX	1D6	DMG MOD	-1D6
INT	7		
POW	3D6	POWER PTS	II
CHA	1D6	MOVE	I

Combat Style: —

Social: Small Groups      Behaviour: Curious

Advantages: Intelligence, Language

Disadvantage: Slow

Skills: Endurance 50%, Language (Chatterbole) 90%, Perception 90%, Stealth 60%, Willpower 40%

Illustration on page 52.



## VERA COLONY

Visitors to Vera colony will encounter some or all of the species listed below. Most of them appear in various sizes and colours, depending on the biome they live in. If needed, the GM should feel free to come up with additional animal species.

### CHATTERBOLE

Chatterboles are peaceful creatures found sticking to the tree trunks in the lush forests of Vera, where they sit talking to each other in high-pitched voices. They are intelligent and the chatter – while not decoded yet – is believed to be a rudimentary language.

Chatterboles live wherever trees are found. This means they will sometimes be found in polar areas, despite there being few of the low, gnarly trees. Regardless of climate, chatterboles amble up and down their trees, keeping trunks and branches clean from algae, insects and particles. A single tree often contains an entire family of chatterboles and this cooperative effort of continuous housekeeping helps the trees to stay healthy. With eyes on two flexible antennae, they can peer around a trunk and inside holes, spotting food or predators. The antennae are also used for prying off small pieces of bark and could be used for pushing a button or handling a simple tool. If a chatterbole ever came to think of it.

Chatterboles stick to the trunks almost like snails and move only somewhat faster. They rarely, if ever, leave the tree they are born in. On the ground they are very exposed and try to find a tree quickly if they end up stranded on soil. Several predators like to eat chatterboles – flykes, monopuses and skywhales.

The most fascinating aspect of chatterboles is their language. It might not sound much more than a combination of monkey chatter and bird chirps but has all the ingredients needed for a simple language. Communication within a herd is almost constant and 'conversations' between trees are also frequent. What they talk about is hard to tell, as no one has translated the chatter yet, but where to find food and various warnings are likely subjects. More abstract ideas should not be ruled out, however.

A linguist would make swift progress in translating their language. If a PC wants to try, set up an Extended Conflict, using INT as a Conflict Pool and Comms as a skill (or any other relevant Knowledge skill). For the opposing values, use Conflict Pool 8, Skill 50%. Set Round length to 1 hour.

A successful conflict (for the PC) can lead to two different results, depending on what the character wants to achieve. If the PC tries to learn the language, the

result will be a starting value of 10% in Language (Chatterbole). Otherwise, the character has understood or relayed a simple phrase with reasonable accuracy. To continue the conversation, the PC can try another Extended Conflict.

## FLUTTERLING

Being not much more than thin sheets and flimsy tentacles, flutterlings use a wavelike motion to move through the air, like manta rays. Their entire bodies move gracefully thanks to their minimal weight and they can stay in the air for hours at a time. Flutterlings come in many colours, often in brilliant hues. Seeing a flock in mid air can be beautiful exposition of movement and colour.

Flutterlings are one of several flying animals on Vera. Simplified, the three species inhabit different heights: skywhales above the treetops, flykes in the uppermost canopies and flutterlings in the lower parts of the trees. While flutterlings sometimes venture higher, most of the food they seek is located 2-10 metres above ground. They prefer seeds, small animals and leaves, using their tentacles to pick up any goodies if needed.

As with chatterboles, the flutterlings' eyes are placed at the top of their tentacles, with around 60 tentacles lining their bodies. Each eye is a simple light receptor but combined they give ample sight for hunting.

The hunting technique flutterlings use is unique on Vera. As soon as a handful of tentacle tips touch a victim, a small electronic current transfers to it. The current is weak but just strong enough to immobilise small prey. This lasts long enough for the flutterling to eat it. At the same time, the tentacles form a cage around the victim, ready to apply another electric shock if needed.

	Tropical	Dry	Temperate	Continental	Polar
Chatterbole	••	•	••	••	◦
Flutterling	•		••	••	
Flyke	•••	•	•••	•••	•
Mille-Broche	•••	•	•••	•••	•
Monopus	••	•	••	•	
Skywhale	••	•	••	••	•
Tree Urchin	•••		••	••	
Vonner	••	•	•	•	

FLUTTERLING		OMNIVORE	
STR	1D6	ACTION PTS	2
CON	1D6+4	HIT POINTS	8
SIZ	1D6+4	ARMOUR	—
DEX	2D6+6	DMG MOD	-1D4
INT	5		
POW	3D6	POWER PTS	11
CHA	1D6	MOVE (FLIGHT)	8

**Combat Style:** Touch (Electric Shock 1d2) 80%, Reach: TOUCH

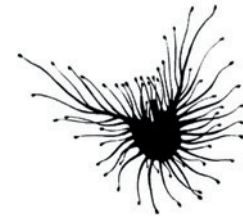
**Social:** Flocks                      **Behaviour:** Afraid

**Advantage:** Flight, Electric Shock

**Disadvantage:** Fragile

**Skills:** Endurance 40%, Evade 85%, Perception 70%, Willpower 40%

*Illustration on page 54.*



*Veran lifeforms and biomes.*

FLYKE		OMNIVORE	
STR	1D6	ACTION PTS	2
CON	1D6	HIT POINTS	4
SIZ	1D6+1	ARMOUR	2 AP
DEX	2D6+8	DMG MOD	-1D6
INT	4		
POW	1D6	POWER PTS	4
CHA	1D6	MOVE (FLIGHT)	8

**Combat Style:** Dive and Rip (Claws 1d4) 85%.  
Reach: SMALL

**Social:** Small Groups      **Behaviour:** Patient

**Advantages:** Flight, Armour

**Disadvantage:** Small

**Skills:** Acrobatics 70%, Endurance 70%, Perception 70%, Willpower 40%

*Illustration on page 169.*



To humans, the electrical shock is almost harmless. A small flock of flutterlings might, if frightened, cause a bit of trouble, however. Delicate electrical equipment can also be badly affected this way.

## FLYKE

When seeing flykes in the distance, circulating around a skywhale in hope of dropped munchies, it is easy to mistake them for birds. While they have a clear likeness at long range, they are very different up close. The 'feathers' are thin filaments of a light metal alloy, they have no beak and what looks like a bird's tail is a set of sharp metal claws.

Flykes are common all over Vera but less so in the polar regions. They spend most of their time in the air and have almost a parasitic relationship to skywhales. When bits and pieces of the giants' catch are dropped, flykes catch the best pieces before it hits the ground. They also hunt small animals, grabbing them with their claws in mid-flight – much like eagles and hawks. The most common prey are mille-broches, flutterlings and chatterboles. Flykes are unlikely to attack humans but if their herd is threatened, they might try sweeping attacks, with claws outstretched, to chase away the intruder.

Several animals catch flykes: tree urchins, monopuses and an occasional skywhale. Vonners also try to tempt flykes into swallowing them. Neither tree urchins nor monopuses eat them whole, as they cannot process the metal filament feathers and must deplume them first.

These 'metal birds' organise in small family herds, often following a group of skywhales as they travel over the landscape. They lay hundreds of small eggs among the treetops that hatch after a few weeks. Newborns look almost like insects and it takes about a year before they enter adulthood and may join a herd. During that time they are vulnerable to attacks and most of them end up as food.

## MILLE-BROCHE

Mille-broches are one of the most common animals on Vera. They live in large herds in most biomes, eating whatever comes their way, from grass and leaves to small animals and carrion. Colouration varies from light yellow to dark ochre.

They are rare in dry and polar areas but are encountered in most other climates. Herd sizes depend on their biome. Wooded and mountainous areas see small herds with 5-15 members, while grasslands can house herds of 40-50 animals. A coastal subspecies specialises in underwater hunting.



Mille-broches are generalists and do not excel at anything in particular. Their 20+ tentacles make them fast enough to avoid many predators (using a strange slithering movement), they eat almost anything in their way and rely on protection from the rest of the herd. Nothing spectacular but enough to keep the species alive when combined with high birthrates (giving birth to live young).

When sleeping, they fold their tentacles upward in a drop shape and huddle close together. Like many other herd animals, individuals near the edge keep an eye and ear on the surroundings, raising a shrill alarm to wake the others. Otherwise, mille-broches stay silent, uttering only small grunts.

The mille-broche's mouth is filled with hundreds of small, sharp teeth and is placed on the underside of the body, with the tentacles surrounding it. This placement forces them to 'kneel' whenever they are grazing but it has also turned the tentacles into much more than legs – they often use them as hands, picking up food and moving things around. The tips are very nimble and can manipulate tiny objects with high precision.

Herd is led by the eldest member. Besides leading the flock to good pastures, leadership also comes with a few privileges. Protection from predators by a 'personal guard' – a tight herd within the herd comprising 3-12 animals – is hard-coded into their minds and the leader always eats first when something delicate is served.

## MONOPUS

The monopus is a devious creature that mimics the lianas found in abundance in Veran forests. When an unassuming victim is close enough, the large tentacle strikes at an alarming speed. It grabs the prey, squeezes it to death and then consumes it slowly.

Monopuses are most common in tropical and temperate forests. They live in small groups, immobile, clustered with only a few metres between the specimen. They are carnivorous and use their camouflage to avoid being spotted. As lianas are abundant on Vera, it is hard to recognise the similarly coloured monopus tentacle. For humans to spot it, a successful Perception, Survival (Vera) or Science (Biology) roll is needed.

The single, powerful tentacle grows from the ground and can reach up to five metres. Its colouration varies from beige to light brown and the full length is covered by tiny mouths, almost invisible when they are inactive. A monopus reproduce by laying a single egg every three years within range of its tentacle. With

MILLE-BROCHE		OMNIVORE	
STR	1D6+4	ACTION PTS	2
CON	1D6+4	HIT POINTS	8
SIZ	1D6+5	ARMOUR	—
DEX	2D6+6	DMG MOD	-1D2
INT	3*		
POW	1D6	POWER PTS	4
CHA	1D6	MOVE	8

**Combat Style:** Grab and Bite (Grip, Bite 1d4, Strangle 1d4) 70%. Reach: SMALL

**Social:** Large or Small Herds

**Behaviour:** Watchful

**Advantages:** Herd

**Disadvantage:** —

**Skills:** Brawn 30%, Endurance 70%, Perception 50%, Willpower 40%

\* The leader of the herd and the small group surrounding it have INT 5 and Perception 70%.

*Illustration on page 71.*



MONOPUS		CARNIVORE	
STR	3D6	ACTION PTS	2
CON	3D6	HIT POINTS	14
SIZ	3D6+6	ARMOUR	—
DEX	2D6+6	DMG MOD	+ID2
INT	6		
POW	2D6	POWER PTS	7
CHA	1D6	MOVE	8

**Combat Style:** Grab and Squeeze (Grip, Squeeze id8+i) 85%. Reach: VERY LONG

**Social:** Single

**Behaviour:** Patient & Sly

**Advantages:** Camouflage/Mimicking

**Disadvantage:** Immobile

**Skills:** Brawn 70%, Endurance 70%, Perception 70%, Stealth 90%, Willpower 50%

*Illustration on page 48.*



an expected lifespan of 20 years, a small 'family' of monopuses often cooperates to catch prey. If needed, they also protect each other.

As soon as a victim is grabbed by a monopuse, the miniscule mouths starts gnawing on it. Damage comes both from the muscular squeeze of the tentacle and from the micro-mouths. It counts as continuous damage as soon as the grab has been successful; no more attack rolls are necessary to keep inflicting damage. Armour works as normal. The monopuse tries to get hold of the entire body but sometimes only a few locations are caught. To break free, a victim must either overcome the monopuse's STR or inflict at least 5 points of damage to it. That will force it to let go but it will make a new try if the victim seems weakened. Getting help from a third party is preferable. They just have to make sure nearby monopuses do not chime in.

The most common prey are mille-broches, flykes and flutterlings. Monopuses, on the other hand, are eaten by skywhales and sometimes flykes. Theoretically, a group of mille-broches might overcome a single monopuse but this rarely happens.

The social aspects of monopuses have been studied very little. A few reports claim 'families' of monopuses cuddle, play and groom each other when they are not waiting for new victims. They also make sure the surrounding trees are set up the way they want, pruning them to get into a better position. A well-fed monopuse will not attack passers by but otherwise it is the most dangerous creature on Vera alongside the skywhale.

## SKYWHALE

Descriptions of skywhales and blinkies can be found on page 195-196. The only addition made here is the skywhales' attack.

When a skywhale is trawling with its enormous tentacle, it does not pass unnoticed. It is like a tank driving through the forest at full speed. Animals flee in front of it, branches are cut off and entire trees might fall. To avoid getting caught in this approaching avalanche, it is best to move fast, perpendicular to the flight path of the skywhale – if it can be gauged. The tentacle moves at 40-50km/h and controls a 10-15 metre-wide corridor.

How long it takes before a skywhale's tentacle is crashing into a team of PCs will vary. Sometimes the racket will be heard long before it hits, giving everyone ample time to move. Other times it will be more abrupt, with only 2-5 rounds of forewarning. A successful Perception roll will often give the character longer to react. Also, a successful Survival (Vera), Science (Biology) or Perception roll will

give the character a good idea of the skywhale's flight path, making it easier to dash in the right direction.

For anyone still in the tentacle's path when it arrives – even vehicles – use the following steps.

1. **Hide.** Any attempts at hiding must be initiated before the tentacle arrives. A successful roll means a good hiding place was found. A failed roll leaves the PC open to attack (but evading is still possible).
2. **Evade.** The last round before the tentacle arrives everyone in its flight path must make an Evade roll. Failure results in 1d6 damage to random location from falling branches, trees or other debris.
3. **Fight.** When arriving, the tentacle will strike two random victims. This is primarily an opposed roll against Evade. A foolhardy PC might try to shoot at the tentacle (a *Formidable* task) – in that case, use the character's Combat Style as the opposing skill. A failed roll by a PC results in 1d8+1 in damage and, if possible, the skywhale will use Grip as a Special Effect. Two opponents can be gripped in the same round and are lifted from the ground, up towards the shorter supporting tentacles.
4. **Struggle.** Anyone caught in the tentacle's grip can struggle to get free. The ride up only takes three rounds. The victim is then transferred to a new tentacle, moving the victim to the mouth (another three rounds). Acrobatics, Athletics or Brawn can be used at *Formidable* difficulties to break free. Any weapons that can be reached must overcome the natural armour of 5 AP and inflict a total of 10 Hit Points of damage before the tentacle lets go. To hit, the PC has to make an *Easy* Combat Style roll.
5. **Fall or Die.** If the tentacle loses its grip the character falls. For every round spent struggling, add 10 metres to the fall. With a bit of luck and a couple of successful skill rolls, trees might break the fall. If the struggle is unsuccessful, the victim is brought to the mouth and immediately takes 3d10 damage.

## TREE URCHIN

Tree urchins are filter feeders that hover among the branches, opening their huge jaws and grabbing anything that passes by with their tentacles. They feed on small animals and greenery but will try to catch larger prey if they can.

Tree urchins are common in tropical forests but live in temperate and continental wooded areas too. A gas bladder allows them to stay airborne without effort,

SKYWHALE		OMNIVORE	
STR	130	ACTION PTS	2
CON	130	HIT POINTS	80
SIZ	190*	ARMOUR	5 AP
DEX	2D6+6**	DMG MOD	—**
INT	1D6+6		
POW	3D6+6	POWER PTS	17
CHA	2D6	MOVE	10**

**Combat Style:** Tentacle Trawl (Strike 1d8+1, Grip, Bite 3d10) 70%. Reach: HUGE

**Social:** Small Herds      **Behaviour:** Detached

**Advantages:** Size, Flight

**Disadvantage:** Cubs

**Skills:** Brawn 200%, Endurance 90%, Perception 95%, Willpower 90%

\* Siz is a dubious measurement for skywhales. While the dimensions are close to a Eorthe blue whale, the weight is much lower. To reflect this, Hit Points have been halved.

\*\* The values listed above for DEX, DMG MOD and MOVE are for a skywhale tentacle at ground level.

*Illustration on page 194.*

BLINKIE		(YOUNG SKYWHALE)	
STR	2D6+20	ACTION PTS	2
CON	2D6+30	HIT POINTS	25
SIZ	2D6+40*	ARMOUR	2 AP
DEX	1D6+6	DMG MOD	+1D10
INT	1D6+3		
POW	1D6+6	POWER PTS	10
CHA	2D6	MOVE	6

**Skills:** Brawn 100%, Endurance 90%, Perception 95%, Precision Flight 75%, Willpower 50%

TREE URCHIN		OMNIVORE	
STR	3D6	ACTION PTS	2
CON	3D6	HIT POINTS	12
SIZ	2D6+6	ARMOUR	2 AP
DEX	2D6+6*	DMG MOD	—
INT	3		
POW	1D6	POWER PTS	4
CHA	1D6	MOVE	2

**Combat Style:** Grab (Strike 1d6+1, Squeeze 1d4) 75%. Reach: LONG

**Social:** Small Groups

**Behaviour:** Patient & Aggressive

**Advantages:** Flight, Sharp

**Disadvantage:** Immobile, Internal Conflict

**Skills:** Brawn 50%, Endurance 60%, Perception 70%, Stealth 50%, Willpower 50%

\* DEX value when tentacles are used in combat. When moving around, DEX is 1d6.

*Illustration on page 39.*



just like skywhales, using their tentacles to steady themselves if needed.

They live in groups and vary their distance from the ground depending on how the winds blow, often floating at 2-6 metres. As soon as they find a good spot, several individuals gather with mouths wide open to get the most of the draught. Any animals passing beneath or on branches nearby are snatched up by the quick, flexible tentacles. Mouth flaps close with surprising speed once the prey is secured.

The behaviour of tree urchins is straightforward. Feeding is their top priority and they spend their days eating. They are patient but react with lightning speed and aggression if approached. Humans are among the larger quarry for tree urchins – anything bigger will be difficult for them to handle.

The small groups are dominated by the largest specimen that always gets the best spot. If needed, it drives weaker individuals away with bird-like calls, shoving and fighting. Tree urchins are asexual and give birth to live young. During the first three months, their tiny offspring live in semi-transparent bags, made from spittle and hung from branches.

One of the most peculiar aspects of tree urchins is not revealed until they die. Frequently, the gas bladder stays intact after death and the hovering body remains in the air, sometimes for years. This creates an opportunity for plants and small animals to colonise it, forming a micro-biome in mid-air. The bladder slumps somewhat over time but as part of the tree urchin's body is replaced with lighter material, the corpse keeps floating. Crafty animals might even pull a few of the corpses together, to form a larger area.

## VONNER

This unassuming little creature is the Trojan horse of Vera nature. Being not much bigger than a fist, it is easily swallowed by predators. However, the vonner survives the passage into the stomach thanks to a thick, rubbery skin. Once inside, its sharp tiny snout extends and cuts its way out, eating the victim from inside.

Vonners live all over Vera, except in the polar regions. They are most common in tropical areas where it is easy for them to find food. To attract prey, they stay on the ground and often pretend to be hiding – *i.e.* hiding badly by intention. This way, predators might attack before realising what prey it is. Once the vonner is caught, it is often too late for the attacker to back out.

Another tactic used by the vonner is to change the way it smells by rubbing itself in other animals' faeces or on carrions. This trick masks their own scent long enough to fool many animals.

The concept of attacking from the inside is ingenious but it comes with a set of risks. First, despite being small, the vonner must protect itself from chewing teeth. A thick layer of blubber provides enough rubbery armour for this and a vonner will slip down throats unscathed. Second, just like animals on Eorthe, gastric acids are produced in the stomach of Veran life-forms, killing bacteria and breaking down proteins. To counter this, the skin of the vonner is resistant to acids (partly by secreting bicarbonate) and withstands the breakdown long enough to launch its own attack.

Vonnors attack several different species: mille-broches, flykes, tree urchins and monopuses are most common, while skywhales rarely are affected, even if a vonner is ingested. A blinkie would be in trouble, however.

An animal swallowing a vonner feels severe stomach pains after about 5 minutes. From here on, it only has 2d6 minutes to live, suffering terrible pains until it passes out. Unfortunately, there are no easy ways to save a creature once the vonner has been ingested. A quick surgical procedure is the only 'safe' route discovered so far but requires a physician to intervene within minutes. A handful of herbal concoctions have been tried – so far with no success.

Vonnors live solitary lives and avoid each other as far as possible. Being asexual, they do not need each other much. They are highly territorial and when a vonner dies, any surviving young in the area divide the territory among themselves.



VONNER		CARNIVORE	
<b>STR</b>	<b>ID2</b>	ACTION PTS	2
<b>CON</b>	<b>4</b>	HIT POINTS	3
<b>SIZ</b>	<b>ID2</b>	ARMOUR	7 AP
<b>DEX</b>	<b>ID6</b>	DMG MOD	-ID8
<b>INT</b>	<b>5</b>		
<b>POW</b>	<b>ID6</b>	POWER PTS	4
<b>CHA</b>	<b>ID6</b>	MOVE	4

**Combat Style:** Surgical Scalpel (Snout id4) 90%

**Social:** Single      **Behaviour:** Patient & Deceitful

**Advantages:** Armour, Acid Resistance

**Disadvantage:** Size

**Skills:** Deceit 80%, Endurance 100%, Perception 50%, Stealth 20%, Willpower 60%

*Illustration on page 25.*



# Game Mastering

A ROLEPLAYING GAME IS A contemporary take on pre-modern collaborative storytelling. It is more closely related to literature than theatre. RPGs have, compared to regular fiction, a curious twist; the protagonists of the story are autonomous. They do what they feel like, controlled by people without prior knowledge of the plot.

For the GM – and the scenario writer – shaping an RPG storyline is like writing a tale with a void at the centre; the absence of a known protagonist. To compensate for this lack of control, they set up story elements like a pinball machine, every encounter, NPC and clue will guide the characters by pushing them this way and that, sometimes forward, other times way off, moving the plot on. Even missing information works as leverage as the characters strive to fill it in. All these steps lead, in small increments, to the end of the scenario with the characters solving the over-arching conflict.

The following pages describe how to work with these parameters as a Game Master in *Odd Soot*. They cover the concept of mysteries, scenario creation and the best way to use NPCs.

## Mysteries

Mysteries are at the heart of *Odd Soot*. In essence, a mystery is nothing but a lack of information. You can think of it as a jigsaw puzzle with a few missing pieces. And those pieces are at the centre of the puzzle, containing the most relevant information. To grasp the meaning of the image, the players must find all the pieces. The goal is to fit them snugly into that empty space.

One of the interesting things about mysteries is how the human brain relates to them. If presented with a mystery, *i.e.* incomplete information, most people want to fill in the missing pieces – a surprisingly strong drive. Psychologists call this drive the Zeigarnik Effect. The reason for this powerful drive lies in the pattern recognition properties of our brains. Many experiments conducted over the years showcase our urge to fill in or reshuffle bits of information to form a complete image. It seems that incomplete information triggers an itch we cannot stop scratching – not until the problem is solved. Only a finished puzzle can give the brain peace of mind. We can use this trait to our advantage when creating scenarios and campaigns.

## MYSTERIES IN ODD SOOT

Almost every entity in *Odd Soot* – individuals, organisations and even entire species – have parts of their existence shrouded in mystery. Along with the over-arching mystery of The Soot and those infected by it, the world is full of missing pieces, unexplained phenomena and a lack of indisputable evidence. All ripe for the GM to weave stories around and the characters to investigate.

The main mystery of the game is naturally The Soot. A majority of scenarios will include this lethal disease in some way. The PCs might search for treatments, track down secret networks of infected madmen or try to find the cause of the disease in ancient manuscripts.

On top of that, other factions will help or hinder the characters. These circles have their own agendas and goals, often unknown to the PCs. Their agents might look for the same things as the characters, trying to get there first, informants might want to question the PCs or perhaps hire them to figure out secrets.

Adding to that, aliens and unexplored worlds contribute another layer of mystery. On alien planets, the characters will find environments vastly different from Eorthe and these locations allow for exploration and danger. The societies of the various intelligent species present yet another challenge, not only on far away worlds but in every city on Eorthe.

## STORY COMPONENTS

Scenarios in *Odd Soot* cover a wide range of subjects. A few ingredients, however, form the basis. While all of them are unlikely to appear in the same scenario, two or three can often be combined to achieve a nice complexity. The list on the next page contains some of the central mysteries.

### *Books on Game Mastering*

*Whether you are a novice or seasoned GM, a few tips and tricks can be helpful. Here are two books to give you a thorough grasp of the undertaking.*

*Robin's Laws on Game Mastering, Robin D. Laws*

*Despite being a slim volume of only 36 pages, this book covers most aspects of game mastering. It is also considered something of a classic. The subjects range from player types over scenario structures to improvisation techniques.*

*Kobold Guide to Game Mastering*

*This book is a collection of essays about game mastering, written by experienced game masters and well-known RPG writers. It is lengthier than the title above but still a light read. It covers a wide range of subjects, including how to make shy players comfortable during sessions, how to prepare a game in just 30 minutes, coupled with more general advice.*

### *The Wu-Ge Theory on Roleplaying Games*

*If you want to delve into the theory of roleplaying games, I recommend a paper by Lars Konzak at Copenhagen University called 'The Wunderkammer-Gesamtkunstwerk Model: A Framework for Role-Playing Game Analysis and Design.'*

*Among other things, he defines four interlocking pieces always present in RPGs: the rules, a world acting as a backdrop, the narrative (scenario) and the verbal performance of the text by the GM and players. When the four pieces work towards a unified whole the gaming experience is often fantastic.*

### What is Weird?

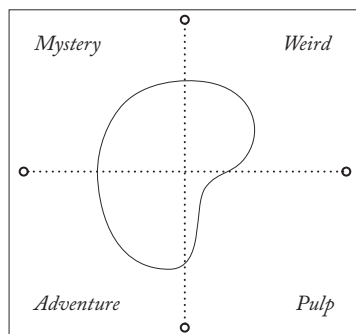
*"The common unifying factor of these pieces of literature is some degree of the surreal, the not-entirely-real, or the markedly anti-real". Wikipedia*

*Weird is a genre term used since the late 19th century to describe books blending supernatural, mythical and scientific tropes. They are often set against a realistic backdrop, not shying away from hopelessness or tragedy. Since the 1990s, weird fiction has seen a resurgence sometimes called New Weird, also bearing similarities with the Slipstream genre.*

*Authors include China Miéville, Jorge Luis Borges, Karin Tidbeck and Jeff Vandermeer.*

### Playing Style

*Odd Soot can be played in many different styles. Most of the time, four main styles will form the basis: mystery, weird, adventure and pulp. The shape inscribed in the diagram below indicates an estimate mix for a nice, working playing style. But feel free to experiment with other proportions, or add in other genres, like horror and drama.*



**The Infected.** Those infected by The Soot act in bizarre ways, endangering the surrounding communities. They operate alone or in loose networks, pursuing goals beyond human understanding. The dominant role of the infected is as a villain but they will sometimes be informants or knowledgeable scholars.

**Strange Aliens.** The spacefaring species have their own agendas, just like the major forces in the game, and will act as villains, competitors, patrons, conspirators and friends. Remember that aliens are not humans in funny costumes. Make sure they act according to their inner drives and beliefs.

**Ancient Magic.** Magic in *Odd Soot* is rare and shrouded in mystique. It is neither good nor evil, lending its powers to whoever discovers them. Both enemies and friends of the PCs will wield it and the characters will find it useful if they try it. Player Characters should have access to spells in limited numbers and care should be taken not to make magic commonplace.

**The Philosophy Engine.** The Philosophy Engine is one of the most powerful mechanical wonders of the world. PCs might not encounter it directly for many years, however. Still, it will affect them in surreptitious ways. Their enemies might get an advantage from it, snippets of predictions might appear as clues and Philosophy Engine agents will take an interest in ambitious characters.

**Unknown Worlds.** The many worlds of Comae Space are truly diverse. Most of them share a common trait, in that they are similar enough to Eorthe to be navigable, but strange enough to cause difficulties. Especially for unprepared PCs. Always consider how the environment might hinder the characters in their endeavours. Only a few planets are covered in this book – more will come later – and GMs should make up their own if required.

**Gloomy Backstreets.** All characters have dark streaks in their pasts that will resurface occasionally. Often they will also need to seek the darkest, most foetid corners to find the secrets they are looking for. Even a successful character walks with one foot in the gutter.

**Fiendish Contraptions.** One of the defining traits of the infected is the mechanical contraptions they build. These devices defy the laws of physics as we know them and their purposes remain unclear. Even when incomplete they are dangerous, both to the operator and the surrounding neighbourhood. Just like magic, these curious objects should never feel commonplace.

**Mysterious Factions.** The major forces in *Odd Soot* have a habit of operating in secrecy. They might act as villains, patrons, competitors or friends. In general, they look for the same things as the PCs but might not share their goals – however

unselfish they might seem. The characters will seldom see the big picture but it is revelatory to see glimpses of shadowy machinations above their heads once in a while.

**Personal Struggle.** The struggle with their own pitiful bodies and souls are central to the characters in *Odd Soot*. Rules-wise, this is covered by The Soot value and Peculiarities but it can be further encouraged by the GM for opportunities of fine roleplaying.

**The Weird.** All is not right in the world of *Odd Soot*. The very fabric of reality seems to fall apart at times, in certain locations. These tendencies often appear in connection with magic, unfolding devices, the infected, luminarian sites and semi-magic contraptions. In small doses, it is a useful component for keeping a sense of wonder in the game.

## Campaigns and Scenarios

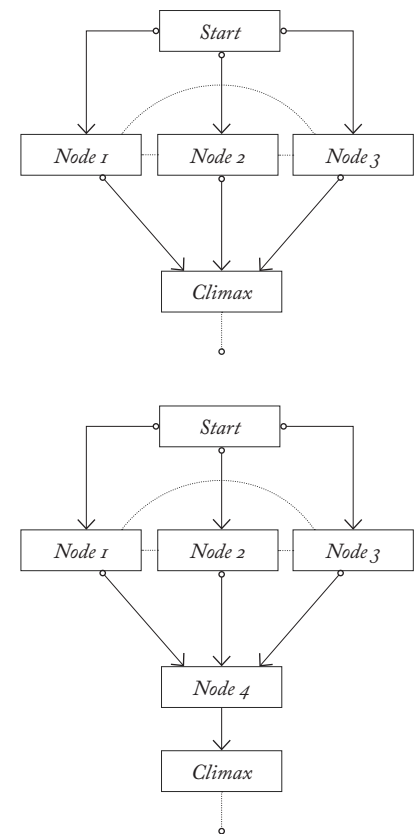
### NODE-BASED SCENARIOS

One of the most efficient ways to create mystery scenarios is to visualise them with nodes. The technique is like mind mapping and is easy to pick up. For anyone who ever tried mind mapping, it will be even easier. Every node represents a scene – a location or an encounter – that the characters get involved in. To describe the outcomes of a scene, the GM draws arrows to other nodes. Theoretically, the number of outcomes can be infinite but often 2-3 major connections will be enough.

For a simple but efficient story structure, the GM needs at least five or six nodes (see sidebar). The first one, at the top, describes the starting conditions of the scenario. Below it, three nodes describe different interconnected scenes. They connect not only to the first but also to each other. All three scenes provide clues leading to the node below – the climax or an intermediate node before the climax.

The first node can be a murder scene, break-in, a lost artefact, a potential client describing mysterious events – or any other scene to get the story going. This scene provides the characters with three concrete leads they can follow up. The GM can use an address, the name of a contact, a person to follow, a bar owner to question and so on. Each of the leads takes the PCs to a new node where they will gather more evidence before they move on to the next one.

These three nodes work best if they can be played in any order, otherwise the scenario might feel railroaded. At some point, the characters will have gathered



### Node-Based Scenario Example

*The initial idea for this example is an alien drug that causes The Soot infection to accelerate. For a user already infected by The Soot, it will lead to their death. The drug has circulated in Glimminge for three months now.*

*First, we need a hook to get the players into the story. To do this, we fill the first node with a scene where an **Old Friend A** of a PC (sourced by the GM from any of the PC's positive Circles) describes the death of a mutual **Ally B**, caused by the alien drug.*

*We set up three nodes below the top one: a dingy flop-house where the death of **Ally B** occurred (1), a clinic run by an **Aygaan Seeker** (2) and the **Nuveri** 'embassy' in Glimminge (3). The **Old Friend A** provides the address to the flop-house. He also relates a rumour of an **Aygaan** healer dealing the drug (which turns out to be false). He has also heard that the **Nuveri** embassy might be involved in some way. The first node is now loaded with a starting scene and three clues for the PCs to investigate.*

*In **Node 1** (the flop-house), the characters will meet the **Aygaan** healer. They will also hear a rumour of **Nuveri** transporting the drug at night to their embassy from a site east of town.*

*In **Node 2** (the **Aygaan** clinic), the **Aygaan** healer turns out to be on the same errand as the PCs – to stop the drug. The alien confirms the rumour about the **Nuveri** embassy and proposes a stakeout. He also joins the characters at the flop-house if they haven't been there already.*

*In **Node 3** (the **Nuveri** embassy), the characters will have to watch it overnight to spot a mysterious delivery truck leaving the premises. They will bump into the **Aygaan**, also watching the embassy, if they haven't met it already. If the PCs do not think of it themselves, the **Aygaan** suggests they follow the truck.*

*The final node, the climax, will take place at an abandoned house east of Glimminge, where the drug is stored. All three nodes are connected to each other and the PCs can play them in any order they want. Each node also adds clues on how to reach the final node. It should be noted that if the characters go to the **Nuveri** embassy first, they might skip the flop-house entirely. This happens sometimes.*

enough evidence to go for the final node (or nodes). There, the villain awaits them or the truth is revealed – sometimes with a twist. For a gratifying end, the final node should be loaded with emotion, action and high stakes.

One thing to keep in mind when creating scenarios, and even more so for mysteries, is to avoid single-clue bottlenecks. In fiction, it might look cool when a brilliant detective discovers an almost undetectable detail to expose the murderer. In roleplaying games this technique seldom works. If the PCs miss the clue, perhaps because of a bad die roll, the session will lose its momentum. Experienced GMs have, over the years, learned how to handle situations like these but it is better to avoid them in the scenario construction.

Luckily, you can avoid such bottlenecks once you know about them. Just make sure that PCs can reach an important node in more than one way, or let the characters discover the clue automatically. Everything might not be revealed like that, just enough to propel the story forward. To uncover the details, they still have to ask the right questions and look in the right places.

GMs can use the same basic setup over and over, by just changing the individual components. As you get comfortable with it, the model allows for endless variation. For example, change the number of nodes, introduce dead ends and take unused clues from earlier scenarios and give them new meaning. And much more complex connections can be constructed. But do not be deceived by the apparent simplicity of the setup. When you link scenarios, you can reach a new level of complexity and fun.

## CAMPAIGNS

A campaign is a series of connected scenarios. They can be loosely linked, for example, by taking place in the same area, or more tightly connected. In more close-knit campaigns, the PCs might track a shadowy villain, with clues from one scenario needed in a later instalment. And the world around the characters adapts depending on what they do.

The easiest way to run a campaign is to use the basic node structure but let the end of the first scenario offer clues for the next one. If we look at the example in the sidebar, the raid at the abandoned house might provide clues to what starship the drugs came with. The new scenario could be set on the starship where the characters try to expose a higher echelon in drug trafficking.

For mysteries, the skins of an onion is often used to describe how a campaign develops. The first scenario uncovers small-time crooks, which leads to a person



or organisation coordinating the work. Busting that level leads to another person even higher up, often with a large-scale agenda (that the lower levels are not aware of). That level might have ties to politicians, wealthy businessmen or crime lords... and so on.

Staying with the plant metaphors, it is also useful to think of campaigns in terms of tree structures. You start at the tip of a tiny branch and move inward toward thicker branches. The PCs start at the tips of several branches (representing individual scenarios) but as they move to the larger branches, they discover many of them leading to the same overarching plot. Every time they reach the bigger branches, new aspects of a shadowy villain is presented. Eventually, the PCs have gathered enough information to go for the big boss. When they defeat her, another, even sturdier branch appears. This is sometimes referred to as a meta plot.

As you can see, a campaign opens up exciting possibilities for creative storytelling. It need not be more difficult than stringing basic scenarios together. Which brings me to a quote from Robin D. Laws: ‘You don’t need to make an adventure complicated. The players will do that for you.’

## THE BIG PICTURE

The meta plot of *Odd Soot* is tied closely to The Soot and its origins. The Luminarians brought The Soot to Comae Space but only by mistake. Ironically, they initiated a renaissance in the area – but also madness and death on a massive scale. Furthermore, the infected have, for some time, tried to organise themselves towards a common goal. There is a connection (albeit not very clear) between the infection, magic, the shamanistic spirit plane, unfolding devices and the way the infected can warp reality. This connection is also partly behind The Philosophy Engine’s mishappen predictions. On top of this, a plethora of Circles and individuals try to exploit The Soot and its side-effects, or stop it from spreading.

The Aygaan know most about The Soot and the wisest among them begin to grasp that the Luminarians somehow were connected to the spread of the disease. For some time now, they have searched farther back to find the initial point of infection; travelling longer, looking for species both infected and uninfected, to pinpoint the time and place of the first cases.

More background will be unraveled in future *Odd Soot* releases.

## Creating Strong NPCs

*An easy way for the GM to work with Non-Player Characters is to have two broad categories: cardboard characters and three-dimensional characters.*

*Cardboard characters fill minor roles and are, as the name implies, one-dimensional. They often have one well-defined purpose in a story, like a grumpy bartender selling information dearly or a constable guarding a crime scene. Some of them will not need any skills or characteristics while others need only a few defining traits. These can often be minimised to one main characteristic, 1-2 skills, a Passion and a Demeanour (see below). Keep the Passion simple and closely tied to the NPC’s function.*

*Three-dimensional NPCs play more important roles in a story. The Player Characters will spend more time interacting with them and they need a wider repertoire of reactions and functions. Depending on their main function, these characters often need a full set of characteristics and a handful of skills, but not always. Even more important are their Passions, Demeanour and History.*

*Passions. A three-dimensional NPC needs two to three Passions, just like player characters. At least one of them should be related to their current motives (like Find Lost Father, Make Money or Hate Solipsists).*

*Demeanour. With Passions defining the motivation of a character, Demeanour sets the mood, quirks and behaviour. Is the person sad, aggressive, absent-minded, calculating? Or nervously looking over her shoulder? Write down 1-3 traits that make it easy to grasp the personality at a glance, to make the GMs work easier.*

*History. To connect the NPC to the setting, decide on one or several defining experiences in the character’s back story. Was she robbed on Sisymbrium as a teenager, bullied in school or did she inherit a small hotel from her aunt? Facts like these, even if they are disconnected, will help sharpen the character’s Passions and inform decisions the person will have to make (often on the fly by the GM). One tidbit will often be enough but several – positive and negative – will give the person a more well-rounded personality.*

## Timeline

*Below is a timeline of major events in Comae Space history. The first third – up until the 1640s – gives very rough estimates, while the latter two thirds are more precise. The GM should feel free to add new events that suits her campaign.*

40 000 BC	<i>The Luminarians invent the Unfolding Device, with FTL travel soon to follow.</i>
500 BC	<i>The founding species of The Sinking City leaves Sisymbrium.</i>
1000	<i>Luminarians enter Comae Space. Their first contact with the Aygaan.</i>
1050	<i>Aygaan Seekers travel with the Luminarians.</i>
1100	<i>Luminarian probes placed in Sol and Lacertae systems for longterm observation of Humans and Eldirerr.</i>
1200	<i>Luminarians have established contact with most intelligent species in Comae Space (still not humans). Their starships carry travellers between the different worlds, opening up many worlds to trade, visiting diplomats and scientists. The Menaryan language is slowly catching on as the universal form of communication.</i>
1250	<i>The Nuveri establish a colony on a neighbouring world (Beta Rasii) with the help of the Luminarians.</i>
1300	<i>First Eldirerr colony (Melli).</i>
1360	<i>The Sumsum spread through the subsector as servants to all species. Their secret information gathering operation begins.</i>
1400	<i>A few Luminarian starships are operated entirely by alien crews.</i>
1440s	<i>First documented appearance of The Soot in Comae Space.</i>
1500	<i>Several medical treatments developed and proven inefficient against The Soot. The first cases of Soot-induced madness documented.</i>
1600	<i>The Soot spreads to more worlds. The chaotic and downright evil deeds of the infected get worse and increase in number. Eldirerr scientists are accused of unethical medical tests on aliens in their search for a cure.</i>
1640s	<i>State of emergency declared on many worlds because of The Soot. The Eldirerr cut off all contact with other species. Medical researchers of all species are desperate but no progress is made.</i>
1712	<i>Luminarians leave Comae Space in fear of The Soot wiping them out. They have not been heard from since then. This marks the start of The Oblivion (1712-1880s).</i>
1750s	<i>Most of the starships left behind by the Luminarians are out of order. The Aygaan and the Eldirerr manage to keep a few ships operable. Travel between stars grinds to a halt, with sizeable populations stranded on alien worlds.</i>
1770s	<i>The Soot has gradually stopped spreading and societies have stabilised.</i>
1823	<i>First difference engine in use on Eorthe, constructed by Charles Babbage. Advances in navigation, mathematics, physics, engineering and astronomy accelerate thanks to the new calculating powers.</i>

1832	<i>First Eorthe probes launched successfully into space thanks to the groundbreaking work of British mathematicians William Moore and Charles Hutton, with their difference engine calculations on ballistics.</i>
1837	<i>The Philosophy Engine is finished. It predicts, among other things, that humanity will encounter off-world intelligences in the near future.</i>
1840	<i>First manned mission into space by humanity. Many subsequent missions, both manned and unmanned, launch during the 1840s to 1850s.</i>
1856	<i>Non-human probes found orbiting Mars and Venus. They are salvaged and disassembled in 1859. Some of the secrets behind the probes' engines are revealed by The Philosophy Engine. The idea to construct a new starship around one of the engines is born.</i>
1860s	<i>First attack by the Crisg'tu species in Comae Space. On Eorthe, the decade is spent constructing the first interstellar starship.</i>
1870s	<i>Preliminary tests of the Unfolding Device installed in a human-built starship, the Odyssey. The repurposed alien probes are now identified as Luminarian, despite the fact that the species is yet to be identified.</i>
1881	<i>Humanity's first manned mission outside the solar system. First contact with the Aygaan as the Odyssey reaches Comae. Eorthe population reacts with shock, joy, distrust and fear – but most of all curiosity.</i>
1882	<i>League of Nations is founded to protect Eorthe and humanity in Comae Space.</i>
1885	<i>First human colony established outside the solar system on Vera. Scientific expeditions are launched to explore all of Comae Space.</i>
1890s	<i>All four dominant species in Comae Space encountered by humans. More Luminarian probes are converted to power Eorthe's starships.</i>
1901	<i>A treaty is signed by all dominant species in Comae Space. It states that any species is allowed to explore and settle on any other world but that indigenous species define regulations for all. In return, Eorthe opens up space travel to all species.</i>
1902	<i>League of Nations establishes first off-world embassy on Corinthi. The Nuveri in return send a trading delegation to Eorthe. The first member of the Aygaan species settles on Eorthe.</i>
1903	<i>Quentrell Brossard publishes the Solipsist Manifest.</i>
1910s	<i>With even more Eorthe starships in operation, travel and trade between worlds are more regular. First starship liners in operation, opening up Comae Space to more casual travelling.</i>
1914	<i>Tension on Eorthe rises between Serbia, Austria-Hungary and Russia, but dies out after a few weeks of fighting, thereby preventing World War I.</i>
1921	<i>The Philosophy Engine's predictions begin to go awry. The Colloquium sends out its agents in Comae Space to find out why.</i>
1922	<i>Present day.</i>

# The Wayward Patient

**T**HIS SCENARIO IS INTENDED as an introduction to the world of Odd Soot, both for the GM and players. It is a short mystery set in and around Glimminge in the spring of 1922. The players will test their investigative capabilities and meet a Soot-infected bureaucrat turned magical inventor.

The scenario works best for 2-5 player characters without prior experience. The end leaves a few loose threads for further investigation that the GM can flesh out into further mysteries.

## Synopsis

Dr Grete Stenger in Glimminge asks the characters to find one of her patients, Aksel Bjare, as he has not shown up for his check-up for three months. He got infected by The Soot 18 months ago and he needs regular medical attention. The infection remains in a benign stage, however, according to Dr Stenger. There have been no violent tendencies or signs of insanity so far.

By following the leads in Bjare's apartment and speaking with the locals, the characters track him to a village called Drangelbekk, close to Glimminge. After asking around for him, the clues point to an abandoned manor, Nevendus Hall,



*Dr Grete Stenger, fearless doctor in Glimminge's poor districts.*

outside the village. There, he has set up a workshop for inter-dimensional experiments. And he needs test subjects. With trickery and illusions, he brings villagers under his spell.

But the village holds another secret. At Piper Hall, a Soot-infected young woman's dreams materialises in her room – dreams of distant stars and uncanny aliens. The effects of her infection are benign, but if Bjare finds out about her – before the PCs can stop him – the two will form an unholy alliance threatening the entire village.

When the PCs find Bjare, a game of inter-dimensional hide and seek ensues at Nevendus Hall. A game of life and death.

## The Doctor's Office

April brings more rain to Doggerland. The winter of 1922 has been like any other on the island. Hard winds from the North Sea has brought rain, interspersed with fog and occasional snow. But now it refuses to go away. In the coffee-shops of Glimminge, no one seems to remember a spring quite as late.

The cold spell has affected the health of one of the characters the past two weeks. An aching leg, a persistent cough or a fever has brought the character to Dr Grete Stenger this morning. Dr Stenger is a middle-aged woman with a small clinic above a hardware store in Haga, a rundown district of the city. The three story building stands in a corner, built by a sea captain in 1862. He spent his old days looking at the ships passing by from the large bay windows, longing for the sea. The windows now offer Dr Stenger's patients a less expansive view of a building across the street. The doctor lives in the captain's old apartment above.

While Dr Stenger is a keen physician, she has earned her good reputation from voluntary work with the poor. She moves in Glimminge's roughest districts without hesitation, day or night, despite giving an almost fragile impression.

The clinic consists of three rooms: waiting room, examination room and an adjoining storage room. 1d4-1 patients sit in the waiting room on simple wooden chairs. The examination room - a corner room - holds a large desk, an examination berth, a wooden cabinet and an entire wall filled with herbal ingredients in jars. During examinations, Dr Stenger covers the windows with white curtains and asks the patient to sit on the bunk. The cabinet, always locked, contains patient files in

### Herbal Tinctures

*Acetas zincicus.* To bathe the eyes. Also a good anti-hysterium.

*Hydras kalicus.* Applied to difficult warts. Proceed with caution as it is highly corrosive.

*Kreosotum.* Used to ease tooth ache. Dissolved in a rubber emulsion (1:200) and used as a mouth wash.

*Tinctura Arnicae.* Rubbed on aching or numb areas. Mixed 1:10 with lead water.

*Gallotannas chinicus.* Used to relieve excess sweating. 2g of powder is mixed with wine and taken orally 2-4 times a day.

*Chloretum cocaicum.* To ease fatigue, sea sickness or vomiting. Pills to be taken up to fifteen times a day.

*Dichromas kalicus.* To relieve a cold. Applied with a brush inside the nose. Also useful in veterinary medicine.

### Dr Stenger on Aksel Bjare

- » *Aksel Bjare is in his mid thirties and works at one of the governmental departments (she cannot remember which).*
- » *Dr Stenger has not heard from him for three months. He has a standing appointment every month, but now he has missed three visits. She has sent several letters and a messenger boy could not reach the man.*
- » *Aksel Bjare lives alone in a small apartment. He is an orderly man, rather quiet but kind and fair-spoken.*
- » *The Soot has spread very slowly. Aside from the markings on the skin, nightmares are the only symptoms he has complained about. He has shown no signs of violence.*
- » *If asked, the doctor will produce a short letter describing the matter. Might come in handy for the PCs later in the scenario.*



### Aksel Bjare's File

*If the PCs want to see the file on Aksel Bjare they will have to break in at the clinic or lure Dr Stenger away from the main room for a few minutes.*

*Breaking in requires two successful Lockpicking rolls: one for the door from the street (at Easy) and one more for the clinic's door (at Normal). Any loud noises will awaken Dr Stenger on the floor above.*

*To get a couple of minutes alone in the examination room requires a successful Deceit roll.*

*Dr Stenger keeps patients' files in the locked oak cabinet next to the entrance. She hides the key in the middle drawer of her desk. A roll-top covers the front of the cabinet. If opened, it reveals 4 large drawers labelled A-F, G-L, M-R, S-Z. Folders are sorted alphabetically and Bjare's file is easy to find.*

*The file does not reveal much more than the PCs already know. Bjare's infection seems more severe than the doctor revealed. A note in the margin from about a year ago states: 'This is rather worrying, must keep an eye on it' referring to a new area of Soot markings on the chest of Bjare.*



### Liepings

*One of many simple coffee-shops in Glimminge's poor parts. Hawkers, sailors and artisans can have a cheap meal and rest from hard labour. The tall owner, Gustav Johansen, serves sandwiches, soups, beer and coffee. Not of the best quality, but in generous servings. The interior consists of cranky wooden chairs and tables, with orders placed at a long, low counter at the end of the single room. The smell of coffee hangs thick. Lace curtains that used to be white have turned yellowish grey.*

standard folders, sorted alphabetically. The door to the small storage room is kept closed, but sometimes Dr Stenger needs to fetch supplies, medicine or consult a book in there.

After a brief examination of the PC, she tells him to wait for two weeks. If the condition does not improve, he should come back again. Depending on the ailment, she might also write a prescription for a tincture (see sidebar).

### THE MISSION

As the character prepares to leave, Dr Stenger bids him (or her) to stay for a few moments.

*'I hear you've taken an interest in The Soot. You see, I have a patient that has been infected for about a year and a half, and I cannot get in touch with him. It seems he has disappeared.'*

The doctor goes on to ask the character if he can make a few inquiries regarding the patient's whereabouts.

*'I'm sure it's nothing. But with The Soot it's best not to take any chances. You know as well as I that the infected sometimes do strange things.'*

She writes the patient's name and address on a slip of paper. If asked for more details, she provides the information in the sidebar.

If the character asks to see Aksel Bjare's file, Dr Stenger will refuse - kindly but resolutely - and refers to her patient's privacy (a very reasonable stance).

### THE COFFEE-SHOP

During all this, the rest of the characters have 11 o'clock coffee at a small and shabby coffeeshop called Liepings. It is located across the street from Dr Stenger.

The place is crowded at this hour. Coffee cups clink, sandwich orders are called out and the buzz from the customers makes conversation cumbersome.

As the PC visiting Dr Stenger returns from the appointment, let the group discuss the case and how they want to proceed. Aksel Bjare's address is the only concrete lead they have, but the players might have other ideas they want to try out too. If they have not told each other about their characters earlier, have everyone spend two minutes describing their background. Remember, if a common Circle unites the PCs, they know each other quite well.

## The Apartment

Aksel Bjare's small apartment is only a 10 minute walk from Dr Stenger's clinic. Rosenborg Street 25 is on the border between Glimminge's medieval centre and Haga. Anyone with a passing knowledge of Glimminge or a perceptive gaze will see that for a department clerk, this is a rather poor area. Apartments have 1-2 rooms, often housing entire families. Simple buildings line crowded streets and grimy backyards are cluttered with outhouses, lines of laundry and occasional horses.

The building at Rosenborg Street 25 looks better than most nearby. The plastered five-story facade remains intact – if a bit dirty – and a doorkeeper on the bottom floor keeps intruders away. A pull string by the doorway brings her attention.

### GETTING IN

Mrs Meta Rasmussen is a hawk-eyed old woman working as a caretaker and doorkeeper. Any visitors to the building must pass her scrutiny. She is polite but has a knack for spotting scams. She has kept street urchins at bay for 20 years and unsavoury tenants quickly end up on the street.

The best approach for PCs is to send their most proper-looking fellows, carrying a letter from Dr Stenger or some other token of authority. She will then, without questions, fetch the extra key to Bjare's apartment door, take them the three stories and let them in. She will also answer any questions as best she can.

Most other approaches need skill rolls on any social skills. Even if Mrs Rasmussen sees through half-lies and tell-tales, she easily spots what she thinks is a good heart. Uncongenial people will get nowhere, unless from the upper classes.

As a last resort, the characters can break in at night. Doors are at a normal difficulty to pick and – barring extreme clumsiness – night time visitors will go undetected.

### THE COLLECTION

As they unlock Bjare's door and step in, two small, cluttered rooms lay before them. Every square inch, every wall and even ceilings are covered with objects, perfectly ordered in arrays, piles, jars and boxes. There are nail clippings, mouse droppings, butterflies, empty tins – and hundreds more. Narrow paths lead through the various collections, barely wide enough for two feet beside each other. All objects are neatly ordered and categorised. Some by size, others by colour.



#### *Mrs Meta Rasmussen on Bjare*

*Mr Bjare kept to himself. He was very polite and dressed like a gentleman. Spent most of his time at work. I believe he worked as a clerk for the government. I don't think he had any friends.'*

*He ate at coffee-shops and restaurants nearby. Nothing fancy, I imagine. Never seemed to spend much. But I'm sure he made good money on that job of his.'*

#### *Neighbours*

*Unless the characters visit Bjare's apartment at night, they will automatically run into two neighbours. Otherwise, the PCs can pay them a visit, asking about Bjare. His neighbours does not know much about him, however.*

*Dagmar Nielsen, across the hall, has little to tell. She remembers that Bjare mentioned (about six months ago) he would spend a few days in the countryside outside Glimminge. She has no idea where he was going.*

*'But Mrs Ruud said she had noticed something more... I can't remember what it was. You'd better ask her yourselves.'*

*Martha Ruud, on the second floor, noticed that Bjare spent more and more time away last year. One day, two months ago, he accidentally dropped some mail in the stairs. Martha – as she helped collect the envelopes – happened to see a train ticket. But she cannot remember the destination (and the train ticket was in fact a bus ticket).*

Collection, 1d100

01-04	Nail Clippings
05-08	Cat Whiskers
09-12	Cigarette Stumps
13-16	Empty Envelopes
17-20	Rocks, rounded
21-24	Flies
25-28	Mouse Droppings
29-32	Faded Carnations
33-36	Perforator Leftovers
37-40	Receipts, ordered by shop
41-44	Matchboxes
45-48	Punch Cards for Difference Engines, discarded
49-52	Dried Peas
53-56	Beetles
57-60	Paper Clips
61-64	Self-Adhesive Labels, empty
65-68	Letterheads, cut out
69-72	Forks, all different
73-76	Tobacco Tins, empty
77-80	Screws & Nails
81-84	Threads & Yarns
85-88	Pieces of Broken Glass
89-92	Butterflies
93-96	Punctuation Marks, cut out from books and newspapers
97-00	Pills, all different

Container, 1d12

- |                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Glass jar, brown | 7. Bowl, decorated glass |
| 2. Glass jar, Clear | 8. Pile                  |
| 3. Bottle, brown    | 9. Array                 |
| 4. Bottle, clear    | 10. Pinned to the wall   |
| 5. Bowl, wood       | 11. Pot, ceramic         |
| 6. Bowl, porcelain  | 12. Box, wood            |

The first room holds a table and a chair by a window, kitchen cabinets, a wooden cupboard and a small stove. The second room only contains a well-made bed and a desk (without a chair). All furniture are covered by bits and pieces of the collections, inside and out. Even the bed.

If Mrs Rasmussen follows the PCs inside, she stops inside the door, gasping and shaking her head. Apparently, she knew nothing of Bjare's maniacal hoarding.

Three clues can be extracted from the clutter:

- » *In the single drawer in the desk lies a newspaper clipping showing a manor. The clipping is only accompanied by a pencil and eraser – otherwise the drawer is empty, making it stand out from the rest of the clutter. The GM should ask the players if they take the clipping.*
- » *A stack of blank paper with a letterhead from the Department of Coastal and Maritime Affairs. Mrs Rasmussen confirms this is Bjare's employer. This is the next stop for the PCs. The papers can be located anywhere the GM deems fitting.*
- » *A photo of Bjare lies on the floor.*

From the ordered chaos of the apartment, the characters can also glean a few more things:

- » *A successful roll on Difference Engines identifies the punch cards as coming from a large engine. Probably stationed at a university or governmental department. The cards show clear signs of usage and have been crossed out with a pencil on both sides. Most have been stitched to other cards earlier, but have been cut apart. The lack of order makes it impossible to extract anything useful from them.*
- » *A successful roll on Medicine or Knowledge (The Soot) reveals that this kind of obsessive ordering appears in some patients. Not in the earliest stage, but as a second step.*
- » *A successful Perception roll makes a PC realise a few missing commodities: food and clothes. Nowhere in the small rooms even a morsel can be found. And no spare clothing is stored in cupboards or cabinets.*

When the PCs look around, the GM can use the two lists in the sidebar to come up with objects and how they are stored.

At the end of this section, the characters have enough information to continue to Aksel Bjare's office, the Department of Coastal and Maritime Affairs.

## The Archives

The Department of Coastal and Maritime Affairs (CMA) is easy to find. The characters might ask a postman, check the telephone book in a post office or – for affluent PCs – take a taxi. CMA lies in the Kirseberg district, close to the university. It's a pleasant district in the northeast of Glimminge. Boulevards cut through the neighbourhood, bordered by 19th century buildings for the well-to-do. Tidy front yards and classic facades showcase the exquisite tastes of the inhabitants.

The department building has its own plot, surrounded by sparse greenery and a wrought-iron fence on all sides. The architect of the five-storied office dilly-dalied between an imposing and a more timid gestalt, resulting in a bland monolith with a rather austere classical facade in limestone and cigar-coloured plaster. In the middle, an oversized mahogany door informs visitors of opening hours: 'Open Weekdays 9.00-15.00. Archives Close 12.00 on Fridays.'

Once inside, visitors pass through a small vestibule and into a two-story foyer. Straight ahead, a receptionist sits behind a curved counter. Grand stairways on each side lead to the upper floors, with office-lined corridors.

The receptionist is polite but aloft. PCs asking for Aksel Bjare – with no further information about the characters' role – will only receive the answer that 'he's not available at the moment.' If they present the errand more elaborately (or show proof of authority or the letter from Dr Stenger) he picks up a phone and utters a few words. After hanging up, he says: 'You will be shown to the archives in a few minutes.'

### THE SUMSUM

A few minutes pass and a Sumsum comes tripping down into the foyer on the stairway, thin arms slithering.

*Ladies and gentlemen, you can call me MosMos and refer to me as a male. I've been appointed to guide you to the archives. Please follow me,* he says in a hollow-sounding but polite voice typical of the Sumsum, while his arms perform a synchronised movement pointing towards a small door at the back end of the foyer.

All PCs have seen a Sumsum before, but perhaps not this close. Their correct but relaxed manners make most people at ease. What the characters probably will miss, is that MosMos feels pleasantly surprised that someone investigates Bjare (a successful roll on Culture (Sumsum) or a similar skill is required to notice this). He has known of Bjare's Soot-infection for six months and has kept an eye on him.



*Aksel Bjare*

### *Aksel Bjare's Boss*

*During the visit to the CMA, the PCs might ask to see Bjare's boss. If so, MosMos will leave them for 10 minutes, returning with Oscar Reenberg. He is a 60-year-old man and head of Services. This includes all auxiliary services not central to the main work at the department, like caretakers, dispatch riders and the archives.*

*He wants a brief explanation of the PC's interest in Aksel Bjare before telling them the little he knows. Bjare has been working in the archives for 10 years. The first two years alongside an older colleague, but since then on his own. He did his job well – archiving old projects mostly but at times retrieving specific files for reference. But it became clear over the years he wished to be left alone. So much, in fact, that co-workers stopped going down to the archives. Communication was handled with notes in the letter-box above the stairs.*

*If pressed, Mr Reenberg admits that he had not been in the basement for several years, until Bjare disappeared three months ago. When he eventually went down, he found the archives had changed into the state they are in now: a labyrinth of shelves with all files ordered according to a system no one else understands. He has no idea for how long it has been like this.*

### *Other Ways In*

*If the PCs want to break in to the department building, striking at night is recommended. The critical moment is to scale the tall fence without being spotted. With a height of 2.3 metres and sharp spikes at the top, a Climb roll is needed (taking 1 minute). A gate in the fence, at the back of the building, can also be picked, but it takes longer (3 minutes for every skill try) as the lock is quite sturdy. For every minute spent outside, there is a 10% chance of a pedestrian coming the PC's way. This, in turn, will lead to shouting, more people and a police officer showing up. Unless the PCs succeed with an Influence roll (or any other social skill) to handle the first witness.*

*Once inside the fence, vegetation and darkness will shelter the PCs. A service entrance at the back of the building has a Normal difficulty to pick.*

*Finding their way inside the department is easy. But the PCs need to locate where Bjare works. With no one to ask, they will have to check the names on all doors. There are four floors and a basement. Each floor takes 15 minutes to scan for one person. Bjare's office can be found in the basement archives (see below for details). The second floor holds a sizable difference engine and only takes 10 minutes to search.*

*Every hour, a night-watch passes through the building. She is not very thorough (who would break in at a coastal department?) but the PCs need a Stealth roll to stay hidden. With a successful Perception roll first, the Stealth roll turns Easy. While she is armed with a truncheon, her experience with burglars is zero. She is nervous and easily scared, can be talked out of taking action with a successful Influence roll and will use violence only to protect herself.*

### *What's in the Files?*

*Thousands of beige files fill the CMA archives. They cover a wide range of subjects related to Doggerland's seafaring. All ships have official registration papers stored here that includes the owner, ship dimensions, tonnage and the official usage of the ship. Sometimes, there is also a copy of the construction drawings. Other files contain statistics regarding fishing, transports and passenger traffic. Most on a monthly basis. Shipwrecks have been tracked and recorded since the 16th century. Detailed charts of hazardous waters and sonar readings can also be found. And just as Oscar Reenberg says, the files seem to be in total disorder.*

Ever since Bjare disappeared - on vacation, according to the official version at the department - MosMos has tried to find clues about his whereabouts. But his discreet investigations has been hampered by his fear of raising suspicions. Now that someone else pays attention, MosMos hopes to gain new insights. He will follow the PCs around the archives, taking part in any discoveries with badly restrained curiosity.

## THE BASEMENT

The door to the archives is adorned with a small plaque in polished brass with "Archives" inscribed. Next to it, a letter-box, unmarked and empty. The door is unlocked at all hours. Inside, a crammed staircase leads, in two flights, to one of four rooms placed in a row, extending along the entire length of the building.

Every square inch of the rooms are filled with book cases in a dark wood. They almost reach the ceiling, leaving about 50 centimetres above - just enough to put a few files that are too big for the shelves. But as soon as the PCs step in among the book cases, they will notice it has been arranged like a labyrinth. Long and short sections are combined, bending in 90 degree turns, to create a small but efficient maze. At the centre, a humble desk stands.

## THE LABYRINTH

The maze-like placement of the shelves might confuse, but it is easy to navigate. In all four rooms, the same arrangement is repeated, except that one room has a desk in the middle. The other three has large, empty tables instead.

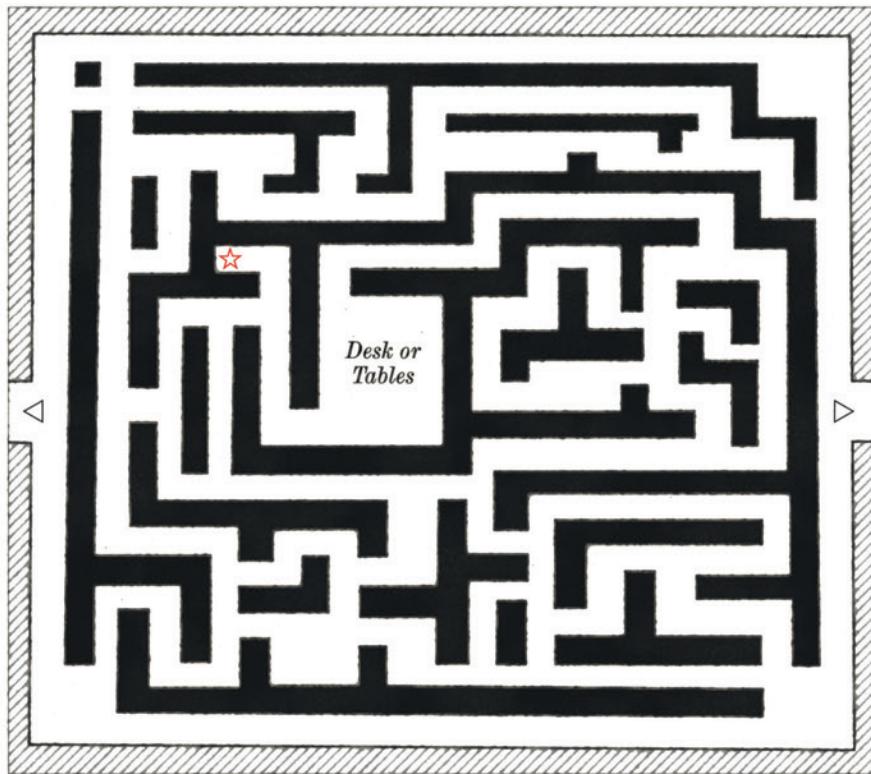
There are three categories of objects for the characters to find in the labyrinths.

**The Desk.** A fine oak desk in the middle of the maze seems to have been Bjare's. There are two stacks of files, a lamp with green glass, a few stamps, a pen and a half empty inkwell. In an empty drawer lies two bus tickets stamped 'Drangelbekk.' This is the piece of evidence the characters need to move along in the scenario.

**Mini-Portal.** At the only dead end in each of the four labyrinths (marked by a star on the map), Bjare created a tiny portal. They allowed him to move small objects between the archives and Nevendius Hall. The portal is nothing but an empty area on a shelf. If something is laid there, like a book or hat, it will disappear. The spell Detect Magic will reveal the area as magical, but gives no detail on its function or destination. A thorough examination of the space will show that even dust seems to disappear.

**Left-Behinds.** Various bits and pieces described on the next page.





*Bjare's labyrinth in the department archives. All four rooms are arranged in the same way.*

Now that the characters have Bjare's old tickets to the village Drangelbekk, they should get ready for a bit of travelling.

## Drangelbekk Village

Drangelbekk village lies 30 kilometres south-east of Glimminge. The small hamlet stretches along the road south, towards the coast, branching out at a few crossroads. Seen from a distance, the church rises over a copse while the rest of the buildings hide among the trees.

The landscape south of Glimminge is flat, with fields of wheat, potatoes and sugar beets - now bare soil, waiting for the sun. Lines of trees cut through the area, following roads or field edges, to break the wind. Small farms dot the landscape, sometimes clustering into small, pleasant villages.

### *Left-Behinds*

*The left-behinds have no fixed positions on the map. Instead, for every successful Perception roll, the PCs find the objects in order, from top to bottom of the list.*

- 1. A tangle of electrical wiring. This shelf contains spare pieces of wiring and scraps of metal from Bjare's constructions (see later).*
- 2. Tin cans with preserved vegetables. Behind the files in a shelf, 20 tin cans have been stacked. They are the same brand as at Nevendius Hall, later in the scenario.*
- 3. Album with assorted insects. Most bugs in the archives were too small for Bjare to include in his collection at home. But he taped them to thick sheets of paper and bound them into an improvised album.*
- 4. A lovely doll. A year ago, the five year old daughter of an employee visited CMA. During the visit, she disappeared without a trace. An hour later, she was found in the difference engine hall on the second floor, unharmed but pale. She refused to tell anyone what had happened. They never found her favourite doll. Now, the PCs find it on top of a shelf.*
- 5. A pair of dog's eyes in a jar. They result from an early experiment by Bjare, to keep an eye on his workplace when he was away. By casting an accompanying spell, the caster can see through the eyes in the jar for 10 seconds. Unfortunately, the fons mercurialis containing the spell can only be found with a critical Perception roll - hidden behind a shelf.*

### *Spell: Eyes in a Jar*

*Power Points: 3      Complexity: 6*

*Range: 10 kilometres      Duration: 10 seconds*

*This spell allows the caster to see through a pair of prepared eyes. The eyes must be surgically removed from an animal and placed in a suitable container. The first time the spell is cast, the eyes come alive and the connection with the caster is established.*

*Whenever the spell is cast thereafter, the caster sees the world through the eyes in the jar. For 10 seconds, the caster's own eyesight fades and is replaced by that of the magic eyes. The spell suggests using an animal with night vision, but any animal works. Both duration and Range can be increased by spending more Power Points.*

### Staying the Night

If needed, the characters can stay at *The Conqueror Inn*. They offer simple 1–2 bed rooms on the upper floor, above the pub. Including breakfast, a bed for the night costs 1.50 kr.

Business has been slow the past five years for Peder Frank, the owner. While people travel more, they gravitate towards the coast where cosy hotels prosper. The dropping revenue comes across both in the bland food and the rooms. Furniture look dented and scratched, wallpaper peels from the walls and carpets are worn thin.

Below: Omnibus from Glimminge to Drangelbekk.

The characters can go from Glimminge to Drangelbekk in two ways:

- » **Automobile:** If they have access to an automobile, the drive along gravel roads will be picturesque. It takes about 60 minutes.
- » **Omnibus:** A small omnibus travels southeast every morning and afternoon from Glimminge Station (at 09.15 and 17.15, all days except Sundays). The ride takes 1 hour and visits most villages along the route. Tickets are 1.20 kr.

As the characters leave Glimminge, a rocket ship is launched from Glimminge Bay. The exhausts draw an arc of fire across the sky, until they are cut off by the grey clouds. For a few seconds, the clouds glow in yellowish red, before returning to dark grey.

When the PCs arrive at Drangelbekk, the overall impression is of a moderately well-off village. Most buildings are well-kept, fences have been repaired during winter and the main street is set in cobblestone. Activities gather around a triangular open area, spilling south along the street. Depending on the day of the week and time, the intensity varies. Saturdays are most vital, with shopping and pub visits. On Sundays, on the other hand, all businesses close except *The Conqueror Inn*. While few goes to church, it is a day of rest. Weekdays are quite active until 19.00. After that, social endeavours take place in any of the three public-houses.

### ASKING AROUND

With only a photo of Aksel Bjare and Nevendus Hall, and no sight of either as Drangelbekk is approached, the PCs will need to ask around to get any further in the investigations. Three story threads cross in the village: Aksel Bjare, a lucid dreamer at Piper Hall and an impoverished old man. They might seem unrelated but eventually the threads end up in the same place.

In general, inquiries will be met with courtesy and serious consideration (except at *The Black Swan*, see further down). Shabby-looking PCs might encounter difficulties in all places - except at the smithy - and will need a successful Influence roll to get answers. All locations have a mundane quality, except for Piper Hall. At the old manor, Drangelbekk's second secret lies waiting for the characters: Toril Ness, a young Soot-infected woman, materialising her vivid dreams in her spacious bed chamber. Upper class, academic or medical PCs will be well-received there, but anyone with a recommendation from the village priest will be let in.





*Map of Drangelbekk village*

*P.O. indicates the location of the Telegram & Post Office. Dotted lines represent foot paths.*

**The Black Swan.** The Black Swan lies at the centre of the village, by the major crossroad, and works as the midpoint for all social activities. For PCs, depending on who they ask, the pub will lead in three different directions.

Neither of the young bartenders will recognise a picture of Aksel Bjare or Nevendus Hall. (GM note: Bjare has taken his dinner at the Swan several times, but the bartenders are not brilliant). Instead, they point the PCs to any of the following persons/locations (roll  $1d3$  or pick one):

1. The local priest. See Church and Rectory on page 236.
2. The post office. See Telegram and Post Office on page 235.
3. Bishops public-house. See Bishops on page 237.

### *The Local Doctor*

*Some investigators, especially those with a medical background, might want to visit the local physician. Dr Arthur Jacobsen is located in Greeby village 4 kilometres west of Drangelbekk. Unfortunately, he has not seen Aksel Bjare, nor heard about him. He is happy to meet a colleague, but cannot share any information of interest to the case.*



*The Black Swan and the three young bartenders.*

### *People on the Street*

*The characters might ask passers-by if they recognise the photo of Aksel Bjare or the manor. If so, none will remember Bjare and only 5% will be able to name the manor (it is hard to get a clear view from the road). If asked about strange events nearby, 20% mentions the disappearance of a homeless man (Brown) recently. With a successful Influence roll, 20% have heard rumours of weird things going on at Piper Hall.*

Unfortunately, the bartenders' lack of knowledge makes any other customers reluctant to share what they know. They will glance at the photos and just shake their heads.

The interior of the public-house looks like most other village pubs. A counter in dark wood occupies a large part of the room and tables fill the rest of the room. Large windows, set on two sides of a corner, allow a good view of the street outside. Dark wood covers the walls and the high ceiling. The atmosphere is correct and everything is well-kept.

**The Conqueror Inn.** This combined public-house and inn is the only place to stay overnight in the area (see sidebar). The owner, Peder Frank, has seen happier days and his enterprise has declined in recent years. If shown a picture of Aksel Bjare, he will recognise the man (but his conclusions are somewhat off). Nevendus Hall rings no bells.

*'That fellow stayed here a few times two years ago. I never forget a face, you know. I think he was a travelling salesman. Well dressed, kept to himself. Not seen him for a year. The manor? Never seen it. They all look the same to me.'*

The inn is a dreary place, and the pub is empty. The building looks sad, with peeling paint and dirty windows. Peder Frank swears at the posh Black Swan and cannot believe people go there. His bitterness will only grow as his business declines over the coming months. In a year, he will join the Solipsists. Treating him well now will give the PCs a possible future informant.

**Smithy.** The smithy, Torger Thor, is a practical man of few words. He maintains all farming equipment in the village as well as cars. Over the years, his workshop has slowly taken on the look of a mechanic's garage; Torger is proud to have kept up with the rapid technological change.

PCs wishing to talk to Torger need a bit of perseverance. Knocking on the workshop door gives no reply. The mechanic has his hands full with a broken tractor and lies on the floor beneath it, disconnected from the world around him. Peering inside or stopping to listen at the door reveal someone is inside, however (assuming the PCs visit during working hours). Once inside, Torger will ask the PCs to wait for a few minutes, while he finishes the last piece. The characters are free to roam the workshop in the meantime but Torger only grunts if asked anything. Two minutes stretch to five, then ten. After 20 minutes, Torger finally crawls out from under the tractor, black from oil and soot (not The Soot, though).

PCs that leave and come back later will have face the same delay. Torger is a busy man and refuses to let his most loyal customers wait. Strangers from Glimminge, on the other hand, will have to wait.



If he gets to see the pictures, he recognises both immediately.

*'This man has ordered sheet metal and electrical components from me a few times this year. I've no idea what he would use it for. Said he was building something. Can't remember his name. Aksel Bjare, you say? Yes, that sounds right.'*

*'That's Nevendius Hall, down the road east. Know nothing about it though, I've only seen it from the road. The priest might know more.'*

If the PCs ask how to get to Nevendius Hall, Torger offers them a ride with his son. 'He will be back in a few minutes,' he says (this time stretching into 1 hour). His son handles the deliveries with a horse and cart. He is happy to drop the characters off at Nevendius Hall on his next run.

**Telegram & Post Office.** The Post Office is on the main street. For the villagers, it is an important meeting point. Encounters are brief but long enough for news to spread quickly. Letters are sent to distant relatives, packages received and telegrams sent. All this is handled by Gry Pallesen. She is a hard working woman of unassailable loyalty to The Royal Mail.

She will not recognise a picture of Aksel Bjare. Nevendius Hall she will spot at once – but her outward reaction will depend on how the PCs look and behave. If Mrs Pallesen distrusts their motives, she will not relay any knowledge. If the PCs make a good impression she will tell them what she knows. But she only has a couple of minutes to spare.

*'That's Nevendius Hall, I believe. It's an abandoned manor not far from here. No one have lived there for years. You will only find weeds there.'*

If the characters want to go there, she suggests they talk to the smithy down the street.

**Poor's Cottages.** Some characters might pursue the clue about Brown's disappearance. The poor's cottages outside the village was his last known residence. Talking to the other paupers will not provide many answers, however.

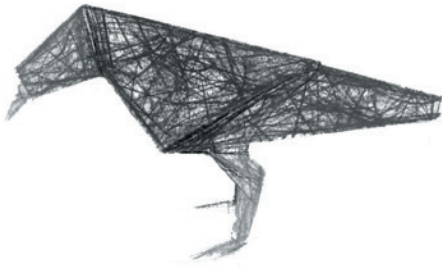
The poor's cottages in Drangelbekk is an old farm-stead, a cluster of grey wooden buildings left unpainted. The main cottage houses eight people while a smaller cottage houses two. Around them, a barn, a few outbuildings and a roost stands. A dozen chickens roam the unkept yard.

The interior is dark and cold. A single room with a low ceiling holds nothing but simple beds fixed against the walls, a stove and a wooden table surrounded by stools. Three people sit by the (cold) stove and two more lie on their straw beds, sleeping or staring into the ceiling.

#### *The Poor Cottage System*

*Since the 19th century, Doggerland has a system where villages must provide for old, poor and sick people. In theory, this was a good decision. In reality, the impoverished are often clumped together in run-down cottages lacking all comforts. They get too little to eat and not enough fuel to stay warm. As a result, diseases spread.*





One of Toki's origami birds that might come alive later in the scenario.

Sigrun Hansen, 71 years old and a widow, rises to speak with the characters as they knock on the door. She is among the stronger but can no longer work because of chronic pain in her arms and legs. Her mind used to be more agile but the less than ideal living conditions at the cottage are taking their toll. Yet, she helps the PCs as best she can.

Mrs Hansen relates the following. Brown disappeared five weeks ago and no one has seen him since. He was a sensitive soul and often felt a strong urge to be alone. The cramped conditions in the cottage only allowed for a minimum of privacy. To handle the situation, Brown self-medicated with alcohol.

*'I just hope he's alright. Brown was a kind man. Even when he was drunk,'* Mrs Hansen ends her story.

If the characters look around the cottage, one thing – besides the shocking poverty – stands out. A moth-eaten old man (Toki) by the table folds small birds, all different, from slips of paper. Despite the man's ragged looks, the origami creatures are intricate and graceful and he folds them with amazing speed. He refuses to speak more than a few words, however. As the PCs leave, he cups his hands around a tiny bird and blows lightly at it. The little creature takes flight with flapping wings and lands on the shoulder of a PC (the one who showed most interest or with the highest POW). If asked, he will only reply *'It's for you.'*

At the end of the scenario, if Bjare takes control of Toril Ness, the small origami creatures will fly around the village. They will cause no harm, but their numbers will increase the more Toril's dreams take over Drangelbekk.

**Church and Rectory.** If the PCs have been to any other location before this, the priest - Wilfrith Lang - will know strangers are in the village and might look for him. It has given this honest man time to ponder a secret he has been carrying for too long: the strange case of Ms Ness at Piper Hall. Therefore, when he meets the PCs, if they mention The Soot, strange events or even before they present their errand, he blurts out:

*'I knew it was wrong to keep it to myself. But I was so sure I could solve this tragic case. I was the only one Ms Ness would confide in. And the manor... oh, it's so sad for the entire village to see it like this.'*

He is talking about Piper Hall and the strange effects The Soot has on young Toril Ness. He knows nothing of Aksel Bjare or his whereabouts, but his outbreak, caused by a bad conscience, hopefully leads the characters on a short detour through the village. It will prove useful.

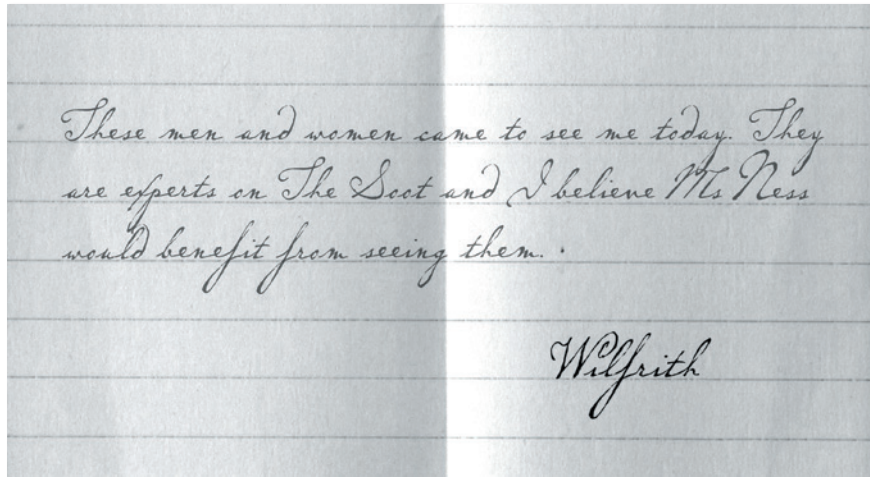
If the characters want to visit Piper Hall, the priest will write a note for them.

*'Show this to the servants. They will let you talk to Ms Ness. Just be prepared for a... well, let's just call it a strange experience. You'll see for yourselves. But please do come and see me afterwards. And tell me if I've acted wrongly when I kept this secret.'*

He refuses to say more, leaving them to form their own opinions.

The church is a small wooden building, painted in white. It stands on a gravel surface, with linden trees in rows. The church seats 40 people in straight-backed benches, but barely half is filled on a regular Sunday. Mr Lang is a pragmatic man, however, and has opened his church to Odin followers on Wednesdays.

The rectory stands next to the church. The priest lives and works on his own in this fine house, plastered in yellow and surrounded by large trees. On weekdays before noon, he will be found in his study, an austere room with a heavy desk and some religious literature. He often takes his meals at Bishops, lingering for an hour or two to read and chat.



**Piper Hall.** See pages 238-241 for details on the manor.

**Bishops.** The Bishops pub lies at the south end of Drangelbekk. It is smaller and has a more rustic feel to it than The Black Swan. Even the beer tastes better. Visitors are fewer (1d6-1) – only four tables fit into the converted stable – but they speak more freely. An old couple, Mr and Mrs Baager, runs the place.

Around noon and again by five o'clock, there is a 70% chance that the PCs will find the priest here (30% at other times). If so, any questions asked to the Baagers

#### **General Store**

*The general store is an old-school shop filled with goods from floor to ceiling. The owner, Maia Vollan, resides behind the counter. She is not from the area and does not recognise the picture of Nevendius Hall. But she remembers Aksel Bjare.*

*'I think he's been here to buy a few tools. I'm not sure, it's been a while. Six months? Perhaps a year? Never mentioned what he would use the tools for. But he seemed like a normal gentleman. A bit on the quiet side, I would say.'*

*If the PCs need equipment, the store carries tools and camping gear. No rifles or guns, however.*

will be kindly directed to Wilfrith Lang. See the section above called Church and Refectory for his answers.

Otherwise, the Baager couple will answer as best they can. They do not recognise Aksel Bjare but identifies the manor as Nevendius Hall, two kilometres outside the village.

The old couple and any guests immerse themselves in a long-winded discussion on whether or not Nevendius Hall is empty. Eventually, they agree upon that the manor works as a den for bums and stray dogs, but that the family who used to live there is long gone. Then they keep talking about Brown, a missing homeless man, shaking their heads (see Bjare's Victims) and the late spring.

### PIPER HALL

Piper Hall was the pride of Drangelbekk. It used to be a splendid manor, inhabited for generations by a kind and generous family. Today, little remains. The buildings still stand proud at the edge of the village, but they have a faded look to them. Silence surrounds it. The only heir, Toril Ness, lies in her chamber infected by The Soot.

Some families end with a bang. Other, like the Ness family, languish slowly, like they grow weary of existence collectively. One of them died young. Another went into space and was never heard of again. But most just grew old and withered. Only their accumulated wealth keeps everything running – at a minimum level.

The household remains functional thanks to the loyalty of three old servants. The gardener (Mr Eluf Petersen), the maid (Mrs Benedikte 'Ben' Møller) and the butler (Mr Karl Poulsen). They have been in the family's service for over 20 years and know the place inside out. Their loving care and protection of Toril Ness (not to speak of their patience with her peculiarities) are obvious to anyone visiting Piper Hall.

For characters spending some time experiencing Ms Ness' dreams, the whereabouts of Aksel Bjare will be revealed just before they leave.

#### Visiting Ms Ness

Walking up the gravel road to Piper Hall, with formidable oak trees to the right and open fields to the left, would have been a nice stroll on a fine spring day. Now, only a true minimalist would find beauty in the various shades of grey, brown and yellow.



*Toril Ness before she was infected by The Soot.*

The buildings, two stories in stone and white plaster, arranged in a generous U-shape, look simple and robust. Architectural decorations have been kept to a minimum. A garden with lawns and occasional large trees embed the complex on the site. The road widens into a gravel surface (used for parking and deliveries, now empty) and a foot path leads across the lawn to the main building (right above the 'r' in Piper Hall on the village map). It ends in an oversized double door, with a draw string on the side.

The butler, Mr Poulsen, will greet the characters in the gracious manners of an old-school servant. As stated earlier, a letter from the priest will allow the PC's entrance, or if they come from a medical or academic career. For others, a successful Influence roll might overcome Mr Poulsen's reluctance.

Once inside, the characters find themselves in a large stairway hall. The butler asks them to wait for a few minutes while he tells Ms Ness about the unexpected guests. When Mr Poulsen returns, he asks them to follow him up to a large chamber right above the stairway. Before letting them in, he says:

*'Please don't be alarmed, whatever happens. You will see peculiar scenes. Stay calm and nothing will harm you. If you need me, pull the string next to the door.'*

Any questions will be met with a faint smile and a *'You will see.'* By that, he knocks and bids the characters to enter.

### Toril Ness

Toril Ness' chamber looks like a giant bedroom. A majestic bed is set between two high windows, with faint daylight seeping through heavy curtains. Propped up with pillows, Toril sits munching a sandwich. Long, blonde hair falls on her shoulders, contrasting with the dark pyjamas she is wearing. A duvet in dark red covers the bed. The scene could be taken from a fairytale about a beautiful princess.

*'Please come in. We only have a few minutes before I must sleep again,'* Toril says.

The characters are invited to pull up chairs and stools close to the bed. Toril will be happy to look at the photos of Aksel Bjare and Nevendius Hall, but will recognise none.

*'I haven't been outside this room in three years. It would be quite surprising if I could help you.'*

Toril is kind and well-versed, with flashes of dry humour about her condition. And she will not hesitate to tell the PCs of her condition.

### *Piper Hall Interior*

*The interior mirrors the somewhat sad exterior of the building. Nothing in particular seems wrong, but the PCs are left with a feeling of time being frozen. Oil paintings on the walls depict ancestors from different times and fine rugs cover the stone floor. But the silence is deafening and no living thing stirs.*

## Dreams, 1d6

1. *Exoplanet Forest.* A dense rainforest materialises in the room, with large lizard-like animals grazing from the lowest branches. The scent of forest and dung is intense. The air is filled with unidentifiable sounds. Curious little birds come and sit on the bedposts. With a crash, the birds take to the air and grazers flee from a group of goat-like predators, ripping one grazer apart next to the door.

2. *Travelling Through Space.* The room drifts through space. Anyone who have travelled in a starship will recognise the pinprick look of the stars on a background of utter blackness. The scene is slow and restful.

3. *Vast Grasslands.* The room transforms into a vast grassland, the sun like a black hole in the sky. Herds of giant worms move over the plain, catching parachute-like creatures with flitting tongues. The stench from the worm's mouths fills the room, until it becomes unbearable. Then, the ground shakes as an even bigger creature turns out to be the actual ground. Like a massive troll, it rises on two legs with a body made of soil. It grabs the worms, squishes them between its eight fingers, before roaring at the terrible black sun.

4. *Planetary System.* Similar to number 2, but drifting through an unknown planetary system instead. Two gas giants have been caught by each other's gravity wells, dancing around each other, with rings forming a figure eight. Closer to the sun, a planet made up of water glimmers.

5. *Mist.* A forest covered in a thick mist, two-legged creatures walking by as dark shadows further away. The mist seems to be alive, assuming vague shapes that drift between the boughs. When small animals scurry past, the shapes attack, slowly engulfing them.

6. *The Cave.* A cave in complete darkness. Almost too slow to perceive, a soft light spreads. First blue, then violet and red. The intensity grows, like seeing a rainbow-coloured sunrise from the inside. A vast cavern takes shape in the light, with glowing seed pods covering the walls. Then, the light fades back to darkness again. Only to start over in a few minutes.

*'I caught The Soot four years ago. I deteriorated quickly but my condition seems to have stabilised. Some say I should be happy to have survived this long. I'm not so sure. I sleep 22 hours a day. My dreams are so vivid that I'm sure they are real. And, in a way, they are. Both Mr Poulsen and Mr Lang tell me my dreams materialise in this room. Sight, sound, smell, all down to the last detail. I've never seen it myself, however. Or perhaps I should say I've seen it in my dreams,' she smiles.*

*'But you better look yourselves,' she says, hands over an empty plate and stretches her arms while yawning. 'I'm turning in.'*

She slides deep under the duvet, everything but a lock of golden hair disappearing. Within minutes the dreams start to reshape the room.

## Dreams

Toril's dreams indeed materialises in the room. Strange forests and plains appear, alien beasts pass through the room and the light of distant suns fill the chamber. It is a stunning, fully immersive experience, especially in an age of black and white movies.

Several dreams come and go, each being 5-15 minutes. They never repeat in the exact same way but landscapes and events are similar. Roll 1d6 or pick from the list in the sidebar to see what the dreams contain.

## Are the Dreams Real?

The dreams show actual locations from the real world, but none can be identified by the PCs. The landscapes are projected into the room through Toril's Soot-infected mind, taking on a semi-physical presence. An animal passing through the room, for example, will not leave any lasting footprints on the floor. But standing in a creature's path you might be knocked over (taking 1d4-1 damage).

Tools and weapons affect animals and objects in the dreams, but it feels like they are behind a layer of protective glass. Weapons only do half damage and tools feel blunt and inefficient. Creatures or plants feel natural to the touch. The animals can be approached, even patted, if the PCs are careful. But anything picked up will fade along with the dream.

Anyone approaching too close to Toril will be scrutinised by the dream beasts, ready to strike if violence or other types of abuse are directed at her. A doctor may check her pulse, breathing and take blood samples, however. Her Soot marks are visible on her neck and arms. Each sleep period lasts for 1d6 hours and anyone who wants to talk to her again will have to wait. Toril's sleep is deep and she cannot be woken.



## A Final Clue

Just as the characters are about to leave, Toril stirs in her bed. The scene filling the room changes. They see the back of a man walking out of Drangelbekk, snowflakes in the air, past Conqueror Inn, following him in jump cuts along the road. As he turns right into a smaller road, the PCs see the side of a face they know: Aksel Bjare's. He walks in stuttering cuts to the manor called Nevendius Hall. With a muffled shout from Toril, the image dies away, changing to an underwater scene. They fall deeper and deeper, the blue light turning into darkness. Then blackness.

There will be no more dreams for a few hours.

## BJARE'S VICTIMS

Bjare's experiments have so far claimed one human victim. At the start, he used rats and stray dogs to establish the foundational research. When the portals worked more often than not, he needed a human guinea pig before trying them on himself. As a homeless man - Brown, as they called him in the village - moved from the poor's cottages to Nevendius Hall, Bjare saw his chance. Brown was tricked into one of the portals, never to return.

Unmoved, Bjare improved the design and now basic operation is smooth. The following weeks, however, Bjare will need new humans. For every week that Bjare is left alone continuing his work, one villager or visitor will disappear (see sidebar). If Bjare is allowed to continue, Ms Ness will be the last victim.

Any PCs being caught by Bjare in the scenario might face the same fate as the first three victims. For every PC caught, one villager is spared. On the other hand, if Bjare is stopped in time, none of the disappearances will take place.

With enough information found in the village, the PCs are ready to take on Nevendius Hall.

## Nevendius Hall

Nevendius Hall is located 2 kilometres east of Drangelbekk. It consists of a stately but weathered manor, a couple of outbuildings and a sizeable chunk of land, now in disuse. The entire farmstead has stood empty for almost 10 years, ever since the previous owners left for the United States.

The characters can get there in several ways. If the weather allows, or the PCs have suited up, hiking will take about 20 minutes. It is a 5 minute drive if the char-

## *Bjare's Victims Week by Week*

*Week 1: Mrs Troelsen, 72, poor's cottages.*

*Week 2: Jonathan Hansen, 53, farmer.*

*Week 3: Erling Hiort, 35, a travelling salesman.*

*Week 4: Bjare finds out about Toril Ness, sole heir of Piper Hall, bending her powers to his goals.*

### *The Manor*

*Nevendius Hall is a late 18th century mansion erected on a large countryside property. The house dresses in a classical style with influences from medieval structures. It consists of two floors.*

*The facade shows marks of neglect – peeling paint, cracks in the plaster – but windows are intact. Around the house, the grass grows long, shrubs and trees have spread way beyond their original beds.*

*Outer doors are made of oak, painted in white. Locks can be picked without any skill penalties.*

*The interior is described room by room below. In general, rooms are almost empty and no one have cleaned them in 10 years. Dust and cobwebs are everywhere. Dingy parquet cover most floors, but wide planks are used in the servants' rooms, the kitchen area and the children's room.*

*Yellowing wallpaper with pale flowers cover all walls, except the kitchen area where stone and plaster has been left visible. On the maps below, thick lines represent stone walls, while thin lines represent wood.*

*There are no electrical lights, except in the pantry (room K) and Bjare's workshop on the second floor. Ceiling height is 3 metres, all painted white. Interior doors are also white and none are locked (but some might be closed).*

acters go by car. A passing villager can provide give them a lift by horse carriage.

The landscape around Nevendius Hall is flat, dotted with clumps of maples, oaks and lime-trees. It consists of farmland with a rich sandy soil ideal for potatoes. The land belonging to Nevendius Hall is left uncultivated, however. Last year's yellowing grass is half standing, half lying flat on the ground, with tiny fresh straws barely visible at the bottom. Spring is indeed late this year.

### APPROACHING THE MANOR

A badly kept gravel road leads the last 200 metres to the manor from the main road (also in gravel, but more well-kept). Trees and bushes obscure most of the buildings until 100 metres remain. If the PCs have seen Toril Ness' dreams at Piper Hall, the road will be familiar.

For anyone who watches the buildings from a distance, not much will be revealed. In daytime, there is a 5% chance that smoke will come from one of the chimneys (caused by Aksel Bjare using the fireplace in Room 8, see below). At night, there is a 10% chance of lights being seen in any of the rooms 6-10. They are turned off after about 5 minutes.

PCs might at this point consider how to approach the manor. Bjare is too consumed by his work to keep a watch, however, so whatever decision the players make here will not change the story.

PCs that want to sneak up to the house unseen will do best to leave a car by the main road. To proceed by foot without risking detection, the GM might have the players make Stealth rolls, to keep them on their toes.

### MANOR LAYOUT

There are three entrances to the manor: the main entrance and two smaller on the sides. Getting in requires either a successful Lockpicking roll or the breaking of a window. In addition to the furniture and objects described below, some rooms also contain random items. Roll on the Random Items table further down, once for each room. Each item only appears once.

Bjare spends most of his time in Room 8 on the second floor (and the inter-dimensional versions of it; see below). He sleeps in Room 5 and uses 6, 7, 9 and 10 regularly. He eats as little as possible, keeping cooking to a minimum, but visits the kitchen and pantry on the first floor once every day. The other rooms are left as they were when he moved in.

Any loud noises by the PCs (shouting, gunfire, smashing objects) has a 5% chance of drawing Bjare's attention. If alerted, he will watch the intruders in secret

(Perception at *Herculean* to notice him) to understand their motives. He will then withdraw to Room 8b. There, he sets up his devices to take care of the PCs, preparing for if they find his secret chambers.

The interior is described room by room on the following pages. Roll once for every room on the Random Items table in the sidebar.

## Outbuildings

There are two outbuildings next to the manor house: a small tower and a stable converted for laundry and storage many years ago.

The tower used to be for storage, but has been in disuse for decades. The sturdy wooden door faces south and is unlocked. Inside, the tower is empty. A single room stretches all the way up to the pointed roof. Remains of woodwork shows there has been a stair and a second floor, now removed.

The converted stable is divided into three rooms: washing, drying and storage. The entrance faces the manor's gable and leads into the washing area. A large copper wash-boiler stands opposite the door with a robust wooden table next to it. A sizeable handle is connected to a water pipe by the door (if turned, it shuts down all water in the manor). An open door leads to the drying area, with washing lines crossing the entire room. Two small windows have a nice view across the fields. The storage room is lined with empty wooden shelves. All three rooms have a thick layer of dust on the floor with no signs of usage for many years. In one of the shelves a curious object stands; see more under Inter-Dimensional Parheliion on the next page (Storage 4).



## Random Items, 1d20

1. A pile of fine clothes from the turn of the century. Three dresses in medium size (well-kept), two bonnets, unisex oilskin coat (torn at the right shoulder, but easy to repair), two jackets in large sizes (well-kept), a cap, a waistcoat in wool and a men's dark dressing gown.
2. Fifty empty wine bottles neatly ordered in a corner. Cheap brand.
3. A broken typewriter on a chair. Can be fixed with a bit of care.
4. Herbs laid out for drying on a large table. Nothing out of the ordinary - all of them could easily be found around the manor in summer - except for one that defies categorisation.
5. Improvised bed reeking of sweat, filth and alcohol. Someone has shuffled together hay, pieces of cloth and a wool blanket into a makeshift bed on the floor. Judged from the smell, it has been used extensively. This is the former bed of the missing homeless man called Brown.
6. Broken furniture stacked in a corner. A desk, two broken chairs, a chest, a low shelf and a large porcelain urn.
7. A newish suitcase filled with a woman's clothes, scientific notes on viking burial ceremonies (in German), two books (also in German) and five small wooden toys depicting circus animals. The toys are remarkably well-crafted and has moving arms, legs and heads.
8. An empty hornet's nest the size of a football lies on the floor. Markings in the ceiling show where it used to be located.
9. A low table set with delicate coffee cups and small, hand painted plates ready for 11 o'clock coffee.
10. A trap for catching rats alive. Empty and without bait.
- 11-20. Nothing.

*Nevendius Hall. Outbuilding and tower to the right, scullery to the far left.*

## FIRST FLOOR

**A. Dining Hall.** This room used to be the main dining hall and is now empty. Large bay windows offer a beautiful view over the fields. It is hard to imagine a more peaceful spot for a good meal. Oak panels cover the lower half of the walls, with exclusive red wallpaper above. A sizeable fireplace sits firmly in one of the walls, sided by two empty book cases with glass doors. Wide double doors open to the parlour (B).

**B. Parlour.** A somewhat smaller room than the dining hall and lit only by a single window. Two armchairs in rent, brittle leather stands by the window. Oak panels continue from the dining hall, but with darker wallpaper on the upper half. A Perception roll reveals recent footprints (in flour) leading into and out of the kitchen door.

**C. Drawing Room.** This room used to be for quiet, informal gatherings or after-dinner chats. Now, it stands empty, except for a shabby, large rug in the middle of the room. In the fireplace, opposite the door, a small patch of greenery grows (more details in C2, under Inter-Dimensional Parhelion).

**D. Smoking room.** This 4x4 metres room, up a few steps, used to be the smoking room. Here, the gentlemen withdrew after dinner to banter and discuss business around the fireplace. Today, it is empty. The dark oak panel makes the room feel cramped instead of cosy. A sliding door leads to a room the size of a closet. This tight space held a good collection of liquor, a few snacks and, if called for, a servant. Now, it holds only a bottle of polish, to keep the oak panel shiny.

**E. Library.** Every square inch of the walls are covered with shelves in a dark wood. They even surround the windows on all sides. The former collections held nothing more exciting than long forgotten bestsellers, but that was bountiful compared to the dust-covered shelves of today. It is still a nice quiet room and it begs to be filled with new volumes and a good reading chair.

**F. Study.** This former study is now empty, except for an optical phenomenon described under Inter-Dimensional Parhelion (F3).

**G. Bathroom.** This semi-modern add-on holds a generous bath tub and a wash basin. The sewer is blocked, however, and the taps has a 20% chance of breaking every time the water is turned on, making them impossible to turn off. If this happens, a handle in the outbuilding (see below) must be forced close to stop a building-wide leak throughout the bottom floor.

**H. Servants' Room.** This room retains much of the robustness of the kitchen, but with normal ceiling height. It used to be the common room for the servants and is now empty.

**I. Kitchen.** The kitchen stretches two stories, with high windows, giving the room a light, airy feeling. Work tables line the white plastered walls. The sturdy planks in the tables have a beautiful grey patina. A massive baking oven resides in a corner, clad in curved, glazed tiles in green hues. Two doors lead from the kitchen: one to the scullery (closed) and one to a small foyer (open). A Perception roll reveals faint tracks (in flour) leading to the pantry door.

**J. Scullery.** This austere room has stone walls and slabs on the floor. Like the kitchen, it stretches two floors in height. A large fireplace is set into a wall, but otherwise the room is bare. A drain occupies the centre and the floor slopes towards it.

**K. Pantry.** The walls of this small room – only 1 by 2 metres – have shelves fitted from floor to ceiling. Most of them contain nothing but dust and traces of old flour. But within easy reach, several metal boxes are placed. They keep Bjare's food store away from the mice. In them, the PCs will find biscuits, dried sausages, dried meat, apples and dried apricots. Next to the boxes, a dozen tin cans are stacked. Labels reveal them to be assorted vegetables. The brand on the tin cans match the cans in the archives.

**L-M. Butler's Room.** Three small rooms, empty except for the box described on page 248.

**N. Lavatory.** A functional but old WC accompanied by a wash basin (with only cold water).

**O. Stair Hall.** A formerly grand hall dominated by a well-crafted staircase in stone.

**P. Vestibule.** Two adjoined rooms, empty but for a broken umbrella next to the outer double doors. A wide opening leads to the Stair Hall. The doors to B and C are closed.

### Inter-Dimensional Parhelion

Bjare's early experiments caused refractions of inter-dimensional space. Like a parhelion around the sun, they appear in a semi circle around the house, causing strange occurrences in four places (marked on the map by stars). Any of the objects can be brought along – if the PCs can find ways to carry them.

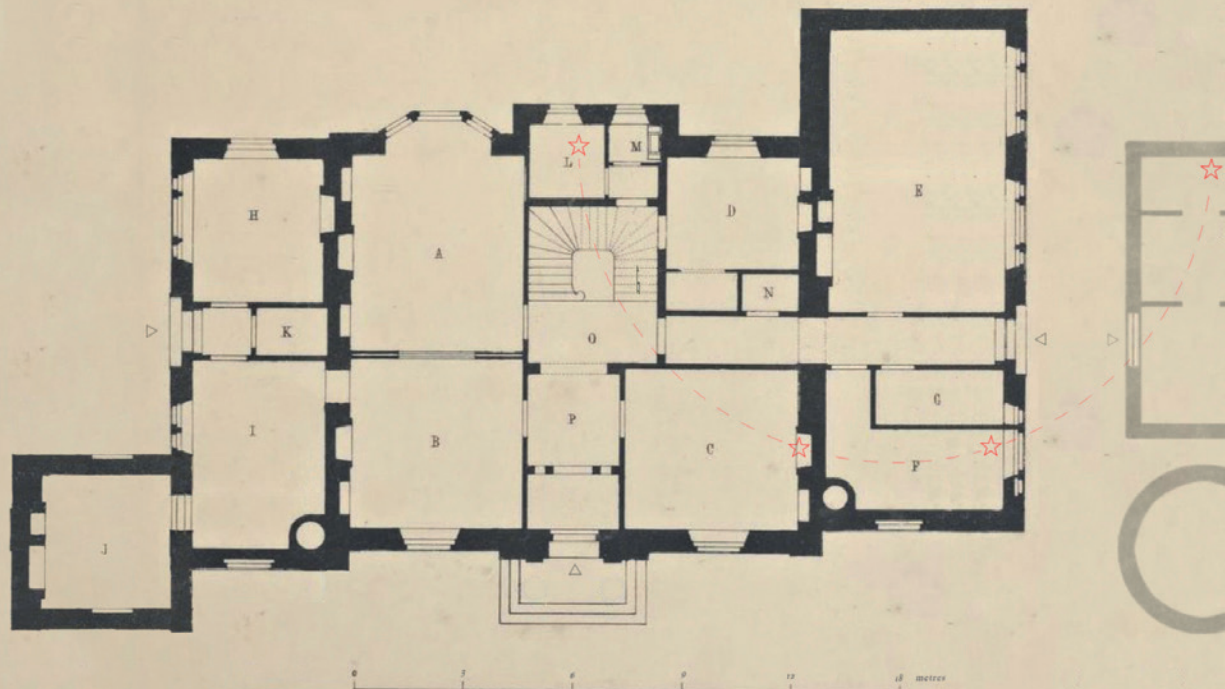
**L1.** A sphere looking like a formicary hovers in mid air, 0.5 metres above the floor. The sphere collapses in on itself like a 'vortex', where dindrellian ants emerge from time to time. If anything is pushed into the vortex, the ants will swarm out and devour it with their sharp jaws. The sphere can be brought along if put in a box.

**C2.** In the fireplace, a tuft of alien grass and herbs grows. A most peculiar herb, that defies all categorisation, dominates. It is slightly below knee-height and every leaf and flower along the stem is unique, both in shape and colour. If the tuft is brought along, it will continue to flower and grow. At the GMs discretion, the herb might have interesting uses.

**F3.** An optical phenomenon, 1 metre in diameter. An invisible sphere in mid air that, when looked through, flips the 'image' horizontally 180°. What would have been seen to the left appears on the right and the other way around. The phenomenon appears 2 metres above the floor and the effect is best seen when looking through it, out of the window. Like the formicary, this sphere can be put in a box if the PCs wish to bring it along.

**Storage 4.** In the storage room in the outbuilding, a geometrical, star-shaped object of indiscernible material stands in a shelf. It is possibly organic, perhaps even alive. Size: 0.1 metres in diameter. Colour: White. This object can be carried as is. At the GMs discretion, it might have strange powers.







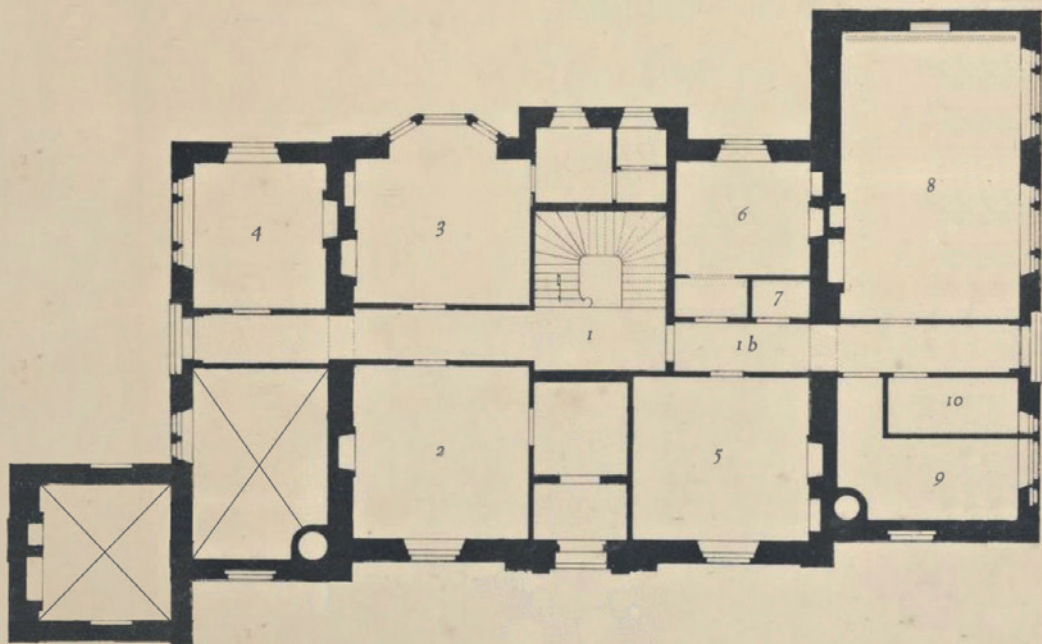
## SECOND FLOOR

1. *Stair Hall.* This is the upper part of the stair hall. To the left is a closed door. To the right, a corridor ends in a window. There are three closed doors.
- 1b. *Corridor.* Behind the door to the left in the stair hall a corridor stretches. Closed doors, three on each side, line the corridor. Walls are filled with insects, mounted in beautiful wooden frames. These are Bjare's favourites from his collection of insects.
2. *Master Bedroom.* The first of two fine bedrooms, with adjoining walk-in closets (bigger than the rented rooms of the PCs).
3. *Bedroom.* The second of two fine bedrooms, also with generous closets. The bay windows offer a lovely view across the rural landscape.
4. *Children's Room.* This room is lit from two sides by large windows and has a nice, airy quality to it. A broken rocking horse stands in the middle and a row of seven tin soldiers, unpainted, stands on the window sill. The last one has lost his head.
5. *Guest Room.* This room contains two small, wooden crates with the few belongings Bjare has brought from his previous life in Glimminge. They contain a nice black suit, a sand-coloured suit for the summer (including a hat made of straw), a few ties, a stack of handkerchiefs in white linen, leather sandals and various extra clothes. He has also packed binoculars, a book on insects, two photos of himself (as a child and as a young man), a vacuum flask smelling of old coffee and a good rucksack for short excursions. A novel called 'The Seven Wonders of Cosmic Nature' by Yesenia Caubet, the famous Spanish expo-biologist.
6. *Storage.* A room filled with empty shelves. This used to be the storage room for clean sheets, duvets and pillows. Small white feathers can be found here and there (from the pillows).
7. *Lavatory.* A functional but old WC accompanied by a wash basin (with only cold water).
8. *Workshop.* This is the room where it all started: Bjare's workshop for inter-dimensional experiments. See the section below called *The Workshop* for details. Do not roll for random objects here.
9. *Study.* This is the room where Bjare sleeps – the few times he actually rests. An old steel-framed bed, like you would find in a dorm, stands in one corner. The bed is unmade and the sheets are dirty. A small stack of unwashed plates lies on the floor next to it. A candle and matchsticks lie on the window sill. As Bjare seldom sleeps here at the moment, there is no chance of finding him here.
10. *Bathroom.* Similar to the bathroom on the first floor (G).

### *About Yesenia Caubet*

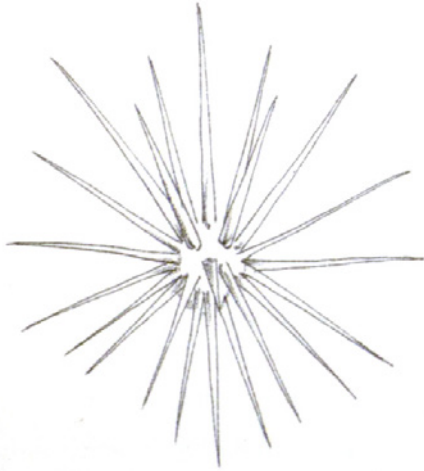
*Yesenia Caubet was a Spanish exoplanet biologist and explorer. She was an early explorer of the new worlds found in Comae Space. Her most popular books include 'The Maru Tribe. The sinking sands of Sisymbrium' (1918), 'The Seven Wonders of Cosmic Nature' (1920) and 'The Sound of a Leaf Falling' (1922). The latter title will be dramatised by a theatre in Glimminge in the coming year.*





0 3 6 9 12 15 metres

## THE WORKSHOP



*The organic object located in the outbuilding*

Room number 8 on the map is Bjare's inter-dimensional workshop. This is the centre of his activities and the place for the final scenes in the scenario. But ever since Bjare succeeded with his experiments he has extended the room by multiplying it. Hidden behind a tapestry in Room 8, a door opens to an identical copy of the workshop – but without contents. And beyond a tapestry and a door in the second room lies a third room. Nothing of this is visible from the outside of the manor. To keep the rooms apart, we will call them 8.1, 8.2 and 8.3.

This arrangement has allowed Bjare to work on several projects at a time, moving back and forth between the rooms. As the earliest projects were finished, he has spent most of his time in the next two rooms (8.2 and 8.3).

### Bjare's Goals

Now that the PCs will finally face Bjare, it is time to look at his immediate goals:

- » *First of all, he hopes that casual intruders will not find his duplicate rooms. He assumes most intruders will leave after finding nothing of interest in the house.*
- » *Second, if intruders find Room 8.2, Bjare will try to scare them away with his tricks. See his various tactics on page 251..*
- » *Third, if Bjare feels threatened, he will try to subdue, injure or kill opponents. Any victims might be useful in future experiments, so he will try to avoid killing them.*
- » *Fourth, if he is loosing (risking capture or death) he will attempt to flee through his most beloved portal in Room 8.3. To accomplish this, he might need to distract the PCs with more tricks.*

On a larger scale, Bjare's goals are muddled by The Soot's effects on him. He enjoys his new powers of invention and magic, at times feeling invulnerable. Like many Soot-infected, he feels superior to other people.

Bjare's scientific goals remains quite clear (at least to himself). His success in building a portal allowing teleportation has drawn the attention of a circle of Soot-infected, gathering around a shadowy figure called The Grey Lady. She coordinates the combined efforts of the network. So far, they have set up a combined research library by linking their respective collections through portals. But their solution has not worked very well. By inviting Bjare, they hope he can bring his expertise and solve their problems. Their intention is to set up a world-spanning network

of rooms (they dream of a chain of endless rooms), which the members can move between freely and conduct their research. This will allow them to break free of society's witch hunt on the Soot-infected. Bjare joined the circle a few months ago, flattered by their need of his knowledge, and has set up an initial portal between his workshop and The Grey Lady's manor. Work on the wider network of rooms has begun.

The rooms' descriptions follow below, with Bjare's tactics coming further down.

### **Room 8.1**

This initial workspace contains a large dinner table, left behind by the previous owners. A mechanical device (an early portal prototype) stands on the table, partly disassembled. Assorted screws, bolts and tools are strewn across the table. In a corner, an empty wooden crate marked 'Drangelbekk General Store' stands. Covering the entire back wall, a dark red tapestry hangs from a curtain rod in brass. Behind it, the door to Room 8.2 stands ajar.

The GM can call for Perception rolls to notice there is something behind the tapestry, but eventually (even if the rolls fail) the PCs will notice the door. If they look carefully, a light shines through the gap. Unfortunately, it squeaks loud and clear when opened.

### **Room 8.2**

This is Bjare's main workshop at the moment. Several smaller tables are scattered around the room, laden with tools and notes. On the floor, halfway through the room, a peculiar machine stands. This is a portal creation device that Bjare finished a few months ago. It 'stamps' a portal into thin air and when moving the machine, the portal remains – invisible to the eye. There are four such portals in the room, used by Bjare to trick unwelcome visitors.

The imposing portal-creating machine is 2.3 metres high, looking like an arched doorframe made of metal. A clunky base contains unseen machinery. Along the inside of the frame, spindly, insectile arms hang limp. All metal is left undecorated but the overall craftsmanship is good.

The device is powered by regular electricity and a thick cord has been screwed tight to the wall. To activate the portal, Bjare reads a spell. This also defines the end point for the portal (that must be a location known by the caster).

To create a portal, the arms move into action like a weaving machine. The sharp tips glow with a blue light and reaches into other dimensions. As it returns,

it latches a single strand of the spatio-temporal weave onto a molecule in our dimension. Repeating this move thousands of times creates a means of travelling without moving.

Four invisible portals have been activated in various locations of the room; a consequence of Bjare having tested the machine:

- » *Portal 1: This portal works like a cupboard, leading only to a small enclosed space (and back again). Good for hiding.*
- » *Portal 2: This portal leads to Room 8.3. It can be used to flee or to capture PCs.*
- » *Portal 3 and 4: These two portals face each other, placed 2 metres apart. They allow Bjare to enter Room 8.2 from 8.3, and then go directly to 8.1 (in just two long steps) if he wants to.*

The exact placement of the portals have not been marked on any map. The GM is encouraged to keep the locations difficult to find for the PCs. They might very well misjudge the exact positions because of Bjare's trickery. Also, all portals can be entered from two directions, confusing the PCs even more.

### **Room 8.3**

This is the most recent room, intended for Bjare's new and successful experiments. At the moment, it only contains a portal to the manor of his secret patron, The Grey Lady. If Bjare is cornered or feels his luck is turning, this is his escape route. He will make a dash for Room 8.3 and dive through the portal, even if he is at gun point, then closing the portal behind him. He hopes The Grey Lady will heal him magically of any non-lethal wounds, if he only reaches the other side. Anyone who sees him enter the portal will catch a glimpse of a large library and, behind Bjare, several persons in curious riveted helmets, with wires leading to the ceiling. Then the portal collapses. The glimpse of the library lasts only for a second.

### **How to Play the Final Rooms**

The Soot affects Bjare's judgement and his successful experiments has made him overconfident. The former shy bureaucrat now comes across as an evil genius toying with his lab rats.

He will use the following tactics and tricks to play around with the PCs – hopefully not causing too many casualties – to scare the intruders away.

*Opposite: A fine Geotrupes stercorarius (dor-beetle) from Bjare's collection of insects in the second floor corridor.*



1. He throws objects or a knife from inside one of the portals. It appears to the PCs as if it materialises out of nowhere.

2. He makes his voice heard from various points in a room, using one of his spells. He can also make a whisper sound like it is coming from close behind a PC. If possible, he will use this to sow distrust between the PCs.

3. He fires a gun from inside one of the portals, warning shots at first.

4. He rolls a piece of equipment on the floor from the inside a portal. If someone approaches it or picks it up, he throws something out of nowhere at them.

5. He suddenly appears before the PCs, fully visible, hands outstretched to show that he is unarmed. In reality, he stands behind an invisible portal. Anything thrown or shot at him will disappear before it hits. Anyone who rushes towards him will end up in portal 1 (the 'closet'). Bjare then disappears into any of the portals or by turning off the lights.

6. He uses his Mind's Hand spell. With the spell, Bjare can turn on and off lights and equipment. He can also move around objects by will. If he ends up in a disadvantageous situation, he will try to move one of the invisible portals. He has never tried this before, but the spell functions as normal on the portals. However, it creates strange side-effects 50% of the time. Typical side-effects (1d6): 1. The portal multiplies into 1d6 portals, 2. The portal just returns the person or object the same way it came, 3. The spell cannot stop the portal from moving and it crashes into a wall (creating an opening in the outer wall), 4. The portal flips 90 degrees, 5. The portal connects to any of the other portals, constantly changing which one, 6. The portal shatters.

7. He grabs a PC from inside a portal, if the PC is close enough, and drags them through it. The character is in shock for 1 round, unable to act, finding himself in Room 8.1 when waking up. Bjare is nowhere to be seen.

8. He initiates the portal-creating machine to weave new portals, then moving the machine away. He will try to use the new portals in creative ways to get rid of the PCs. He might even dare the PCs to use it. He is fully capable of showing illusions of the other end of the portal, like a flaming hell, an alien monster or a tropical beach. The actual target destination will be somewhere in the manor (that's the best he can do under the circumstances). If any of the PCs have been caught by Bjare, he might promise to let them go if one of the other characters steps through a portal.



## Epilogue

*Two days after the PCs have left Nevendius Hall, a truck arrives and three men load any remaining magical apparatus in the back. They operate on the orders of The Grey Lady, hoping to salvage Bjare's work.*

For Bjare's final escape attempt, see the description of Room 8.3. Even if he is held at gunpoint, he will try to wriggle out of the situation – by talking and using his tricks – and use his portals or spells to slip away. To distract the PCs, he might hint at the network of endless room and The Grey Lady.

## Conclusion

Hopefully, the characters find a way to stop Bjare's experiments. If he is left unchecked, it will have dire consequences for Drangelbekk and Toril Ness. Whether Bjare is captured or not is of less importance.

If Bjare slips away, the characters will have to report his status to Dr Stenger. She will be concerned and promises to reward them even more if they find him later. If they caught or killed Bjare, the doctor will thank them – but only if they can convince her it was a necessary precaution.

With a bit of luck, the PCs manage to stop Bjare's portal experiments before they escalate into something much worse. Otherwise, Bjare combines Toril Ness' powers with his own devices. The area covered by Toril's dreams will grow, encompassing the entire village in two months. Bjare's influence forces darker, more violent streaks into her dreams, consuming her over time. Drangelbekk turns into a place of strange occurrences and constant fear. Most inhabitants flee and the area will be quarantined. It will be a new case for the characters to solve.

If Bjare is stopped in time and Toril Ness survives, the characters might find her useful in a later scenario. With the right treatment, she might even regain some of her normal life.

Experience Rolls: Each character is rewarded with 3-4 experience rolls after the scenario, the higher number if they succeeded well.

## Changing the Level Difficulty

To make the scenario more challenging, you can increase the number of inter-dimensional parhelions at Nevendius Hall and make some of them difficult to handle.

Bjare might also duplicate more rooms in a row. By installing portals between them, he can play hide and seek with the PCs for a long time, taking them out one by one.

To help the characters along, you can provide them with the names Drangelbekk and Nevendius Hall early on. Once they have entered the manor, you can allow them to spot Bjare and give them the option to follow him to his workshop.

## Name List

*For on-the-fly NPCs, the GM can pick names from the list below:*

*Male: Laurits Bauder, Sander Haugen, Mikkel Eenhelm, Espen Haraldson, Ioan Aeldred.*

*Female: Sabine Mildburg, Anika Lund, Ina Synnøve, Ellinor Dam, Agathe Naav.*

## Non-Player Characters

### AKSEL BJARE

Unlike most people, Aksel Bjare felt that life took a turn for the better when he got infected by The Soot. He used to be on the melancholic side, finding joy only in his collection of beetles. Work at the archives was numbing, social life non-existent. With The Soot, his collecting took on a feverish intensity, incorporating everything around him. After a few months, he started to feel an invigorating lust for scientific exploration of the unknown. He felt a determination he had not experienced before and made quick progress on a theory of inter-dimensional movement, with experiments soon to follow.

Starting with small objects, he could soon move rats in the blink of an eye across the room without killing them. Ideas came easy to him and his skill in building machinery developed fast. The apartment soon grew too small and Bjare set out to find a house.

The Soot has changed Bjare into a brilliant but narcissistic experimenter. He will not allow anything to stand in his way. The two things he cares about are to perfect his inter-dimensional portals and deliver them to The Grey Lady. He will not show any sympathy for the wounded and a dead body is merely a missed opportunity to use live subjects in experiments.

Bjare has a slender build and a lean, clean-shaven face. His brown hair is short and these days he seldom washes it. The black markings from The Soot cover large parts of his body but are covered by clothing. In the workshop, he wears a white shirt, a bow tie and a pair of dark trousers. Outside, he puts on a nice, dark coat and a black hat. In general, his movements are precise giving him a restrained appearance.

For Bjare's goals and behaviour, see pages 248-251.

HUMAN		BUREAUCRAT		EORTHE
STR	8	ACTION PTS	2	<b>The Soot:</b> <i>Phase 3</i>
CON	10	HIT POINTS	11	<b>Peculiarities:</b> <i>Obsession (Collecting) 100%</i>
SIZ	11	ARMOUR	—	<b>Demeanour:</b> <i>Reckless, Impulsive, Cold-Hearted</i>
DEX	12	DMG BONUS	-1d2	<b>Passions:</b> <i>Impress (The Grey Lady) 90%, Pride (Inter-Dimensional Research) 75%</i>
INT	15			<b>Equipment:</b> <i>Pistol (1d6)</i>
POW	25	POWER PTS	25	<b>Spells:</b> <i>Create Portal, Illusion, Mind's Hand, Stupor*</i>
CHA	11	AGE	35	

**Skills:** *Craft (Insect Collecting) 95%, Endurance 50%, Evade 60%, Influence 70%, Knowledge (The Soot) 10%, Language (Menaryan) 80%, Perception 65%, Research 70%, Science (Entomology) 80%, Science (Magic) 90%, Willpower 80%. Combat Style (Self Defence, Pistol, Unarmed) 55%*

\* See page 258 for new spells

## DR GRETE STENGER

HUMAN		PHYSICIAN		EORTHE
STR	8	ACTION PTS	2	<b>The Soot:</b> —
CON	12	HIT POINTS	11	<b>Peculiarities:</b> —
SIZ	10	ARMOUR	—	<b>Demeanour:</b> <i>Kind, Correct, Inquisitive</i>
DEX	14	DMG BONUS	-1d2	<b>Passions:</b> <i>Help The Poor 90%, Do No Harm 75%</i>
INT	16			<b>Equipment:</b> <i>Doctor's bag, Bicycle</i>
POW	13	POWER PTS	13	
CHA	10	AGE	52	

**Skills:** *Endurance 70%, Evade 50%, First Aid 85%, Influence 70%, Insight 70%, Knowledge (The Soot) 10%, Language (Latin) 70%, Medicine 80%, Native Tongue 75%, Perception 70%, Research 50%, Street-wise 40%, Willpower 60%*

in detail. She has set high standards for herself and takes any failures badly, blaming herself if her patients do not get better.

Dr Stenger has an ordinary face, with long hair worn in a knot. She is of average build. To lessen the distance to her patients, she almost never wears a white coat. Instead, she has long skirts in dark colours and white, high-collared blouses. Outdoors, she puts on a black coat and a black hat, both weatherproof.

Grete Stenger is a skilled physician working in the poor districts of Glimminge. With her inquisitive mind and long experience, she takes on the medical challenges of the homeless, petty thieves and impoverished workers. She delivers babies, performs surgery and keeps an eye on The Soot.

Her examinations are brief but thorough. For returning patients, she has a knack for memorising their ailments

## TORIL NESS

HUMAN		DREAMER		EORTHE
STR	8	ACTION PTS	2	<b>The Soot:</b> 90%
CON	6	HIT POINTS	9	<b>Peculiarities:</b> <i>Fatigue 80%, Always On (Dream Projection)</i>
SIZ	11	ARMOUR	—	<b>Demeanour:</b> <i>Kind, Correct, Tired</i>
DEX	8	DMG BONUS	-1d2	<b>Passions:</b> <i>Cure The Soot 90%, Loyalty (Piper Hall) 75%, Love (Servants) 65%</i>
INT	16			<b>Equipment:</b> —
POW	18	POWER PTS	18	<b>Spells:</b> <i>Dream Projection</i>
CHA	16	AGE	20	

**Skills:** *Astrogation 20%, Courtesy 80%, Dance 50%, Endurance 30%, Evade 30%, Knowledge (The Soot) 10%, Ride 30%, Science (Magic) 80%, Sing 65%, Willpower 50%*

every conceivable cure without success. After a few years, her dreams started to materialise and they grew longer and more vivid over time.

Toril is weak and slender from her illness. She wears a pyjamas, sometimes with a dressing gown over it. Her dark-blond hair is either drawn back in a ponytail or left to fall down on her shoulders.

Toril Ness was born in a wealthy family, residing happily at Piper Hall. Her childhood was as effortless as a spring morning. In her teens, her mother died and her father disappeared on a space journey. Toril remained as the sole heir of Piper Hall.

When The Soot infected her a year later, she decided to downsize the household. The best doctors came to visit but none could offer any help. Toril tried

## MRS META RASMUSSEN

SPECIES: HUMAN		DOORKEEPER	
STR	8	ACTION PTS	2
CON	10	HIT POINTS	10
SIZ	9	ARMOUR	—
DEX	10	DMG BONUS	-1d2
INT	14		
POW	11	POWER PTS	11
CHA	10	AGE	69

**Skills:** *Endurance* 30%, *Evade* 30%, *Insight* 85%, *Local (Haga District)* 65%, *Willpower* 60%

**Passions:** *Respect (Upper Class)* 80%, *Pride In Her Work* 70%, *Dislike (Low-Life)* 60%

**Demeanour:** *Hawk-Eyed, Stern*

**Appearance:** *Wrinkled old lady with a simple dress. Long, dark hair tied up at the back*

## MOSMOS

SPECIES: SUMSUM		PUBLIC RELATIONS	
STR	7	ACTION PTS	2
CON	10	HIT POINTS	9
SIZ	8	ARMOUR	—
DEX	17	DMG BONUS	-1d4
INT	15		
POW	13	POWER PTS	13
CHA	7	AGE	37

**Skills:** *Art (Photography)* 85%, *Courtesy* 90%, *Culture (Human)* 75%, *Endurance* 60%, *Evade* 80%, *Perception* 80%, *Slight* 60%, *Stealth* 70%, *Willpower* 70%

**Equipment:** *Mini-Camera*

**Passions:** *Loyalty (Sumsum)* 90%

**Demeanour:** *Considerate, Subservient, Nosey*

## NIGHTWATCH

SPECIES: HUMAN		NIGHTWATCH	
STR	11	ACTION PTS	2
CON	10	HIT POINTS	12
SIZ	14	ARMOUR	—
DEX	12	DMG BONUS	—
INT	11		
POW	8	POWER PTS	8
CHA	10	AGE	41

**Skills:** *Endurance* 40%, *Evade* 40%, *Willpower* 30%. *Combat Style (Nightwatch, Truncheon)* 35%

**Equipment:** *Truncheon (1d4), Flashlight*

**Passions:** *Fear (The Dark)* 60%

**Demeanour:** *Insecure, Confused*

**Appearance:** *Uniformed middle-aged woman, with pale complexion and a black bob cut. Overweight*

## OSCAR REENBERG

SPECIES: HUMAN		BUREAUCRAT	
STR	8	ACTION PTS	2
CON	12	HIT POINTS	12
SIZ	11	ARMOUR	—
DEX	8	DMG BONUS	-1d2
INT	13		
POW	11	POWER PTS	11
CHA	12	AGE	62

**Skills:** *Bureaucracy* 85%, *Endurance* 40%, *Evade* 30%, *Knowl. (Leadership)* 70%, *Willpower* 40%

**Passions:** *Loyalty (CMA)* 80%, *Do a Good Job* 70%

**Demeanour:** *Polite*

**Appearance:** *Wears a good 3-piece tweed suit, has grey hair and is clean-shaven*



## WILFRITH LANG

SPECIES: HUMAN		PRIEST	
STR	9	ACTION PTS	2
CON	11	HIT POINTS	11
SIZ	11	ARMOUR	—
DEX	10	DMG BONUS	-1d2
INT	15		
POW	14	POWER PTS	14
CHA	12	AGE	39

**Skills:** *Endurance* 40%, *Evade* 30%, *Insight* 55%, *Influence* 75%, *Language (Latin)* 65%, *Musicianship* 60%, *Oratory* 75%, *Sing* 50%, *Willpower* 50%

**Passions:** *Devotion (Krystian God)* 80%, *Loving Care (Toril Ness)* 70%, *Cherish (Parish)* 60%

**Demeanour:** *Kindhearted, Empathic, Apologetic*

**Appearance:** *Normal build, brown hair, black clothes*

## MR BAAGER

SPECIES: HUMAN		BISHOPS' PUB	
STR	7	ACTION PTS	2
CON	10	HIT POINTS	10
SIZ	10	ARMOUR	—
DEX	11	DMG BONUS	-1d2
INT	13		
POW	11	POWER PTS	11
CHA	13	AGE	67

**Skills:** *Endurance* 60%, *Evade* 40%, *Knowledge (Bird Watching)* 70%, *Willpower* 60%

**Passions:** *Love (Mrs Baager)* 80%, *Loyalty (His Pub)* 70%, *Pride (Drangelbekk)* 60%

**Demeanour:** *Kind, Good Listener*

**Appearance:** *A slim old man with white hair covered by a cap, and casual work-wear in blue and grey*

## PEDER FRANK

SPECIES: HUMAN		CONQUEROR INN	
STR	13	ACTION PTS	2
CON	7	HIT POINTS	10
SIZ	13	ARMOUR	—
DEX	9	DMG BONUS	+1d2
INT	10		
POW	8	POWER PTS	8
CHA	10	AGE	47

**Skills:** *Brawn* 55%, *Endurance* 40%, *Evade* 30%, *Willpower* 40%. *Combat Style (Knife, Unarmed)* 65%

**Passions:** *Loyalty (His Business)* 50%, *Jealousy (Black Swan)* 70%, *Hate (His Job)* 80%

**Demeanour:** *Rough, Bitter*

**Appearance:** *A slightly overweight man, red faced and bald, wearing dark trousers and a plaid shirt*

## MRS BAAGER

SPECIES: HUMAN		BISHOPS' PUB	
STR	9	ACTION PTS	2
CON	12	HIT POINTS	11
SIZ	9	ARMOUR	—
DEX	8	DMG BONUS	-1d2
INT	13		
POW	11	POWER PTS	11
CHA	14	AGE	66

**Skills:** *Craft (Cooking)* 70%, *Endurance* 50%, *Evade* 35%, *Willpower* 60%

**Passions:** *Love (Mr Baager)* 80%, *Loyalty (Her Pub)* 70%, *Pride (Drangelbekk)* 60%

**Demeanour:** *Kind, Good Listener*

**Appearance:** *Small old woman, grey hair, dressed like a farmer's wife in subdued colours*

## TORGER THOR

SPECIES: HUMAN		SMITHY	
STR	13	ACTION PTS	2
CON	11	HIT POINTS	11
SIZ	11	ARMOUR	—
DEX	15	DMG BONUS	—
INT	11		
POW	9	POWER PTS	9
CHA	9	AGE	53

**Skills:** *Brawn* 50%, *Electronics* 35%, *Endurance* 40%, *Evade* 30%, *Mechanics* 85%, *Willpower* 50%

**Passions:** *Everything can be Repaired* 80%, *Love (His Son)* 70%, *Cherish (Old Gear)* 60%

**Demeanour:** *Silent*

**Appearance:** *Normal build, blonde hair & blue eyes, oil-stained work-wear*

## KARL POULSEN

SPECIES: HUMAN		BUTLER	
STR	9	ACTION PTS	2
CON	10	HIT POINTS	11
SIZ	12	ARMOUR	—
DEX	9	DMG BONUS	—
INT	15		
POW	11	POWER PTS	11
CHA	13	AGE	71

**Skills:** *Courtesy* 90%, *Endurance* 60%, *Evade* 30%, *Willpower* 70%

**Passions:** *Loving Care (Toril Ness)* 90%, *Loyalty (Piper Hall)* 70%, *Pride in His Work* 60%

**Demeanour:** *Polite*

**Appearance:** *Slim old man in a black suit, wearing steel-rimmed glasses*

## MAIA VOLLAN

SPECIES: HUMAN		GENERAL STORE	
STR	7	ACTION PTS	2
CON	10	HIT POINTS	11
SIZ	11	ARMOUR	—
DEX	11	DMG BONUS	-1d2
INT	10		
POW	7	POWER PTS	7
CHA	12	AGE	36

**Skills:** *Commerce* 70%, *Endurance* 40%, *Evade* 30%, *Willpower* 40%

**Passions:** *Loyalty (Her Business)* 50%

**Demeanour:** *Bland, Distant*

**Appearance:** *A 30-something woman in practical clothes, slim face and curly, white hair*

## MRS SIGRUN HANSEN

SPECIES: HUMAN		POOR'S COTTAGE	
STR	7	ACTION PTS	2
CON	7	HIT POINTS	11
SIZ	9	ARMOUR	—
DEX	8	DMG BONUS	-1d2
INT	13		
POW	11	POWER PTS	11
CHA	12	AGE	71

**Skills:** *Craft (Farming)* 75%, *Endurance* 30%, *Evade* 30%, *Willpower* 50%

**Passions:** *Help the Poor* 80%

**Demeanour:** *Kind, Good Listener*

**Appearance:** *A small woman, worn by a long, hard life. Wears grey and brown farmer's clothes*

### *Dream Projector*

Power Points: 5

Complexity: 10

Area: 2x2m

Duration: 1 Minute

*This spell projects the dreams of the caster onto the area around them, mixing the two together seamlessly. The dreams take on a semi-physical presence, making physical interaction between the real world and a dream possible. The efficiency of tools and weapons are halved, as the two worlds appear to be separated by a tiny, imperceptible distance. In general, large forces transfer quite well, while delicate movements or small objects have less of an impact. For example, a charging rhino would affect a character but the sting of a midget would not. The area affected and the duration can be increased by spending additional Power Points.*

## Spells

The following spells appear in the scenario. No written accounts of the spells can be found in the scenario, which means the PCs have no way of learning them. That might of course change in a later scenario.

### **Create Portal**

Power Points: 10

Complexity: 20

Range: 10m

Duration: 1 Round

With this spell, along with custom machinery, the caster can create a portal to a place known to them. By spending an additional 5 Power Points, the machine can be moved when the spell has been cast, leaving the portal intact. Such a portal is invisible and can only be detected with a *Hard* Perception roll or the spell Detect Magic.

### **Illusion**

Power Points: 1

Complexity: 2

Range: 10m

Duration: 1 Minute

By re-weaving the space-time continuum, the caster can create illusions for any of the senses. It can, for example, be an object, person, voice or a stench, appearing as real. In the basic version, it only affects one of the senses: sight, sound, taste and smell. For every sense added, the cost increases by 1 Power Point. The illusion is static – a dynamic (animated) illusion costs 2 Power Points. Touch is not possible to mimic, however.

### **Stupor**

Power Points: 5

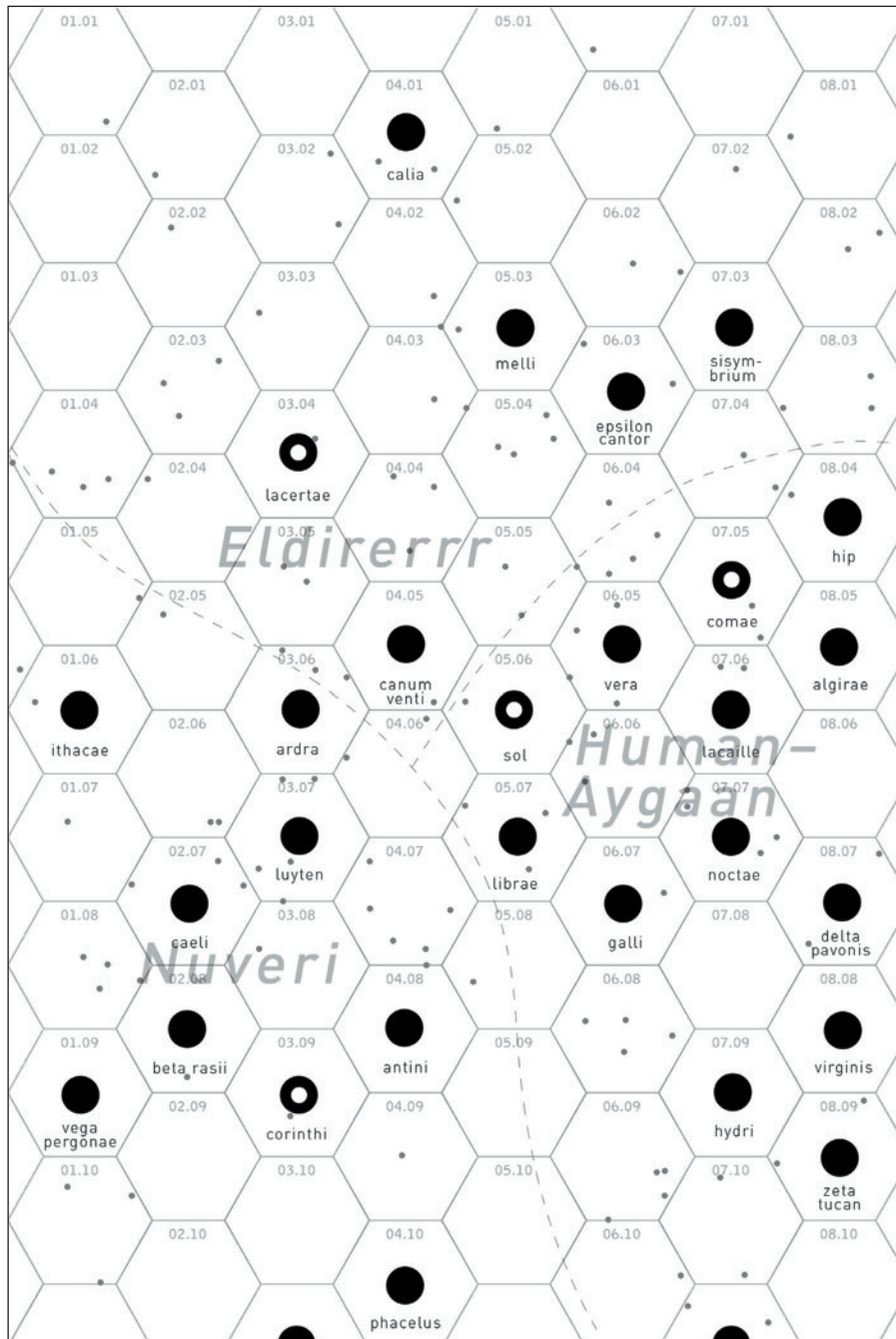
Complexity: 10

Range: Touch

Duration: 1d4 Hours

Along with a potion, this spell puts the target in a mindless state for 1d4 hours. When the spell is cast on a victim that has consumed the potion, the target loses all will and terminates all actions. Any commands by the caster must be obeyed. To resist, an affected target have to succeed with a *Herculean* Willpower roll.

The potion takes one day to mix, containing rare ingredients that require either specialised manufacturers. It is activated by successfully casting the spell on the finished potion. If this spell roll fails, a new potion have to be made.



### Comae Space Map

This map of Comae Space is intended for the Game Master. The map at the front of the book (page 8), on the other hand, can be found in any Eorthe library or book on astronomy. It is meant for the players.

The map is based on the Catalog of Nearby Habitable Systems (HabCat).

## Acknowledgements

I want to thank Matthew Eager, Thomas Varga and Joakim Waern for invaluable feedback during the writing of the book. I also want to thank Pete Nash and Lawrence Whitaker for letting me use Mythras Imperative.

I'm in great debt to the talented draughtsmen of past centuries, whose images of flora and fauna I have borrowed from to create my alien life-forms. These are some of the works I have used:

*Termini botanici iconibus illustrati*, Bey W. Öhmigke dem Jüngern

*Curtis's Botanical Magazine*

*Genera quædam insectorum. Iconibus illustravit et descripsit*, Hermannus Burmeister

*The Cephalopoda. Atlas*, Carl Chun

*The Free-Living Unarmored Dinoflagellata*, Charles Atwood Kofoid & Olive Swezy

*Zoologia Danica*

*Die acraspeden Medusen der deutschen Tiefsee-Expedition 1898-1899*

I dedicate this book to Olle and Katarina. Without their help and encouragement, Comae Space would have remained a daydream.



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# 088 Soot

Name .....	<b>STR</b> .....	.....	The Soot
.....	<b>CON</b> .....	.....	.....
Player .....	<b>SIZ</b> .....	.....	Peculiarities
.....	<b>DEX</b> .....	.....	.....
Culture .....	<b>INT</b> .....	.....	.....
.....	<b>POW</b> .....	.....	.....
Career .....	<b>CHA</b> .....	.....	Luck Points

Standard	%	Professional	%	Professional	%
Athletics <small>STR+DEX</small>	.....	Acting <small>CHA x2</small>	.....	Lockpicking <small>DEX x2</small>	.....
Boating <small>STR-CON</small>	.....	Acrobatics <small>STR+DEX</small>	.....	Mechanics <small>DEX+INT</small>	.....
Brawn <small>STR+SIZ</small>	.....	Art <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....	Medicine <small>INT+POW</small>	.....
Conceal <small>DEX+POW</small>	.....	Astrogation <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Musicianship <small>DEX+CHA</small>	.....
Customs <small>INT x2 +40</small>	.....	Bureaucracy <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Navigation <small>INT+POW</small>	.....
Dance <small>DEX-CHA</small>	.....	Commerce <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....	Oratory <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....
Deceit <small>INT-CHA</small>	.....	Comms <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Pilot <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....
Drive <small>DEX+POW</small>	.....	Courtesy <small>INT-CHA</small>	.....	Politics <small>INT-CHA</small>	.....
Endurance <small>CON x2</small>	.....	Craft <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....	Research <small>INT+POW</small>	.....
Evade <small>DEX x2</small>	.....	Culture <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Science <small>INT x2</small>	.....
First Aid <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....	<i>Luminarian</i> .....	.....	<i>Magic</i> .....	.....
Influence <small>CHA x2</small>	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Insight <small>INT+POW</small>	.....	Demolitions <small>INT+POW</small>	.....	.....	.....
Locale <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Difference Engines <small>INT x2</small>	.....	.....	.....
Native Tongue <small>INT-CHA+40</small>	.....	Disguise <small>INT-CHA</small>	.....	Seamanship <small>INT+CON</small>	.....
Perception <small>INT+POW</small>	.....	Electronics <small>DEX+INT</small>	.....	Seduction <small>INT+CHA</small>	.....
Ride <small>DEX+POW</small>	.....	Engineering <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Sensors <small>INT+POW</small>	.....
Sing <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....	Forgery <small>DEX+INT</small>	.....	Sleight <small>DEX-CHA</small>	.....
Stealth <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....	Gambling <small>INT+POW</small>	.....	Streetwise <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....
Swim <small>STR+CON</small>	.....	Knowledge <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Survival <small>CON+POW</small>	.....
Willpower <small>POW x2</small>	.....	.....	.....	Teach <small>INT+CHA</small>	.....
.....	.....	Language <small>INT+CHA</small>	.....	Track <small>INT+CON</small>	.....
.....	.....	<i>Menaryan</i> .....	.....	Vacc Suit <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	Zero G <small>DEX x2</small>	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

# 088 Soot

**Combat Style** STR+DEX

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Action Points .....

Damage Modifier.....

Healing Rate .....

Initiative.....

Movement.....

Unarmed STR+DEX.....

**Locations**

**Hit Points**

01-03 R Leg .....

04-06 L Leg .....

07-09 Abd .....

10-12 Chest .....

13-15 R Arm .....

16-18 L Arm .....

19-20 Head.....

Power Points .....

<b>Circles</b>	<b>Passions</b>	<b>Magic</b>
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**Equipment** .....

**Wealth** .....

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Homeworld.....

Age .....

Exp Modifier .....



# 088 Soot

Name .....	<b>STR</b> .....	.....	The Soot
.....	<b>CON</b> .....	.....	.....
Player .....	<b>SIZ</b> .....	.....	Peculiarities
.....	<b>DEX</b> .....	.....	.....
Culture .....	<b>INT</b> .....	.....	.....
.....	<b>POW</b> .....	.....	.....
Career .....	<b>CHA</b> .....	.....	Luck Points

Standard	%	Professional	%	Professional	%
Athletics <small>STR+DEX</small>	.....	Acting <small>CHA x2</small>	.....	Lockpicking <small>DEX x2</small>	.....
Boating <small>STR-CON</small>	.....	Acrobatics <small>STR+DEX</small>	.....	Mechanics <small>DEX+INT</small>	.....
Brawn <small>STR+SIZ</small>	.....	Art <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....	Medicine <small>INT+POW</small>	.....
Conceal <small>DEX+POW</small>	.....	Astrogation <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Musicianship <small>DEX+CHA</small>	.....
Customs <small>INT x2 +40</small>	.....	Bureaucracy <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Navigation <small>INT+POW</small>	.....
Dance <small>DEX-CHA</small>	.....	Commerce <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....	Oratory <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....
Deceit <small>INT-CHA</small>	.....	Comms <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Pilot <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....
Drive <small>DEX+POW</small>	.....	Courtesy <small>INT-CHA</small>	.....	Politics <small>INT-CHA</small>	.....
Endurance <small>CON x2</small>	.....	Craft <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....	Research <small>INT+POW</small>	.....
Evade <small>DEX x2</small>	.....	Culture <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Science <small>INT x2</small>	.....
First Aid <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....	<i>Luminarian</i> .....	.....	<i>Magic</i> .....	.....
Influence <small>CHA x2</small>	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Insight <small>INT+POW</small>	.....	Demolitions <small>INT+POW</small>	.....	.....	.....
Locale <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Difference Engines <small>INT x2</small>	.....	.....	.....
Native Tongue <small>INT-CHA+40</small>	.....	Disguise <small>INT-CHA</small>	.....	Seamanship <small>INT+CON</small>	.....
Perception <small>INT+POW</small>	.....	Electronics <small>DEX+INT</small>	.....	Seduction <small>INT+CHA</small>	.....
Ride <small>DEX+POW</small>	.....	Engineering <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Sensors <small>INT+POW</small>	.....
Sing <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....	Forgery <small>DEX+INT</small>	.....	Sleight <small>DEX-CHA</small>	.....
Stealth <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....	Gambling <small>INT+POW</small>	.....	Streetwise <small>POW+CHA</small>	.....
Swim <small>STR+CON</small>	.....	Knowledge <small>INT x2</small>	.....	Survival <small>CON+POW</small>	.....
Willpower <small>POW x2</small>	.....	.....	.....	Teach <small>INT+CHA</small>	.....
.....	.....	Language <small>INT+CHA</small>	.....	Track <small>INT+CON</small>	.....
.....	.....	<i>Menaryan</i> .....	.....	Vacc Suit <small>DEX-INT</small>	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	Zero G <small>DEX x2</small>	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

# o88 Soot

**Combat Style**<sup>STR+DEX</sup>

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**Hit Points** .....

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**Power Points** .....

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**Action Points** .....**Initiative** .....**Homeworld** .....**Damage Modifier** .....**Movement** .....**Age** .....**Healing Rate** .....**Unarmed**<sup>STR+DEX</sup> .....**Exp Modifier** .....

Circles	Passions	Magic
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**Equipment** .....

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**Wealth** .....

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