

HϕGHSCVM

THE CϕTY OF BLOOD

Ka'Scalia is the seat of the Empire of the Seas: Wealth flows in with the waves and clots there, dragging the all of sapience's vice and avarice with it. In whispered corners, men without faces hire men and women without names for all sorts. Need a killing done? Need something stolen from a political opponent of yours? Need someone followed for a day or week? Find the right tavern, one with dark corners and silent patrons.

Ka'Scalia is not merely a Port City. It is *the* Port City, the one which all others pale in comparison towards. Built on a hilly Peninsular, Ka'Scalia covers Senate Hill, Old Hill, New Hill and the Docklands, as well as the Labyrinthine tunnels beneath it all. The shattered hulk of First Hill sits for all to see, just to the west of the city walls. There is a reason why there are no Slaves in Ka'Scalia anymore.

In dark alleyways and in the tunnels under the hills, in Merchant warehouses and Patrician's Estates, men and women of all stripes clash with feathered elves and scaled orcs. Frog-skinned goblins revel in their new found freedom, bitter dwarves determine to best them, spiderhaired Smallfolk take to the shadows as if bred there. Mages douse their lips in blood and slash their palms, twisting the blood with mouth and mind into fire and ice, rock and wind.

These are the *Highscum*, pawns and rooks, ravens and crows, kings in their own minds. They'll risk life and limb, but woe betide the man who cannot afford to pay.

CHARACTER CREATION

WHO YOU ARE

Flesh out your *Highscum* a little. Alias, gender and race would be a good start. What colour are their eyes? Hair, feathers or scales? How did they get into their current... line of work?

WHAT YOU ARE

Now, the nitty-gritty. Your *Highscum* needs some *Traits*. Four, to be precise. *Traits* are what raise your *Highscum* above the humdrum swell of sapience. Each *Trait* is a description of itself rather than a singular word or statement. For example, let's say you want your *Highscum* to be good at sneaking around. You wouldn't just write 'sneaky.' That would be *dull*. No, you'd write:

Takes to Shadows and Crowds as a fish to water.

Much better. Now write down another three.

WHAT YOU HAVE

A Craftsman is nothing without his tools. Traits in hand, your *Highscum* has some choice pieces of *Gear* to acquire. *Gear* can be just about anything: Clothing to armour to slings to Pikes to a set of lockpicks. Carrying on our 'Sneaky' theme from above, we'll take some climbing equipment. Of course, we're not writing down 'Climbing Equipment'. We'll choose:

A worn grappling hook and rope, metal dulled for darkness, rope oiled for silence.

And note down another two pieces of *Gear*. You can of course pick up more gear as you come across it.

WHO YOU KNOW

Sapientes are Social Creatures, and you can't survive in Ka'Scalia alone. Note down the basic characteristics (age, race, name etc.) and role (Merchant, Brothel keeper, Arkon etc.) of two *Contacts*. Whilst they provide no direct mechanical benefit, your *Highscum* may, should they risk it, use their *Contacts* to aid themselves: Whether this be providing information, equipment, Arkane knowledge or anything else they could reasonably be expected to provide. However, the Game Master ultimately, has control over their actions, and thus the final say in what they will or will not do.

THE GAME

You're a *Highscum*. You'll be hired for a job. The employer doesn't matter. Do it and you'll get paid. Don't do it, and you'll *get dead*, because you'll have died trying.

You could be hired for anything, by anyone. Be prepared.

THE SYSTEM

CORE DICE

At the start of a job, count the number of *Traits* your *Highscum* has. If that number is four or fewer, grab that number of dice. (Arkane Training isn't counted!) If you've got more than four, grab an additional die for every two *Traits* after the fourth one. (Eg: Five/Six *Traits* = five dice, Seven/Eight *Traits* = Six Dice etc.).

These are your *Core Dice*. The number of them you have available to use can go down over the course of a job, but it cannot normally fall beneath one, or rise above your maximum as calculated above.

TESTS

When you're attempting to do something with a reasonable chance of failure, announce what you're trying to do and to what you're trying to do it to. (Eg: 'I want to Climb this wall' or 'I want to kill him' or 'I Want to Sneak past this guard'. Anything,

really, although 'I want to complete the Job' and the like are cheating.)

DOING TESTS

Regular or opposed, all *Tests* start the same. First, describe what you're trying to do and to what. (As recounted to the left.)

Then, grab your *Core Dice*, and put them in front of you, in your newly-formed *Pile*. (Your *Pile* is, literally, all the dice you've got piled in front of you that you can use for *Tests*.)

Look at your *Traits*. If you've got at least one helpful *Trait* (Eg: Something that boils down to 'Silver Tongue' if you're trying to talk your way past a problem) grab two dice. For every other helpful *Trait*, grab one additional die. (Eg: 2 helpful *Traits* = 3 additional dice.) Add them to your *Pile*.

Look at your *Gear*. If you've got at least one useful piece of *Gear* (Eg: a good sword if you're trying to kill someone) grab two dice. For every other piece of useful *Gear*, grab an additional die. (Eg: 3 useful pieces of *Gear* = 4 additional dice.) Add these dice to your *Pile*.

The Game Master will announce whether you're doing a *Test* or an *Opposed Test*.

WHICH TESTS WHICH?

A *Regular Test* is called for when you're up against an inanimate object or something animate but unaware of your presence.

An *Opposed Test* is used when you're up against something animate and aware of you.

Example: Sneaking up on an unaware guard would be a *Regular Test*. Trying to kill him after you have successfully snuck up on him would also be a *Regular Test*.

However, trying to kill him in a duel or trying to evade capture after he's spotted you would both be *Opposed Tests*.

REGULAR TESTS

First, build your *Pile* as described above. Then roll all the dice in your *Pile*. You're looking for **fives and sixes**. These are termed *Hits*. In order to succeed, you'll need at least a certain number of *Hits*.

If you've got enough *Hits*, the Game Master will ask you to describe how you do what you set out to do. Give it some Flair!

If you didn't get enough *Hits*, the Game Master will describe what you did (or more likely didn't) do. If you got no *Hits* at all, reduce the number of *Core Dice* you have in your *Pile* by one, to a minimum of one. The Game Master Describes what happened to you.

OPPOSED TESTS

First, build your *Pile* as for *Regular Tests*, announcing what you wish to do. Your opponent does the same.

Then, both people take all the dice in their *Piles* and roll them. Each person then divvies up their dice into three stacks: **Ones** and **Twos** go in the first, **Threes** and **Fours** in the second and **Hits** (**Fives** and **Sixes**) in the third.

The **Ones** and **Twos** are *Burnt*: They are set aside and removed from the *Pile*.

The **Threes** and **Fours** are *Blanks*: They are returned to the owner's *Pile*, ready to be used again.

The **Fives** and **Sixes** are *Hits*, as seen above in *Tests*. Compare the number of *Hits* each person rolled. If the numbers are equal, return the *Hits* to their owners' *Piles* (along with the *Blanks*) and roll another *Opposed Test* with each person's remaining dice. (Eg: Each Person's *Blanks* and *Hits*.)

Eventually, someone will end up with a higher number of *Hits* than their opponent. When that happens, the person with the smaller number of *Hits* begins to *Bleed* (See below) until they roll one *Hit*.

ΕΠΙΦΙΓ ΟΠΠΟΣΕD ΤΕΣΤS

Opposed Tests come to their end when someone has no more dice to roll. This person has lost the *Test*. Their victorious opponent describes how they carry out what they were setting out to do at the beginning of the *Opposed Test*, hopefully with some flair. The loser (supposing they are still alive) recovers their *Core Dice*, minus one die to a minimum of one *Core Die*. The victor (and really, they should be alive) may gain an additional *Core Die* up towards their maximum if the GM wills it.

BLEED

Someone undergoing *Bleed* takes a die from their *Pile* and rolls it. If they rolled a **One**, **Two**, **Three** or **Four**, they discard the die as if it were *Burnt*, and then repeat the *Bleed* with another die that remains in their *Pile*.

If they roll a *Hit* (**Five** or **Six**), they do not discard the die they just rolled. They instead add it back into their *Pile* then repeat the *Bleed* with a different die in their *Pile*.

ΑΦD ΩΤΗΕR

Someone not undertaking either kind of *Test* may add dice to the *Pile* of someone else undertaking a test, upon describing how they are in fact aiding the other. They may add one die for every Useful *Trait* and one die for every Useful piece of *Gear*. (Useful defined by what the person can justify as helpful.)

ΑRΚΑΠΙΑ

Ka'Scalia was built on the Arkane, and the Arkane is built on Blood. Ka'Scalia's walls are single shining forms of Stone, built from the lifeblood of thousands of slaves. Ka'Scalia's ships need not heed storms, when their own wind is but a pint of a Slave's blood away. Of course, there are no slaves anymore. Officially.

All Arkane manipulations are powered with the blood of sapient creatures, and it takes the form of the four Classical Elements: Fire, Earth (including stone) Air and Water (including Ice.) It takes no other forms.

Anyone can do attempt to manipulate the Arkane. It certainly wouldn't be a good idea for most people to try, however.

ΑRΚΟΠIS

An Arkon is someone properly trained and equipped for the manipulating the Arkane.

ΒΕΣCΟΜΦΙΓ ΑΠ ΑRΚΟΠ

At Character Creation (and Character Creation is the only time you can become one), use one of your *Traits* to describe how you got your Arkane training. This could be anything from being a Noble Scion to being part of a cult to being a *Highscum*'s child.

However, the proper training takes a lot of time, leaving less time for other things, and so The Arkane Training *Trait* does not count as a *Trait* for *Core Dice* (Eg: Start with 3 *Core Dice* at Character Creation.)

ΑRΚΑΠΕ ΓΕΑR

An Arkane Kit is also part of the Arkon package, and counts as one of your three starting pieces of *Gear*. A Casting Kit consists of a Bloodbelt, four Fetishes and a Casting Dagger.

The Bloodbelt is a long, single, still living length of the purple plant Bloodvine, twisted and woven into a rough belt-like strap, worn on the hips. Bloodvine is known for its purple-red sap, which can function as blood for Akane purposes, allowing mages to cast without using much of their own (or someone else's) blood.

They are speculated to be sapient.

Fetishes are special objects Arkons use to aid their manipulation of the Akane. Fetishes are personal to each Mage, and are commonly worn hanging off the Mage's Bloodbelt. A Casting Kit contains four Fetishes: One for Fire, one for Earth, One for Air and One for Water. They are not used up when attempting to cast.

The casting dagger is a small weapon designed for opening shallow wounds in the palm and in Bloodvine. It is useless as a weapon.

ΜΑΠΦVΛΑΤΦΟΠIS

Without risking significant blood loss, Arkons are able to form and manipulate small fireballs, create waist high rough, thin rocks barriers, very briefly bring forth a gale or sustain a breeze for a minute or two, summon icicles from the moisture in the air around them. Of course, extra blood can be drawn from a living, sapient thing, willing or not...

ΜΑΠΦVΛΑΤΦΠG

The Arkon describes what they wish to cast, and why. The Game Master informs the Arkon how many *Hits* they will need to cast. The Arkon then attempts the cast.

If an Arkon casts using an Arkane's Kit, they take three dice and roll them, noting the number of *Hits* they get. If they did not get the number of *Hits* required for casting, they *Bleed* for their *Core Dice* until they either gain the required number of *Hits* or run out of *Core Dice*.

If they gain the required number of *Hits*, they describe what they have cast and it's effects, with a Game Master veto.

If they gain at least one *Hit*, but not enough for a proper cast, the Game Master describes what happens, unless they attempt to use another's blood to bolster the number of *Hits* they get (Game Master rules on what happens.)

If they gain no *Hits* at all, they reduce their *Core Dice* by one, to a minimum of one *Core Die*. The cast fails.

If the Arkon does not have a Casting Kit, the cast is more difficult, and they *Bleed* immediately from their *Core Dice*.

If someone without Arkane training attempts to cast a spell, they may not use any aspect of a Casting Kit, even if they have access to one. They *Bleed* immediately from their *Core Dice*, only counting **Sixes** as *Hits*. They may only ever use their own blood. Their manipulations are crude, feeble and weakly controlled if at all, and as such the GM always describes the result. They find the process significantly more difficult, and are not informed of how many *Hits* they need to properly cast.

SVRΦVΣD?

If you've done your job and (hopefully) got paid, restore your *Core Dice* to your maximum. If you got paid, acquire a new piece of *Gear*. If the GM wills it, you may add a new *Trait* and recalculate your *Core Dice* if applicable.

ΠPC SVGGΣTΦΠS

Mook: 1 Core Die/Trait/2 pieces Gear
Regular: 2 Core Dice/Traits/2 pieces Gear
Sergeant: 3 Core Dice/Traits/3 pieces Gear
Miniboss: 4 Core Dice/Traits/3 Pieces Gear
Boss: 5 Core Dice/Traits/4 pieces Gear/Hat

ΠΑΜΣ:

ΡΑCS

ΓΣΠΔΣR

ΔΓΣ

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:

**MAX CORE
DICE**

TRAITS:

≈

**CURRENT
CORE DICE**

≈

≈

≈

≈

ΓΣΛR:

≈

CALCULATING CORE DICE

Φ TO ΦV TRAITS
Number of Traits = Number of Core Dice.

V+ TRAITS
For every two Traits above four, add one additional Core Die.

ARKONS
Arkons do not include their Arkane Training Trait for purposes of calculating their Core Dice.

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CONTACTS:

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