



WICKED FANTASY

Written by John Wick

Designed by Gillian Fraser

Written by John Wick

Designed by Gillian Fraser

Based on Articles by Jesse Heinig and John Wick

Produced by Mark Diaz Truman

Art by Mauro Mussi

Graphic Design and Cover by Jessica Kauspedas

Edited by Ginger Erdman, Jessica Kauspedas and John Wick

Special Thanks to Wolfgang Bauer, Jesse Heinig and Sean K. Reynolds

Copyright

ISBN

Work of Fiction, etc.



To Dave Arneson

The unsung, Secret Master of Gaming.

I'm singing his song.

contents

Introduction	1
Humans: The Reign of Men	3
The Elevation of Men.....	4
Universities.....	4
Human Pride.....	5
A Human's Life.....	5
Youth.....	5
Adulthood.....	5
Old Age.....	6
The Senate.....	6
The Army of the Republic.....	6
Calendar.....	7
Economy.....	7
The Guilds.....	8
City-States.....	8
The Governor.....	8
The Captain of the Watch.....	9
Alderman.....	9
Barrio Councils.....	9
The Cities.....	10
The City of Nevarnare.....	10
The City of Ajun.....	10
The City of Ashcolmb.....	10
The City of Shavay.....	11
The City of Tomkin.....	11
The City of Vanta.....	12
The City of Tamerclimb.....	12
The City of Vinnick.....	13
The City of Millford.....	13
The City of Jinix.....	14
The Noble Class.....	14
Baron.....	14
Count.....	15
Duke.....	15
The King of Men.....	17
A Noble's Courage.....	17
The Law of the Reign.....	18
Crimes against the City.....	18
Crimes against the Reign.....	19
Fines.....	19
Crimes.....	19
Punishments.....	20
Bounty Hunters.....	21
The Order of Palatines.....	22
Fast Path Palatines.....	23
The Shadow Hand.....	23
Playing the Shadow Hand.....	24
The Mystery Cult of the Makers.....	24
Hierarchy.....	25
The First Mystery: Making the World.....	26
Teachings.....	27
Human Racial Traits.....	27
Languages and Dialects.....	28
New Feats.....	29
Human Knowledge Feats.....	29
Human Teamwork Feats.....	29
Human Rally Feats.....	29
Extended Rally.....	29
Human Hometown Feats.....	31
New Cleric Archetype: Philosopher.....	31

<i>Class Skills</i>	31
<i>Class Features</i>	31
<i>Humanity Domain</i>	31
<i>Philosophy Domain</i>	32
New Paladin Archetype: Palatine	32
<i>Class Skills</i>	32
<i>Class Features</i>	32
New Inquisitor Archetype: The Shadow Hand	34

<i>Class Skills</i>	34
<i>Class Features</i>	34
New Oracle Mystery: The Makers	34
<i>Class Skills</i>	35
<i>Class Features</i>	35
Approved Classes	36
Loyalty	38

Haffuns: Seeming Servants 47

Little Servants.....	47
Talda: Haffun Seeming.....	48
A People of Secrets.....	48
Taunken: The Secret Language of Haffuns.....	49
Tura: The Servant.....	49
Tatura: The Butler.....	50
<i>Ishu: Butler Marks</i>	52
<i>The Traveling Butler</i>	52
The Oath of Secrecy.....	52
Ranfa: Haffun Ghosts.....	53
<i>Shutha: Spectres</i>	53
<i>Jorsha: Ghost Speakers</i>	54
Yffur: Homeless Haffuns.....	55
Stand Tall: The Hobyn Movement.....	55
Wipla: The Wild Ones.....	56

Ghuva: The Giving Curse.....	56
Haffun Racial Traits.....	57
Haffun Family.....	57
<i>Haffun Family</i>	58
<i>Haffun Talda Feats</i>	59
<i>Family Feats</i>	60
<i>Ghuva</i>	60
New Cleric Archetype: Jorsha	61
<i>Class Skills</i>	61
<i>Class Features</i>	61
New Class: Butler	61
<i>Class Skills</i>	62
<i>Class Features</i>	62
Approved Classes	67
A Little Chat	69

Orks: Children of Pain 75

The Halls of Ghusha.....	75
Ghavah: Cursed by the Blood for Greatness.....	76
Gahthrak: The Warlord.....	77
Fala: The Voice & Memory.....	77
Feth'ork.....	77
Freedom & Rage.....	78

Shash: The Shadow that Follows You.....	78
Shathula: The Cult of Pain.....	78
Va: Scars of Honor.....	79
Thunda.....	80
Six Tribes.....	81
<i>The Big Walk</i>	81

<i>Economy</i>	81	<i>Ork Racial Traits</i>	85
<i>Heredity</i>	82	<i>Languages and Dialects</i>	86
<i>Banners</i>	82	<i>Feth'ork Blooding</i>	86
<i>Ughash: Wandering Orks</i>	82	Ork Masochistic Feats	87
<i>The Shield Breakers (Strength)</i>	82	Ork Shash Feats	88
<i>The Ush ("Iron Benders") (Intelligence)</i>	82	Scars	89
<i>The Keepers of Secrets (Wisdom)</i>	83	New Oracle Mystery: Blood	89
<i>The Guile of Khusmet (Charisma)</i>	83	<i>Revelations</i>	89
<i>Khav'u's Children (Constitution)</i>	83	<i>Final Revelation</i>	91
<i>The Shadow Steppers (Dexterity)</i>	84	Barbarian Archetype: Gahthrak	91
An Ork's Life	84	<i>Class Features</i>	91
<i>Youth</i>	84	Bard Archetype: Ork Fala	92
<i>Adulthood</i>	84	<i>Class Features</i>	92
<i>Old Age</i>	85	Approved Classes	93
A Cold Peace	85	Mishin	95

Elves: The Guardians of the Wood 103

Protectors of the Aelenderon	104	The Heart Bound (One Last Thing) ...	113
An Elf's Life	104	Elf Racial Traits	113
<i>Youth</i>	104	<i>Cyffathellean – Tree Bound</i>	114
<i>Adulthood</i>	106	<i>Cyllabellan – Soil Bound</i>	114
<i>Old Age</i>	107	<i>Cwthellean – Iron Bound</i>	115
The Hierarchy of Trees	107	<i>Dzunkaveth – Half-Elf</i>	115
<i>Titles</i>	107	Ffhrad: Favors	115
<i>Distinctions & Favors</i>	108	Durzah's Redemption	115
<i>Exiles, Orphans & Bastards</i>	108	Elf Feats	116
Dzunkaveth: Half-Elves	109	<i>Human Raised</i>	116
Iron	109	<i>Thick Skin</i>	116
<i>The Effect of Iron</i>	110	<i>Great Tree Weapon</i>	116
<i>Iron Laws</i>	110	<i>Fool's Luck</i>	116
<i>The Life of a Slave</i>	110	<i>Lucky Fool</i>	116
<i>Iron Biters</i>	111	Mistletoe Feats	117
Durzah: Dark Elves	111	<i>Mistletoe</i>	117
<i>Whisper of the Darkness</i>	111	<i>Oak's Mistletoe</i>	117
<i>Priests and Guardians</i>	112	<i>Birch's Mistletoe</i>	117

<i>Elm's Mistletoe</i>	117	New Witch Archetype: Vezhma	121
<i>Ash's Mistletoe</i>	117	<i>Racial Features</i>	121
<i>Blackthorn's Mistletoe</i>	117	<i>Class Features</i>	122
New Druid Archetype: Cyllawellan . . .	117	New Prestige Class: Heart-Bound Elf .	122
<i>Class Features</i>	117	<i>Requirements</i>	122
New Summoner Archetype: Oghzhan .	119	<i>Racial Traits</i>	122
<i>Racial Features</i>	119	<i>Class Skills</i>	123
<i>Class Features</i>	119	<i>Class Features</i>	123
New Sorcerer Archetype:		The Elven Language	124
Szhaszh	120	Approved Classes	125
<i>Racial Features</i>	120	Her Name is a Song Your Vulgar Lips Could	
<i>Class Features</i>	121	Never Sing	127

Dach'youn: For the Pack. 133

Basics	133	<i>Owoun: The Moonsinger</i>	141
A Dach'youn's Life	135	<i>Shu'sha: The Hunter</i>	141
<i>Youth</i>	135	<i>Oosheb: The Little Voice</i>	141
<i>Adulthood</i>	136	<i>Grr'khun: The Talon</i>	142
<i>Old Age</i>	137	<i>Pack Conflict</i>	142
Kachta: The Six Sisters	137	<i>Ka'cha: The Duel</i>	143
<i>Dach'youn Astrology</i>	138	And, Finally... Mud	143
<i>Cha'ppa: The Swift Red Moon</i>	138	Dach'youn Racial Traits	143
<i>Hav'ha: The Deadly Silver Moon</i>	138	Moon Sign	144
<i>Gu'sha: The Wise Blue Moon</i>	138	<i>Cha'ppa</i>	144
<i>Gur'gha: The Enduring Green Moon</i>	138	<i>Gu'rgba</i>	144
<i>Or'gha: The Cunning Yellow Moon</i>	138	<i>Gu'sha</i>	144
<i>Sh'va: The Lovely Violet Moon</i>	139	<i>Hav'ha</i>	144
<i>Vax: The Black Moon</i>	139	<i>Or'gha</i>	144
<i>The Khu'chala: The Moon Dance</i>	139	<i>Sh'va</i>	145
The Scavenger Ethic	139	<i>Vax</i>	145
Too'cha: The Pack	140	Pack Rules	145
<i>Bach: The Alpha</i>	140	New Rogue Archetype: Eecha	145
<i>Kech: The Beta</i>	140	<i>Racial Features</i>	145
<i>Duch'khu: The Heart and Mind</i>	140	<i>Class Features</i>	145
<i>Eecha: The Nose</i>	141	New Fighter Archetype: Grr'khun	146

<i>Class Features</i>	146
New Ranger Archetype: Kech	146
<i>Class Features</i>	146
New Bard Archetype: Oosheh	148
<i>Class Features</i>	148
New Sorcerer Archetype: Owoun	148
<i>Class Skills</i>	148
<i>Class Features</i>	148
New Ranger Archetype: Shu'sha	149
<i>Class Skills</i>	149
<i>Class Features</i>	149

New Feats	149
<i>Pack Membership</i>	149
<i>Gnoll Pack Feats</i>	150
Special Gnoll Feats	150
<i>Grr'kbun Feats</i>	150
<i>Eecha Feats</i>	150
<i>Kech Feats</i>	151
<i>Owoun Feats</i>	151
<i>Shu'sha Feats</i>	152
<i>Oosheh Feats</i>	152
Run	155

Gnomes: Shapers of the Land 161

The Life of a Gnome	163
<i>Youth</i>	163
Adulthood	163
<i>Old Age</i>	164
Gunahar: Wise of the Wild	165
Tilsspan: Adaptation	165
Ryttervast: Gnomes of the Central Grasslands	165
Skogland: Gnomes of the Central North Forest	166
Coareg: Gnomes of the Eastern Shore ..	166
Forsterken: Gnomes of the Lakes	167
Haufbreg: Gnomes of the West Mountains	167
Vanktjenner: Gnomes of the Xeric Shrublands	168
<i>The Weeping Ones & The Lonely</i>	168
<i>Klosters & Monachs</i>	168
Tegar: The Watchful	169
Gnome Racial Traits	169
<i>Occupation: Homesteader</i>	170
<i>Occupation: Hunter</i>	170
<i>Regions</i>	170

Gnome Feats	170
<i>Path of the Woods</i>	170
<i>Friend of the Wilds</i>	171
<i>Speaker of the Wilds</i>	171
<i>Intuit of the Earth</i>	171
<i>Nature's Imperfections</i>	171
New Cavalier Archetype: Ryttervast ..	171
<i>Class Features</i>	171
<i>Order of the Brazen Fox</i>	172
New Barbarian Archetype: Haufbreg ..	172
<i>Class Features</i>	172
New Ranger Archetype: Skogland	173
<i>Class Features</i>	173
New Druid Archetype: Forsterken	174
<i>Class Features</i>	174
New Alchemist Archetype: Zaubermach	174
<i>Class Features</i>	174
New Monk Archetype: Vanktjenner	175
<i>Racial Traits</i>	175
<i>Class Features</i>	175
Vow of Empathy	176

Approved Classes 176

Cacilia..... 178

Gobowins: The World's Worst Blessing 187

A Gobowin's Life..... 188

Youth..... 188

Adulthood 189

Old Age..... 189

Buwuk: The Worst Blessing in the World191

Wursa: The Best Curse in the World... 191

Ufas: Gobowin Ambiguity..... 191

The True Origin of Gobowins 192

Gofas: Gobowin Caravans..... 193

The Buk..... 193

Dun: Tricks 194

Gobowin Tricks..... 194

Dunda: The Big Trick..... 195

Fana no Tana..... 196

One and Lots..... 196

Sheesa: The Unluckiest One..... 196

Gobowins and the Reign 197

Tomkin 197

Shavay..... 197

Jinix 197

Ashcolmb..... 197

Tamerclimb..... 198

Millford..... 198

Vanta..... 198

Ajun 198

Nevernare..... 198

Vinnick 198

Travel in the Reign 199

Roadmen & the Mail 199

"Goblin Mail"..... 200

Gobowin Racial Traits 200

Buwuk: Bad Luck 201

Guda "Good Luck Charms" 201

Caravan 201

Maintaining a Caravan..... 202

Gobowin Feats 202

Forage Finder 202

Big Magic Eye..... 202

Handy Hands 202

Gold Sniffer..... 203

Follow Footprints 203

Whisper Ears..... 203

Gobowin Buwuk Feats..... 203

Bad Luck Back..... 203

More Buwuk..... 203

Even Wursa Buwuk 203

Gobowin Caravan Feats..... 203

Better Cart 203

Mighty Fine Cart..... 203

New Witch Archetype: Sheesa 203

Racial Features..... 204

Class Features 204

Luck Patron..... 204

New Class: Buk (The Goblin Merchant)204

Class Skills..... 204

Class Features 204

Approved Class 205

Telmar's Helmet 207

Uvandir: The Pride of Craftsmen 217

An Uvandir's Life	218	Uvandir Feats.....	233
Vandirtuvaldinshan.....	219	<i>Vandra</i>	233
Beard	219	<i>Longbeard</i>	233
<i>Ushvalashanan: Shame</i>	220	<i>Two Gun Mojo</i>	233
Guhn: Wasting Breath	221	Gemstone Feats.....	233
Violence	221	<i>Darkvision Gemstone</i>	233
<i>Gefecht: Fighting</i>	221	<i>Sleepless Gemstone</i>	233
<i>Balastvoen: Annoyance</i>	222	<i>Stonemade Gemstone</i>	233
Beer.....	222	<i>Mental Resistant Gemstone</i>	234
Obsession.....	224	Vandirtuvaldinshan Feats.....	234
Melancholy	225	<i>Grand Master Craftsman</i>	234
Uvandir Bodyguards.....	226	<i>Hands of Stone</i>	234
Branding	227	<i>Stand My Ground</i>	234
Music	227	<i>The Long Walk</i>	234
Technology	227	New Wizard Archetype: The Jeweler... 234	
Magic	228	<i>Class Features</i>	235
Swakander: Three Craftsmen.....	228	New Gunslinger Archetype: The	
<i>The Jeweler</i>	228	Watchmaker.....	235
<i>The Watchmaker</i>	229	<i>Racial Features</i>	235
<i>The Woodcutter</i>	229	<i>Class Features</i>	235
And Finally... Digging for Their God .. 230		<i>Gunpower</i>	236
Uvandir Racial Traits	230	New Druid Archetype: Woodcutter ... 236	
<i>Obsessions</i>	231	<i>Class Features</i>	237
<i>Melancholy</i>	232	Approved Classes	237
<i>Optional: Drunk Rules</i>	232	A Round on Missus Bing	239

Roddun: Scourge of the City 247

A Roddun's Life.....	247	<i>King Rat</i>	251
<i>Youth</i>	248	<i>Gratitude</i>	253
<i>Adulthood</i>	249	Teeth.....	253
<i>Old Age</i>	249	Take What You Need	253
<i>The Roddun Language</i>	250	<i>Taking vs. Gratitude</i>	254
Kinship.....	250	Junk Magic.....	254
A Roddun Barrio.....	251	Tzitik: Gemstone Magic.....	255

The Skootztik	255	<i>Promises</i>	262
The Cities	256	<i>Protection</i>	263
<i>The Capital City of Nevarnare</i>	256	<i>Terror</i>	263
<i>The City of Ajun</i>	256	<i>Non-Roddun Reputation</i>	263
<i>The City of Ashcoln</i>	257	<i>Using Reputation</i>	263
<i>The City of Jinix</i>	257	Mischief Feats	263
<i>The City of Millford</i>	257	<i>Mischief Boss</i>	263
<i>The City of Shavay</i>	258	Gemstone Feats	263
<i>The City of Tamerclimb</i>	258	<i>Blindsight Gemstone</i>	263
<i>The City of Tomkin</i>	258	<i>Plaugeborn Gemstone</i>	264
<i>The City of Vanta</i>	258	<i>Fast Healing Gemstone</i>	264
<i>The City of Vinnick</i>	259	<i>Tooth & Nail Gemstone</i>	264
Roddun Racial Traits	259	New Prestige Class: King Rat	264
Mischiefs, Barrios and Respect	260	<i>Requirements</i>	264
<i>Taking Over a Business</i>	260	<i>Class Skills</i>	264
<i>Taking Someone Else's Things</i>	261	<i>Class Features</i>	264
<i>Favors</i>	261	New Wizard Archetype: Junk Wizard	266
<i>Destroying a Business</i>	261	<i>Class Features</i>	266
<i>Details</i>	261	New Ninja Archetype: Skootzik	266
<i>Businesses</i>	261	<i>Racial Features</i>	266
Reputation	262	<i>Class Features</i>	266
<i>Enemy</i>	262	Approved Classes	267
		No Favors	269

Kuba-Chubisi: The Invisible Allies

The Defeated	276	Verath: Treachery	283
Invisible Allies	277	Zus-Shah: Outsiders	283
A Kuba-Chubisi's Life	278	<i>Masks</i>	284
<i>Apprentice</i>	278	<i>Infiltration</i>	284
<i>Journeyman</i>	279	<i>Freedom</i>	284
<i>Master</i>	280	<i>Reaction</i>	284
Gouss-Kulan: Sacred Geometry	280	The Cities	285
Savu-Kaven: Sin of the Sword	281	<i>Millford: The City of Promises</i>	285
<i>Free-Dienun: Kuba-Chubisi Pacifism</i>	282	<i>Nevarnare: The Illuminated City</i>	285
Ber-Gemut: Mastery of the Mind	282	<i>Ajun: The City of Memory</i>	285

<i>Tomkin: We Are All In</i>	285
<i>Vanta: Strength & the Sword</i>	285
<i>Tamerclimb: Home of the Palatines</i>	286
<i>Shavay: Courage, Not Bravery</i>	286
<i>Jinix: The Curt Lady</i>	286
<i>Ashclomb: The Foothold of Lies</i>	286
<i>Vinnick: The Stone Hero</i>	286
Kuba-Chubisi Racial Traits	287
<i>Mimic</i>	287
<i>Strange</i>	287
<i>Free-dienun</i>	287
Feats	287
<i>Extra City Effect</i>	287
<i>Extra Monument</i>	288
<i>Mundane Semblance</i>	288
<i>Back of my Hand</i>	288
<i>Ledge Walker</i>	288
<i>Sewer Crawler</i>	288
New Fighter Archetype: Savu-Kaven	288
<i>Class Features</i>	288
New Class: Mahsh-Ahtahd	289
<i>Class Skills</i>	289
<i>Class Features</i>	289
Approved Classes	295
A Secret	297

Introduction

Hi there. My name's John and I design games. Before I begin, I should probably explain what all this is about.

I had a conversation with a certain Wolfgang Baur about an ongoing column in his magazine *Kobold Quarterly*. I made a suggestion and he seemed to like it.

Growing up, I was always a big fan of Roger Moore's "Ecology of..." series in *Dragon Magazine*. I liked the almost anthropological approach of looking at each race from top to bottom. An attempt to make them as authentic as possible. After I read any of those articles, I always had the same desire: I wanted to make a character.

So, in talking with Wolfgang, I wanted to do something similar. An anthropological look at the "standard races" of the world's most popular roleplaying game... but do it with a twist. Instead of reinforcing the genre, what if we took a look at each of the races through a kind of dark lens. If you'll forgive me, "through a wicked mirror." Not anything that would change the races beyond recognition, but give them a different feel. A different taste. A different style.

Wolfgang liked the idea and I enlisted the help of Jess Heinig to make sure I could navigate the tangled maze of game mechanics.

Jess and I tackled five races: halflings, humans, gnomes, dwarves and elves. I wrote them up and sent Jess some suggestions for mechanics. (The sole exception here is the gnomes. Jess wrote those bad boys up all himself.) He looked at my suggestions, chortled loudly and said, "No, you don't want *this*, you want *this*!" And that's when Jess reminded me why I recruited him in the first place. Well, the series was a success and we got a whole ton of feedback on

the five races. A few years later, I thought the same series would go well with *Pathfinder*. The mechanics were similar, but different, and I could add more detail to the sketches I provided for *KQ*. But I needed someone who was familiar with *Pathfinder*. That's when I found Jill.

The youthful and exuberant Gillian Fraser jumped on the opportunity, grabbed it with her teeth and would not let go. I was breathless trying to keep up. We sent our results to Mr. Heinig who sent us feedback and we made significant changes based on his keen insights. But Jill did more than that. She worked like a horse to get this thing done. We struggled and argued and sometimes threw out entire classes because we couldn't figure them out. But eventually, the muses were kind, and we found something we liked. She fought hard for this book and she deserves many accolades.

And here is the result of our efforts. We now have *ten* races -- including orks, gnolls, goblins, ratmen and kobolds -- and a whole bunch of new text and mechanics for the ones Jess and I originally worked on.

The original layout was done by Aaron Acevedo, but the lovely and talented Jessica Kauspedas has done us the favor of giving us a new full color layout that knocked our socks off. And Mauro Mussi has provided us full color portraits for each of the races, bringing them to vivid life.

The world is a lot bigger than when we started and there are still a lot of gaps to fill. We'll be filling them in as we go. But for now, a short rest. We have worked on this monster for more than a year now and I think it's time for a nap. Wake me up when it's time for GenCon.

Don't let the Enemy in while I'm out,






Humans: The Reign of Men

And this is the Reign of Men. When all are King, Not subject to any gods or tyrants, men choose their own destinies. Free to wreck or ruin our own lives or to lift ourselves up from the muck and sing songs that no voice has ever sung.

And this is the Reign of Men. We are free. And so shall we always be.




Established by a line of warlords in the earliest days, the Reign of Men has transformed itself many times. Once a tyranny, now something very different. When the new races speak of men, they use the word, “Kingdom.”

This is both accurate and misleading.

While men do have a King, their own word best translates as “reign” or “rule.” Not the Kingdom of Men, but the Reign of Men.

Men have always been here. They are the Old Race. Newcomers—such as the elves, haffuns and uvandir—bring their strange ways and gods, but men and their Reign have always been here. From the first fires of creation to the moment when the heat of those flames die, men will be here. First to step from the fire, last to walk into the darkness.

Five centuries ago, the Kingdom of Men suffered a plague of philosophers, all asking questions of liberty and social duty. The movement transformed the Kingdom and inspired a young and newly-crowned king—Mantias Colevale—to change the way men were ruled. His decisions actually decreased his own power and influence while increasing the authority of the Senate. Complete madness.



Some called him, “the Philosopher-King,” and others ridiculed him, calling him, “the King of Mans.” But Colevale’s laws passed forever changed

the direction of the Kingdom, creating something the world had never seen before.

Now, to be human is to be part of something larger. A citizen of a government elected and empowered by the people. Each man has both liberty and responsibility. He has what the philosophers called courage: the ability to recognize you are not the most important thing in the world. As such, men do not serve themselves: they serve the Reign. While human achievement is always self-satisfying, satisfaction is not the end goal. “What betters the Reign?” is the prime question. The King serves the Reign. His magistrates serve the Reign. The citizens serve the Reign. And the Reign provides them freedom to pursue happiness.

At least, that is what the Reign was. These days, the bones of the Kingdom are old and beginning to brittle. The blood is thin. And where “Courage!” was once shouted from the rooftops, it is now a chorus in a song: repeated over and over again from habit. True, there are those who still remember the passion of the philosophers and their transformative magic, but those days are long gone. The selfish reward themselves while the needy suffer with naught. Temples of foreign gods are on every street corner, their luring voices calling to the weak. And the King sits on the throne, a bitter and broken man. Where is the courage of men? Where is the glory of the Reign?

Not all is lost. The courage of men remains, although it may be asleep in their hearts. There are

Clerics and Paladins

With the absence of gods, men have no clerics and no paladins. Instead, they have the *philosopher* and the *palatine*. While clerics and paladins draw power from appeasing an external source of power, the philosopher and palatine draw power from their own will. The power to heal, the power to remove curses, the power to put down the risen dead. All of this comes from *will*, not obedience and submission to a “higher power.”

Philosophers seek to unravel the mysteries of the universe. The palatines, on the other hand, are warriors granted special powers by the Senate to enforce the Senate’s Law throughout the Reign.

The divine powers of philosophers and palatines come from the same inner strength that drives the rest of humanity, but for these individuals, that power is beyond the reach of most men.

those who carry it still, inspiring others through their deeds. Stories spread of young men and women who may yet ignite the quiescent fire. Even now, tales of their deeds are told throughout the Kingdom by voice and printer’s ink. Some even speak of a second Reign when men will rise up as they did before.

Rise up and take hold of their own destiny. Rise up and claim what is theirs. Rise up and reign.

The Elevation of Men

“If we only contemplate on what we are, we will never see what we may become. Philosophy is the beginning of action, not the whole of it.”

— Valir Severin, *The Philosophies*

Humans are bound not by a common faith, but by a common philosophy: that all men may become more than they are. They do this through rigorous training, insight and learning. The Reign of Men builds schools and universities to bring wisdom and enlightenment to all men and women.

While other races seek knowledge and power from external entities, humanity looks for power from within. Will, self-determination and dignity are the virtues of men and these virtues provide them with powers the other races can only describe as “magical.” But men would claim these abilities are the exact opposite of magic; instead, the abilities taught to children in human schools and universities only tap into latent power within the human spirit.

Universities

Each town and village has at least one building dedicated to knowledge and learning: a university. A place where men go to cure their curiosity. Universities also serve as common houses to shelter the poor and sick.

Universities are populated by *philosophers* (sometimes called “travelers” or “seekers”). These scholars bring books with them wherever they go, teaching and learning both, bravely baring the fragile light of knowledge to a dark and haunted world. These philosophers are not simply book-bound clerics, but men and women trained to find and fight wickedness and evil, to protect those who cannot protect themselves. They can be found everywhere in the Reign of Men, armed not only with knowledge, but also with armor, shield and sword.

Human Pride

When the other races speak of humans, instead of “human will,” they often invoke “human ego.” Instead of “human pride,” they talk about “human hubris.” It is no secret humans are a proud race, but that pride can get the best of them from time to time. Tales of humans rushing into danger with no thought to their own safety or well-being. Courage or hubris? It is fine line that men walk.

A Human's Life

This next section details the life of a human in the Reign of Men. We look at youth, adulthood and old age.

Youth

Most human children are born in a village or city university with assistance from a trained philosopher. A human child spends his youth attending that same local university learning how to read, write and count. It is important to note that human children receive a preliminary education regardless of social standing. The Reign of Men puts a high value on educating its citizenry. After five years in training—around the age of ten—his parents decide his trade.

This is where the life of a young human can branch off in three different directions. He could become a scholar, a soldier or a tradesman.

As a scholar, the child's parents buy a “scholarship” with a university. Scholarships cost a great deal: more than a peasant family earns in an entire lifetime. But as a scholar, the child enters the university and spends the next ten to twelve years studying natural philosophy, the arts, metaphysics, magic theory, zoology, history and all the other sciences. When he finishes his education, his typical choice of employment is usually as a philosopher at a university. He can either find employment himself or rely on the

contacts he made within the scholarly community. Some philosophers become adventurers, selling their knowledge and skills to the highest bidder. Others become advisers to nobility.

As a soldier, the child enters the service of a local military. His parents receive a small reward from the local government for volunteering their child. In the military, he learns the trade of a soldier. He learns how to use arms and armor, how to survive in the wilderness, how to become self-sufficient and how to obey orders. Soldiers are usually given one year to prove their worth. Those who do not prove themselves are removed from service. If he proves his worth, he is assigned to one of the Great Cities. Soldiers can gain great distinction while in the service of a City. Some even become local heroes.

Lastly, a child can gain apprenticeship in one of the many Guilds. There are hundreds of Guilds in the Reign of Men. Carpenters, draughtsman, coopers, masons, shipwrights, etc. A child's parents present their son or daughter to a Guildsman in hopes of acceptance. The Guildsman pays handsomely for the child's service and the child becomes the Guildsman's apprentice. For the next ten years, the child learns the skills and knowledge necessary to master his craft. If he fails in his service, the Guildsman forfeits his bargain and the child is let go. But if he proves himself, he becomes a Master Guildsman in his own right. He may open a shop of his own—far from his master's shop, of course—and sell his skills and merchandise.

Adulthood

At some point in his adult life, a man gets married. For centuries, mankind practiced arranged marriages, but that quaint tradition died long ago. Men and women choose their own husbands and wives. Marrying the one you love is the standard among men; children are no longer forced into lifetime marriage contracts with other children they've never met.

Most human families live in large houses where generations have been born, grown old and pass away. Grandparents, their children and their grandchildren live under the same roof, and those grandchildren are present when their grandparents pass away.

Those who have lost families or cannot maintain additional family members turn to the universities for help. Universities care for the old, the sick and the dying in the most humane way possible.

Old Age

A human's natural lifespan extends to sixty to seventy. Most men die before then; the average lifespan of a human is around forty to fifty. When men grow old, they retire to the local university where they rest and teach the young, sharing the experience of their lives. The university cares for them and helps prepare them for the end of their lives.

At least, that's the ideal. In many parts of the Reign, the universities are filled with the old and infirm. There aren't enough funds to fulfill their needs. So many of the old die on the streets. Some families have the resources to care for a dying family member, but the poor have no such privilege.

Some Senators fight for more funds to be diverted to universities, but the sound of a greater threat deafens their requests. Many are shouting about the possible threat of the orks to the north or the elves in the forests. And who knows what the dwarves are digging for in their massive mines. Meanwhile, the elderly pass away from the world. Alone and cold.

The senate

The Reign of Men is made up of ten Great Cities. Each City is its own independent entity, its own independent state. However, all Cities must acknowledge the ruling authority of the Senate.

Each City sends ten Senators to the capital city of Nevarnare (never-nah-ray). Every ten years, the Cities hold elections to determine who will represent their interests in the Senate.

The Senate negotiates border disputes between the Cities, passes laws that affect all the Cities and serves as a place to negotiate trade.

The Governor of a City (see below) can recall a Senator for re-election. The Governor must hold a vote; if fifty percent of the people approve, the Governor recalls the Senator. The Senator must then run a *new* election against the Governor. If the Governor wins, he becomes the new Senator and a new Governor is elected. This is an uncommon circumstance, but it has happened—in some Cities more than others.

In recent times, City journals (newspapers) have commented on the seeming control the Guilds have on certain Senators. When election time comes, many Guilds put up their own candidate to serve the interest of the Guild... rather than the interest of the people.

The Army of the Republic

The Law prevents Cities (or citizens) from maintaining armies. Instead, the Reign has its own army, the Army of the Republic, drawn from the citizenry.

The Army is divided into legions: generally 1,000 to 5,000 men. Each legion represents the men and women of a single City, and thus, some legions are numerically greater than others. Legions are divided into centuries: one hundred soldiers.

The centurions of the Army of the Republic are not part time soldiers. They train in the morning, they train in the afternoon and they train at night. Their job is to protect the Reign from foreign threats and to assist in putting down domestic ones.

The Army has no general, and cannot be marched, unless the Senate elects a general. Until then, only smaller units—usually centuries—may be dispatched to deal with issues requiring the Army.

Becoming the General of the Army of the Republic is a distinguished honor—an honor that lasts a lifetime. However, with the lack of foreign threats, there is little need for a General. Peace treaties with the elves, dwarves and other races have made some Senators question the need for a standing army. “Let the Cities defend themselves!” Denedor Vru, the Senator from Shavay once announced on the floor. He was quickly shouted down by other Senators who reminded him of what happened the *last* time Cities were allowed armies of their own.

Calendar

There are two human calendars. The first has been voted out of common usage by the Senate one hundred years ago but it still used by many of the agrarian villages. The second calendar, the Sanden Calendar, consists of ten months—or “moons”—each with thirty days and begins on the spring equinox. The end of the year—and the remaining days—are taken up by a year-end festival called Uvali (which simply means “festival”).

- Moon of the Falcon
- Moon of the Elk
- Moon of the Serpent
- Moon of the Spider
- Moon of the Bear
- Moon of the Fox
- Moon of the Wolf
- Moon of the Wasp
- Moon of the Boar
- Moon of the Rat
- Uvali Festival

Economy

While Cities have used their own coins for centuries, a recent decision by the Senate has formalized currency in the Reign. Now, all Cities use the same standardized coins. Also, the Senate introduced “bills,” giving the merchants of the Reign paper currency as well.

Wildmen

For some men, liberty means casting away all the trappings of society. Living in the wilderness, fending for yourself, free from any constraints. The citizens of the Reign call these men fools. *Dulzba*. “Wildmen.”

These men who embark on what they see as a journey of self-reliance have accepted the term as a mark of pride. One such fool, Jayk Vlanna, lived in the wilderness for twenty years. After his death, Jayk’s brother published his journal, *Confessions of a Fool*. “Go on and live in your comfort and compromise,” Jayk Vlanna wrote, “I will live free.” Vlanna’s journal not only inspired an entire generation of young men and women to “go wild,” but also provided a kind of guide to living in the wilderness, providing those who felt the call to live the life he lived. On his own terms, without comfort and without compromise.

Previously, each City minted coins and each City had its own standard for weight and worth. The new coins have uniform sizes and value. As per the usual human preoccupation with the number 10, the Reign of Men has created a decimal economic system.

- 10 copper coins = 1 silver coin
- 10 silver coins = 1 gold coin
- 10 gold coins = 1 bill
- 10 bills = 1 note
- 10 notes = 1 crown

Although the Senate has officially ordered all currency to be converted to the new system, the old coins still manage to show up every now and then. In fact, many old coins are considered more valuable than the new currency.

And with the advent of paper money, forgery has become more of a problem than ever. Originally, paper currency was supposed to remove the inconvenience of carrying coins, but it caused a rash of forgeries that nearly wrecked some City's economies. Now, "papers" (bills, notes and crowns) are only carried by official Guild couriers, thus ensuring their security.

The guilds

The most powerful economic and political force in the Reign of Men is not the Senate or the Governors. It's the Merchant and Craftsman Guilds.

The first Guild was the Architect's Guild, which served to protect the secrets of the architect's trade. It included architects, masons, carpenters and all the other tradesmen and craftsmen involved in the construction and maintenance of buildings. Members were sworn to keep their trade's secrets upon pain of death. And not just death, but *grisly, bloody* death.

Inspired by the Architect's Guild, other trade organizations formed in much the same manner for the very same purpose. Brewers, coopers, ship makers, cobblers, apothecaries and even courtesans created their own Guilds.

These days, Guilds all but control every level of human politics. They own Governors and Senators alike, ensuring the only laws that are passed are laws that protect the Guilds. When they run into an official they can't bribe, they just run a Guildsman against the standing officer. Voters are bribed as well. Those that can't be bribed are intimidated. Those who can't be intimidated... well, politics is a bloody business, isn't it?

City-states

The Reign of Men currently includes ten Great Cities, which also act as independent states. These are the hubs of human civilization. Each city has its own standing militia for protecting its outlying villages and farms. Each city also sends ten Senators to the capital of Nevarnae to voice the concerns and wants of its people.

The Governor

The center of city control rests in the hands of the Governor. Governors are elected officials. Their terms last six years before they must run for re-election.

The Governor's duties involve the day-to-day details of city administration. He assigns others to various positions of authority, which puts a lot of power—and wealth—in his hands. Want to be a judge? Bribe the Governor. Want to be a tax collector? Bribe the Governor.

But a Governor would be foolish to only assign positions of authority to those who pay him. Every six years, he faces re-election. If the people are unhappy with his administration, he could soon find himself without a job.

The Governor is also responsible for addressing citywide issues, collecting taxes and maintaining its infrastructure. If a building crumbles after an earthquake, it is the city's responsibility to rebuild it. If the streets are in disrepair, the city's engineers are responsible for repairing them. The Governor evaluates which repairs are necessary and how much of the budget to devote to them.

Finally, the Governor is the city's chief legislator; he makes new laws and revokes old ones to address the city's current problems. And while he is also responsible for enforcing those laws, his chief lieutenant—the Captain of the Watch—is the man who directly handles that responsibility. Unfortunately for the Governor, the Captain is the only other public official who is *not* appointed, but is elected by the people.

The Captain of the Watch

One of the most coveted positions in a human city is the Captain of the Watch. Responsible for the city's security, the Captain is in charge of the men and woman who maintain the city's security. The Captain also decides which laws to enforce and which crimes to prosecute (yes, he is not beholden to prosecute *all* crimes). The City Watch is divided into districts and each district has its own chief officer, or Sergeant. Sergeants are most directly involved with the people and often serve as the face of the district's Watch. A common phrase among the cities goes, "Sergeants do the dirty work while the Captain just washes his hands."

While the Captain is not appointed by the Governor—serving a term of six years—the Captain's Watch is only as powerful as the Governor allows them to be. Because the Governor decides on the city's yearly budget, he can approve a large Watch or a small Watch—depending on the relationship he has with the Captain. However, Captains can appeal to the people if they feel they do not receive sufficient funds from the Governor. Such appeals can end a Governor's term quickly.

In recent years, many Governors have run elections with a hand-picked Captain of the Watch as a running mate. This ploy has worked in some cities, but not all of them. There is an understanding among the public that a Governor and Captain who do *not* get along creates a delicate balance of power.

Until recently, no citizen could hold more than one title, but a recent Senate vote overturned that law. With the ever-growing human population—and bureaucracy—the vote was almost unanimous. However, a small number of Senators brought up the possibility of furthering corruption within the system. Multiple titles meant conflicts of interests, nepitism and other problems. These concerns were shouted down by the majority who saw the passage of the new law necessary to maintain the Reign.

Alderman

Cities are divided into districts and each district has an alderman to handle the day-to-day problems and issues. Originally, each city had ten aldermen, but as cities grew, the need for more aldermen grew.

Aldermen are appointed by the city's Governor and serve as long as the Governor does. If the people remove a Governor from office, the new Governor reviews the current staff of aldermen and makes changes as he sees fit.

The chief responsibility of an alderman is the collection of taxes at the end of the year. He has a number of officers—tax collectors—who assist him with this duty.

Barrio Councils

In recent years, many barrios have begun electing unofficial representatives to speak directly to their alderman. While the Reign does not recognize these councils as official representatives, only a foolish alderman would ignore them. In fact, many alderman defer to the position of the council rather than face a public backlash.

The cities

Listed below are the Ten Great Cities of the Reign. Each is distinct from the others with its own dialect, its own traditions and history. To be human is also to be from a City. Just as men are proud of their heritage, they are doubly proud of their native City.

The City of Nevarnare

Governor: Riscale Fols

Population: 2 million

Nevarnare (nevar-nar-ay) is one of the largest Cities of the Reign, built for the purpose of serving as the capital.

It is the largest City in the Reign, double the size of the next-largest City (Shavay), claiming over two million residents. Some have called it “the City of Bureaucrats” considering the staggering amount of paperwork needed to keep the place running. And, if truth be told, the strain is starting to show. There are too many people doing too many things, jumping through too many loopholes. Parts of the City are falling apart faster than the architects can repair them. Sewage is starting to become a problem as well with outbreaks of disease in the poorer parts of the City and the wealthy only paying to patch the problem rather than fix it.

Still, Nevarnare is the shining light of the Reign. At its core is the Senate—a structure that holds the greatest minds of mankind. At least... well, maybe... perhaps...

Let’s just say the Senate has seen brighter days. Most Senators are wealthy opportunists who pay little regard to the needs of their Cities but instead create opportunities to fill their own pockets. I did say, “most,” but not “all.” There are still some who see their position as an obligation and a duty. But these Senators are rare and the sound of their voices addressing the Senate proper is even rarer.

The City of Ajun

Governor: Rische Tomsson

Population: 890,000

Ajun is the oldest City in the Reign. The City is a living museum filled with mankind’s oldest structures. Also, there are more universities in Ajun than in all the other Cities combined. It is both a living reminder of what man once was and a symbol of what men may become.

Families from all over the Reign send their children to Ajun to gain an education. Because of that, Ajun has an ever-shifting population: there are almost always more students in Ajun than citizens. Because of its diverse population—students from Cities all across the Reign—Ajun is mankind’s most cosmopolitan City.

One important tradition of Ajun is something the populace calls “the philosopher’s march.” At the end of the week, instructors and students leave the universities behind and head to the taverns to discuss “real philosophy.” They drink, eat and talk until the early morning. Instructors leave their laurels (symbols of prestige in the universities) behind and engage the students as equals, hoping to be challenged by pointed questions. More money is spent on this night than the rest of the week and the weekly event draws spectators from all over the Reign.

The City of Ashcolmb

Governor: Balan Vre

Population: 750,000

While none of its residents ever use the phrase, outside its walls, the rest of the Reign calls Ashcolmb, “the City of Shadows.” The last five Governors were assassinated. The current Governor, Ballyn Vre, is missing an eye from a failed attempt to take his life. “All politics is blood,” the historian Donnington True once wrote. “And in Ashcolmb, that’s doubly true.”

Ashcolmb was originally founded by a line of sorcerers—the Voir family—who established the City as a place to safely (and secretly) research the power of their blood. Perhaps it was the very character of the Voir bloodline that created the aura surrounding Ashcolmb. Treason and treachery loom over the streets and buildings. Murder is commonplace. It is not a place for the timid or weak. Only the ruthless survive the politics of Ashcolmb.

The most profitable (legal) export from Ashcolmb these days are the jewels being pulled from the mines in the Qyvanay (quin-van-nay) Mountains. Of course, there is also plenty of coin in smuggling those jewels under the noses of the City's Watch...

The City of Shavay

Governor: Palla Venor

Population: 650,000

While the Capital is the center of commerce and politics, it is not the central City of the Reign. That distinction belongs to Shavay. Like a hub in a great wheel, Shavay sits almost equidistant to all the Cities, making it the prime location for travel, communication and correspondence.

Uvan Dru, one of Shavay's Senators, called his home, "the City built on letters." All messages—official and personal—go through Shavay, and because those messages need to be carried, that means all messengers go through Shavay as well. Shavay's messengers, commonly known as "roadmen," are regarded as heroes. Stories and songs of courageous roadmen carrying letters through the wilderness can be heard in every tavern.

The City of Shavay was named after Shavay Dis, a man who served fifteen years as a King's Knight. He served the King as "the Knight of Letters," a kind of herald and courier. After he retired, he turned his knowledge and experience into a private service, and eventually, his own Guild. Shavay's Roadmen have created a transcontinental system

to carry messages from one side of the Reign to the other. A letter may pass through the hands of a dozen Roadmen before it reaches its destination, but all of Shavay's men swear an oath to ensure both a letter's security and their speed of delivery.

The City of Tomkin

Governor: Auntie Rose

Population: 490,000

Tomkin is the City closest to Everwood, the largest elven forest in the Known World. It also boasts the largest marketplace in all the Reign. Because of its location, Tomkin grows some of the best produce and men come from every City to trade. The market has an odd social structure completely controlled by women called "aunties." The pecking order goes all the way up to the woman who runs the market, "Auntie Rose," the woman who also happens to be the City's Governor.

Auntie Rose has created in Tomkin a City unlike any other. She invites the other races into the walls of her City and trades with them openly. The place is filled with elves, uvandir, gnomes and even orks and goblins. Vines grow up the walls from the nearby forest, nearly merging the two entities together. Some call it, "the Forest City." That isn't far from the truth.

Antie Rose spent the majority of her time in office erasing centuries of laws she viewed as useless and over-regulatory. "Let there be one law," she said at her last election. "And let that law be this: 'Protect each other.'" Her running mate retorted, "The way she's erasing laws, it won't be long until that *is* the only law."

He lost that election.

Tomkin is, in many ways, the most free City State. It's economy is not as strong as other Cities, but it has earned its reputation as "the City of Orphans." All those who are lost come to Tomkin. Auntie Rose would have it no other way.

The uffred

When man first settled in Tamerclimb, they encountered a species of horse unlike any man has ever seen since. Men called them *uffred* (from the sound the horses made) and while they did not understand their language, it was clear from the very beginning that this species of horse was intelligent.

Many hundreds of years later, men and the uffred have become fast allies. Living in the fields below Tamerclimb Mountains, they run free and live in harmony with man. The uffred allow men to ride them, but only men of *their* choosing. Those who are so honored bond with their steed in a secret ritual known only to those who have undergone it. Most of these men are palatines, but there are a few who have also been found worthy.

The City of Vanta

Governor: Tamin Avente

Population: 750,000

The philosopher Jenesh Crue wrote, "To vote in Vanta, you must bring a sword. Otherwise, they will assume you are from somewhere else and turn you away." While it sounds like idle banter, Crue's story is actually true. All citizens of the city are required to learn the sword, the spear and the shield. And when a Vanta citizen comes to vote, he proves his citizenship by bringing his weapon with him.

The citizens of Vanta live in the north most City in the Reign. That means they must deal with orks, trolls, ogres and all the other "lesser races" who reside in the North. They elect Governors and Senators who understand the necessity of martial training and who understand Vanta's unique situation. The Cities in the South do not have to worry about the dangers of the North, and when the Senate decides whether or not to spend funds on Northern patrols, those Southern Senators will always vote against it. Vanta needs men and women who understand the world isn't just art and culture. Sometimes, it's blood and steel.

The City of Tamerclimb

Governor: Usav Vanir

Population: 500,000

The Reign of Men boasts two Mountain Cities. The first is Tamerclimb, named after the western mountain range where it rests. There is only one road to the City and it is not an friendly road. Men and women from all over the Reign come to answer a spiritual call. "The Call of Tamerclimb." It is here, in this secluded and sacred place, that the palatines are trained.

Tamerclimb is smaller than most of the other Cities and it is not suited for visitors. There are no elegant taverns for travelers, no theaters and no brothels. There are merchants and craftsmen, however, and all of them are devoted to a single cause. The cause of justice.

Tamerclimb is not the only City that produces palatines, but it is the place where all palatines must go at some time during their life. They cannot resist the call. To stand in the Great Hall, to hear the songs of their brothers and to bleed in the Hall of Swords.

Sooner or later, all palatine make the climb...

The City of Vinnick

Governor: Wayson Flann

Population: 560,000

Near the center of the Reign of Men are the rich fields of Vinnick where the best wines in the Reign are bottled and shipped out to the other Great Cities. But Vinnick boasts more than just great wines; it also boasts the most prestigious wizard's college in all the Reign.

In fact, two things support nearly all of Vinnick's economy: magic and wine. Merchants devoted to acquiring all the little things a wizard needs to make his magic work. Herbs, tiny pearls, small sacks of bat guano, empty spell books. All these things can be found on the streets of Vinnick. There are entire stores devoted only to staves and wands—imported from the finest trees in Everwood Forest and carved by the greatest craftsmen, of course. Walk down one street and you can find a man crushing iron to powder. Children surround his shop and watch and cheer.

And, of course, the City is always filled with wizards. Apprentices, journeymen and masters making their way through the City's streets, arguing about politics and metaphysics, drinking wine and otherwise trying to chase away the doldrums of academic life.

The City of Millford

Governor: Tarkin Vanor

Population: 400,000

The second mountain City of Millford is on the other side of the Reign: far to the East. It is the newest of the Great Cities and one of the oldest. Millford was once a proud jewel in the Reign, but it fell to corruption, disease and chaos. Several expeditions set out to reclaim Millford, but only the latest, led by its current Governor, Tarkin Vanor, has showed any degree of success.

While most of the original architecture still stands, much of the City lay in ruin. Only sixty percent of the walls stand. Horrors from the wasteland are a constant threat—and have ruined previous attempts to reclaim the City. But Vanor brought with him rugged men and women who were willing to sacrifice to rebuild something great. These are not philosophers or scholars. These are people who know how to live without the protection of walls. The people of Millford are hard... and they aren't afraid to show it.

Vanor's success can also be attributed to the treaty he made with the orks living just a few miles from the City. Only a few were present when he spoke to the leader of the tribe, but those who saw the exchange say the story is worth hearing.

The Countess of Owls

Tenlest Stromm is a roadman who lives on the outskirts of Millford. She rarely enters the City, unless on one of her "pilgrimages" (see below). The people know her as "the Countess of Owls" because of her peculiar relationship with the birds. Stromm has a bit of a reputation for being a kind of witch, but those who know her well also know she is keen with both bow and sword and not a witch at all.

Stromm also braids intricate tapestries, delivering them to doorsteps without warning or notice. Wizards say the tapestries have some sort of magic, but cannot determine its type. Those who have received a Stromm tapestry report seeing ghostly owls in their homes and a sudden lack of intruders.

Stromm also shows up when mothers are about to give birth. She helps deliver the child, then names it. No family ever disrespects her actions. And, like her tapestries, those born by her hand show a peculiarity about them. Good fortune follows them like a shadow.

The City of Jinix

Governor: Joran Bron

Population: 300,000

Of all the Cities in the Reign of men, Jinix is the one most men try to avoid. Jinix was hit hardest by the Plague and has yet to fully recover. The Governor, Joran Bron, is a corrupt man who has become consumed by his own indulgences and his people have done little, if anything, to remove him. The Senate has considered removing Bron from office, but they must pass a law giving themselves the power to remove a Governor from power. Needless to say, not many Senators are willing to cross that line.

Because of its lawlessness and corruption, Jinix has become known as “the City of Thieves.” It is a well-deserved title. Street gangs run the City now and the threat of crime is a constant reality. The only thing keeping Jinix’s economy intact is its export of vices: black tobacco, witch grass, blood wine and other less than scrupulous indulgences.

On paper, Jinix is the poorest City in the Reign, but that’s only on paper. Most of Jinix’s exports are illegal in other parts of the Reign, but that does not slow down trade. In fact, if truth be known, more money comes in and out of Jinix than any other City (except the Capital). But all of it slides between palms, under tables and otherwise smuggled in and out of Jinix’s walls.

The Noble Class

Once the forefront of human culture, the nobility have become something of a romantic artifact. Many men and women still hold title within human culture: barons, counts, dukes and marquises still exist, still hold land and still bestow their titles onto their children. Their castles still dot the landscape and they still maintain their domains. But their authority has been stolen away by the

Senate and the merchant Guilds... a fact the nobility may not be happy with, but must accept.

Nobles are little more than landlords these days. Perhaps it is the warm comfort of nostalgia that keeps the Senate from doing away with nobility completely. Whatever the reason, nobles are permitted to hold any title they see fit and their titles still maintain a little influence. Nobles mostly control the regions of land outside the Great Cities. These are lands the Senate pays little attention to and allows the nobility to maintain their antiquated authority.

Barons, counts and other nobility are still afforded a great deal of respect in their respective territories, but once within the walls of the Great Cities, that authority ends and the Senate’s authority begins. The noble class knows this, and thus, maintains a healthy distance from the Cities and their Governors. Instead, they remain in the countryside, locked behind the walls of their castles.

Let’s take a look at the nobility of the Reign, starting from the bottom and going all the way to the top.

Baron

In the Reign of Men, the lowest noble is the baron. So called because he is the governor of a “barony.” In the Old Days, a barony was defined as, “the parcel of land which could be seen from the tallest tower in the castle.” (This led to all sorts of problems when two castles could see the same land.) Eventually, after much bloodshed, the land was divided into distinct baronies, but these lands were not equal: some baronies were much larger than others, giving some barons more power, and thus, more control over the lives of others. In fact, some baronies were larger than counties (see below), making a few barons more powerful than the lords they served.

A baron swore fealty to the King, promising a loan of men and arms

when called upon. He was responsible for the gathering of taxes, maintaining the King's Roads and paying his "debt of duty," which usually included a yearly tax of food and other resources.

Today, barons are no longer responsible for the gathering of taxes; that duty has fallen on the Senate's officers. But because of a loophole (or oversight) in the law, barons are still charged with maintaining the King's Roads. (This led to Lady Quin forming the first "noble courage," which you'll read about in a moment.) But barons are landowners, and thus, may collect rent from those who live upon their lands. Because barons are men, all of them are different. Some are kind, some are cruel. Some are cold-hearted and others are generous.

Count

In the Old Days, a count was an individual specifically charged with commanding portions of the King's Army. He was given a large parcel of land, a county, to feed and train his soldiers.

While a count had more land than a baron, he was also directly accountable to the King in most matters. That led to most counts being nothing more than subjugates of the King's will while their "lesser fellows," the barons, were fairly independent and did not draw the King's attention—so long as they maintained their payments of taxes.

A count was in charge of a county: a track of land directly controlled by the King. Counties still exist within the Reign of Men and counts still serve as the primary official within their boundaries, answering to the King when things go wrong. As landowners, they collect rent from their tenants and pay taxes to the Senate *and* the King. Thus, the phrase, "a count's wealth," which means, "one who appears to have much, but in fact, has very little."

Duke

The title of duke was reserved for family members of the current King. The King may, if he so desires, assign anyone he wishes to the title of Duke, although traditionally, the title was only given to immediate family members.

There are only five duchies in the Reign of Men: Sandbourne, Willingsgate, Farthershore, Craigscliff and Villianshire. These five duchies eventually became eclipsed by the Cities that grew up within their borders, making the title of duke nearly useless. Of the five duchies remaining, only one has been filled...

Iscona Urson: The Duchess of Iscona

The current Duke of Villainshire is the King's younger sister, Iscona. She resides in the castle that overlooks the Great City of Vanta. The other castles remain empty until a new King is elected and brings with him more siblings. Or, until he and his wife have a child (their only son was killed serving in the King's Courage).

Iscona has political ambitions of her own, but she has always been overshadowed by her brother. She has gathered some support for the next King's Election but many have told her that her brother will win if she runs against him. And so, the Duchess of Iscona must find a way to make sure her brother *doesn't* run in the next election...

Dukes and Cities

Sandbourne	Jinix
Willingsgate	Ajun
Farthershore	Shavay
Craigscliff	Tamerclimb
Hawksmoor	Vanta



The Vampire Duchess

Ashivaeyr Mezzet wanted to live forever and was willing to do anything to get it. She made a deal and got more than she bargained for. Buried alive, she survived three days in a coffin, then dug her way out. Once she was free, she was immortal, but a creature who could only survive on the lives of others.

Few know her secret. Many suspect her dark truth, but none have been able to prove it. All those who have tried have died. So far.

The King of Men

Unlike all other nobles, the title of “the King of Men” is an elected position. The people elect the King who serves a term of ten years. If he is popular enough, he may win subsequent elections and maintain his title indefinitely. Over the centuries, his power has faded—stripped away by the Senate—but he still maintains an important role in human politics.

The King may veto any decision made by the Senate. His veto may be overturned by a three-fifths majority re-vote, but this is often difficult in the fractious Senate.

The King may also introduce laws to the Senate. He does this on a specific day—the fifteenth day of the Moon of the Elk—and any laws he introduces are voted upon by the Senate.

The King is also allowed to create knights: men and women he has given the authority to “mete the King’s justice.” There are many degrees of knighthood—each with its own duties—and while this title is largely ceremonial, winning the honor brings fame, glory and one thousand gold pieces.

Because of an obscure clause in the description of the King’s authority, he is also allowed “one hundred magistrates who may travel the land to protect the weak and bring justice to the wicked.” Many Kings often overlooked this clause, but lately, a trend of creating bands of knights willing to put themselves in harm’s way to serve the King has become quite fashionable.

Finally, the King has his own personal guard who protect him and his family.

Jadna Ursen, the King of Men

The current King is a mountain of a man named Jadna Ursen. A northerner and a widower with two grown children, he spent his youth as a King’s knight and served as a Senator for one term. When he entered the race, he was seen as a dark horse,

but won the crown with little money a bit of luck and a lot of charisma. He has served seven of his first ten years. He is a popular King, although the Senate thinks less of him than the people. He has twice forced laws upon them they disapproved of but could not reject because of his popularity.

His one hundred knights—the King’s Courage—are nearly as famous as he is. The leader of his Courage, Vanessa Lynde, is the subject of countless theatricals, stories and songs. Rumors of a romance between the knight and her widower King are so ubiquitous, the truth of the matter has become almost meaningless. Lynde is responsible for twenty groups of five knights each. She has served as the “King’s Knight” for three of the King’s seven years. She was the first of the King’s Knights to recruit non-humans into the ranks; a decision that has proven highly controversial in some parts of the Reign.

Recently, Ursen has noticed numbness in the fingers of his right hand. The numbness spread to his arm and has transformed into a dull pain. He has secretly consulted philosophers and doctors, but no one can identify the cause. He has kept his illness secret, for if the Senate were to learn of it, they would surely use it against him.

A Noble’s Courage

Twenty years ago, the Lady Quin took advantage of her wealth and put together a small band of soldiers with the sole command of “Keep my lands safe.” The band of men and women did just that, carrying Lady Quin’s banner wherever they went, protecting villagers and townsfolk from ogres, cultists and other dangers. Eventually, they dubbed themselves, “Lady Quin’s Courage.” The idea caught on and others started adopting the tradition.

Twenty years later, most Lords and Ladies have their own Courage. The band of heroes carries the banner of their sponsor and carries out their sponsor’s will. But not all Courages

are as noble as Lady Quin's. In fact, some are notorious for their abuse of power.

Rivalries between Courages created a yearly event—during the Uvali Festival—where they participate in contests of skill and prowess. “The Test of Courages” is one of the most popular events at the Festival, bringing viewers from all over the Reign.

The Law of the Reign

The Reign's laws are based on a principle of rights. That is, the Reign recognizes its citizens have certain rights and offers to protect those rights. In exchange, the people pay taxes, obey laws, etc. This is the basis of all laws, crimes and penalties in the Reign.

For example, murder is a crime because it violates another citizen's right to be alive. Theft is a crime because it violates another citizen's right to own property. All laws in the Reign are based on this principle.

While the Senate dictates the laws of the Reign, it is up to each City to enforce those laws. The Senate cannot directly enforce laws, only write them. (There is an exception, the palatine, which we will discuss, below.) That means each City dictates what the punishment shall be for each crime.

The Governor of each City hires judges to carry out the justice of the City. Judges do not use precedent to dictate the punishment of a crime, but instead, rely upon the circumstances of the case. In the Reign, circumstance and human judgment dictate punishment, not the rule of the Senate. In other words, a judge may hear two cases of theft in a day and give very different punishments for those murders, based entirely on the circumstances.

Within the courtroom, a judge hears arguments from both the accuser and the accused. Often, a local official, such as a member of the City Watch,

will stand as the accuser. City Watch offices who can afford to do so sometimes hire professional accusers: men and women who are knowledgeable about the law and who are convincing enough to make sound and valid arguments. Likewise, the accused may also employ a professional defender to speak in their behalf. While the Reign recognizes a citizen's right to hire a defendant, he does not automatically have the right to one in court.

After the judge hears both sides of the argument, he renders his decision. That decision, as mentioned before, is based on the arguments of the accused and the accuser and not on previous legal decisions handed down from “higher” courts.

The Reign played with the concept of precedent for a while, arguing that similar cases should result in similar punishments and that attaching specific consequences to specific acts protected the courtroom from arbitrary decisions, but the Reign found that precedent was too binding, preferring that judges be allowed to dictate the outcome of a case based on their own intelligence and the circumstances of the case.

Unfortunately, this has led to much corruption in the Cities. Bribery, self-interest and other factors have made many courtrooms across the Reign little more than mockeries of their original intent. While some judges maintain a sense of honor within their courtrooms, more often than not, payment wins over evidence.

Crimes against the City

When a citizen commits a crime against a City official—such as a judge or City Watch or governor—he has committed a crime against the City itself. Such crimes are considered particularly heinous and are dealt with harshly.

Also, interfering with City business, such as bribing a judge or another city official, is also considered a crime against the City itself and dealt with in proper fashion.

Crimes against the Reign

The Senate may become involved in a case if it is a “crime against the Reign.” Such crimes include acts against officials of the Reign, such as senators, is also considered particularly grievous and may even involve Senate officials investigating and punishing the accused.

Fines

Most cases that involve a finding of guilty include a fine to the court. Fines can be as small or large as the judge sees fit. Smaller offenses usually involve smaller fines, but larger offenses include greater fines.

If a citizen is not able to “pay his due” to the court, he must work off the fine in public service. This can include time in prison, repairs to public buildings, street cleaning, etc.

Crimes

The following is a list of the most common crimes in the Reign and her cities.

Assault

The Reign defines assault as either committing or threatening to commit bodily harm upon another citizen of the Reign. Assault is a serious crime in the Reign, often referred to as the “step down” crime. That is, it is one step down from murder. The most common punishment is “custody,” which you can read about, below.

Bribery

Bribing a public official is a very serious crime: a crime against all the people that official has under his authority. The most common punishment for bribery is public humiliation and beating, although some judges have prescribed exile and prison.

Murder

Murder robs another citizen of his life. It is the most wicked crime a citizen of the Reign can commit. The Reign does not distinguish between “types” of murder: taking another citizen’s life, regardless of the circumstances, is what the courts of the Reign call “the highest crime.”

At the same time, the Reign also recognizes that its citizens have the right to protect themselves from injury and harm. Thus, the self-defense clause exists. If a citizen is faced with violence, he has the right to protect himself “within reasonable means.” Most judges accept self-defense as justification for violence, but murder is still a touchy subject. Citizens who claim self-defense as a justification for murder have a long road ahead of them; they must prove to the judge that they had no other recourse but to take the life of the victim. Otherwise, it’s just murder.

Because murder is seen in such a light, capital punishment does not exist in the Reign. Long ago, the citizens of the Reign decided that the government does not have the right to take the lives of its own citizens. In the landmark decision, Senator Victus Adel wrote, “Murder is the highest crime of all, an act that no citizen shall ever bear the right to have. Why then shall we allow the state to have such a right?”

The punishment for murder is usually either imprisonment or exile, however, a judge in Ashcolmb, Ubek Swans, recently passed down a sentence that has become popular with other judges in the city: blinding. The criminal’s hands are bound behind him and red-hot poker are burned into his eye sockets. While some judges see the act as cruel, others see it as just. “He sent one man to the darkness,” wrote Ubek Swans, “let him live his life in the same darkness.”

The court may also find that a murder is accidental, and thus, not murder. The Reign is very clear on this: murder is the willing taking

The punishments we
imagine for those
who break our laws
are far more cruel
than the crimes
they commit.

— Soren Fal, Arcane
Order of the Shepherd

of another citizen's life. The murderer must have the intent to carry out the crime, and then do so. Unintentional killing is not murder.

Theft

The Reign recognizes three kinds of theft. The first is simple *thievery*: using deception to deprive another citizen of their rightful possessions. This includes pick pocketing, grift games, embezzlement, counterfeiting, tax evasion and other uses of duplicitousness. The second is *burglary*: breaking into another citizen's home for the purpose of taking rightfully owned possessions. Finally, *robbery* is using violence or the threat of violence to take rightfully owned possessions from another citizen.

Because theft and robbery generally do not involve violence, they are considered lesser crimes and are often punished by a fine. Fines usually include a payment to the court as well as payment to the victim. More serious punishments have been known to include the removal of fingers, hands and tattoos marking the convicted party a "THIEF." Typically, the tattoo goes on the forehead. And yes, removing the tattoo—magically or otherwise—is a crime against the City.

Punishments

Here is a list of the standard punishments you can find in the Reign.

Corporal Punishment

Most crimes call some sort of corporal punishment. Usually, a member of the City Watch performs the duty.

Whipping is the most common punishment. Depending on the crime, a man is whipped once for every (gold, copper or silver) coin he owes the City. He may be flogged less if he can manage to discretely bribe the man with the whip before the flogging begins.

Dunking is another popular form of corporal punishment. The criminal gets dunked into the well a number of times equal to the coin he owes. He remains under the water for as long as the Watch feels is necessary for him to properly serve his punishment. While it is technically illegal for the Watch to murder someone by dunking, it does happen from time to time. The Watch is usually fined an amount equal to the dead criminal's fine. Needless to say, drowning occurs on a regular basis.

Other forms of punishment—the rack, the public stocks, etc.—are also used. The duration of the punishment always depends on the fine.

Custody

“Custody” puts the criminal in the possession of the victim for a period of time. The criminal is stripped of his right to own possessions and must act as a servant for the victim. Often, victims relinquish this right, handing over the time to the state to do as they wish. While in custody, the criminal is expected to do as he is told while the victim is responsible for the criminal’s well-being. (This is why many victims choose to have the state carry out the custody rather than themselves.)

Exile

Some Cities choose to exile their criminals. The man or woman receives a brand (“[City] EXILE”) on the back of the hand or the forehead and sent from the City, never to return. They may choose to find life elsewhere—in another City, if they can—but they may *never* return to the City from which they were exiled.

Some exiles choose to remove the brand with either magical or mundane tools, but if discovered, such an act can be seen as a “crime against the City” and punished appropriately. Returning to the City, ignoring the order, can also be seen in the same light.

Fines

For minor crimes, the first fine levied against the accused is usually a fine. If the guilty party cannot pay the fine, a more stern punishment is in order.

Hard Labor

The Reign has many mines and fields that need working to maintain its economy. If a guilty man cannot pay for his crimes, he can be shipped out to work off his debt.

Prison

Prisoning citizens has become a controversial subject in the Reign. Many cities see imprisonment as inhumane, degrading and expensive. Others see it as the best solution to an impossible problem.

Bounty Hunters

Faced with overwhelming crime and lack of funds, many cities have turned to the use of bounty hunters. These men are given “special privilege” by the city to hunt down and capture criminals. They are considered officers of the city and are not bound by laws against assault. Sometimes, in extreme cases, they are not even bound by laws preventing robbery and murder.

The Death Penalty

The Reign has no death penalty. At the beginning of the Reign, the Senators decided that the government should not have the right to kill its own citizens. This stemmed from a long history of nobility killing those it was sworn to protect.

The concept is a controversial one, but many cities claim they have had nothing but success. Cities such as Jinix and Ashcolmb employ more bounty hunters than actual officials, while cities like Vinnick and Tamberclimb wonder why a city would need bounty hunters at all.

The Order of Palatines

The Order of Palatines was established at the beginning of the Reign along side the Senate. For centuries, knights served kings as men and women who guarded their lords' realms against invaders and other dangers. Palatines were established as "the people's knights." Rather than serving a lord, they served the common men and women of the Reign.

To become a palatine, one must travel to Tamerclimb. The long road that winds up through the mountains is no easy journey. Then, once there, men and women cannot petition the Order itself, but a palatine.

Our potential candidate—a young woman from Jinix—makes "the climb" to the City. Once there, she finds a palatine and asks to petition him for membership. Most palatines will ignore such petitioners, knowing that many (if not most) within the Reign are not worthy of the station. Our petitioner follows him wherever he goes. She must follow him with no money in her pockets, no shoes on her feet. She follows him and speaks to no one. She may only eat what is given to her. Many in Tamerclimb see petitioners and offer them food, but if a palatine feels the people are too generous, he may take it himself or refuse the offer. If he refuses, the petitioner receives nothing.

(Also, an important note: a palatine may only have one petitioner at a time.)

This little ritual lasts as long as the palatine sees fit. It could be days, weeks or even months. When a palatine feels the petitioner has earned respect, he will usually give her a pair of shoes. This indicates the palatine has recognized that she is worthy of following him. Soon thereafter, the palatine will bring his petitioner to the Great Hall in Tamerclimb, where he officially names her as his "shield carrier." She will spend three years thereafter learning the history of the Order, learning the history of the Reign, learning the Law and learning how to protect the people.

But each of these is a single step. Each year is a single step toward becoming a palatine. The City of Tamerclimb reaches high into the sky and contains three "tiers." The first tier is the Tier of the Book. Here, our shield carrier learns the history of the Reign and the history of the Order. The palatines test her, and if she is found worthy, she may climb to the second tier.

The second tier of the City is called the Tier of the Scales. Here, our potential palatine learns the Law. She learns why laws work the way they do, how to make judgments and how to execute the law. If she is worthy, she may climb to the third tier.

The third tier is called the Tier of the Shield. Here, she learns how to use shield and sword to protect the people of the Reign. While the sword is an important symbol in the Order, the most important symbol is the shield. The shield protects the people—the first order of business for a palatine. A palatine learns that if she must use her sword, it is because she has failed to use

the shield. A palatine only needs to use the sword to avenge if she has failed to use the shield to protect.

(Consider this for a moment: an apprentice palatine is called a “shield carrier.” The distinguished honor of carrying a palatine’s shield is greater than the honor of carrying his sword.)

Finally, if she is found worthy, our potential palatine climbs to the sacred fourth tier. A place where only palatines may go. The climb is treacherous: there is no path. The palatine must climb the last mountain, finding her own way. If she succeeds in the climb, she enters the Grand Hall of the Palatines. She is given a scales (to judge), a sword (to avenge) and a shield (to protect). Then, she is told to go back into the world the way she came. Climbing back down the mountain into the world below. Into the Reign. To judge, to avenge, but most importantly, to protect.

Fast Path Palatines

It has become customary in the Senate these days to create palatines without “sending them up the mountain.” These “fast path palatines” (not a complimentary epithet) do not undergo the same training as those who have climbed the mountain. However, due to the need for new palatines, the Senate has permitted “quick rituals” to fulfill the need.

Of course, the Grand Hall in Tamerclimb is not happy with this decision and those who have made the Climb regard these fast pathers as “lesser” palatines.

The shadow hand

In recent years, a few in the Senate have whispered about the effectiveness of the palatines. Of course, none of them would question the order openly (those who have quickly found themselves voted out of office), but a very quiet concern has been raised. The palatines act on their own accord, often without the permission or even knowledge of the Senators. In fact, some in the

The grand Master

The current Grand Master of Palatines is a man named Maeko Conredare. The Grand Master had an unorthodox rise to the position. Having lost his inheritance to his older sister, Conredare took the “fast path” to becoming a palatine. He served the Senate for six years, but could never earn the respect of those who considered themselves “true palatines.” So, he grew his beard and hair long, changed his name and made the climb. When he reached the Tier of the Shield, the Grand Master asked him to write his name in the Grand Ledger. He said, “It is already there.”

Conredare continued his career for twenty years, becoming well-known in the Reign. Most tales of his deeds are highly exaggerated by bards, but even if the truth were to be known, they would still be highly dubious.

When Adolphus Ressus passed, a new Grand Master was needed. The Council voted and almost unanimously chose Conredare. The position is a bit of a mixed blessing. Although he is growing older, Conredare still views his chief duty to be protecting the citizens of the Reign, not sitting as a figurehead. He is also trying to eliminate the prejudice between “true” palatines and the “fast paths.” But this effort, he realizes is largely symbolic. He travels down the mountain as often as he can, continuing his “adventures” while maintaining the bureaucracy of the Order. But his bones are beginning to grow old, and he knows he has only a few adventures left.

Senate believe the palatines consider themselves above the Senate, and thus, above its authority.

This led to the quiet implementation of a new organization. A group of men and women who act upon the Senate's will without question. The organization is known only to a few and they hide its funding in cleverly worded taxes. To those who know, it is called "the Shadow Hand," and those men and women who operate under its charge are known as "the Senate's Shadows."

Shadows operate without explicit Senate authority. That is, unlike palatines, shadows cannot simply show a "shadow badge" and save themselves from the local authorities. Instead, they operate alone (or in pairs), carrying out the Senate's orders. If they are caught or captured, they are told to ensure the security and secrecy of the order at all costs.

At all costs.

If it means murdering a mayor, so be it.

If it means burning down a village, so be it.

If it means swallowing poison... so be it.

Playing the Shadow Hand

So, there's this guy. He's in every game group. He's a really big fan of X-Men's Wolverine and The Punisher. He's a loner. He does things by himself and he likes it that way. You, in fact, may be that guy.

After reading about the shadow hand, you may be tempted to play one. I have one piece of advice for you.

Don't.

Nobody likes that guy. They pretend they do. But in secret, if he stopped showing up to games, nobody would complain.

Playing the shadow hand isn't an opportunity for you to wear a trench coat, stick to the shadows and pretend you're mysterious. It's tricky. Roleplaying is a group activity. If it were TV, someone would call the players "an ensemble cast." You have to contribute to the group.

Now, I'm not saying you can't play a sneaky character (there's a reason Mr. Waszkiewicz has the nickname "Scorpion Dan" in our group), but you should always be asking the question, "How am I contributing to the story and the group?" If your goal is to sabotage the group, don't play a shadow hand. If your goal is to have fun regardless of the other players, don't play a shadow hand.

You should be using your time and energy finding excuses to work with the group, not against them. You should be playing out the conflicted loyalty you have toward the Senate and your friends. You should let your loyalty to the Senate get tested, especially when it orders you to do something immoral. You are a hero, after all. Sure, a flawed hero, but a hero nonetheless.

Just because we've put shadow hands in the game doesn't give you an excuse to be a jerk.

In other words, don't be that guy.

The Mystery Cult of the Makers

It was only a century ago. Now look at them.

They say it started in Ashcolmb, but other Cities had small temples as well. At least, as far as I can tell.

In a few years, those small temples grew. They bought larger buildings and gathered more followers. Now, every City has at least

three temples. Some Cities have even more. I've even heard that Senators have joined.

Do they believe everything they're taught in those secret meetings of theirs? I don't know. But I've seen them carrying their symbols--their "holy symbols"--all across the Reign. I don't like it. But they're everywhere.

The Maker Mystery Cult is a recent phenomenon in the Reign of Men. Ashcolmb scholar Lucius Vren claims the first "temple" was in his home City, and there is some evidence for that claim, but as far as university philosophers can determine, the temples arose spontaneously across the Reign.

While the cult maintains its secrecy, its members are highly evangelical. It has grown quickly, bringing in thousands of new members each year. The members are sworn to secrecy, initiated and then encouraged to bring others into the fold.

The cult teaches its members that the values and virtues of humanity are the result of direct guidance from "the Makers." The Makers are a group of beings who created the world and humanity itself. They want men to learn virtue, and do so through a complicated system of symbols.

At first, scholars believed the Makers were only allegory, but as external knowledge of the cult's secret teachings grew, it became clear that believing in the Makers as actual figures was a part of the cult's teachings.

A pamphlet entitled, *The Lie of the Makers* was first seen in the Capital. It revealed many of the secret rites and rituals of the Maker cult including its deepest teachings. It said the Maker cult taught its followers to bow and revere statues

of the Makers, to ask forgiveness for failures of character and subjugation to their authority.

The cult denied the charges, claiming the pamphlet was pure fiction. But *The Lie of the Makers* had already done its damage. Violence against both followers and temples broke out all across the Reign. But instead of fighting back against the violence, the followers of the Makers did something completely unexpected: they did not resist.

The Cult of the Makers teaches that violence is the greatest failure of mankind. And so, as rioters threw rocks and stones at the temples, the cultists exited, sat in front of the temple and bowed their heads. As they were pelted with rocks and broken glass, they chanted, "Raising a hand against another is raising a hand against a brother."

In the span of a single day, hundreds of Maker cultists were killed. Thousands were injured. And violent protest against the cult nearly vanished overnight.

To this day, the Maker Cult still gains thousands of initiates every year. While many speak out against its teachings, none can disagree that the Cult of the Makers is a powerful force within the Reign.

Hierarchy

The cult has three levels of initiation: initiates, seekers and priests.

The first level, initiates, are walked through a ritual that introduces them to the most basic level of the mystery.

Seekers are those who have proven their devotion and given a higher understanding of the symbols and allegories of the cult.

Finally, priests are those who have gained the deepest insight into the mysteries of the Makers. Their understanding of the symbols is so profound, they can commune with the Makers themselves.

Within the temple, the hierarchy means little in terms of authority. All initiates, seekers and priests are “brothers” and “sisters.” All are equal under the eyes of the Makers. Those who are higher in the hierarchy see it as their duty to help those who are lower step closer to Truth. And what exactly is the Truth? Well...

The First Mystery: Making the World

Long ago, there was Nothing. And then the Makers came from Elsewhere and they made the world.

The First Sister looked at the Nothing with her blind eyes and said, “This is how we shall begin.” She used her Trowel to gather the Nothing and shaped it into the mountains of the world.

Then, the Second Sister said, “You are blind, Sister, so you cannot see the sky is black. And everyone else will need light to see their work.” And so she used her Brush and painted the Sun, the Moon and the Stars on the sky.

The First Brother saw what she did. He used his Hammer to strike down upon what she made and that which was weak was turned into dirt and soil and powerful stones.

Then, the Third Sister saw the holes he left behind and filled it with the waters from her Pitcher. And from this, she made the lakes, seas and oceans. But her Pitcher also made the Sky blue. The Makers looked at this and said, “For half the Day, the Sky will be blue and half the Day, the Sky will be black.”

Then, the Twins walked the world, the first with his Hoe and the second with her Burlap Sack. Where the Brother tilled the soil, the

Sister followed close behind and threw seeds. From their footsteps came all the plants and trees and things that grow in the world.

The Fourth Sister saw the things her Siblings made and said, “Dear siblings I am not talented like you. You all created such lovely wonders for this paradise of ours. All I can offer is to weave our story into the hearts of our creations so they may understand the love and care they have been sculpted with.” And so she used her Loom and began weaving the Story of the World.

The Second Brother said to himself, “It is not fair that only the Makers have Fire. The ones below should have it, too.” And so, with his Cloak, he snuck up to the Sun and stole some of the Fire. And he hit it in the Trees and other places so that others could find it. But because the fire burned him, it made his skin black and the other Makers knew what he did.

The Last Sister had no tools. She only had her hands. And with her hands, she took everything that her Brothers and Sisters had made and shaped it into the Birds and the Fishes and the animals that crawl and run. She made them, one by one. But she saved her greatest creation for last: she created Men. The others looked at what she had done and said, “This is the greatest creation of all.”

Then, when they were finished, the Last Brother approached the others, his face full of pride, and he said, “Look what I made!” The other Makers saw it and saw it was steel. “You fool!” they told him. “They will use that to destroy each other!” And so, the Makers took the steel and broke it apart and hid it deep in the world. But the Third Brother was angry and he brought storms and earthquakes to wreck and ruin what the others had made.

Teachings

The Cult espouses a philosophy they call, “the Branching Way of Life.” It teaches the faithful that the greatest virtues and values humanity achieves come from higher sources.

The Makers created the world and all within it. The Makers are beings who live outside reality in a place called “Elsewhere.” They speak to the faithful in their dreams and during vision quests. During the last couple centuries, they have begun to speak strongly to a select few. Priests who can hear their intentions so strongly, they can write the words down. The priests often spend the rest of their lives instructing others with the wisdom the Makers have given them.

They call themselves the Branching Way of Life, because while each follower may be a branch on a great tree, the core is always the same.

The Makers have heard humanity’s need. The starving children, the broken widows, the invading races. The Makers have been moved by the pleas of a few, to act on behalf of the many. Thus, they help those here make a difference. They instruct them, they guide them and they give power to their hands.

There are many Branches, and while most intermingle, there are a few darker Branches. The ones who allow their Faithful to act in ways that might appall those in the visible branches. However, the Makers know that they must defend their flock. They are not above finding the faithful willing to follow this need.

The Makers know what is best for humanity, and now that they are here, humanity stands a chance. They understand humanity is unique and different, and offer many branches so that all of humanity may join them.

One day, when all of humanity embraces the Makers, they will be able to walk among us. Gods and goddesses, loving and wise. They will bring with them, the faithful they have collected, and those who have gone before will join us, and impart the wisdom they have learned. Our loved ones will return, in all the glory of their newly formed beings. Elevated servants of the Makers.

Until then, our disbelief holds them back. We must believe, with all our beings. We must follow the branch we choose. We must serve them willingly and faithfully, and only then, will they bring us heaven on earth.

Human Racial Traits

- +2 to Strength, Constitution or Dexterity and +2 Intelligence, Wisdom or Charisma
- Medium: Humans have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- Movement: Base speed of 30ft.
- The Will of Men: Gain +1 racial bonus to all Will Saves. At 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th character level, gain an additional +1 bonus. Men are creatures of will; their will carries them through a harsh world of politics and physical dangers.
- Improved Teamwork: Humans count every member of their party as having the same Teamwork Feats they have. No matter size of the group, humans know how to work with others, even if they aren’t human.
- Rally: Whenever a human threatens a critical on an attack roll, all allies within 30ft gains a +1 rally bonus to attack and damage for the next round. This bonus increases for every consecutive threatened critical in the same combat to a maximum bonus equal to their Charisma modifier. Humans can drive others

to new heights of determination through shouts of inspiration and encouragement.

- **Skillful:** Choose one skill that permanently counts as a class skill. Additionally, gain a +2 racial bonus to that skill. The bonus gains an additional +1 every four character levels. Humans pursue a wide range of careers and live in a multitude of conditions, and as a result learn to excel in many different skills.
- **Hometown:** Humans pick one city in the Reign to be their hometown. Each hometown has two “city skills.” If a human has a bonus of at least +4 in one city skill, they gain one bonus feat. If they have a bonus of at least +4 in both city skills, they gain two bonus feats. Check sidebar for which skills are related to cities. Every city in the Reign is known for producing a certain kind of person. When a human matches up with the ideals of their hometown they start with a leg up.
- **Hometown Advantage:** When humans are in the city they were born, they gain a +2 racial bonus to all Social rolls. Additionally humans gain +2 Favored Terrain (Hometown). Humans know their hometown like the back of their hand. Every street, every common merchant and all of the people are easily recalled from days of childhood.
- **Language:** Humans begin play speaking Common and Human (Hometown Dialect). Humans with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

City Bonuses

City	Skills
Millford	Survival & Profession (Trapper)
Nevarnare	Diplomacy & Perform (Oratory)
Ajun	Sense Motive & Knowledge (Philosophy)
Tomkin	Handle Animal & Profession (Merchant)
Vanta	Intimidate & Profession (Soldier)
Tamberclimb	Ride & Knowledge (Law)
Shavay	Perception & Profession (Roadman)
Jinix	Sleight of Hand & Profession (Smuggler)
Ashclomb	Appraise & Bluff
Vinnick	Linguistics & Knowledge (Arcana)

Languages and Dialects

Men have their own language—human—as well as a number of dialects.

Each City has its own dialect: a unique way of speaking that includes accent, body language, slang, jargon and other distinctions. You can always tell where a human is from by his dialect.

Humans know the dialect of their own City. Each rank of the linguistics skill gives a human one additional dialect for free (including the other language you learn).

Using the correct dialect in a City improves the attitude of any NPCs by one rank.

New Feats

Human Knowledge Feats

Love of Knowledge

You pursue *philosophia*, the love of knowledge.

Prerequisites: Human, any Knowledge skills 4 ranks total.

Benefit: You may make untrained Knowledge skill checks, even if you do not have any ranks in the Knowledge skill, regardless of the DC of the skill check. Once per day per four character levels (minimum of once per day), you may ruminate on a subject for 2 minutes in order to take 20 on a Knowledge skill check. As usual, you may only take 20 if you are not under stress or threat and have uninterrupted time to consider the question.

Normal: You may only make untrained Knowledge skill checks if the DC is 10 or less. You may not take 20 on Knowledge skill checks.

Human Teamwork Feats

Human Tactics

Humans know how to fight well with others, and in time, they can teach others to fight well with them.

Prerequisites: Human, Profession (Soldier) 5 Ranks

Benefit: As a standard action, you can grant one teamwork feat to all allies within 30 feet who can see and hear you. Allies retain the use of this bonus feat for 3 rounds plus 1 round for every two character levels you possess. Allies do not need to meet the prerequisites of this bonus feat. You can do this a number of times a day equal to your Wisdom Bonus.

Human Rally Feats

Saving Rally

Some humans can do more than just inspire a better attack.

Prerequisites: Human, Diplomacy 6 Ranks or Intimidate 6 Ranks

Benefit: When you threaten a critical hit, instead of using the Rally ability, you can use the Saving Rally ability. Saving Rally affects an ally who has failed a Will saving throw during the encounter and is still under the effects of the failure. Make either a Diplomacy or an Intimidate Check; the result counts as a new saving throw result for the ally against one effect; your choice of which effect to attempt the save against. This cannot be used on yourself.

Extended Rally

The more intense your words, the further they can reach.

Prerequisites: Human, Saving Rally, Base Attack Bonus +10, Diplomacy 10 Ranks or Intimidate 10 Ranks

Benefit: You can extend the range of the Rally ability to 60ft. If you use the Saving Rally ability instead, you can affect a number of extra targets equal to your Charisma Bonus.

Sorcerer's Rally

Hearing the right words can help the magically gifted to new heights.

Prerequisites: Human, Extended Rally, Spellcraft 5 Ranks, Diplomacy 13 Ranks or Intimidate 13 Ranks

Benefit: When you threaten a critical hit, instead of using the Rally ability, you can use the Sorcerer's Rally ability. Sorcerer's Rally allows you to select one ally with caster levels

Alternate Rally Rules

Normally whenever you threaten a critical hit, you can attempt to activate a rally. If your players would prefer, you can use rally anytime you score a successful hit but, you only get 3 + Charisma modifier uses of rally per day. You still must make a Charisma check vs. DC 10 + CR of target to get the effect of the rally. If your Charisma check is unsuccessful, it still counts as a use of your rally.

and make a Spellcraft Check DC 10 + their Caster Level. If successful, add your current Rally Bonus * 2 to their caster level for the next round.

Inspirational Rally

With the right words, people can be called to act.

Prerequisites: Human, Sorcerer's Rally, Diplomacy 17 Ranks

Benefit: When you threaten a critical hit, instead of using the Rally ability you can use the Inspirational Rally ability. Inspirational Rally allows you select one ally and one enemy they can attack without moving within 60ft of yourself. Make a Diplomacy Check DC 10 + CR of the selected enemy. If successful, the ally makes an attack against the enemy. They gain a *morale* bonus to attack and damage equal to your current Rally Bonus * 3 for the attack. Melee, Ranged, Touch and Ranged Touch attacks can be used with the power.

Menacing Rally

The terror you can inspire in your enemies is frightful.

Prerequisites: Human, Sorcerer's Rally, Intimidate 17 Ranks

Benefit: When you threaten a critical hit, instead of using the Rally ability you can use the Menacing Rally ability. Menacing Rally allows you to make a Intimidation Check DC 10 + CR of your target. If successful, all enemies within 60ft take a penalty to all attack and damage equal to your current Rally Bonus * 3 for the next round. Penalties from Menacing Rally do not stack; only use the highest current penalty.

The Triumph of Men

Men are Exceptional and do Exceptional Deeds.

Prerequisites: Human, Inspirational Rally or Menacing Rally, Diplomacy 20 Ranks or Intimidate 20 Ranks

Benefit: When you threaten a critical hit, instead of using the Rally ability, you can use The Triumph of Men ability. The Triumph of Men allows all humans, including yourself, who are allies, to regain $\frac{1}{4}$ of their maximum hit points + your current Rally Bonus * 4 and remove any conditions that they wish to remove. This can only be used once per day.

Human Hometown Feats

Home Away From Home

While a human may have been born in one city, it's possible they grew up or have lived a long time in a different city.

Prerequisites: Human, Knowledge (Chosen City) 7 Ranks, own home in the Chosen City

Benefit: You gain the benefits of Hometown Advantage in the Chosen City. This feat can be taken multiple times but only Cities in the Reign of Men can be your Chosen City.

New cleric Archetype: Philosopher

The philosopher replaces the cleric in the Reign of Men. Having no gods, humans look to themselves for strength, drawing upon their own will to change the world around them. The philosopher represents man's quest for knowledge. He uses his intellect and reason to challenge the mysteries around him, shining a fragile light in a dark world.

Requirements: Human

Class Skills

The philosopher class skills are Appraise (Int), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (arcana) (Int), Knowledge (engineering) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (law) (Int), Knowledge (nobility) (Int), Knowledge (philosophy) (Int), Knowledge (planes) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Ranks per Level: 5 + Int modifier

Class Features

The following are class features of the philosopher.

Focus: Instead of a holy symbol, a philosopher has a focus: a normally mundane item with

which she can channel through. It can be any mundane item that holds sentimental value to her such as a fan passed from mother to daughter or a lucky coin. When using the focus, add a +1 bonus to the DC of philosopher spells.

This ability replaces the need for a *holy symbol* and the *aura* ability.

Meditations & Insights: Instead of spells, philosophers have "meditations." Mechanically, spells and meditations work the same. Also instead of orisons philosophers have "insights." Again, mechanically these two work the same. If a philosopher takes the *humanity* or *philosophy* domain, she starts with one bonus insight.

This ability modifies *spells* and *orisons* class features.

Godless Domains: Philosophers can select any two domains, regardless of deity or alignment restrictions. This is subject to GM discretion. Philosophers can also choose from the Humanity and Philosophy domains.

This ability replaces the *domains* class feature.

Humanity Domain

Granted Powers: Your understanding of humanity and all of its merits and flaws allows you to influence and inspire other humans.

Brotherly Bond (Sp): As a standard action, you can gain a +2 *humanity* bonus to all Charisma based checks when interacting with humans. All non-hostile humans who would normally start lower on the Attitude Chart start at Friendly. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.

Disbelief (Sp): At 10th level, you can cast *true seeing* as a swift action, with a DC of 10 + 1/2 your philosopher level + your Wisdom modifier. The total number of minutes of this effect per day is equal to your philosopher level. The rounds do not need to be consecutive, and

you can dismiss the effect at any time as a free action. Each attempt to use this ability consumes 1 round of its duration, whether or not the creature succeeds its save to resist the effect.

Domain Spells: 1st—bless, 2nd—eagle’s splendor, 3rd—dispel magic, 4th—tongues, 5th—righteous might, 6th—eagle’s splendor, mass, 7th—holy word, 8th—holy aura, 9th—heal, mass.

Philosophy Domain

Granted Powers: Your knowledge of philosophy is not just a basic understanding of facts and ideas; it is a way of life.

Second Thought (Sp): As a standard action, you can re-roll any Knowledge check when you dislike the result. You can use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Wisdom modifier.

Clarity (Sp): At 14th level, you are *always* aware when you have fallen under a magical effect controlling your actions. In addition, you can ignore magical effects that control your actions or influence your mind. The total number of rounds per day is equal to your philosopher level. The rounds do not need to be consecutive, and the effect automatically happens as an immediate action. Each round you are affected consumes 1 round of its duration.

Domain Spells: 1st—comprehend languages, 2nd—calm emotions, 3rd—invisibility purge, 4th—imbue with spell ability, 5th—atonement, 6th—owl’s wisdom, mass, 7th—scrying, greater, 8th—antimagic field, 9th—astral projection.

New Paladin Archetype: Palatine

The palatine replaces the paladin in the Reign of Men. Having no gods to worship, men call upon the power of their own will. The palatine is the embodiment of that ideal. Focused,

disciplined and devoted to justice and honor, the palatine represents what is best in men.

Requirements: Human

Class Skills

The palatine class skills are Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (law) (Int), Knowledge (nobility) (Int), Profession (Wis), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spellcraft (Int).

Class Features

The following are class features of the palatine.

The Power of Will (Su): At 2nd level, a palatine gains a bonus equal to her Charisma modifier (if any) to Will Saves. Each ally within 10 feet of her gains a half her Charisma modifier (if any) to Will Saves.

This ability replaces the *divine grace* class feature.

Noble Uffred: At 2nd level, the palatine gains the companionship of an uffred in her crusade against evil. This mount functions as a druid’s animal companion, using the palatine’s level as her effective druid level. Uffred use the heavy horse stats but have an Intelligence of 8; they understand human speech but cannot speak in return.

At 11th level, the mount gains the *celestial creature* advanced simple template and becomes a magical beast for the purposes of determining which spells affect it.

At 15th level, a palatine’s mount gains *spell resistance* equal to the palatine’s level + 11.

Should the palatine’s uffred die, the palatine may not gain another mount for 30 days or until she gains a palatine level, whichever comes first. During this 30-day period, the palatine takes a –1 penalty on attack and weapon damage rolls.

This ability replaces the *lay on hands* class feature.

Man's Vigor (Ex): At 3rd level, a palatine is immune to all non-magical diseases. As a swift action they can grant this ability to an ally within 10 feet of them. A palatine can use this ability once per day at 3rd level, and one additional time per day for every three levels beyond 3rd, to a total of six times per day at 18th level.

This ability replaces the divine health class feature.

Relief (Su): At 3rd level, and every three levels until 12th level, a palatine learns new *reliefs*. As a standard action, a palatine can use any *reliefs* she currently knows but only one at a time. A *relief* can remove a condition caused by a curse, disease, or poison without curing the affliction; such conditions return after 1 hour. A palatine must be adjacent to the target to use *reliefs*. Each day, she can use this ability a number of times equal to 1/2 of her palatine level, plus her Charisma modifier.

At 3rd level, the palatine knows the following *reliefs*.

Fatigued: The target is no longer Fatigued.

Shaken: The target is no longer Shaken.

Sickened: The target is no longer Sickened.

At 6th level, a palatine learns the following *reliefs*.

Dazed: The target is no longer Dazed.

Diseased: The palatine's relief acts as remove disease, using the palatine's level as the caster level.

Staggered: The target is no longer staggered, unless the target is at exactly 0 hit points.

At 9th level, a palatine learns the following *reliefs*.

Cursed: The palatine's relief acts as remove curse, using the palatine's level as the caster level.

Exhausted: The target is no longer Exhausted.

Frightened: The target is no longer Frightened.

Nauseated: The target is no longer Nauseated.

Poisoned: The relief acts as neutralize poison, using the palatine's level as the caster level.

At 12th level, a palatine learns the following *reliefs*.

Blinded: The target is no longer Blinded.

Deafened: The target is no longer Deafened.

Paralyzed: The target is no longer Paralyzed.

Stunned: The target is no longer Stunned.

This ability replaces the *mercy* class feature.

Channel Positive Energy (Su): This ability functions like normal, but a palatine spends *relief* uses instead of *lay on hands* uses to use channel positive energy.

This ability modifies the *channel positive energy* class feature.

Meditations: Instead of spells, palatines have *meditations*. Mechanically, they work the same. She starts with one bonus 1st level meditation.

This ability modifies the *spells* class feature.

Bonded Weapon (Sp): This function a normal *divine bond* but the bond must be with a weapon. She names the weapon in an elaborate ritual, binding the weapon and herself. Instead of celestial spirits, the palatine channels her will through the weapon by invoking its name. A palatine cannot add *flaming*, *flaming burst* or *holy* to her bonded weapon.

This ability replaces the *divine bond* class feature.

Rally Feat: At 14th level, a palatine gains a bonus rally feat even if she does not qualify for it.

This ability replaces the *aura of faith* class feature.

Champion of the Reign (Ex): At 20th level, a palatine fully realizes her inner power and exactly what she can do with it. As swift actions, she can

grant the following bonuses to all allies within 30 feet: 1) all allies gain a +5 *hope* bonus to all saving throws, 2) are immune to all status conditions, 3) and all threatened critical automatically succeed. A palatine can use this ability for a number of rounds a day equal to 1/2 of her palatine level.

This ability replaces the *holy champion* class feature.

New Inquisitor Archetype: The Shadow Hand

Requirements: Human

Alignment: Any Non-Chaotic

Class Skills

The shadow hand replaces Knowledge (religion) with Knowledge (law).

Class Features

The following are class features of the shadow hand.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency:

A shadow hand does not have a deity that he worships. Instead, he gains one free martial weapon proficiency.

Meditations & Insights: Instead of spells, shadow hands have *meditations*. Mechanically they work the same. Also instead of *orisons* shadow hands have insights; again, mechanically they work the same. If a shadow hand takes the *humanity* or *philosophy* domain, he starts with one bonus insight.

This ability modifies spells and *orisons* class features.

Godless Domains: Shadow hands can select any domain, regardless of deity or alignment restrictions. Otherwise, godless domains functions like the normal inquisitor domains class feature. This is subject to GM discretion. Shadow hands can also choose from the *humanity* and *philosophy* domains.

This ability modifies the *domains* class feature.

Greater Improved Teamwork (Ex):

At 3rd level, a shadow hand gains double his normal bonus from teamwork feats when using improved teamwork.

This ability replaces the *solo tactics* class feature.

Mental Stalwart (Ex): At 11th level, a shadow hand can use superior mental resiliency to avoid certain attacks. If he makes a Will saving throw against an attack that has a reduced effect on a successful save, he instead avoids the effect entirely. This ability can only be used if the inquisitor is wearing light armor, medium armor, or no armor. A helpless shadow hand does not gain the benefit of the mental stalwart ability. In addition, a shadow hand doubles his racial bonus to will saving throws granted by the *will of men* racial trait.

This ability replaces the *stalwart* class feature.

The Judgment of Men (Su): At 20th level, a shadow hand can call the judgment of men down upon a foe during combat. Instead of using his judgment ability, the shadow hand can invoke the *judgment of men* on a foe as a standard action. Once declared, the target makes a will save to negate or they lose access to all class features, feats and use of magical items for the rest of the combat. The DC of this save is equal to 10 + 1/2 the inquisitor's level + the inquisitor's Wisdom modifier. Regardless of whether or not the save is made, the target creature is immune to the shadow hand's judgment of men ability for 24 hours. When this ability is in effect, the shadow hand cannot use any other judgment abilities.

This ability replaces the *true judgment* class feature.

New Oracle Mystery: The Makers

Requirements: Human

Class Skills

An oracle with the makers mystery adds Appraise, Knowledge (local), Linguistics and Ride to her list of class skills.

Class Features

The following are class features of the Makers.

Bonus Spells: sanctuary (2nd), grace (4th), create food & water (6th), oracle's vessel (8th), serenity (10th), joyful rapture (12th), regenerate (14th), divine vessel (16th), heal, mass (18th).

Revelations

Brush (Su): As a swift action, you may bless a paint brush and hold it in the air; it create a patch of sparkling yellow light centered on you with a 30 foot radius. If any allies fail a saving throw while inside the light they may make a second attempt with a bonus equal to your Charisma modifier. This also causes undead to flee as if panicked. Undead receive a Will save to negate the effect. The DC for this Will save is equal to 10 + 1/2 your oracle level + your Charisma modifier. Undead that fail their save flee for 1 minute. Intelligent undead receive a new saving throw each round to end the effect. You may use this ability a number of minutes a day equal to your oracle level. This duration does not need to be consecutive, but it must be spent in 1-minute increments.

Burlap Sack (Su): You gain a blessed burlap sack that appears empty at all times. As a swift action you may pull a seed from the burlap sack which can be consumed as a standard action. Any creature who consumes a seed from the burlap sack gains *regeneration* equal to their Constitution modifier for a number of rounds equal to your oracle level. You may use this ability a number of times a day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier.

Cloak (Su): As a standard action, you may place a grey cloak over any non-living object and then bless it. Once the cloak has been blessed, it cannot be moved and the object under it cannot be found. The cloak must completely cover the object for this ability to work. You can use the cloak for 1 hour per day per oracle level. This duration does not need to be consecutive, but it must be spent in 1-hour increments. You must be at least 7th level to select this revelation.

Hammer (Su): You may bless a hammer and hang it from your belt, granting you a +4 armor bonus. At 7th level, and every four levels thereafter, this bonus increases by +2. At 13th level, this armor also gains the *fortification* ability as though it was light armor. You can use this revelation for 1 hour per day per oracle level. The duration does not need to be consecutive, but it must be spent in 1-hour increments.

Hands (Su): As a standard action, you may transform any small non-living object (up to 1 cubic foot) into another small non-living object. The transformation lasts for 24 hours before the object reverts back. If the object is broken while transformed the pieces revert back into the original object unbroken. All transformed objects glow faintly.

Hoe (Su): As a standard action, you may bless a hoe and use it to make a melee touch attack. If your attack is successful, instead of dealing damage, the target is flat-footed for a number of rounds equal to 1/2 your oracle level. You may use this ability a number of times a day equal to 3 + your Charisma modifier.

Loom (Su): You may bless a loom and pluck a thread as an immediate action. When you pluck a string on the loom the current round restarts, meaning all actions taken in the current round

do not happen. All hit points return to their value before the round started, all spells and abilities used are regained and any effects that started in the current round do not happen. You may use the loom once per day. You must be at least 15th level to select this revelation.

Pitcher (Su): You may bless an empty pitcher. The pitcher fills a potion of *cure light wounds* containing 5 uses. If the potion is not used within 10 minutes, it turns into normal water. At 8th level, the pitcher can create a potion of *cure moderate wounds* potion. At 12th, level it can create a *potion of cure serious wounds*. At 16th level, it can create a *potion of cure critical wounds*. You may use this ability a number of times per day equal to 3 + your Charisma bonus.

Sword (Su): You may bless a sword and as a standard action you may use the *control weather* or the *earthquake* spell. If you use *control weather*, the casting time is 1 standard action but it still takes 10 minutes for the effects to manifest. You may use the sword once per day. You must be at least 15th level to select this revelation.

Trowel (Su): You may bless a trowel and then stick it into the ground to create a 15 ft aura centered on the trowel. Any allies inside of the aura gain a +2 to their Strength and Constitution scores. You can use this revelation for 1 minute per day per oracle level. The duration does not need to be consecutive, but it must be spent in 1-minute increments.

Final Revelation: Upon reaching 20th level, the secrets of creation are known to you. This allows you to use create *demiplane, greater* as a spell-like ability once per day without requiring material components. In addition, the cost of making your demiplanes permanent is only half the normal cost.

Approved classes

Listed below are the classes available to humans in *Wicked Fantasy*.

Class	Human
Barbarian	yes
Bard	yes
Cleric	archetype
Druid	yes
Fighter	yes
<i>Monk</i>	no
Paladin	archetype
Ranger	yes
Rogue	yes
Sorcerer	yes
Wizard	yes
<i>Alchemist</i>	no
Cavalier	yes
<i>Gunslinger</i>	no
Inquisitor	archetype
<i>Magus</i>	no
Oracle	mystery
<i>Summoner</i>	no
<i>Witch</i>	no
<i>Antipaladin</i>	no
<i>Ninja</i>	no
<i>Samurai</i>	no



Loyalty

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

When the servant asked Marca to sit, she kept standing. "I'll wait," she said.

The little man didn't know what to say. So, they both stood there for a moment before Marca said, "You should tell your master that I'm here."

The servant nodded and bowed and turned away, opening and closing a door behind him.

Marca stood. Waiting.

She was wearing her full uniform. Sword, chest plate, grieves, everything. She carried her helmet in her hand. She was washed, her hair tied up above her head. This was not strange: Marca did these things regularly, and she did them herself. No servants.

Eventually, the door opened and the servant asked her to step through. Marca went through the door. Lucilla was waiting for her.

Lucilla looked almost exactly the same as the last time they met. Still beautiful. Still cold.

"Marca," she said. She used his name like a stranger would.

"Captain Tanny," he said.

Lucilla looked up at her, her eyes shadowed by the room and black ink. Her red lips curved into a smile.

"Marca Valetrex, you have been re-assigned to Voir's guards."

"Ma'am," she said.

She raised an eyebrow at her.

"Is that a question?" she asked.

Marca stayed at attention.

"No ma'am."

Lucilla paused for a moment, then looked back down at the paperwork. "Obviously, you know what kind of man Voir is."

Marca said nothing. The senator from Ashcolmb's name was drenched in blood and corruption, just as was his city.

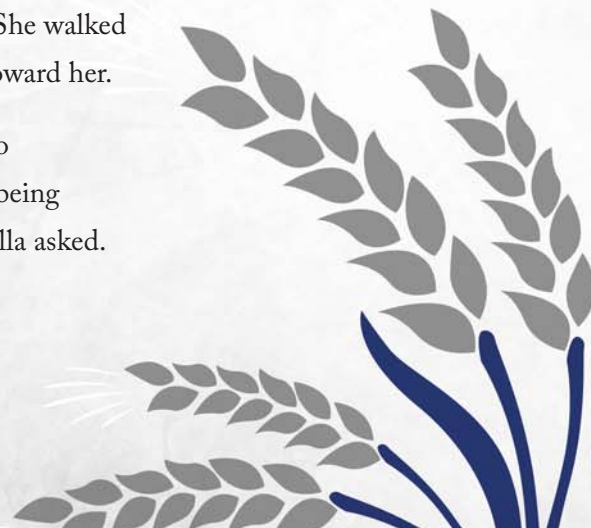
"Others," Lucilla said, "could interpret this as a... demotion." She almost smiled when she said the word. "I wouldn't worry about it." She looked up at Marca. "You're used to that, aren't you?"


Marca didn't say anything. She fixed her eyes on the wall behind Lucilla.

Lucilla nodded, then put a quill in her hand, signing the paperwork. Then, she sealed it. "Take this to Voir's office. They are expecting someone."

Lucilla took the paperwork in her hand, then stood behind her desk. She walked around the side toward her.

"You don't want to know why you're being transferred?" Lucilla asked.





Marca kept her eyes on the wall. “No, ma’am.”

Lucilla nodded briefly, then put out her hand, passing Marca the paper. “Not even a little curious?”

Marca took the paper, and for the first time, she turned to look at Lucilla. “No, ma’am,” she said.

“I know exactly why I am being transferred. Thus, I have no curiosity.”

She turned her eyes front forward.

Lucilla leaned against the desk.

“And why is that?” She smiled. “You have my permission to speak freely.”


Marca held the paper in her hand. She looked at Lucilla, but said nothing. She left the room without a salute.

An hour later, she stood in another office, waiting. This one was larger. Everything about it was larger. Desk, doors, room, paintings on the wall.

The door opened and a tall man stepped through it. He wore the rank of Captain and Ashcolmb colors. “Marca Valetrex?” he asked.

“Aye,” she said, standing at attention.

“Come in,” he said. Then, he turned and walked back in the way he came. Marca followed him.



She gave him the papers. He put them on his table with other papers. “A drink?” he asked.

Marca shook her head. “No, sir,” she said.

He shrugged and served himself. She could smell the spices in the wine from where she stood. He drank deep from the cup and refilled it. Then, he turned to her papers.

“Let us see what we have here,” he said. He unfolded the papers and started reading.

“Marca Valetrex. From Tamerclimb.”

He looked up. “Born there?”

“Yes, sir,” she said.

He looked back down. “Took the climb at sixteen.”

He looked back up. “You didn’t make it?”

“No, sir,” she said.

“Why not?” he asked.

“I don’t think I know your name, sir,” she said.

He smiled. “Sorry.” He took another drink of wine and stood, walking around the table.

He extended his hand. “I’m Arturus Cellenus. I’m the Captain of Senator Voir’s guards.”

She shook his hand, looked him in the eye.

Then, she let it go and looked back at the wall.

“You’re formal,” he said, walking back around the desk. “Are all Tamers so formal?”

“Sir,” she said. “I’m sure I don’t know, sir.”

He drank more wine and went back to the paperwork. “So. Back to the questions. You didn’t make the climb?”

She took a breath. “No, sir.”

“So, you aren’t officially a palatine?”

She shook her head, slightly. “No, sir.”

Arturus nodded. “Why not?” he asked.

Marca took another breath. “I broke my ankle,” she said. “I couldn’t make the last climb.”

He said, “I only ask because it doesn’t say why you didn’t finish your training here.”

“My ankle, sir,” she said.

He nodded. “Very well.” Then, he turned a page. “You served as a bodyguard in three Senator’s retinues,” he said. “And you’ve been transferred each time.” He added, Quickly.

“If you say so, sir,” she said.

He paused, looking at her. “This isn’t a formal inquisition, Valetrex,” he said. “I’m just trying to get an idea of who they sent me.”

She nodded. “Yes, sir.” She said. “I understand, sir.”

“Look,” he said. “Senator Voir demands loyalty from his...”

“Loyalty?” she said.

She looked at Arturus. He was caught off guard. She looked him right in the eye. When she spoke again, she did not pause.

“My loyalty, *sir*, is to my charge. I have served three Senators over the last five years. In that time, I have been stabbed seventeen times, broken three bones, shot with arrows, poisoned and lost the tips of two fingers. And not a single one of my charges took a single wound. I have stood outside the doors of

taverns and brothels, been bribed by wives, husbands—and bribed finely, might I add—and not said a single word. I have watched senators break more laws than they ever pass. I have seen degradations that pennybook authors cannot dream of. And for what? A common street merchant earns more coin than me. So, if you want to question my loyalty, it is your discretion to do so.”

She paused. Then, she said, “Sir.” She resumed her gaze at the wall.

Arturus watched her. Then, he took another drink of wine and closed the paperwork.

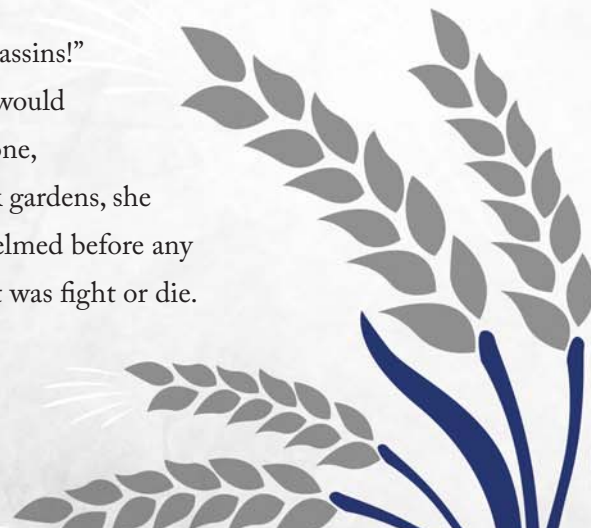
“I don’t think we’ll have any problems, Valetrex,” he said.


* * *

Marca pushed the dead man off, wiping his blood from her eyes. Then, her sword found another man dressed in black cloth. One swing of her sword, and she detached his arm from the rest of his body.

Three more. Two dead at her feet. There was no-one but her. Aelia was nowhere in sight. Probably skipping out on duty to drink in the tavern again.

She shouted, “Assassins!” knowing no-one would hear. Out here alone, guarding the back gardens, she would be overwhelmed before any support arrived. It was fight or die.





The first one jumped at her, then jumped back. A feint. She saw it before it happened. His partner moved too fast. She pushed her sword forward, knocking the assassin's sword aside, swept it up, clipping him under the chin with her pommel. Then, she spun about with a diagonal cut, anticipating a rear attack.

She was right. The cut was not deep, but it knocked the second assassin back.


Their first feint failed. She smiled.

"Two of you dead already," she said. "Who's number three?"

They stepped wide of each other. They finally decided to get smart. She could not handle three if they stood on far sides of her. She had to act.

She jumped at the first one—the wounded one—and brought her sword down hard, hoping his was made of copper. She heard the swords clash and felt his blade bend.

Lucky guess, she thought to herself. She shot an elbow up into his face and turned so he was between her body and his friends. Another good decision. She saw his ally's sword pierce his chest, but did not dodge in time. The point of the blade went through the assassin and caught her in the belly. The direct thrust glanced off her armor and scraped skin off the side of her abdomen.



She cursed the cheap armor and threw the dead assassin aside.

"That's three," she said, trying to avoid the pain and the wound. "Who's number four?"

The two masked assassins looked at each other. One of them took a step back.

"Coward!" the other one shouted. It didn't matter: the first one ran.

"Count the coins in your pocket," she told the last one. "That's what your life is worth if you stay."

She saw the assassin thinking. And as he did, she cut his head from his shoulders.

* * *

In the morning, Arturus found her with the dead bodies. She had a field bandage on her wound and she was standing at attention.

"I was beginning to wonder why you hadn't signed in," he said.

"Sir, I didn't want to leave the scene," she told him.

"Where is your backup?" he asked.

"Sir, I don't know," she said. "I suspect she is in the tavern, recovering."

Arturus made a frown. "Again," he said.

Then, he looked at the bodies. "No-one to question?" he asked.

She shook her head. "Yes, sir." She reached behind her and pulled a bound and gagged man dressed in black.

"He tried to run," she said. "He didn't get far."

Arturus looked down at the assassin, frowning. "Has he talked?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," she said.

Arturus nodded, his frown deepening. "That's too bad," he said.

She nodded. "Yes, sir," she said.

Arturus drew his blade. She killed him before it got free of the scabbard.

The door opened and a small, twisted man stepped through. He wore the white robe of a Senator, a red sash indicating his rank. His head was shaved, his beard white as his robes. Marca also saw the scar across the man's throat.

The Senator stepped toward her with a slight limp. "Marca Valetrex?" he asked. His voice was like a broken whiskey glass.

Marca nodded. "Senator Voir."

The man extended his hand. "Please," he said. "Let us not be so formal. If you are to be the captain of my guard, call me Alexander."

Marca did not take his hand.

"Senator Voir," she said.

Voir's brow furled. He looked Marca up and down, then he went to the table and sat down. "Have a seat," he said.

Marca kept standing.

Voir opened the paperwork on his desk. He looked it over. Then, he looked at Marca. "I do

not need to read this," he said. Every word he spoke sounded like it opened a wound.

"Do you know why I requested you be the new Captain, Marca?" Voir asked.

Marca nodded. "Yes, sir," she said.

"Tell me."

She took a breath.

"Aelia spends every night in a brothel, getting drunk and talking. Albanus does the same. I saw Cael talking with a guard from Senator Ruddick. Coins exchanged hands. Fulvin's wife is sleeping with Senator Glaucia. He knows and he doesn't care. Hardina is sleeping with Domitus, but they argue. When the relationship dies, they won't be able to be in the same room together. Naeve is a drunkard. I saw Nonus talking to Senator Vicks and..."

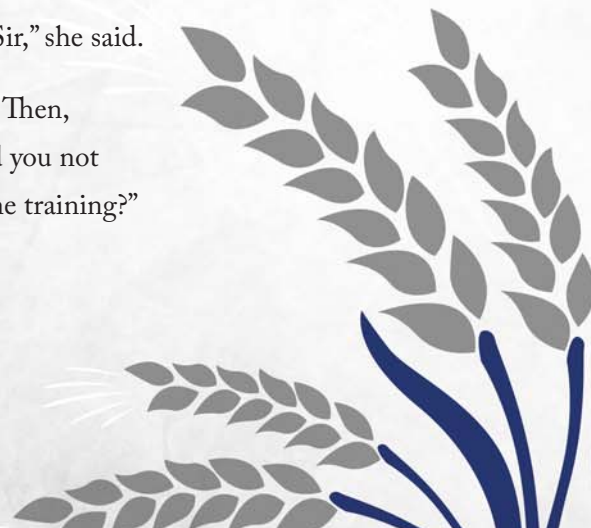
Voir raised his hand. "Enough."


Marca didn't stop. "Vicks is arguing against you on the floor for the reclamation treaty. Pont hates you. He's a man of ethics and conviction, and so he hates you. Otho..."

Voir raised his voice. "Stop."

Marca stopped. "Sir," she said.

Voir watched her. Then, he said, "Why did you not finish your palatine training?"





Marca looked at the wall behind Voir. "Because I broke my ankle," she said. "I couldn't finish the final climb."

Voir tilted his head, just a bit. Then, he said, "Is that why you were dismissed from your other posts?" he asked. "Because of your 'ankle?'"

Marca took a deep breath, but said nothing.

Voir smiled. "I know why," he said. "Why you never made the final climb. Why Senator Pedash sent you away. And the others."

He got up from the desk and limped to the other side. "You are a beautiful woman, Marca," he said.

She took her gaze from the wall and looked at Voir. Glared at him.

"Oh, do not worry," he said. "I have no designs on your body." He chuckled. A frightening sound that made her think of marbles and broken glass. "At least, not beyond the role of my guard."

He smiled. "Is that why you quit?" he asked. "Quit the climb?"

She didn't say anything, keeping her eyes on the wall.

"You were young. Six years ago? Grew up in Tamerclimb, believing all the stories they told you about the palatines. So honorable. So righteous."

She could feel her breath stagger in her chest.

"And you wanted to be one of them," he said, his voice dropping to a whisper. "But you found out exactly how honorable and righteous they really are when left alone with a pretty young..."

"Sir!" she said, turning her gaze at him. She could feel the hint of a tear in her eye. "I left because I could not make the last climb."

Voir nodded. "Your broken ankle," he said.

He turned away from her to a table. He opened a glass pitcher. Marca smelled something foul. He poured the liquid into a glass and raised it. "My medicine," he said.

Voir drank the foul liquid, then made a face. "I will never get used to it," he said. "And to think, I gave up wine for... this." He chortled again. Marca felt her skin crawl.

He put the glass down, still half full of the green liquid. "We give up our youthful indulgences," he said, "for the realities of adulthood."

Voir looked at her. "Or," he said, "our ankles break."

"Permission to speak freely?" she asked.

Voir watched Marca for a moment, then went back to his chair. He sat and smiled. It stretched the scar under his chin. "Assume you always have permission to speak freely, Captain," Voir told him. "But only when we are alone. Never in front of others."

"Understood, sir," Marca said.

"What is it you want to ask?" he said.

"I have proven my loyalty to you," she said. Then, she looked at him. "Prove you are worthy mine."

Voir watched her, then nodded. He picked up a piece of fruit from his desk and began to peel it. "You know who I am. You know my reputation."

Marca said, "Sir."

Voir told her, "I know yours."

Marca said nothing. Then, she drew her sword. In a heartbeat, the blade was under Voir's chin.

"Tell me," she hissed.

Voir's hands trembled. He opened his lips to speak and stuttered. Then, he took a deep breath.

"You say 'Yes' and 'No' to the wrong men," he said. "And it has cost you."

She asked, "How has it cost me?"

"Men assume much about you," he said. "They assume you are an easy catch. And when you refuse them, they do not take it well."

She pushed the sword against his throat. "Is that so?" she asked.

Voir backed up, pushing his chair against the floor. "Yes," he said, nearly choking. "I know why you were dismissed from your previous assignment."

"This gets more and more interesting," she told him, twisting the blade. "Tell me."

"You were in competition with the Captain," he said. "You lost. And you were reassigned to me."

"You," Marca said. "The most corrupt man in the Senate."

"The only man," Voir told her, "who will not judge you."

That held Marca's hand. She watched Voir for a moment, then stepped back, taking her sword away from his throat.

Voir put his hand to his neck. "You are not only an idealist, Marca Valetrex, you are a romantic as well," he said. "You believe in love. You believe when men tell you they love you."

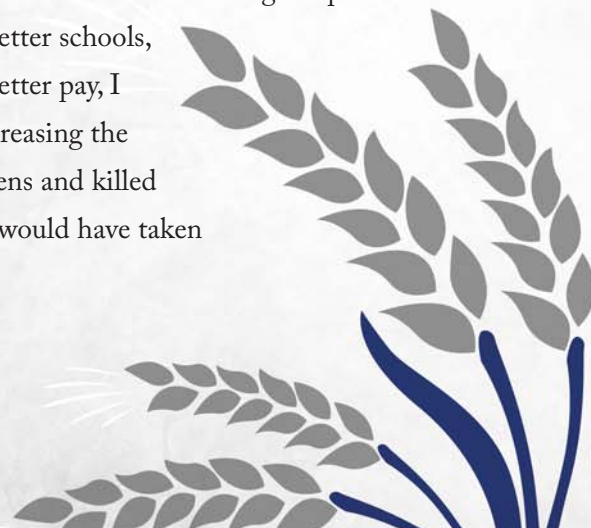
Marca still clenched her sword in her hand.


"I am a romantic as well," Voir said.

Marca laughed. "Now you try to tempt me," she said.

"I am a respected senator of the Reign," he told her. "I bought my seat twenty years ago and I've won every election since." He paused. Then, he said, "Respect comes from the fact that my most vocal opponents are most often found murdered or poisoned, usually in brothels or in alleyways."

Then, he said, "I have voted against new taxes meant to fill my fellow Senators' pockets. I have voted against militias meant only to break borders. I have stopped three men from becoming Emperor. I have voted for better schools, I have voted for better pay, I have voted for increasing the rights of our citizens and killed legislation which would have taken





them away. My record is free for you to see, Marca. Look at it.”

He pushed himself to his feet, picked up his orange and limped toward her.

“Some say we couldn’t be more different,” he told her.

“You are young and some may even say beautiful. I am old and ugly. You are strong. I am weak. You have morals and I...” he paused. “I come from Ashcolmb.”

Voir stepped in front of his Captain, looking up at her.

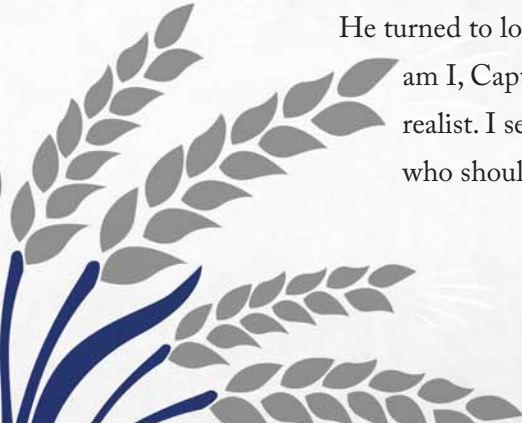
“You and I both know the Reign is dying,” he said. “Withering from the inside. Like...” he paused, looking at the orange in his hand. “Like rotting fruit.”

Then, he said, “You have seen it yourself. You know it is happening. Even in your beloved Tamerclimb.”

He looked down, then looked back up at her. A small, withered man from Ashcolmb, looking up at a woman from Tamerclimb.

Voir watched her, then stepped back to his desk. “They say a cynic is nothing more than a disillusioned idealist,” he said.

“I am no cynic,” she said.



He turned to look at her. “Neither am I, Captain,” he said. “I’m a realist. I see before me a woman who should have been a palatine.

Who deserves to be a palatine. But judgmental, short-sighted men kept her from that goal.”

He turned back to his desk and sat down. He picked up his quill and a parchment. “I will have you as my Captain because I trust your loyalty.” He looked at her. “And you have mine.”

Then, he said, “If you wish to be assigned to another Senator, I can arrange it.”

Marca paused for a moment. Voir watched her.

Then, she said, “No.”

Voir nodded. “Very well,” he said.

Marca paused for a moment, then said, “But know this.”

Voir looked up.

“If you betray my loyalty,” she said, “nothing in the Reign will protect you from me.”

Voir nodded. “I know.” Then, he said, “That is exactly why I want you as my Captain.”



Haffuns: Seeming Servants

When Alvin Fix first saw them, his first thought was to give a polite bow, but then he thought, "A polite bow may insult them." So, he curtseyed instead.

"Alvin Fix," he told them. "I am alchemist and advisor to King Theodore IV. And I welcome you to his land."

One of them stepped forward, repeating the action. "Tom Bing," he said. His hair was covered in dirt, his skin thick with sweat and soil. "I have no title," the little man said. "And I am at your service."

Alvin Fix would soon learn how literal the little man's words were.

"Haffun" is the human word for "child," but it translates better as "little one." When they first appeared with the uvandir—popping up out of the ground, covered with dust and dirt and the sweat of a desperate chase—the farm woman who found them said, "You look like haffuns!"

"Then haffuns we are!" Tom Bing said, a smile on his broad face. The first sign of the haffun's ability to adapt to nearly any situation.

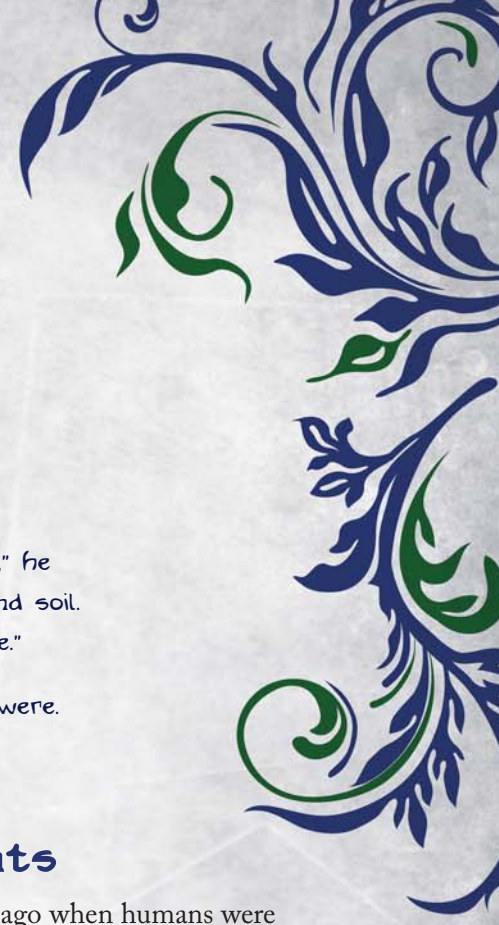
They came up from the ground—digging their way from the other side of the world—running from a horror whose name they never utter. Human scholars have learned that much, but little else, about the race who adopted the first name they were given. No one knows what their kind call themselves. "Haffuns."

Despite their secrecy, they fit in to human society as if they had been missing forever. How they did it—and what became of them—is our topic this evening. The haffuns and human society. How they arrived, how they adapted and how they made themselves essential.

Little servants

It was two hundred years ago when humans were introduced to the "underbloods." Three races—the uvandir, the haffuns and the gnomes—broke through the wall of a human iron mine under the Dragoncoil Mountains, scaring the miners half to death. It was a historical moment that could have turned to violence if not for the miner chief, Silus Alessender and the haffun who called himself "Tom Bing." Bing rushed himself up to the front of the cave with his hands raised. He looked at Silus Alessender for a long moment. Then, Bing spoke in the human tongue, with the perfect dialect of Alessender's home City of Vanta, "Get us a pint, friend. We've come a long way."

A few days later, the King's emissaries met with the underbloods. When Alvin Fix, the chief philosopher of the King, arrived on the scene, the uvandir and haffuns offered their services to him. Fix took representatives from both races to meet the King, and within minutes, Theodore IV was completely enchanted by the "haffun ambassador," Tom Bing.



When Bing was offered to stay in the King's court so His Majesty could learn about this new race, Tom Bing accepted, bringing in servants of his own to cook and clean and maintain the King's court. The haffuns proved themselves almost magically efficient, providing meals that made the King laugh and moan with pleasure. His clothes and linens were immaculate. The hospitality of the haffuns won him over in a single week and he declared them welcome in the Reign of Men. (Citizenship, however, was another matter, as we shall soon see.)

Soon enough, every family in the Reign needed haffun servants. Every family who could afford it, that is. Within two years, the number of haffuns serving as cooks, butlers and envoys outnumbered the humans serving in the same positions. Of course, this caused some resentment among the human population, but there was little they could do. It seemed the haffuns were bred for this work. Created for it, even. And that got human scholars wondering about the origins of these little servants.

Unfortunately, the haffuns are tight-lipped about their origins. A few have spoken about "the old times" in hushed whispers, but few details have surfaced. The best information we have comes from a conversation with a drunken haffun conducted by Ruffus Wage, a Scholar of the Tower. The haffun spoke about "the Enemy," and "the Great Flight." Fleeing from something horrible, they literally dug through the world. Other haffuns in the tavern quickly shushed their cousin, flashing their kind and gentle smiles at the scholar. "He's had too much to drink," they told him. "Pay no attention to what he says."

But not all haffuns serve as butlers and cooks. Their keen skills in style and grace have made them some of the best diplomats in the Reign.

Serving as seneschals to dukes and earls, it is an exception *not* to see at least one haffun in a noble's court. And then there are the haffuns who serve no man. We'll talk about them later.

Talda: Haffun Seeming

The chief reason haffuns make such excellent servants is their innate ability to blend into the background. Unobtrusive. Inconspicuous. Unseen. *Invisible*. The haffuns call this talent *talda*: the unassuming art. Human scholars call it *haffun seeming*. If a haffun remains perfectly quiet and unmoving, others tend not to notice him. He melts into the shadows, becoming almost invisible. This distinctly haffun trait added to their value as servants. Out of sight until needed, fading into the background until needed again.

All haffuns show this ability to some degree, although others dedicate time and effort to refine it to a razor edge. Because of this single ability, haffuns have incorporated themselves into human society, making themselves almost *necessary*. Almost as if it were some kind of plan...

A People of Secrets

After two centuries of perfectly integrating with human culture, haffuns have become almost essential to its existence. Three generations of humans cannot remember life without haffuns. But human scholars have long suspected there is a dark secret hidden under the charming demeanor haffuns show.

And they're right.

There is a secret haffun language that has remained a secret for nearly two centuries. Haffuns use

slight gestures and code phrases to communicate hidden meanings while carrying on seemingly mundane conversations. But their secrets don't end there. Haffuns also have a secret hierarchy. They even have their own covert king.

Taunken: The secret Language of Haffuns

Every haffun knows taunken. It is a language they developed to communicate information without any other race understanding the conversation. In fact, the whole point of taunken is to hide the fact a conversation is even happening.

Taunken begins with a question and a handshake. "How do you fare, brother?" the first haffun asks and extends his hand. The question indicates, "I wish to speak in taunken." The second haffun takes the first haffun's hand and arranges his fingers in a particular way. He says, "I fare well, brother." This indicates, "I understand your intent and am ready."

Once that ritual has begun, both haffuns can communicate through a complicated system of code words, phrases and gestures. While it appears they are having a mundane conversation about household chores, they are really speaking of something completely different.

Tura: The servant

Perhaps the strongest element of haffun culture is the concept of *manna*: "the household." The word can also be translated as "my family," but that meaning is hidden from most humans.

A haffun who has adopted a family is called a *tura*. It means, "one who serves." A *tura* sees the family he serves as an adoptive family. Not

relatives—the father is not his father and the children are not his brothers and sisters—but *family*. The safety and security of the household are *his* responsibility—as well as serving the food, washing the dishes and turning down the linens. These people invited him into their home: a sign of such great trust that dishonoring it is unspeakable.

Because of their unique abilities, haffuns quickly learn all a household's secrets and they do their best to *keep* those secrets within the walls of the household. Protecting a household's secrets is the key to protecting the household.

Haffuns also protect the *manna* in other ways. When intruders come calling, the haffun makes sure they either don't get in or don't get away with anything... or don't make it out of the house alive. Of course, the haffun has to make sure the family never knows.

And thus, "maintaining a household" means much more to a *tura* than humans suspect. A proper *tura* knows how to cook, how to clean, how to manage money, how to silently kill interlopers and how to clean up the blood and dispose of the body in such a way that nobody ever knows he was there.

Butlers also go outside the walls of their home to seek out and deal with those who would bring scandal and ruin on their household. Those who spread malicious rumors... gone. Those who would cheat the household out of money... gone. Those who seek to ruin the reputations of the master's daughters... gone. All very quiet. All very anonymous. And who would suspect that smiling little haffun of such a crime?

Of course, a *tura* knows how to use the proper measures for the proper circumstances.

Master and servant

Haffuns never use the word "master," but "hire."

Haffuns are servants, not slaves, a distinction they make plain and clear. Because haffun servants are in such high demand, they can pick and choose clientele. If a haffun grows dissatisfied with his hire, he leaves.

He leaves politely, but he leaves, nonetheless.

Not every threat to the household needs to vanish. Some just need to be bribed. Others need to be intimidated. Some need to be blackmailed. Protect the household. By any means necessary.

Tatura: The Butler

He knelt in the circle. Darkness all around him. The cloaked figures held candles and the light flickered across their eyes.

"What is your name?" one of the figures asked.

"Mika Weatherby," he told them.

Another cloaked figure spoke. "That is the name others know you by. But here, you have another name. A name that many before you have held and many after you shall hold."

He was confused. "Another name?" he began to ask, but the figure kept speaking as if he had said nothing.

"This is an ancient name. A sacred name. One that you shall hold with dignity and pride. It is as sharp as a razor and just as deadly. Whisper it and you can blind your enemy. Speak it out loud, and you can burn him. But whisper it into his ear... and you will destroy him."

He blinked. His mouth went dry.

"This is your name," the cloaked figure said and leaned in close. He whispered the name in Weatherby's ear and a thunderstorm exploded in his head. He saw a thousand faces rush by him. A thousand others who bore the name. And each of them touched him. Each of them gave him their power.

The name was his. It was his until he died. And then, another would hold it. But for now, it was his.

"Say it," the cloaked haffun said.

Weatherby paused.

"Say it," the figures told him, all at once.

"Garlan," he said. "Tan garlan."

Thunder struck across the sky and Mike Weatherby thought he felt the stone tremble under his knees...

In quiet corners, safe from ears that might hear, haffuns tell their children the story of their origin. They talk about lifetimes of slavery, serving ungrateful masters who beat and murdered their servants. The Enemy. They also talk of the haffuns who formed a secret cabal to overthrow the Enemy and lead their people to freedom. These haffuns—twenty of them—were called the *tatura*. The word means, “protector,” or “watchman.”

Using magic they stole from the Enemy, these twenty haffuns made a sacred oath—bound by blood—to find a way to bring their people to freedom. They developed a secret language that allowed them to speak without being heard. They developed skills that allowed them to assist their friends and family and silently thwart the Enemy. And, they took secret names that would be carried by them and all their ancestors. Twenty secret names.

If one of the *tatura* fell, another would take up the name, ensuring the circle would never be broken. The sorcery they used to empower themselves would never fail so long as twenty haffuns held the names of the original casters. If even one *tatura* dies, the magic of the others fails until he is replaced. The only way to replace him is for the nineteen others to perform the ritual again. Until that happens, all *tatura* magic is gone.

Tatura deal with a very specific problem: *ugun*. An *ugun* was an insect that showed up in the haffuns’ “previous life.” It invaded gardens and households, bringing other insects with it. Think of an aphid, except with a poisonous stinger that caused sickness or death. A gardener had to remove the *ugun* quickly or it could destroy the entire garden. The more they ate, the bigger they got and the more dangerous (poisonous) they became.

This word has come to gain another meaning for *tatura*: any annoyance that endangers the household. In other words, *ugun* means “pest.” Insects or weeds invading the garden? Pest. An intruder trying to steal the silver? Pest. Someone spreading malicious rumors about the eldest daughter? Pest. An *ugun* that must be removed before it gets too big.

Other haffuns may also call upon a *tatura* for assistance—if the need is dire. All they need do is invoke the secret name to the proper *tatura* and he must answer the call. While a haffun may call upon any *tatura* for aid, the need must be dire. Some haffuns have been known to abuse this privilege... their needs were met, but the haffun who made the call seldom survived the problem unscathed.

The Grand Master's Butler

The current Grand Master of the Palatines, Maeko Conredare, has a haffun in his service by the name of Jarvis Quinn. The haffun was “inherited” when Conredare stepped into the position. He has tried on many occasions to dismiss Quinn, but the haffun refuses to leave, going so far as to start every day with, “Good morning, sir. Yes, I know, I’m released from service. Would you like strawberry or grape jam on your toast?”

Unknown to the Grand Master, Quinn has saved Conredare’s life numerous times (he has thwarted at least seven assassination attempts). Before he began his service with Conredare, Quinn learned the gnome “no weapon” technique for disarming opponents. This skill has come in handy on many occasions. Two years ago, Conredare decided he was fond of the haffun. One year ago, he began to suspect his butler may be more than he seems.

The Twenty Tatura Names

Balla Utya
Ban Fortuda
Col Bean
Gar Gallan
Hiram Agaves
Jarvis Quinn
Jyss Shallan
Mal Bubray
Martha Hudson
Nama Unnan
Nuo Prunt
Oliffar Shen
Rin Palla
Sam Yffur
Sunja Sav
Tab Collum
Tan Garlan
Tol Binx
Tom Bing
Wes Fassa

Ishu: Butler Marks

Ishu is a symbolic language only understood by butlers. It is part of the sorcery they stole from the Enemy before they made their Great Escape.

Ishu is a logographic language consisting of a number of symbols representing words. The symbols are carved, painted or drawn upon a person or a thing, imbuing it with a sorcerous power. Butlers call these symbols “marks.”

A butler’s mark can be put on a door, for example. Whenever the door is opened, the butler knows it. A mark can also be put on a weapon to make it impossible to find.

For the most part, marks look like simple patterns or decorations, unobtrusive and difficult to find if you don’t know what to look for. Some haffuns have discovered a few of the marks, but most remain secret.

The Traveling Butler

Unfortunately, not every *tatura* has a household. Some are forced to travel from City to City looking for a household to adopt. In between jobs, some *tatura* find work applying their skills in... less traditional ways. Some have been known to link up with Noble Courages (adventuring parties; see *The Reign of Men*) as cooks and servants. Of course, being adopted by such an enterprise isn’t exactly the same as having a household... but it will do for now.

The Oath of Secrecy

Haffuns consider secrets to be sacred. Everyone has parts of their past they would rather not reveal, and to a haffun, these are to be protected; even when they are not your own. *Especially* if they are not your own. If you go out of your way to protect another’s secrets, you show how precious these things are to you. You show another that you are willing to help protect their secrets, and perhaps, they will go out of their way to help protect yours.

The Oath of Secrecy is older than any haffun can remember.

All haffuns teach it to their children at a young age. No one can remember a time when haffuns *didn’t* swear the Oath.

When a haffun asks, “Will you swear?” it means “Will you take the Oath with me and promise to keep this thing between us a secret.” It is no small task to take the Oath. Once taken, you are held to its promise. And haffuns don’t share the Oath with non-haffuns lightly.

To perform the Oath, both parties grasp hands. The leader of the Oath speaks and the follower repeats what he says. Traditionally, only two have taken the Oath (see the text below), but many haffuns have changed that tradition, including as many as they like (they exclude the highlighted text from the Oath, shown below). Of course, some older haffuns refuse to participate in any Oath that includes more than two.

I hereby swear to forever protect the secret I witnessed today. I shall never reveal it to any other. Not by hint, allusion, connotation, announcement, innuendo, or inference, willfully or unwillfully. Any paths that lead to this secret, I shall wipe clean. There shall be no evidence, no track, no trace that shall lead any back to this place.

Furthermore, I agree to aid, assist, afford and abet any activity that shall further this secret from discovery. I shall hinder, impede, interrupt, handicap, hamper and harm anyone from discovering this secret.

(The following paragraph is often omitted by younger haffuns.)

Finally, I admit, here before my friend, that only two may make this oath. Any others who make any such discovery that may unearth the thing we bury today should be buried with it. And when I am done digging, I shall clean the blood from my hands with the soil that covers the secret.

(Return to the last paragraph.)

This I swear by my own life. We are sworn to the Oath, bound by it as family is bound, and as sacred as the blood of family, so is sacred this secret that binds us now. Forever. So we swear, so it shall be done.

Ranfa: Haffun Ghosts

Over the course of two hundred years, almost three generations of haffuns have been born, lived and died in human households. What humans don't know is that many of those haffuns are *still residing* in their homes.

When a haffun dies, he is usually surrounded by friends and family (all haffuns). They hold his hand and speak kind, soft words. They promise to remember him. And then, he breathes his last breath, and he's gone. That's what humans see and hear about. What they don't see or hear is the secret ritual being performed. The ritual that keeps the haffun's spirit here in this world.

Ranfa are the ghosts of dead haffuns. They can only be seen by other haffuns and can only communicate to other haffuns. Sometimes, they are helpful. Sometimes, they are a hindrance. They are, after all, parents and grandparents who want to see their descendants do well.

Ranfa remain in the world for two reasons. First, their names are remembered by those who are still in the world. Second, they are usually tied to an item around the household. The item, a *fana*, is something the haffun considered precious or important while he was alive. As long as that item remains intact, the *ranfa* remains. If the item is ruined or destroyed, the *ranfa* will pass from the world when the current generation passes away.

Shutha: Spectres

When a haffun dies, if he is not surrounded by friends and he does not perform the proper ritual, he will become a *shutha*. A spectre. A dark, angry and violent ghost.

Human Ghosts?

Do the other races leave behind ghosts? The answer is less straightforward than the question.

Haffuns have seen the ghosts of humans but have great difficulty talking to them. They have also seen the ghosts of other races from time to time, but less often (understandable considering the time haffuns spend with humans). Some of the other races (orks and gnolls, for example) are said to leave behind spirits, but these are just stories. Anecdotes are not evidence.

But no jorsha has ever seen an elven ghost or an uvandir ghost.

Shutha can haunt homes where no haffuns were present to help the dying haffun become a *ranfa*. *Shutha* break plates and mirrors, hide important items, throw furniture around the room, slam doors and cabinets and otherwise cause terror in the household. Most *shutha* are little more than a nuisance, but unless they are dealt with, *shutha* can become increasingly powerful. Powerful enough to possess the body of a resident and cause real evil.

Haffuns know a ritual to deal with *shathua*, but they cannot perform the ritual without alerting the homeowner of the existence of *ranfa*. Thus, haffuns are very careful to handle the situation. So far, very few humans have discovered the existence of *ranfa*. Those who know have been asked to make the Oath of Secrecy. And those who refused to take the oath... well, no human philosopher has written about it yet. And those damn curious philosophers disappear all the time...

Jorsha: Ghost Speakers

While all haffuns know ghosts exist, not all of them can see or hear them. That's a particular gift unique to the jorsha, the ghost speaker.

Jorsha are born with the blessing (and curse) of speaking with ghosts. The problem is, once a ghost knows you are a jorsha, it will never leave you alone. Ghosts always want to speak to their ancestors, tell them what they're doing wrong with their lives, how to correct it, things they forgot to say when they were alive, all of that. Fortunately, a jorsha is not helpless in this relationship; in fact, jorsha have great power over ghosts. They can dispel ghosts, sending them off to... well, the jorsha don't really know where, but they do know that ghosts go *somewhere* when they are dispelled. Where that might be, ghosts aren't saying. Most claim a sense of silence and darkness. Others have no memory at all.

Jorsha draw power from their ancestors, summoning them for strength in times of trouble. As ones who can see into the spirit world, they also know that all haffuns are connected to the past. They can see powerful connections—as glimmering lines—between haffuns who are alive and those who are dead. Part of a jorsha's training is finding the ancestor he has the strongest connection to. Finding that ancestor awakens power within the jorsha he never had before. Haffuns call these ancestors *tanfa*. There is no real translation for the word, but it can best be described as "patron saint." Those you are connected to influence your life in invisible ways you may never discover. An ancestor who betrayed his brother may drive your own hand to do the same... or, he may guide you to forgiveness

so you may not make the same mistakes. A jorsha not only finds these *tanfa* for himself, but finds them for other haffuns as well, serving as a guide to a haffun's invisible link to the past.

Yffur: Homeless Haffuns

On the street, of course, there are haffuns who have not found a home in human society. At least, they haven't found a place in a human home. On the city streets, however, they have found a place to call their own. Homeless and alone, these "street haffuns" use their skills of stealth and negotiation to become con men, pick pockets, burglars and robbers. The best on the street, in fact. Armed with kinship and a strong sense of organization, haffun street gangs are some of the most ruthless and dangerous in the Kingdom.

Called *yffur* by their own kind (meaning "homeless ones"), the haffun street gangs bind their members with secret oaths of solidarity. Once a member, always a member. These blood oaths are reportedly magical in nature, although no human scholar has ever seen one or can even verify their existence. As far as the other races are concerned, the oaths may as well be myths. But while the oaths may be myths, the devotion of an yffur to his gang is anything but. The violence they undertake to protect their territory and their members shocked the human legal system. Graphic acts of symbolic violence meant to intimidate and demoralize rival gangs are everywhere. One story tells of a gang found in a warehouse drained of blood without a single mark found on any of the bodies. Criminal code: they didn't have the blood (courage) to stand against us. Another example: a body found completely mutilated except for his face. "So's his friends'd recognize him," any street merchant would tell you.

Extortion and vice is how they earn money. They know what people want, they know what people need and they know how to get it. Charm gets you a long way. Learning secret desires. Learning forbidden temptations. Using the knowledge to get you what *you* need and want. That's the haffun way.

Most cultured haffuns refuse to speak of their homeless cousins. If they say anything at all, they usually shake their heads, mumbling something under their breath about lack of virtue, lack of patience, lack of duty. Then, they smile and pour you another drink. And is the bread warm enough? Cook put some honey in the butter...

Stand Tall: The Hobyn Movement

A small voice has been causing trouble in both haffun and human culture. It started in the City of Nevernare and has made its way to the other cities as well. The source of the voice is Hiram Agaves, a haffun who has been thrown into prison on seven different occasions. His crimes? Multiple counts of disturbing the peace, multiple counts of inciting to riot and a single count of aggravated assault (he denies the last charge, saying he was only defending himself against human ruffians).

Agaves believes haffuns should break their self-imposed shackles. They should leave human civilization behind and create their own culture. He has even gone so far to use a word haffuns have sworn to keep secret: their own word for their people.

"I am not a haffun. I am not a child," he wrote in his first published screed. "I am a hobyn. And I will not acknowledge any human who calls me anything else."

Agaves has gained many followers and his movement has begun to gain notice among human authorities. In fact, some humans have even shown support for his cause. Of course, those groups have always been outspoken on their hatred for the other races (haffuns, elves, uvandir, etc.) and are not the best of allies. But Agaves uses their own hateful tirades to demonstrate how humans truly feel about haffun culture.

“These people are only the public voice of a silent opinion. Humans hate us. They always have, always will. It is only our virtues they favor, not our company. ‘Stay silent and clean up my dishes. Stay silent and maintain my garden. Stay silent and do as you are told.’

“I will *not* do as I am told. I will *not* stay silent. I am a hobyn. I will speak wherever my people will hear me. I will weep for them. I will bleed for them. I will die for them if I must.

“But I will not stay silent. I will stand tall. And though I may not live to see it, one day, we will be free. Whether it be by peace or by the sword, one day, we will be free.”

Wipla: The Wild Ones

Some haffuns have found homes outside the cities of men. The *wipla* (“wild ones”) are haffuns who have taken up the human profession of “adventurer,” seeking out fame and fortune in the wilds of the world. Most adventuring parties have at least one haffun—if for no other reason, he can turn bark, grass and stream water into a meal—and sometimes even more. Their unique skills make a wipla the perfect scout or spy. A few have even gone far enough to learn the ways of the sword, spear and shield. And a few—the reckless ones—learn the ways of human magic.

Despite their public distain for the wipla, most haffuns’ eyes grow wide when they hear the tales of their adventurous cousins. I think it is safe to say that all haffuns long for adventure... even if it is within the confines of their hire’s home.

ghuva: The giving curse

One thing that is not commonly known about the haffuns is what they call *ghuva*. The Curse. Like most haffun secrets, this one is kept close to the vest, but word got out soon enough. The haffuns themselves have done well enough dismissing it as complete bunk, but a few of the King’s subjects have discovered it to be true. Enough to keep the rumor alive. A rumor about a curse put on the haffuns for fleeing their past masters. Or perhaps it was bred into them from the beginning to ensure their servitude. Either way, it hangs over the entire race like a knife, ready to fall.

The Curse. *Ghuva*. The Giving Curse.

No haffun can refuse a true plea of aid.

If you ask, and you are truly in need, the haffun *must* assist you as best he can.

There’s just no getting around it. If asked, and the plea is honest, the haffun has no choice. He must give you what you need. If he does not, he grows ill. His skin turns ashen and his breath grows thin. The color leaves his eyes and he struggles even to walk. No-one knows if the Curse can kill a haffun. No haffun has ever gone so far to discover that elusive little detail.

If you ask, and your request is true, he will look into your eyes, discover what you need, and give it to you. That’s the Haffun Curse.

Haffun Racial Traits

- **+2 to Dexterity and Wisdom**
- **Small:** Haffuns are Small creatures and gain a +1 size bonus to their AC, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, a -1 penalty to their Combat Maneuver Bonus (CMB) and Combat Maneuver Defense (CMD), and a +4 size bonus on Stealth checks.
- **Movement:** Base speed of 20ft
- **Servant's Ear:** Haffuns receive a +1 racial bonus on hearing based Perception checks. At 5th level and every 5 character levels after, gain an additional +1 bonus. This bonus doubles if the haffun is using *talda*. From a young age, haffuns are trained detect the smallest sounds to better hear the demands of an employer, eavesdrop on secrets or hear dangers to their families in the night.
- **Family:** Haffuns gain bonuses based on their family. When at least three members of a family are present, they can use their family's reputation ability. Check the haffun family section below for rules on creating a haffun family. Every haffun family is known for being particularly skilled in certain crafts or professions pertaining to the household.
- **Talda:** When a haffun is standing completely still (breathing does not count as moving) their DC to be spotted increases by their character level. If the haffun is concealed in some way, any creature not actively searching does not receive a perception check to spot the haffun. Senses that do not rely on eyesight still grant a chance to find the haffun.
- **Ghuva:** Haffuns suffer from an innate compulsion that causes them to empathize with other thinking beings. This grants them bonuses and penalties depending on fulfilling the needs of others. Check *ghuva* below for full rules.

- **Omni-Linguism:** Haffuns can temporarily learn to speak the language of any intelligent creature within 30 feet. A haffun makes a linguistics check DC 15 (they can make this check untrained). On a success, a haffun can communicate with the creature in its native language and dialect for as long as the haffun stays within 30 feet of the creature or 24 hours passes; whichever comes first. A haffun can use this ability a number of times per day equal to his character level.
- **Language:** Haffuns begin play speaking Common, Haffun and Human (Hometown Dialect). Haffun with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

Haffun Family

Every haffun family has specialties they are known for; these specialties are crafts and professions are common to the running of a household. To create a haffun family, you select three specialties from the following list. Specialties are always class skills, you gain one free rank in them and you gain a +2 racial bonus to them as well. The crafts specialties are baskets, book, calligraphy, cloth, clothing, glass, jewelry, leather, painting, pottery, sculptures and shoes. The professions specialties are architect, baker, barrister, brewer, butcher, clerk, cook, driver, gardener, innkeeper, librarian, midwife, porter, scribe, shepherd, stable master and tanner. Each specialty belongs to a group such as fashion or feast. You select one of these groups to take your family's reputation power from. When three or more of your family is present and helping then you can use your reputation power.

Haffun Family

Every haffun family has specialties they are known for; these specialties are crafts and professions common to the running of a household. To create a haffun family, you select three specialties from the following list. Specialties are always class skills; you gain one free rank in them and you gain a +2 racial bonus to them as well.

The crafts specialties are baskets, books, calligraphy, cloth, clothing, glass, jewelry, leather, painting, pottery, sculptures and shoes.

The profession specialties are architect, baker, barrister, brewer, butcher, clerk, cook, driver, gardener, innkeeper, librarian, midwife, porter, scribe, shepherd, stable master and tanner.

Each specialty belongs to a group—such as bookkeeping or fashion. You gain one group and all associated abilities. Certain abilities can only be used when there is more than one family member present. You count as one family member.

Bookkeeping

Specialties: craft (books), profession (clerk), profession (librarian) or profession (scribe)

1 Family Member Present: Whenever making purchases, round up or down to the nearest silver piece (in the family member's favor, minimum of 1 when buying).

2 Family Members Present: Whenever making purchases, round up or down to the nearest gold piece (in the family member's favor, minimum of 1 when buying).

3 or More Family Members: All costs, buying and selling, are increased or decreased by 5% (in the family member's favor) per haffun present (maximum 30%).

Décor

Specialties: craft (calligraphy), craft (paintings), craft (pottery), craft (sculptures) or profession (architect)

1 Family Member Present: When making linguistics checks to spot a forgery of a painting, sculpture or similar work of art, decrease the DC by 5. You can make this check untrained.

2 Family Members Present: You can use the *enthrall* spell as supernatural ability once a day per family member present.

3 or More Family Members: You ignore all penalties that would reduce your Charisma score.

Fashion

Specialties: craft (cloth), craft (clothing), craft (jewelry), craft (leather) or craft (shoes)

1 Family Member Present: When making knowledge checks to know anything about fashion—such as the proper ceremonial dress for a ritual or the most fashionable color this season—the DC is decreased by 5. You can make these checks untrained.

2 Family Members Present: With a basic sewing kit or disguise kit, you can change one outfit into another outfit. The alteration takes 10 minutes per 1 gold piece difference in the cost of the outfits; you cannot sell this outfit.

3 or More Family Members: With a basic sewing kit or disguise kit, you can create any outfit in ten minutes. You cannot sell this outfit.

Food & Wine

Specialties: profession (baker), profession (barrister), profession (brewer), profession (butcher) or profession (cook)

1 Family Member Present: When making scent-based perceptions checks to look for rotten or poisoned food or drink, decrease the DC by 5.

2 Family Members Present: When you make a successful profession (cook) check, the meal removes the *nauseated* and *fatigued* conditions from any creature who eats it. You can make these checks untrained.

3 or More Family Members: You can create a batch of 12 snacks once per day. Each snack provides nourishment as if it were a normal meal for a Medium creature. The snack also cures 1 point of damage when eaten, subject to a maximum of 8 points of such curing in any 24-hour period. It takes a swift action to eat one of the snacks.

Housekeeping

Specialties: craft (baskets), craft (glass), profession (innkeeper), profession (gardener) or profession (midwife)

1 Family Member Present: When making perceptions check to discover hidden areas, decrease the DC by 5.

2 Family Members Present: Any stealth check made within 30 feet of you has its DC increased by 10.

3 or More Family Members: Any perception checks made to spot your party's ambush fail.

Transport

Specialties: profession (driver), profession (porter), profession (shepherd) or profession (stable master)

1 Family Member Present: When making survival checks to find your way, decrease the DC by 5.

2 Family Members Present: You can match the base land speed of traveling companions within 10 feet of you. If the group is only haffuns, double their base land speed instead.

3 or More Family Members: You have the *well-prepared* feat.

Haffun Talda Feats

The Silent Servant

Like any good household servant, you have learned to hold stock-still and blend into the background with such precision that you become completely unobtrusive and overlooked.

Prerequisite: Haffun, Stealth 2 Ranks

Benefit: So long as you do not move from your starting space on your turn, your racial stealth bonus increases by +2. Additionally, you may make a stealth check without need for cover or concealment as long as you do not move from your starting space, and you are adjacent to a wall, tree, or other solid background.

The Whisper Way

You have refined your *talda* sufficiently to make small movements while remaining unobtrusive, just as a servant can quietly pick up a discarded letter or unlock a door without drawing the attention of the household or guests.

Prerequisite: Haffun, The Silent Servant, Stealth 6 Ranks, Sleight of Hand 3 Ranks

Benefit: You may now make small movements—one five-foot step per turn—while maintaining the “whisper way” technique. You must continue to remain adjacent to (at least) one solid background, such as a wall or tree. You may pick up objects, pocket them, or even toss an object that you

can hold in your hand—although you may not throw a weapon. Manipulating an object causes you to make a *sleight of hand* check opposed by perception checks from anyone who can see the object, but you can make this check untrained and you add your racial stealth bonus (generally +6, because of the increased bonus from the *Silent Servant* feat). Success means that the action does not draw the attention of the observer(s) and you remain hidden (assuming that the observers failed to notice you previously when opposing your initial stealth check). You may also make *disable device* checks without revealing your location, and if you are already hidden, enemies may not make hearing-based perception checks to hear you when you use those skills.

The Invisible Passage

Your *talda* is so refined that you can now move unobtrusively about a house—or prison, dungeon, tower, forest, or nearly any other backdrop— even without creeping along a wall.

Prerequisite: Haffun, The Whisper Way, Stealth 10 Ranks

Benefit: As a full-round action, you may move up to 10 feet while retaining the benefits of the *talda* techniques. You must remain within at least 10 feet of a solid background, such as a wall or tree, but you no longer need to be adjacent to such a surface to use any of your *talda* bonuses.

Family Feats

Family Friend

As they have worked their way into human culture, haffuns have “adopted” many men and women into their families; a great sign of devotion and trust. Those who have been adopted seem to acquire haffun abilities...

Prerequisite: Permission from a Family Member.

Benefit: You count as member of a specific haffun family. You also gain one free rank in one of their specialties and access to their group abilities such as bookkeeping or fashion. There must be at least one actual haffun family member present for you to use the second or third ability from the group.

Tuan/Tuana (Husband/Wife)

A head of a haffun household cannot do all the work alone....

Prerequisite: Haffun, Married to a haffun from different family.

Benefit: You count as a family member for a second family but only when your spouse is present. You also gain a free rank in your spouse’s specialties and access to your spouse’s group abilities such as bookkeeping or fashion. Your spouse must be present for you to use the second or third ability from the group.

Special: If your spouse leaves you or dies, you lose access to your spouse’s group abilities.

Ghuva

When you use *ghuva* to learn the current desire of a creature, you must fulfill the desire within 24 hours. If you are successful, the creature gains a +2 *morale* bonus to all rolls for the next 24-hour period. This bonus does not stack with any other bonus. You can use *ghuva* once per day for every three character levels you have.

If another creature looks into your eyes for five seconds and concentrates, you automatically learn their current request; you must fulfill this request. For as long as you do not, you take a -2 penalty to all skill checks, ability checks, saving throws, attack

rolls and combat maneuver checks. If the creature dies, you are no longer bound to fulfill the request.

If you use *ghuwa* at the same time a creature tries to force you to use *ghuwa*, flip a coin. You can only be taxed by one desire or request at a time.

New Cleric Archetype: Jorsha

The speakers of the dead, jorsha are both blessed and cursed with the ability to speak to ghosts. They deal with spectres and other malicious spirits and also help other haffuns find their links to the past through the voices of their ancestors.

Requirements: Haffun

Class Skills

The jorsha trades Knowledge (religion) for Knowledge (local).

Class Features

The following are class features of the jorsha.

Ghost Senses: Jorsha know when there are ghosts in the area and can see them as though they were living creatures. He automatically knows if a ghost comes within 30 feet and which direction the ghost is from himself. A jorsha cannot see ghosts through walls or other obstructions but he will still know that a ghost is present. Jorsha can also communicate with ghosts. For the purposes of this ability, a “ghost” is any creature with both the undead type and the incorporeal subtype.

This ability replaces the *aura of good* class feature.

Expulsion Energy: Jorsha specialize in banishment of hostile spirits and creatures. At 7th level, he can consume two uses of his *channel energy* ability to use the *dismissal* spell. At 11th

level, he can consume two uses of his *channel energy* to use the *banishment* spell. It does not matter if the jorsha channels positive or negative energy; he can still use this ability. A shutha’s fana counts as a rare item for the purpose of banishment.

This ability modifies the *channel energy* class feature.

Ancestor’s Domains: Jorsha choose one ancestor to pull his powers from. That ancestor must have a name and two domains to which it grants access. As with clerics, the jorsha may not choose an alignment domain unless his ancestor was of that alignment. Note that a jorsha need not necessarily be of the same alignment as an ancestor—ancestor spirits might have any number of reasons to serve as a patron beyond simple moral agreement.

This ability replaces the domains class feature.

New class: Butler

The butler serves as the protector of his family, adopted or otherwise. He is skilled in many arts including gardening, home décor and silent assassination.

Requirements: Haffun

Role: The butler is a silent but powerful force within the party. He has excellent stealth skills and a sneak attack, but he also serves the party in other ways (not just at breakfast, lunch and dinner). He supports the party through unique talents and uses “marks” to give bonuses when needed.

Alignment: Any

Hit Die: d8

Starting Wealth: 4d6 x 10 gp (average 140 gp). In addition, each character beings play with one outfit worth 10 gp or less.

Butler special Abilities by Name

Name	Special Ability
Balla Utyan	+3 to Knowledge (history) checks
Ban Fortuda	+3 to Knowledge (engineering) checks
Col Bean	+3 to Stealth checks
Gar Gallan	+3 to Disable Device checks
Hiram Agaves	+3 to Acrobatics checks
Jyss Shallan	+3 to Diplomacy checks
Mal Bubray	+3 to Spellcraft checks
Martha Hudson	+2 to Fortitude saves
Nama Unnan	+3 to Knowledge (local) checks
Nav Gall	+3 to Linguistics checks
Nuo Prunt	+3 to Sense Motive checks
Oliffar Shen	+3 Hit Points
Rin Palla	+3 to Escape Artist checks
Sam Yffur	+3 to Appraise checks
Sunja Sav	+3 to Knowledge (nobility) checks
Tab Collum	+3 to Perception checks
Tan Garlan	+2 to Reflex saves
Tol Binx	+3 to Sleight of Hand checks
Tom Bing	+2 to Will saves
Wes Fassa	+3 to Knowledge (arcane)

Class Skills

The butler class skills are Acrobatics (Dex), Appraise (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Knowledge (arcane) (Int), Knowledge (engineering) (Int), Knowledge (history) (Int), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (nobility) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Perception (Int), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Stealth (Dex) and Spellcraft (Int).

Skill Ranks per Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

The following are class features of the butler.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency: Butlers are proficient with all simple and martial weapons, plus the bola, repeating crossbow and net. He is proficient with light and medium armor but not with shields.

Butler's Name: Butlers gain a name passed down from one of the original 20 butlers. It gives power to his marks and can inspire fear in his enemies. If he for any reason loses his name, he can no longer use any marks he knows or invoke the name.

Sneak Attack: If a butler can catch an opponent when he is unable to defend himself effectively from his attack, he can strike a vital spot for extra damage.

The butler's attack deals extra damage (called "*precision damage*") any time his target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when the butler flanks his target. This extra damage is 1d6 at 1st level, and increases by 1d6 every two butler levels thereafter. Should the butler score a critical hit with a sneak attack, this extra damage is not multiplied. Ranged attacks can count as sneak attacks only if the target is within 30 feet.

With a weapon that deals nonlethal damage (like a sap, whip, or an unarmed strike), a butler can make a sneak attack that deals nonlethal damage instead of lethal damage. He cannot use a weapon that deals lethal damage to deal nonlethal damage in a sneak attack, not even with the usual -4 penalty.

The butler must be able to see the target well enough to pick out a vital spot and must be able to reach such a spot. A butler cannot sneak attack while striking a creature with concealment.

Home Ground (Ex): A butler selects a specific property or a traveling campsite as his home ground. The butler gains a $+2$ bonus on initiative checks and Acrobatics, Perception and Stealth skill checks when he is within the bounds of the property or campsite. At 5th level and every five levels thereafter, the skill bonus and initiative bonus increases by $+2$.

Once a butler chooses a home ground, it cannot be changed. However, the butler can choose, as his home ground, a mobile campsite. The campsite must be constructed by the butler without help from others. A butler's campsite can accommodate one person (including the butler) per fifteen minutes of construction. The home ground bonus for a traveling campground only applies if the family is actually camped in a wild or rugged place, such as a forest glade, a cavern, a ruined dungeon or an open grassy knoll on the edge of town. A site that includes permanent structures is a home, not a camp.

If the butler gains ranger levels, these bonuses *do not* stack with the ranger's favored terrain bonus; use the higher bonus only.

Marks: At 2nd level, a butler learns a one *mark* of his choice. He gains an additional mark at 4th level and for every 2 levels attained after 4th

level, as noted on *Table: Butler*. A butler cannot select an individual mark more than once.

A butler can inscribe a mark once per day per point of Wisdom bonus (minimum 1). A mark's power lasts for 24 hours.

Unless otherwise noted, using a mark is a standard action that does not provoke an attack. The save to resist a mark is equal to $10 + 1/2$ the butler level + the butler's Wisdom modifier.

Aid (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a creature (including himself). If the creature makes a successful aid action the bonus is increased by $+2$.

Alarm (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a passage way. If anyone crosses the passage, the butler knows. If they have a home ground of a traveling campsite, they can inscribe the mark around the camp in a circular manner. The circle counts as a passageway.

Danger (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a person. The butler always knows where that person is and if that person is in danger. The butler even knows that the person is in danger even if the target does not—if a hidden attacker is about to strike, for example.

Grin (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on himself. When he uses Bluff or Diplomacy on a creature that is (or could be) sexually attracted to him, gain a $+1$ racial bonus.

Hear (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a flat surface. He can hear through the mark as if it were his own ear

Key (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a key. If a creature is using the key can make *disable device* checks on any lock it will fit into and

uses the butler's *disable device* score. If the key would normally open the lock, it opens.

Known (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a mundane item. If a creature is holding the item can make Wisdom check (DC 15) to learn a simple fact about the creature. The creature can make a Will save to resist.

Locate (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a mundane item. He always knows where the item is in relation to himself.

Loud (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on small mundane item. If that item is thrown, it makes a huge sound with a 30 foot radius from where it lands. (Base Perception DC -10 to hear.)

Quiet (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on an item or creature. That item or creature makes no sound; armor and weapons do not count as part of a creature but their clothing and shoes do.

Seal (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a lock. The lock cannot be opened by natural or magical means. However, the lock can still be broken or destroyed.

See (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a flat surface; he can see through the mark as if it were his own eye.

Smell (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a flat surface; he can smell through the mark as if he had the *scent* ability

Taste (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a plate or cup. If he holds the item he can know what effects food or drink on the plate or cup will have without tasting them.

Tool (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a tool. At time of inscription, he decides on a craft or profession. Anyone using the tool

can make a *craft* or *profession* check using the butler's *craft* or *profession* score.

Silent Servant: At 2nd level, as long as butler does not move from his starting space on his turn, his racial stealth bonus increases by +2. Additionally, a butler may make a stealth check without need for cover or concealment as long as he do not move from his starting space, and he is adjacent to a wall, tree, or other solid background.

Whisper Way: At 6th level, a butler may make small movements, one five-foot step per turn, while maintaining whisper way technique. He must continue to remain adjacent to at least one solid background, such as a wall or tree. He may pick up objects, pocket them, or even toss an object that he can hold in his hand, although he may not throw a weapon. A butler has to make a *sleight of hand* check opposed by perception checks from any creature that can see the object and he can add his racial stealth bonus to the check. A successful check means that the action does not draw the attention of the observer and he remains hidden.

Lesser Invoke Name: At 8th level, as a standard action a butler invokes his name and every enemy within 30 feet becomes shaken. The Will save to resist is equal to 10 + 1/2 the butler level + the butler's Wisdom modifier.

Major Mark: Starting at 10th level, and every two levels thereafter, a butler can choose one of the following major marks whenever he could select a new mark. If he wants he may choose a mark instead of major mark.

A major mark lasts for 24 hours or until its salient ability is discharged.

Blast (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a flat surface. The mark explodes in 1d6 rounds or if a

living creature makes contact with it. The radius is 10 feet in every direction and it deals 1d6 damage per every 3 butler levels. Any creature in the radius makes a Reflex save for half damage.

Coin (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a coin. If the coin leaves his possession it will find its way back to him the next day. Only haffuns can see this mark.

Effective (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a tool. The tool can be used to complete any type of *craft*, *profession* or skill check without penalty for using the wrong tools. On a successful check, the tool breaks.

Health (Su): The butler marks himself or an ally. The mark takes effect when the target creature is reduced below 0 hit points. The target gains *fast healing* equal to the butler's Constitution bonus (minimum 1). Once activated, this mark lasts a number of rounds equal to half the butler's level (minimum 1).

Hidden (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a light simple weapon. When the item is hidden on a creature, it cannot be found.

Love (Su): The butler marks a living creature. The creature inscribed with this mark falls in love with the butler. The creature must make a Will save to do anything that would have harmful consequences for the butler. This is a mind-affecting effect. *Prerequisite:* *Grin*

Precision (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on the palm of a creature. The next time that creature makes a successful attack using a weapon in the inscribed hand; it automatically threatens a critical hit.

Protect (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on armor. The next time a critical hit is threatened on the creature wearing the armor, the attack completely misses instead.

Soft (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a pair of boots. The next time the creature wearing the boots takes falling damage, the damage is 0.

Unseen (Su): The butler inscribes four marks on the floor in a square shape. Every living creature within the marks is treated as invisible to every creature outside of the marks. This mark lasts a number of rounds equal to the half the butler's level (minimum 1).

Soundless: At 10th level, while using *whisper way*, a butler may also make *disable device* checks without revealing his location, and if he is already hidden, enemies may not make hearing based perception checks to hear him while using those skills.

Invoke Name: At 12th level, when the butler invokes his name, enemies become *frightened* instead of *shaken*.

Invisible Passage: At 14th level, as a full-round action, a butler may move up to 10 feet while retaining the benefits of the *silent servant* and the *whisper way*. He must remain within at least 10 feet of a solid background, such as a wall or tree, but he no longer need to be adjacent to such a surface to use *silent servant*, *whisper way* or *soundless*.

Greater Invoke Name: At 16th level, when the butler invokes his name, enemies become panicked instead of frightened.

Unseen Attack: At 17th level, a butler can make an attack action with sneak attack without breaking *whisper way*. He can do this a number of times per day equal to his Dexterity modifier.

He still has to make a sleight of hand check to make the attack without being noticed.

Grand Mark: Starting at 18th level, and every two levels thereafter, a butler can choose one of the following *grand marks* whenever he could select a new mark. If he wants he may choose a mark or major mark instead of grand mark.

Cloak (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a cloak. When he is wearing the cloak, it acts as

a perfect disguise. He looks, sounds, smells and feels like the person he is impersonating. This is a supernatural disguise, so no skill check is necessary, although it can be penetrated with *true seeing*.

Home (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on the ground. A large ornate door rises from the mark, opening up to a large mansion. Filled with enough food to feed everyone who enters, the ghosts of butlers from the past arrive to care for their other

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Butler's name, sneak attack 1d6, home ground +2
2nd	+1	+3	+3	+0	Mark, the silent servant
3rd	+2	+3	+3	+1	Sneak attack 2d6
4th	+3	+4	+4	+1	Mark
5th	+4	+4	+4	+1	Sneak attack 3d6, home ground +4
6th	+4	+5	+5	+2	Mark, the whisper way
7th	+5	+5	+5	+2	Sneak attack 4d6
8th	+6/+1	+6	+6	+2	Mark, lesser invoke name
9th	+7/+2	+6	+6	+3	Sneak attack 5d6
10th	+7/+2	+7	+7	+3	Home ground +6, mark, major mark, soundless
11th	+8/+3	+7	+7	+3	Sneak attack 6d6
12th	+9/+4	+8	+8	+4	Mark, invoke name
13th	+10/+5	+8	+8	+4	Sneak attack 7d6
14th	+10/+5	+9	+9	+4	Mark, invisible passage
15th	+11/+6/+1	+9	+9	+5	Sneak attack 8d6 , home ground +8
16th	+12/+7/+2	+10	+10	+5	Mark, greater invoke name
17th	+13/+8/+3	+10	+10	+5	Sneak attack 9d6, unseen attack
18th	+13//+8/+3	+11	+11	+6	Mark, grand mark
19th	+14/+9/+4	+11	+11	+6	Sneak attack 10d6
20th	+15/+10/+5	+12	+12	+6	Home ground +10, mark, grand invoke name

needs. This mark functions as the spell *Mage's Magnificent Mansion* with the added bonuses that any family member who rests within the mansion and undergoes natural healing gains an extra 2d6 hit points for every full eight hours of rest.

Life (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a corpse. Inscribing the mark is a full-round action. If it is the corpse of a family member, it comes back to life with half of its original hit points. Otherwise it comes back to life with 0 hit points. The butler suffers one point of temporary constitution damage per two levels of the target. The butler regenerates one point of constitution per day.

Pocket (Su): The butler inscribes a mark on a pocket. The pocket acts as a *handy haversack* but only the butler can remove items from it. If another creature reaches into his pockets, they find nothing.

Terror (Su): The butler inscribes a permanent mark on a creature. Every time that creature sees or hears the butler, it becomes panicked. The mark can only be removed with a *wish* or similar magic, although slaying the butler ends the effect. This is a mind-affecting, fear effect.

Grand Invoke Name: At 20th level, as a swift action, a butler can invoke his name before delivering a killing blow. If the attack is successful, the creature cannot be resurrected, reincarnated or brought back to life by any means.

Approved classes

Listed below are the classes available to Haffuns in *Wicked Fantasy*.

Class	Ork
Barbarian	archetype
Bard	yes
Cleric	archetype
Druid	yes
Fighter	yes
<i>Monk</i>	no
<i>Paladin</i>	no
Ranger	yes
Rogue	archetype
Sorcerer	yes
Wizard	yes
<i>Alchemist</i>	no
Cavalier	yes
<i>Gunslinger</i>	no
<i>Inquisitor</i>	no
<i>Magus</i>	no
<i>Oracle</i>	no
<i>Summoner</i>	no
<i>Witch</i>	no
<i>Antipaladin</i>	no
<i>Ninja</i>	no
<i>Samurai</i>	no



A Little chat

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

When Val Palla woke, he could not move his arms. He tried wiping his eyes, but nothing. He looked around. He was in his room, in his bed, but he could not move his arms. He tugged, but they had no strength. He looked up and saw his left wrist tied to the bedpost and the second tied at his waist. His left shoulder was burning and his fingertips were numb.

He tried shouting, but his voice came out as a mumble. He could not feel his tongue and something covered his mouth.

He tried kicking, but his legs would not move, either. It was then that panic began to settle in. Val Palla was helpless and alone.

He looked around the room, but there was only the moonlight from a shuttered window. He tried making a sound again, this time screaming, but his voice was caught by the cloth tied over his mouth.

He kicked and he pulled and he screamed. Nothing. For what seemed an hour, he tried to get at the knots, but they held fast. In his head, he thought of all his enemies. But no, it couldn't be an enemy. He would be dead by now. Men in the Senate murdered enemies. It had to be something else. Coercion. That was it. Someone wanted something from him.

Or, perhaps it was a robber. That's it. A simple robber who came to take his valuables, found him sleeping off three bottles of wine and the whore's exertions and...

Wait. Where was the whore?

He looked to one side, then the other. He saw no sign of her. Not her clothes, not the wine bottles, not the black cigars... nothing. He looked at the pillow she fell asleep upon. It looked fresh as spring. Not even a hair.

He tried to breathe, but the cloth choked his breath. He breathed through his nose, but it was stuffed. He started to panic. He tried shouting for help. He tried shouting, "I can't breathe!" but it was a muffled mess. He could feel his eyes growing wider. He could feel his chest collapsing. He inhaled desperately, each breath more painful than the last. His vision began to blur. He screamed one last time...

A hand pulled down the gag. Palla gasped in air. Six or seven times before he caught his breath. Just out of instinct, he said, "Thank you." It was barely above a whisper.

"I don't want you to die yet," a small voice said. Palla looked in the direction of the voice but saw only an empty chair. He noticed it there for the first time. It usually sat against the wall, but here it was, pulled up next to the bed.

"Where are you?" Palla gasped. "Where?"

He heard a matchstick strike, then smelled sulfur. He looked back at the chair and saw a child sitting there, holding the flame and a pipe. The roar of the flame burned strong and he saw the child's face. A girl. But not a girl. There was age in her eyes. Age, wisdom and... something resembling cruelty.

"A haffun?" he asked, barely able to speak above a whisper.

The girl smiled. As cruel as her eyes were, her smile was worse.

"Wh-what is the meaning of..." he started, but she stopped him with a soft sound she made between her lips.

The haffun spoke. "I do not need to tell you why I am here," she said. "Except to say that you made it impossible for us not to meet."

Palla shook his head. "What do you mean? I..."

"A man is a sum of his actions," she told him. "An arithmetic of a lifetime. Kindnesses and cruelties. They all add up."

"My guards will have you," he said, his voice slowly gaining strength.

She took a draw from the pipe.

"No," she said. "They won't."

He paused for a moment, half believing her. Then, he turned his head and opened his mouth. But before he could shout, he felt a pain in his throat. His mouth felt it was full of wasps. He whimpered with pain.

"You see," she said. "I told you."

He looked at her, sitting in his chair. She took another pull on the pipe, the shadows lifting for just a moment.

"What is this?" he asked, but his words slushed together like dirty, melting snow.

"You have wronged many women in your days," the haffun said, folding her feet, one over the other. "One of those wrongs has caught up with you."

She reached into a pocket and withdrew something made of silver. She showed it to him. "You have seen one of these, haven't you?" she asked. Palla looked. Then, he nodded.

"It's a watch," he said.

She nodded and smiled. "Yes! The uvandir make them. Rather brilliant. They allow you to keep an exact passage of moments. Seconds, minutes, hours. Very useful for cooking, you know."

He felt the pain in his mouth fading. Perhaps he could try another scream.

"I've been using it to keep track of poison," she said.

He felt something drop in his stomach. "Poison?" he asked.

She gave him a half smile. "Yes," she said. "Poison."

His jaw trembled. "In me?"

She looked surprised. "No!" she said. "In your son."

All the pain in his body changed.

It changed into fear.

"No," he said.

She looked at the watch. "Yes," she said.

"And in less than two minutes, the antidote I brought with me will do him no good."

"My son," Palla said, "is miles from here. In another City."

"I know," the haffun said. She got up from her chair and used another match to light a candle. Then, she walked to the far end of the room.

"It took me a while to bring him here," she said, "but..."

She lifted the candle and Palla saw his boy, all of seventeen years, tied to a chair, his lips blue, his skin white, his jaw thick with foam. His body was as still as a gravestone.

"Two minutes," the haffun said.

Palla could barely speak. "What... what..."

"What do I want?" the haffun asked. "Oh, it's very simple."

She took a long document from another pocket. She set it on the table next to the bed. She pulled up an inkwell and a quill. Then, she looked at Palla.

"Sign it," she said.

"What is it?"

"The deed for all your lands and titles."

Palla looked at his son.

Then, he looked at the haffun.

"Who am I signing it to?"

The haffun shook her head. "No," she said.

He was confused. "What?"

"No," she said again. "It's 'To whom am I signing?'" She sighed. "Men don't even know the proper way to speak their own language."

"You son of a bitch!" Palla wanted to scream the words, but they came out as a hoarse cough.

"I'm female, Lord Palla," she said. "And your boy has a minute left."

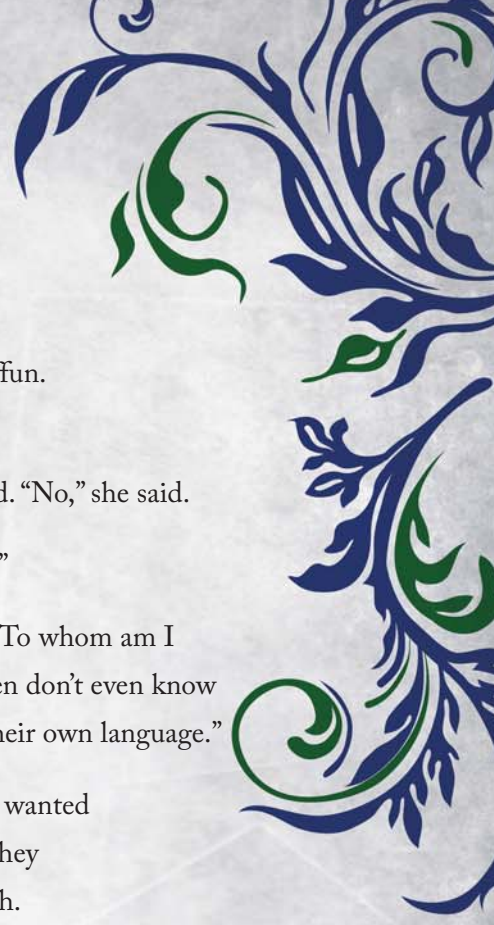
He took shallow, quick breaths. He looked around the room. There must be a tool, a weapon... something."

"There's nothing," the haffun told him. "I removed anything that could have helped you. Including the girl."

Palla turned back to the haffun. "I'm going to kill you," he said.

She slowly shook her head. "No," she said. "You are going to sign this document. Then, I am going to take you somewhere far away from here and you are going to live the rest of your life in a farmhouse far, far from the City where you can never harm another young girl again."

"I'll find a way back," he snarled.



“And if you do,” she said, drawing from her pipe, “I will kill you.” She looked at his son. “Forty-five seconds.”

He looked at the parchment. Then, he raised his eyes back at her. “Who are you?”

She smiled, tilting her head. “My name?”

“Tell me.”

She stepped up to the edge of the bed. “Shallan,” she said “Jyss Shallan.”

He felt his throat *click* as he swallowed.

“You’ve heard of me?” she asked.

He nodded. “Y-yes.”

“Then do as I say and sign the document.”

She picked up the quill, dipped it into the ink and put the quill in his hand.

Palla signed it, his hand quivering as he did.

The haffun nodded. “Good,” she said. She stepped back and put the parchment on the table.

“My boy!” Palla tried to shout.

“Do not worry,” she said. She stepped to the boy, took a small glass bottle from her pockets and unscrewed the top. She removed the top, revealing a glass dipper. She lifted the boy’s chin with one hand and let a few drops fall onto his tongue.

“Done and done,” she said. Then, she put the glass bottle away and took out another.

“This one is for you,” she told him.

Palla felt his hands beginning to tremble. “What is it?”

“Poison,” she said. “But it won’t kill you. Only put you to sleep for a while.”

“H-how d-d-o I k-”

“That I’m not going to kill you?”

He nodded, unable to speak.

“Lord Palla, if I wanted to kill you I would have already.”

“You n-needed the c-c-c...”

“The contract?” she asked. “If you showed up dead tomorrow, the contract would mean nothing. The Senate would investigate.”

He was trying to catch his breath. She held the dipper up to his mouth.

“Open wide, Lord Palla.”

He shook his head. “No,” he said. “No.” Then, “I don’t trust you. You’re going to kill me. You’re an assassin.”

“I have killed before, yes,” she told him. “But not tonight. And I am not an assassin, Lord Palla.” Her smile grew wide. “I am a gardener. Now, open your mouth or I’ll drop it in your eyes.”

He looked at her for a moment, his whole body trembling. Then, he squeezed his eyes shut and opened his mouth.

He felt the poison hit his tongue. It was bitter as it slid around his mouth. He felt his eyes grow heavy,

felt his limbs grow weak, and before he could say or do anything else, a warm darkness reached up from deep below and grabbed him, pulling him down.

As he faded, Jyss Shallan watched him. When she was convinced he was gone, she nodded and put the dropper back on the bottle, screwing the lid shut. Then, she turned to the boy and said, "He's out."

The boy opened his eyes and raised his head. "Are you sure?"

She gave him a disapproving look. "Of course I'm sure." Then, she walked to the papers as he rose up from the chair, shaking his limbs.

"I can't feel my fingers or toes," he said.

"The drug will wear off soon enough," she told him, holding the papers. "It was necessary to create the proper illusion."

He held his hand out to her. "Can I see them?" he asked.

Shallan gave him the papers. "Congratulations, Dffd," she said. "*You* are now Lord Palla."

He looked over the paperwork. Then, he looked at her. "I could not have done this..."

She raised a hand. "I know, I know." Then, she sat back in the chair and re-lit her pipe.

Dffd shifted his gaze from the papers to his father. "He deserves it."

With the match light reflecting on her face, she said nothing.

Dffd stepped over to the bed. His hand trembled on the knife on his belt.

"I could kill him now," he said. "For what he did to Belinda."

"That would be unwise," Jyss Shallan said. "Like I told him, if he is dead, the authenticity of the papers comes into question."

He turned to look at her.

"And if he disappears?"

"He won't," she said. "He will take ill. I have friends in the country. They will take care of him. He won't be in any pain, but he will be helpless. And unable to do anything."

She hopped off the chair and stepped up to Dffd. "He was unpopular in the Senate. No one will question you taking over his lands once he becomes ill. But if he's dead, that's another matter. Senators don't like it when other Senators mysteriously die. It makes them nervous."

Dffd nodded. "Yes," he said. "I understand."

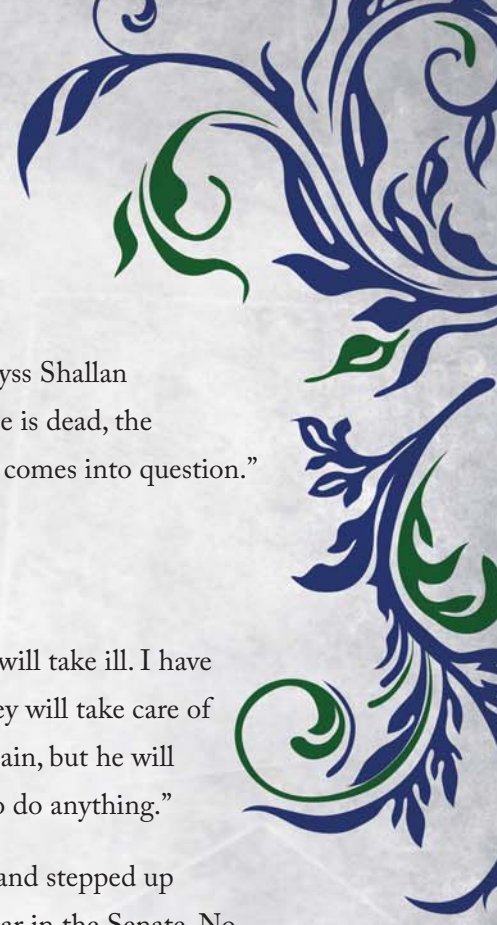
"My cousins will take good care of him," she told him. "Do not worry about that."

Then, she touched his hand. "In the meantime, don't you have a wedding to plan with Belinda?"

Dffd looked down at her, his grim face turning to a bright smile. "Yes," he said. "I do."

She nodded up at him. "Good," she said. Then, she looked out the window at the sun beginning to rise.

"If you would excuse me, Lord Palla," she told him, "I would like to see the garden."





orks: children of Pain

come closer to the fire, child. come closer, listen
and I will tell you how we murdered the gods.

Long ago, the gods made our people to serve as their slaves.
And for centuries, that is what we were. We were slaves.

We raided villages, murdered the helpless and took what we wanted
from the weak. Because that was what we were taught. The
mantra running through our minds, over and over again.

The strong eat the weak and pain makes me stronger.

And so we lived, we fought and we died. That was our lives.

But one day, a warrior stood and said we did not have to live as slaves to the
gods. The lessons they taught us—of steel, of violence, of blood, of pain—could be
used to set us free. We would go to the mountain and we would murder the gods.

And little one, that is exactly what we did...

They were the terror of the outlying villages.
Raiders who arrived in the night, murdered and
butchered and left behind only flaming ruin.
Adventurers went into the wilderness to fight
them, but every year, it seemed new raiders had
been born in the spring, grew to adulthood in
the summer and were ready to raid by the fall.

But in the last two decades, something changed.
The raids stopped. No sign of them for three
years. Then, one fall, a group of them showed
up at the gates of the northern city of Val'quir.
They carried a white flag, brought with them a
“bard,” and asked to see the “headman” of the
city. They were lead to the governor’s presence—
highly guarded—where the bard explained
what had happened, what had changed and
what they hoped might happen in the future.

The bard told the story of how evil gods had
created the race and sent them against mankind
and the other races to cause pain and sorrow.
Then, he told of a hero who rose up and went
to the mountains with twelve others—thirteen

being the sacred number—and murdered
the gods, thus freeing his people. He said the
people knew when the task was done: a cloud
lifted in their minds. The “red hate” that led to
fear and hate of the other races was gone.

And the bard said, “We are no longer at war.”

“I am glad to hear it,” the governor told him.

The bard and his retinue turned to leave,
but paused at the door. He looked back
at the governor and growled, “Don’t
give us cause to change our minds.”

The Halls of Ghusha

To murder their gods, the
orks knew they would have
to become spirits. As spirits,
they could enter the Great Hall
of Ghusha—where their gods
drank, ate and cavorted—and



"The gods will get you!"

It is rumored that the orks did not succeed in killing *all* their gods. As the story goes, a few escaped into the dark spirit world during the bloodbath in Ghusha Hall. They may still be out there, plotting to retake their Great Hall.

Or, it could all just be a story meant to scare little ork children. "Be good, or the gods will get you!"

Half orks?

Romantic liaisons between orks and humans are incredibly rare, but they do happen from time to time. While humans and orks are biologically similar enough for intercourse, they are not similar enough to bear children.

murder the gods, one by one. These ork heroes stood facing each other, and then, on a single command, thrust their swords into their brothers' hearts. An entire army of ork warriors died in the same instant and found themselves at the Gates of Ghusha. Then, they raided the Hall, and after a great battle, murdered the gods and claimed the Hall as their own.

Now, the *valu*—ork guardians—stand at the Gates of Ghusha. But within the Hall are the souls of orks who have died and now eat and drink and cavort as their gods once did. And when an ork dies, his soul comes to the Hall. The party calls out, "Prove your pain!": a chance to tell the story of his death. If it is a good death, they allow him to join the table. If they are unsatisfied with his story, he is kicked out of Ghusha and forced to return to the world as a newborn ork who gains a new opportunity to "prove his pain."

ghavah: cursed by the blood for greatness

The ork word for blood is *gha*, but it means more than just that. It also carries the connotation of strength, courage and plain old guts.

The heroes who went up the Mountain came back with the blood of gods in their veins and they passed it along to their descendants. Now, orks carry that power within them. A power they can call upon. But it is not a simple thing to do. An ork must be trained. He must learn how to call upon the power within him, and for that, there is the *ghashoh*: the blood shaman.

Occasionally, an ork is born who is different than the rest. He speaks in riddles and wakes from terrifying dreams. Sometimes, he falls into ecstatic dances and sing strange songs. The power of the heroes' blood is too great in him. He is *Ghavah*. Cursed by the blood for greatness. Bound to be a blood shaman.

He is isolated from the other children and brought to the Tribe's current blood shaman, who evaluates him for training. If he is found worthy, the Ghavah takes him in. If he is not, he never returns to the Tribe.

Every Tribe has a number of *ghashoh* who train the young orks how to call upon the power that sleeps within. *Ghashoh* seldom directly interact with the Tribe. They live on the edges of the encampment, alone in small tents. The *ghashoh* not only tests potential blood shaman, but other orks as well, with an elaborate (and private) ritual to see how much of the heroes' blood lays sleeping within them. The *ghashoh* takes the child from its parents and retreats back to his tent. The children leave the tent some time after with fresh scars and strange visions in their heads. But after they recover, the ork children know how to summon the strength of the gods.

Gahthrak: The Warlord

Every once in a while, a ghashoh test reveals a child of great potential. One who can master the power within him. When the blood shaman finds such a child, he announces a gahthrak: an ork who can use his blood as a weapon.

Gahthrak grow bigger than most orks. They are stronger and faster. The power they command is beyond that of a normal ork warrior.

Gahthrak have a unique status in ork society. A *gahthrak* is the champion of his tribe. A literal warlord. While he holds no real political power, when the Tribe goes to war, they turn to the *gahthrak* to lead them. When two Tribes disagree on matters that may lead to war, the *gahthrak* of both Tribes meet and fight. The winner is the one who decides on the matter.

Fala: The Voice & Memory

Gunda fala tal. It is a phrase every ork speaks at least once in his life. “The *fala* is watching me.”

In every Tribe, there is one ork who sits next on the left hand side of the Warlord. The *fala*. The voice and memory of the Tribe.

The *fala* is the Tribe’s bard. But he is more than just a “magical entertainer.” The bard is the living memory of the Tribe. He is its history. And if you please him, he will remember you in a favorable light. If you *displease* him, he will remember you in a less flattering light. A *fala* can ruin an ork. Destroy his reputation forever. With one biting story. Or, he can make the ork’s reputation shine brighter than the sun. With one brilliant story. Heroes who ignore or disrespect the *fala* do so at their own risk.

The ork bard is less musical than his human counterparts, relying on the power of stories

to inspire his fellows. Orks already know the stories—they tell them every night around fires—so all they need is to be reminded of the tale. A single poignant phrase or even just the title of the story is all that’s needed to remind orks of their Tribe’s past victories... and inspire them to future ones.

Gunda fala tal. “The *fala* is watching me.” I can be a hero or a fool. My legacy is now.

Feth'ork

One peculiar thing about orks: animals don’t like them. Beasts can sense something *wrong* about orks. Perhaps it is the smell, or perhaps it is just a sense that orks are not... *natural*. Most animals either flee or attack orks, depending on the beast. This made hunting incredibly difficult. It made finding a mount impossible.

But orks did not accept this fate. Instead, they experimented with ways to *make* mounts. Eventually, they found a way. It isn’t anything resembling “domestication.” It’s something else entirely.

If an ork wants a hunting hound, he captures an animal and then starves it for several days. He then gives the animal food that has been mixed with his own blood. This process takes several months, but the ork blood transforms the animal into something else. It transforms the animal into a feth’ork. An “orkfriend.” The animal’s attitude isn’t the only thing that’s transformed. With the ork blood coursing through its system, the orkfriend gains size, strength and ferocity. In fact, a feth’ork may call upon the “red rage” just as orks do, entering a blind, killing frenzy.

A feth’ork also shares a bond with the ork who made him. While the two cannot directly communicate, the two gain a kind of mutual intuition. If the wolf smells danger, the ork

knows it. If dialogue with a human diplomat is going sour, the feth'ork begins to snarl.

Some orks reject the use of blood to create animal companions. Perhaps it reminds them of the old days...

Freedom & Rage

For orks, who served entire lifetimes as slaves for so long to wicked gods, freedom is everything. "Without freedom, all orks are slaves." Ork culture, now liberated from their gods, has transformed under that one paradigm. Orks are free to live their own lives. Free from all tyrannies.

When orks find themselves in dispute and cannot find a resolution between themselves, they find an ork both parties trust to decide on the matter. Whatever the ork chooses, the two parties agree to abide by the decision.

Because of their history, orks try to keep a leash on violence, but it is not easy. They were bred for it. Bred with the *bludga*: the red rage. It overcomes all your senses, blinds your mind to thought and throws you into a fire that only blood can quench. Orks look upon *bludga* as a remnant of their past. The last bit of hold the gods have upon them. An ork cannot control it, and thus, it makes him a slave.

Many orks see *bludga* as a sin: a moral failing. They urge their youth to fight the rage, to suppress it. Perhaps, one day, they will find a way to purge it from their souls forever. But others see *bludga* as a blessing. Yes, it is the surrender of freedom, but it is a *willing* surrender, not a forced one. They embrace *bludga* and use it to defeat those who would enslave the ork race again.

Although, there are stories of orks entering a kind of "sacred rage." A rage that they can control. A rage that, instead of possessing the ork, the ork possesses. Most orks consider such stories to be only that: stories. Although a few have

said the orks who went up the mountain to kill the Gods entered such a rage. Perhaps there is more to the tale than just wishful thinking...

Between freedom (the passion to control their own destiny) and *bludga* (an uncontrollable bloodlust that takes all freedom away) is the place where orks find themselves today.

If one ork doesn't like the decision, he is free to leave and join another village, but wherever an ork goes, his shadow—his *shash*—follows him.

shash: The shadow that follows you

The ork word for "reputation" is the literal word for "shadow." *Shash*. "Wherever you go, your *shash* follows you." Orks put a great deal of importance on *shash*. Almost as much as freedom itself.

Different tribes value different kinds of *shash*. Some value an ork who is known to be violent and cruel. Others value an ork who is known to be wise and careful in his decisions. Still others value a crafty ork, full of wiles and cunning. Depending on the tribe, your own reputation deems whether or not you can stay there or you should just move on.

shathula: The cult of Pain

In the absence of Gods, orks have turned to another force greater than themselves to revere. A force that controls all creatures. A force that can kill you... or drive you to become a legend.

Orks do not worship Gods; they worship *pain*.

The ork word for pain is *shathula*. It means, "The grim herald." Orks view pain as a sentient, living entity in the world. It warns an ork, "You are about to die." The typical ork response to this warning is, "Shut up, I'm busy."

Many speculate on how the cult of pain began, but its origins are still mysterious. Some human scholars believe it began after the rejection of divine worship (many human scholars reject the existence of “ork gods” in the first place). Whatever its origins may be, the cult of pain is now one of the most primary philosophies in ork culture.

Shathula teaches that pain is a sentient, living force in the world (and only orks recognize it). The ork relationship with pain is twofold. First, orks recognize that pain is an indication of injury. In other words, pain lets you know how close to death you are. Second, orks also recognize that pain causes biological changes in the body. Adrenaline rushes through the blood, making the ork stronger and faster. The closer you are to death, the more *shathula* pushes you to survive.

Of course, there comes a time when pain is too great to overcome. You are too close to death and the end is inevitable.

This is the time for greatness. To show your strength. To embrace your pain. To embrace your destiny.

Orks do not show pain, but they do point out pain in others. The first is a matter of pride. “I do not make the sounds of a weakling.” The second is a point of honor. “Look at Guthar! Look at his wounds! Look at his pain!” That’s why orks point out how another “holds his pain.” It is a matter of respect.

Va: Scars of Honor

While men have their own code of honor, orks follow a different kind of morality. They call it *va*. The word literally means “scars,” but it has deeper connotations. Many human scholars use Fortunus Breck’s account of his summer of living with the Shield Breaker Tribe as the best introduction to *va*.

It was his first week living with the orks. He had only recently earned enough trust to sit closer to the fire—not yet next to it—and he noticed the orks were “painting their scars.” He asked why and quickly found himself struck in the jaw and flat on his back. Another ork, one who was friendlier to Breck, quietly explained that it was rude to ask about scars. He had to wait until someone gave up the story voluntarily.

Eventually, Breck earned enough trust that one ork warrior, named Gothin, pointed at a small scar on his shoulder. “You see this?” Gothin asked. Breck nodded, but said nothing. Gothin told him the story of how he earned the scar stealing horses from a human village. “They shot an arrow at me,” he said. “It went straight through my arm. I left it there until I came back to camp and then I ripped it out myself.”

Another ork shook his head violently. “That is nothing!” he shouted, showing a larger scar. “This one here! This one I earned protecting a catch of ork children against an ogre! It wanted to eat them all. I wasn’t going to allow that!”

These were *vaka*: scar stories. Breck said the stories went on for hours. Each ork showing another scar, each story more great than the last. He wrote, “I would share the rest, but I cannot, dear reader. You have not earned the right to hear them.”

For orks, scars are more than just war stories. A scar demonstrates an ork’s wounds—the pain he suffered to succeed. A *vaka*, a scar story, is more than just bragging about accomplishments. If an ork accomplishes a great task with no scars, the story isn’t worth telling. He sacrificed nothing, therefore, his accomplishment is worth nothing. To make a story worthy or great, an ork must sacrifice *something* to make it great.

Breck also wrote that some orks voluntarily give themselves scars to represent

"No scars."

The ork word "nava" means "no scars." Orks use it in many ways. It can be used as an insult: a human noble who has lived his life in comfort without ever having to make difficult decisions has "nava." It can be used as a term of disappointment: if an ork undergoes adventure where the ork comes out the other side without any significant challenge, he may be heard to utter, "Nava." Orks have been known to use the term to dismiss a task unworthy of their attention. If the task is not challenging enough, the ork will say, "Nava." It has no scars. Another warrior who challenges the ork to a duel may see the ork turn away, turning his back on the challenger. "Nava," the ork says. "There are no scars here."

emotional loss or grief. An ork who loses a lover to violence puts a scar across his heart. The deeper the scar, the greater the loss.

Breck also noted that the orks began telling him scar stories after he had been injured himself while protecting an ork child from a wolf. The wolf had bit into his leg, leaving a deep wound. That night, after he had recovered, the orks began telling him vaka. In a small way, they acknowledged his courage and told him stories as a way to thank him for saving the child.

This is not to say orks do not value stealth and guile. They do. But a deed is not great—it has no honor—unless the hero gave up something to accomplish his goal. Sacrifice. That is what makes an action honorable. It is the *va*—the scar—that makes it great.

And, as mentioned above, scars do not have to be physical. An ork hero who must choose between the one he loves and his best friend... which will he give up? That is a deep scar. A scar, some orks say, that can never heal. *Vadu*. The scar that never heals. The greatest honor of all.

Breck summarized *va* like this: "Orks are not interested in simple great deeds. They want to hear stories of *sacrifice* and *pain*. The story of the ork who snuck into an enemy's village and killed every single warrior without taking a single injury? They would scoff at such a tale. But a warrior who walked in and challenged each and every warrior to a duel, fought them all, and nearly died doing so? That is a story an ork wants to hear. I do not know if all the stories I heard were true. It does not matter. I saw the pain in their eyes. The suffering they survived. That is what makes orks sing. I feel your pain, my brother. And I sing for you."

Thunda

Orks do not have a legal system, per se. They do not decide disputes with juries or judges. Instead, when a conflict arises within a Tribe, any ork may call for a *thunda*. Human scholars first translated this word to mean, "a hearing," as in a judicial hearing, but the word better translates as "a big talk."

When an ork calls a thunda, the Tribe stops what they are doing and gather in the middle of the encampment. The ork announces why he is calling the thunda and explains his reasons. Then, the Tribe votes on whether or not the thunda should take place. If a majority of orks vote *yes*, the thunda commences after dinner that night (or immediately, if the case is an emergency). If the orks vote *no*, the Tribe has decided the ork's claim not worthy of having a thunda. No thunda takes place. Orks who call too many "no vote thundas" earn a reputation for being spurious.

At the thunda, all orks in the Tribe are allowed to speak. Every ork speaks his mind and when all the talking is done, the Tribe is given one day to consider a decision (or, immediately if the case is an emergency). The question brought before the thunda must be posed as a yes or no question. The ork who called the thunda—and any other orks involved in the matter—must abide by the Tribe’s decision.

Six Tribes

Nine armies, led by nine warlords, travelled up the mountain to face the gods. Only six of those armies returned. (When the Tribes meet, they always raise three white banners for the three Tribes who did not return from the Mountain.) The warlords who led those armies not only slew the Gods of the Mountain, but did a little bit more.

They *ate* the Gods of the Mountain. Drank their blood and ate their flesh.

When they returned from the mountain, they brought the strength of the gods with them. They passed that strength on to their children and those orks passed that strength on to their children. Thus, the six great Tribes.

The Big Walk

Orks have no cities or villages. They are a migratory species that moves across the rough Northlands where it is too cold for farms. The ork word for their migration across the Northlands is *Taldutha*, or “the Big Walk.”

Orks have no agriculture, instead they rely on hunting and gathering. The common ork diet consists of game, parsnips, potatoes, carrots and other tubers. They also enjoy fruits when they can find them. During the winter months, orks are very fond of eating pinecones. They are also skilled brewers and have found men and dwarves are particularly fond of ork mead and cider.

During the Big Walk, the Tribes generally stay out of each other’s way, but sometimes cross paths for trade, exchanging stories and news and celebrations.

Economy

Ork tribes have no currency, relying entirely on trade. Orks who have traveled south and lived in human Cities bring back tales of humans using coin and paper, but the idea has not caught on in the Tribes.

Orks who do come to the human Cities are not ignorant of coins and other kinds of currency, but they don’t see much sense in the practice. They’ll participate—trading little pieces of soft metal for a good, solid axe—but that doesn’t mean they won’t snicker while they’re doing it.

“How did they return?”

Human scholars studying ork history have asked, “If the heroes killed themselves to reach the Mountain, how did they come back once the Gods were killed?”

Orks usually answer this question with a non-verbal reply.

Heredity

Orks place a great deal of importance on heredity: the strength of their ancestral connection with the heroes who climbed the mountain. Orks trace their bloodline back to those original heroes—the purer the connection, the greater your status among your fellow orks.

Those who have direct links back to the heroes are called *futha* (the word best translates as “ancient son”). Those who have a less direct link are called *bufasha* (or, “cousin”).

Banners

Each Tribe has its own *ghutha*, or heraldry. Tribes carry their *ghutha* into battle to show their tribal pride as well as to communicate commands. Carrying the banner is a special honor reserved only for orks who have proven themselves worthy.

Ughash (wandering orks) carry their Tribe’s banner with them when they leave the Tribe behind. The banner reminds an ork who his is, where he comes from and the responsibility of carrying his Tribe’s honor wherever he goes.

Ughash: Wandering Orks

While orks are a tribal species, some feel a need to wander away from the Tribe. Orks call this *ughash*: the lust to see. To see the world beyond the Tribe, beyond ork lands. An *ughash* can last a few weeks, a few months or even a lifetime. Even *gabthrak* feel this wandering urge, seeking adventure (and glory) far from their Tribe. (Of course, most *gabthrak* bring a *fala* along with them to remember their great deeds when they return to the Tribe.)

When an ork declares he has *ughash*, a fellow Tribesman (typically a mother, sister or a loved one) makes a banner to carry. The ork is expected to fly the banner on his back or carry it in his hands. “Spread the word of our Tribe.” The banner also serves as a blanket the ork can wrap around himself at night. “Carry

the warmth of the Tribe with you,” she says, as she gives him the blanket. “And remember it will always be here for you when you return.”

The Shield Breakers (Strength)

Banner: A Red Single Point Banner with brown trim along the edge and a crossed Battle Axe and Spiked Club

Thranna the Shield Breaker. He slew every enemy who stepped in his way. Thranna the Skull Crusher. He devoured his enemies, stealing their strength and power. Thranna the Unconquered. No army ever stood against his might.

An ork named Bhugan killed him and ate what was left. There wasn’t much.

They are the Shield Breakers. Among their own tribe, they call themselves, “the Sons of Bhugan.” But if you don’t share their blood, don’t you dare use that name. You haven’t earned it. They are the strongest warriors of all the tribes. They know it. And you should know it, too. If you don’t, they’ll teach you. When it comes time for war, they are always up front. They wear scars like trophies and speak well of those they have killed. “They had the courage to face a Shield Breaker,” a Son of Bhugan might say. “Is there a better way to die?”

The Ush (“Iron Benders”) (Intelligence)

Banner: Orange single point, striped red and yellow trim and a bronze hammer over a broken forge.

Ghursha was the one who made their weapons. It was said he cut off one of his own hands to bled on the iron that made his great forge so his weapons—and thus, his warriors—would carry his blood into battle. Perhaps, if he had two hands, he would have been able to save himself from Ush.

When Ush killed Ghursha, he also broke the forge that he made. All the weapons that helped control

orks' minds... the tools that made them were no more. Instead, Ush gave orks the knowledge of how to make tools and weapons themselves. And those who carry his blood in their veins are the greatest smiths and crafters in the tribes. They named themselves after their founder. "I am an Ush," they say. And the word has become synonymous with "he who bends iron."

When the tribes go to war, every ork wants an Ush weapon. The swords are sharper, the axes stronger and the bows shoot farther than any other. "Go to war without an Ush in your hand and you may as well walk in without anything at all." That's what the orks say. And the Ush just nod and smile.

The Keepers of Secrets (Wisdom)

Banner: Two-tip, black background with a two-headed white snake.

He was tall and slender. Slender for an ork. Still a tree stump to most other races. He hid his face from his brothers and sisters, disliking eye contact. They did not trust him. But Teel was clever. When strength alone wasn't enough, the other gods turned to Teel. And he would give them a plan... for a price. And when the ork heroes came, he warned the others it would happen. He almost escaped. Almost. But a clever ork caught him. Just before the knife fell, Teel said, "All my knowledge will be yours, my child. That is my last curse."

The ork who killed him was Ighusha. When he returned from the mountain, he was changed. He withdrew from his fellow orks, revealing himself when called upon or when he felt it was necessary. He paid other orks to steal books from human libraries and even disguised himself to infiltrate universities.

His tribe is called many things. "The Whisperers," "the Keepers," "the Quiet Ones."

But they carry the knowledge of the world. And they know now what Teel said was true. Theirs is both a blessing and a curse. Knowing what you are... and what you can never be.

The Guile of Khusmet (Charisma)

Banner: Tri Point, Solid Purple and Broken Golden Rimmed, Circular Mirror

Although it may be difficult for human readers to comprehend, Vamkh was a beautiful ork. The Most Charming of All Orks. Anyone who saw Vamkh fell in love with Vamkh. It was said Vampkh was both male and female depending on who was looking or speaking. And Khusmet could convince anyone—*anyone*—to do anything with just a whisper.

Vampkh's charms and beguilements were no protection against Khusmet. That's because, when Khusmet faced the Most Charming of All Orks, she wore wax in her ears and gauze over her eyes.

The inheritor's of Khusmet's blood, better known as "the Guile of Khusmet" inherited the charms and wiles of Vamkh and it shows in the faces and voices of their clan. Even the other races must admit, the Blood of Khusmet produces some damn fine looking orks. But not only beautiful, but wiley as well. Khusmet orks have found all sorts of wealth in the Great Cities of Men. For as clever as they think they are, none can withstand the guile of Khusmet.

Khavu's Children (Constitution)

Banner: Two points, green background with many black eyes.

Dwimnga was the mother of all orks. A horrifying sight. A bloated, diseased thing said to have a thousand teats, a thousand eyes, a thousand mouths, and it was said she could give birth to a thousand orks a day.

It was the ork hero Khavu who killed and ate Dwimnga. When Khavu returned from the mountain, it was said she could run for days without rest, fight for days without sleep and when she found a warrior who she favored... well, perform other activities for a great deal of time without any need for rest, too.

The tribe known as Khavu's Children inherited their namesake's seemingly undying endurance.

The Shadow Steppers (Dexterity)

Banner: Dark grey and blue, tri-point with a black hand held forward.

Shuvalah was always portrayed as a smaller ork than his brothers and sisters. In the old banners and tapestries, he is always hiding behind something. He was called "shadow kin" and "the knife thrower." When Tuvanka murdered the shadow-stepper, she inherited all that was his. She had no idea what she was in for.

Shuvalah had made a deal with dark things to gain his powers and when Tuvanka ate his heart, that deal transferred to her. Now, all her descendants are beholden to the dark things that Shuvalah bargained with. They may move quietly and they may land any dagger they throw, but their hearts are tainted with darkness. A secret they have kept so far.

So far.

An Ork's Life

This next section details the life of an ork in the Tribes. We look at youth, adulthood and old age.

Youth

Orks are usually born in litters of three or four. Twins or single children are extremely rare and seen as an omen (good or bad, depending on the circumstances). Litter mates are raised by

their mothers until they can walk; a period of six to seven months. Once children are mobile, the males take over the duty of childcare.

Between six to twelve months, ork children are capable of walking, carrying tools and weapons and fighting. Both male and female children are taught how to fight. Those who are strong are made warriors, or *thurka*. Those who are not strong (regardless of gender) are made "housemates," or *dunga*. Housemates are taught how to weave, knit, sew, cook and perform other duties. Being a *dunga* is not a sign of disgrace; on the contrary, *dunga* are recognized as essential for the survival of the Tribe. And *dunga* are not entirely helpless. They still know how to use weapons but they spend far less time hunting and fighting than *thurka*.

Adulthood

As an ork ages, he earns a reputation with his Tribe. That reputation means a lot, following him for the rest of his life.

Our ork also eventually finds a *ganna*, or "partner." (Ganna is also the word orks use for the partnership itself.) Orks choose their *ganna* based on personality rather than romantic attachment (although, romance can enter into the agreement). A *ganna* partnership is between two orks who work well together, who can maintain a home together and raise children together. A good father and a good mother.

But orks are not sexually exclusive. They can seek sexual companions outside the *ganna*, but such dalliances are seen as temporary. Romance (what orks call a *futha*) comes and goes, but the *ganna* always remains. If a *futha* produces a child, both the *ganna* are considered responsible for the child. If one *ganna* wishes to raise the child and the other does not, then only one parent group claims the child. *Ganna* sometimes disagree on which family should raise a child.

If such a disagreement arises, the Tribe holds a *thunda* (a hearing) to decide the matter.

Old Age

It is difficult to determine how many years an ork can age because so many of them die young. Stories tell of an ancient ork living on his own in the mountains, still hunting, surviving by his strength and cunning alone. But such stories are considered little more than legends.

The oldest ork in the Tribes, Bahsuthrak, has seen fifty years go by. His muscles and memories are still strong and he proudly shows his scars to those who are worthy to see them.

A Cold Peace

And now, for the last two decades, orks and the other races have lived in peace. At least, a relative peace. The Reign of Man expands every day. As it moves to the North, they move into ork lands. Rivers are re-routed, forests cut down and all the hunting is gone. Nothing for winter. Orks send bards to speak to the rulers of the growing human cities and receive promises, but those promises are seldom kept.

A few tribes now speak of going back to war with the Reign of Men, but not enough. With fewer numbers, poorer supplies and no allies, the orks would have little hope against the well-armed Reign of Men. But every year, they creep further North. And every year, the rivers become dams, the forests become plains of stumps and the winters get longer...

Ork Racial Traits

- +2 to Strength and Charisma
- **Medium:** As Medium creatures, ork have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Movement:** Base speed of 40ft

- **Darkvision:** Ork can see in the dark up to 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only, but it is otherwise like normal sight, and ork can function just fine with no light at all.
- **Masochistic:** Gain a +1 pain bonus to attack rolls after taking 5 points of lethal damage. At 5th, 10th, 15th & 20th character levels, orks gain an additional +1 bonus for an additional 5 points of lethal damage. Orks do not like pain. They worship and relish pain because the pain makes them stronger.
- **Feth'ork Bleeding:** Ork gain the feth'ork Bleeding Ritual, a feth'ork is a normal animal with one size category bigger template applied, the ork subtype and the Empathic Link ability. Animal Companions and Bonded Mounts start as a feth'ork, no size template is applied. Familiars start as a feth'orks and have a two size category bigger template applied. Otherwise, a feth'ork gains abilities as normal. Common animals have no place in the ork tribes, only the superior feth'ork may stand at an ork's side.
- **Shash:** Ork gain glory and blunders based on their starting age. Glory adds a +1 racial bonus to any skill. Blunders take a -1 racial penalty from any skill. Check the nearby table for glory and blunders. Throughout their lives, orks build up their shash by acts of greatness or great bungles. This reputation follows them all of their days.
- **God's Blood:** Ork gain a god's blood ability based on which tribe they come from. Check the god's blood section for abilities. Once you choose an ability, it cannot be changed. The heroes went up the mountain and ate the Gods; they brought back great power for all ork.
- **Ghutha:** Ork gain a +2 inspiration bonus to skill checks when the banner of their tribe

Can you damage yourself?

Yes, but it requires a Will Save to get past your natural survival instinct. Decide how much damage you want to do and add 15 to get the DC for the Will Save. Such as if you want to do 10 points of lethal damage to activate Pain Tolerance, add 10 +15 for a DC 25. If you succeed, the damage is automatically applied to your hit points, if you fail, you are *shaken* and cannot attempt it again for another 30 minutes.

is nearby and visible. The sight of a tribe's banner fluttering in the breeze spurs all ork who call it their own to glory.

- **Language:** Orks begin play speaking Common and Ork (Tribal Dialect). Orks with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

Age	Glory	Blunders
Adulthood	3	1
Middle Age	5	3
Old	7	6
Venerable	9	9

Languages and Dialects

Orks have their own language—ork—as well as a number of dialects.

Each Tribe has its own dialect: a unique way of speaking that includes accent, body language, slang, jargon and other distinctions. You can always tell which Tribe an ork belongs to by his dialect.

Orks know the dialect of their own Tribe. Each rank of the linguistics skill gives an ork one additional dialect for free (including the other language you learn).

Using the correct dialect in a Tribe improves the attitude of any NPCs by one rank.

Feth'ork Bleeding

School enchantment (compulsion) [mind-affecting];

Level: Ork 1

Casting Time: 3 months minimum

Components: M (Ork Blood)

Targets: one creature

Duration: permanent

Saving Throw: Fortitude DC (Con Score + Character Level); SR no

Description

If an ork wants a hunting hound, he captures an animal and then starves it for several days. He then gives the animal food that has been mixed with his own blood. This process takes several months, but the ork blood transforms the animal into something else. It transforms the animal into a

feth'ork. At the end of every month, the animal makes a Fortitude Save. After the first failure the animal gains a size template one bigger than it is. The second failure gives the animal the ork subtype. At the third failure the animal becomes a full feth'ork and gains *empathic link*. The ritual continues until the animal becomes a feth'ork or the animal misses a blood feeding or the animal saves 10 times. At 10 successful saves it has grown an immunity to ork blood and cannot become a feth'ork. It will revert to its original form by the end of 15 days. If a feeding is missed, the ritual is broken and the animal reverts back to normal and the ritual must be performed from the beginning.

Special: An ork does not need to concentrate on this Ritual full time but he must attend to it once a day. You cannot make a feth'ork for someone else. You may only have one feth'ork at a time. To blood an animal, it can be no bigger than medium and must be of the *animal* type.

Ork Masochistic Feats

Pain's Gift

A lifetime of pain gives certain resistances against all sorts of challenges.

Prerequisite: Ork, 10 Hit Points, Endurance 2 Ranks

Benefit: When you take 10 points of lethal damage you gain a +1 pain bonus to all Endurance Checks. For every 10 points of additional lethal damage gain a +1 bonus. You gain a DR 5/bleeding. This bonus lasts until the end of the encounter or until you regain the hit points, whichever comes first.

I Will Not Fall

Ork understand the power than pain brings, they know how to inflict wounds;

injuries that allow the flow of pain to make them capable of great feats.

Prerequisite: Ork, Pain's Gift, 20 Hit Points, Climb 4 Ranks or Swim 4 Ranks

Benefit: You can choose to spend up to 20 Hit Points to gain a one-to-one pain bonus on any *climb* or *swim* check. This bonus remains until you regain the hit points, the spent hit points do not count towards your total lethal damage. While receiving this bonus you also gain a +2 pain bonus to endurance checks made for *climb* and *swim*. This bonus lasts until the end of the encounter or until you regain the hit points, whichever comes first.

Profane Rage

The more an ork bleeds, the more he wishes to return the favor. "Blood calls for blood."

Prerequisite: Ork, I Will Not Fall, 30 Hit Points, Base Attack Bonus +8

Benefit: When you take 30 points of lethal damage you gain a +4 pain bonus to Damage. For every 30 points of additional lethal damage gain a +4 bonus. After you take the first 15 points of damage in combat, all piercing attacks gain the *bleeding* quality. This bonus lasts until the end of the encounter or until you regain the hit points, whichever comes first.

Special: When this feat is active you must attack the closest creature with all attack rolls, even if the closest is an ally. You may choose to not activate this feat.

Red Hazed Mind

As the pain sets into the mind it closes it up to outside interference, no one can turn an Ork to their will while they have pain in mind.

Prerequisite: Ork, Profane Rage, 40 Hit Points, Will Save +10

Benefit: When you have to make a *will save*, and have taken 40 lethal damage, you roll three times and take the result you want. This overrides *misfortune* and any similar effects. After you take 25 points of damage in combat, gain +5 pain bonus vs mind-affecting effects. This bonus lasts until the end of the encounter or until you regain the hit points, whichever comes first.

Special: When this feat is active you must attack the closest creature with all attack rolls, even if the closest is an ally. You may choose to not activate this feat.

Sacred Bludga

There is a story that the orks who went up the mountain and killed the old gods entered a stage of *bludga*. Orks strive to find the middle ground where warrior can use the strength of the beast but retain their freedom of mind.

Prerequisite: Ork, Red Hazed Mind, 50 Hit Points, Base Attack Bonus +15, Will Save +15

Benefit: If you go below 0 Hit Points, you do not fall unconscious. All pain bonuses stack, gain +15 pain bonus to attack, +20 pain bonus to damage, all damage becomes lethal, ignore resistances and gain DR 25/All. You do not make any death saving throws but lose hit points as normal. When you reach half your constitution in negative hit points, you die immediately. This bonus lasts until the end of the encounter or until you regain the hit points, whichever comes first.

Ork shash feats

Direct Descendent

If an ork can trace their lineage directly back to one of the six heroes it is a great honor.

Prerequisite: Ork

Benefit: Gain 3 extra glories and blunders that can be spent on any skill. Also, all ork start one step up on the attitude chart when you meet them for the first time.

Special: Must be taken at character creation.

Cousin of the Honored

To be family of the directly descendent is almost as great an honor.

Prerequisite: Ork

Benefit: Gain 3 extra glories that can be spent on any skill.

God's Blood

All *god's blood* abilities cost a D4 of hit points to activate. For every consecutive activation in the same day, add an additional D4 of damage.

The Shield Breakers: When attempting to *sunder*, the hardness of the item counts as 5 less than normal. Gain a +2 *bhugan* bonus if you take 1 point of additional damage.

The Ush: You can make any *craft* check untrained as long as you have the supplies and tools need to complete the item. Gain a +2 *ush* bonus if you take 1 point of additional damage.

The Keepers of Secrets: Before you roll for any wisdom-based skill check, you can forgo rolling and succeed.

The Guile of Khusmet: Whisper a command no more than 10 words into anyone's ears. There is no saving throw against this ability but the person must be able to understand you. Your target must obey the command. An affected person never obeys suicidal or harmful orders.

Khavu's Children: After failing a constitution-based check, you can re-roll with a +5 *khavu* bonus. If the re-roll results in failure, you can use a consecutive activate and try again.

The Shadow Steppers: For a number of minutes equal to half your character level (minimum 1, round down) you become incorporeal. Only your clothing becomes incorporeal; equipment and weapons remain solid.

Scars

If an ork ever falls below 0 hit points and survives, they have the option of getting a *scar*. A *scar* cost 250 experience points and the ork cannot have more *scars* than their constitution bonus. Orks can use *scars* to gain respect among other ork: for every *scar* they have it is a +1 *scar* bonus to all charisma-based or leader-oriented checks. *Scars* scare other races though: for every *scar* an ork has, they gain a +1 *scar* bonus in intimidation or fear-based checks.

New Oracle Mystery: Blood

The oracle of blood replaces the cleric in ork culture. The blood of the gods is so potent within him, he can barely contain it. It gives him visions. It delivers omens. It drives him mad. But it also makes him powerful beyond the imagination of other orks. A delicate balance and a deadly price.

An oracle of blood helps younger orks realize their own potential, teaching them how to tap into the power their ancestors realized when they killed and ate the Gods. He lives on the edge of the Tribe, alone, and waits for those who seek him out for the power he can awaken.

The Oracle's gains power as he gains *revelations* (as per a typical Oracle), but these revelations are not given to him; he finds them within himself.

Requirements: Ork

Class Skills: An oracle with the blood mystery adds Handle Animal, Intimidate, Knowledge (nature), Knowledge (local), Perception and Survival to her list of class skills.

Bonus Spells: unbreakable heart (2nd), boiling blood (4th), blood biography (6th), restoration (8th), spell immunity, communal (10th), heroes' feast (12th), restoration, greater (14th), frightful aspect (16th), spell immunity, greater communal (18th).

Revelations

Blood Magic (Ex): You do not use material components in the traditional sense: you use blood instead. A single pint of blood is equivalent to 100 gold worth of material components. The blood does not need to be fresh but cannot be more than one month old. You do not need to use your own blood exclusively, but it must be ork blood. If no prepared source of blood is available, you can inflict injuries on yourself instead. For every hit point inflicted, it is worth 10g of material components. You cannot take more than 4 pints of your own blood (40 hit points worth) a week. If you use more than a pint of your own blood (10 hit points worth) in combat, you become *fatigued*.

Clean the Blood (Su): When you touch a creature, you learn all problems afflicting the creature (like a *diagnose disease* spell). An 8th level, you can touch a creature and remove any biological afflictions from the blood, such as diseases and poisons. This functions like the *remove disease* and *neutralize poison* spells. You only make one check for both. It is a standard action to use this ability.

Gauntlets of Ghursha (Su): You conjure large fur lined gauntlets that grant you +2 deflection

bonus to AC. At 7th level, you can use the gloves to cast *vampiric touch* once a day and once more a day every four levels thereafter. You can use the gauntlets for 1 minute per day per oracle level. The duration does not need to be consecutive; it can instead be spent in 1-minute increments. The gauntlets are a *god's blood* item. If you are from the Ush tribe, you gain an additional +1 *ush* bonus for every god's blood item you are wearing.

Jewel of Vamkh (Su): You conjure a blood red jeweled brooch that allows you to change your appearance. This functions like the *disguise self*, *alter self* and *vocal alteration* spells. The bonuses to disguise do not stack. You can use the brooch for 10 minutes per day per oracle level. The duration does not need to be consecutive; it can instead be spent in 10 minute increments. The brooch is *god's blood* item. If you are from the Guile of Khusmet tribe, for every *god's blood* item you are wearing you can add another 5 words to your command. You must be at least 7th level to take this ability.

Mother's Helm (Su): You conjure a horned helm that covers your face and grants you the ability to see in every direction at once. It also grants you a +5 *competence* bonus to perception checks and you cannot be surprised. You can use this helm for 1 hour per day per oracle level. The duration does not need to be consecutive; it can instead be spent in 1-hour increments. The helm is *god's blood* item. If you are from Khavu's Children tribe, you gain an additional +1 *khavu* bonus for every god's blood item you are wearing.

Red Eyed (Sp): As a standard action, you can rub fresh ork blood into your eyes to see any living creature within 60 ft. You see the world as foggy white except for the blood pumping through veins or still wet blood stains. The

drier the blood gets, the more grey it becomes until your sight turns white like the rest of the world. Your gaze can penetrate a number of feet through objects and walls equal to your oracle level. You can use this ability a number of rounds per day equal to your oracle level, but these rounds do not need to be consecutive.

Teel's Skin (Su): You conjure dark red leather that is sleek across your skin. This leather grants a +4 armor bonus. At 7th level, and every four levels thereafter, this bonus increases by +2. At 13th level, this armor grants you DR 5/piercing. You can use this armor for 1 hour per day per oracle level. The duration does not need to be consecutive; it can instead be spent in 1-hour increments. The armor is a *god's blood* item. If you are from the Keepers of Secrets, you can roll a wisdom-based check before using your *god's blood* ability. You can do this a number of times a day for each god's blood item you are wearing.

Thranna's Pride (Su): You can summon a simple or martial weapon that is appropriate for your current size. You are considered proficient with this weapon. At 3rd level, the weapon is considered masterwork. At 7th level, 15th level, and 19th level, the weapon gains a cumulative +1 enhancement bonus. At 11th level, the weapon gains the *vicious weapon* property. You can use this ability for a number of minutes per day equal to your oracle level. This duration does not need to be consecutive, but it must be used in 1-minute increments. The weapon disappears after 1 round if it leaves your grasp. The weapon counts as a *god's blood* item. If you are from The Shield Breakers, for every *god's blood* item you are wearing, the hardness of items counts as one less.

Tuvanka's Step (Su): You conjure dark red furred boots that grant a +1 competence bonus to stealth and acrobatics checks. At 5th level and every 5 levels after gain an addition +1 bonus. You can use these boots for 1 hour per day per oracle level. The duration does not need to be consecutive; it can instead be spent in 1-hour increments. These boots are a god's blood item. If you are from The Shadow Steppers tribe then you can make any god's blood items incorporeal with you.

Will of the Gods (Sp): An oracle of blood can control any living creature with running blood. She must be able to see the creature, but the creature does not have to be able to see or hear her. The oracle can only control one target at a time and must mimic the movement they wish their target to make. She does not have to move to make the target walk but she must walk in place. The target retains full control of its mind and if it becomes aware that the oracle is controlling them, the creature may attempt a fortitude save of DC 10 + caster level + Charisma modifier. The oracle can use this ability for 1 round per day per oracle level. The duration does not need to be consecutive; it can instead be spent in 1-round increments. It is a standard action to use this ability; must be at least 15th level to take this ability.

Final Revelation

Upon reaching 20th level, you fully understand the power sleeping in your blood. You gain a bonus on all saving throws equal to your charisma modifier, a bonus to attack and damage equal to the number of orks within 60 feet radius and you gain *overwhelming presence* as a bonus spell.

Barbarian Archetype: Gahthrak

Requirements: Ork

Class Features

The following are class features of the gahthrak.

Son of the Mountain (Ex): The gahthrak has a climb speed of half his base land speed. If his land speed is reduced for any reason, his climb speed is reduced as well. This bonus stacks with any other bonuses to the gahthrak's climb speed.

This ability replaces *fast movement*.

The Strength of my Enemy (Ex): At 2nd level, as a full round action, a gahthrak can consume the heart of an unconscious or recently dead creature (died within the last hour). He does provoke attacks of opportunity while doing this and counts as flat-footed. He gains a racial bonus to his damage rolls (minimum 1) equal to the CR of the creature for a number of rounds equal to half his barbarian level.

This ability replaces *uncanny dodge*.

The Blood of my Enemy (Ex): At 5th level, a gahthrak can use the strength of my enemy as a standard action. He also gains a racial bonus to his natural armor (minimum 1) equal to the CR of the creature for a number of rounds equal to half his barbarian level.

This ability replaces *improved uncanny dodge*.

The Heart of my Enemy (Ex): At 14th level, a gahthrak can use the blood of my enemy as a swift action. He also gains a racial bonus to his attack rolls (minimum 1) equal to the CR of the creature for a number of rounds equal to half his barbarian level.

This ability replaces *indomitable will*.

Bard Archetype: Ork Fala

Ork bards are not like the human scholars or the elven pipers. Their skills lie in inspiring warriors to battle, praising the courageous and mocking the foolish. A fala's performance does not use songs or poetry, but scalding words of ridicule or inspiring words of praise.

Requirements: Ork

Class Features

A fala gains the following class features.

Bardic Performance

A fala gains the following types of bardic performance.

Tales of Our Ancestors (Su): A fala can use his stories to inspire or undermine the will to fight in those who hear it. At the start of the performance, the fala chooses to affect his allies or his enemies. If a fala chooses his allies, he gives them a morale bonus to saving throws against *charm* and *fear* effects and a morale bonus to attack and damage rolls. If a fala chooses his enemies, then he gives a penalty to saving throws against *charm* and *fear* effects and a penalty to attack and damage rolls. The fala cannot affect both his allies and enemies at the same time. At 1st level, the bonus or penalty is 1. At 5th level, and every six bard levels after, the bonus or penalty increases by 1. *Tales of our ancestors* is a language-dependent, mind-affecting ability that uses audible components.

This performance replaces *inspire courage* and *fascinate*.

Casting Aspersions (Su): A fala of 3rd level or higher can use his stories to inspire or undermine

the concentration of those who hear it. At the start of the performance, the fala chooses to affect an ally or an enemy. The target must be within 30 feet and able to hear the fala. If it is an ally, they gain a bonus to one skill check. If it is an enemy, they receive a penalty to one skill check. *Casting aspersions* is a language-dependent, mind-affecting ability that uses audible components.

This performance replaces *inspire competence* and *suggestion*.

Pay No Heed (Su): A fala of 9th level or higher can mentally disarm his enemies to the point they cannot perceive their surroundings properly. A fala chooses one enemy as his target that can hear him and one ally within 30 feet of the target that can also hear him. The ally counts as invisible to the target of the performance. If the ally makes an aggressive action towards the target, such as attacking the target, the performance ends and they become visible again. For every three levels a fala attains beyond 9th, he can target one additional ally or enemy while using this performance (up to a maximum of four at 18th level). *Pay no heed* is a language-dependent, mind-affecting ability that uses audible components.

This performance replaces *inspire greatness*.

Vicious Scalding (Su): A fala of 15th level or higher can rile his enemies up into a wild rage. A fala chooses one enemy as his target that can hear him. The target goes into a violent rage and attacks an enemy of the bard's choosing. The target will only attack creatures he knows to be his enemies; he will not turn on an ally. The target can only make melee attack actions;

they may take move actions to get closer to their current target. The target may make a Will save DC fala level + fala's Charisma modifier to become immune for 24 hours to *vicious scalding*. Once per round, as part of his performance, a fala can change the focus of his target's attacks. *Vicious scalding* is a language-dependent, mind-affecting ability that uses audible components.

This performance replaces *inspire heroics*.

Epic Tale (Su): By spending 10 minutes retelling a story from ork history, a fala may affect his allies and enemies (if they listen to the whole story without interruption) with *tales of our ancestors*, *casting aspersions*, *pay no heed* or *vicious scalding*. The tale's effects last 10 minutes or until otherwise ended. The fala must spend 4 rounds of bardic performance for each creature to be affected. Each creature does not have to be affected with the same affect.

This ability replaces *mass suggestion*.

Approved classes

Listed below are the classes available to orks in *Wicked Fantasy*.

Class	Ork
Barbarian	yes
Bard	archetype
<i>Cleric</i>	no
Druid	yes
Fighter	yes
<i>Monk</i>	no
Paladin	archetype
Ranger	yes
Rogue	yes
Sorcerer	yes
Wizard	yes
<i>Alchemist</i>	no
<i>Cavalier</i>	no
<i>Gunslinger</i>	no
<i>Inquisitor</i>	no
<i>Magus</i>	no
Oracle	mystery
<i>Summoner</i>	no
<i>Witch</i>	no
<i>Antipaladin</i>	no
<i>Ninja</i>	no
<i>Samurai</i>	no



Mishin

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

Jacob Turner stood in his tavern and felt the winter sneaking under his front door. He looked for his son and found him at the sailors' table, singing their songs, and they were singing right along with him.

When the boy finished, the sailors cheered and ordered more drinks. Jacob Turner called out to his son, "Jerek, fetch more wood for the fire!" The boy nodded and picked up his crutch, leaning against the sailors' table and limped to the back door. Jerek opened the door just as the front door opened. A stream of ice cold wind thrust through the tavern and everyone shouted, looking to the front.

Jacob Turner looked, too. What he saw there was an ork.

Standing against the moonlight, it took up the entire door frame. It had to duck to come in. It stepped forward slowly. Jacob saw the ork had no weapons. The Watch must have taken them away when it entered the City. But it claws and it had teeth. And it had scars. It seemed its whole body was made of scars. Its hair was thick and coarse like whiskers and when it moved, it made Jacob Turner think of an animal, prowling after prey.

"Shut the door!" Ban Illven shouted. He was always drunk, always shouting. Turner doubted old Ban even knew what was at the door. Everyone took one short breath. The ork looked confused, then turned and closed out the wind.

Jacob watched the ork losely. It moved through the tavern, looking at faces. Laughter had long since died when the ork opened the door. Every move it made just dug the grave deeper. Jacob saw men reaching under the tables. He needed to do something.

"Hey there!" he said in his biggest, friendliest voice. "What can I get for you?"

The ork stopped and looked at him. It walked up to the bar and stood still.

"Something to drink?" Jacob asked.

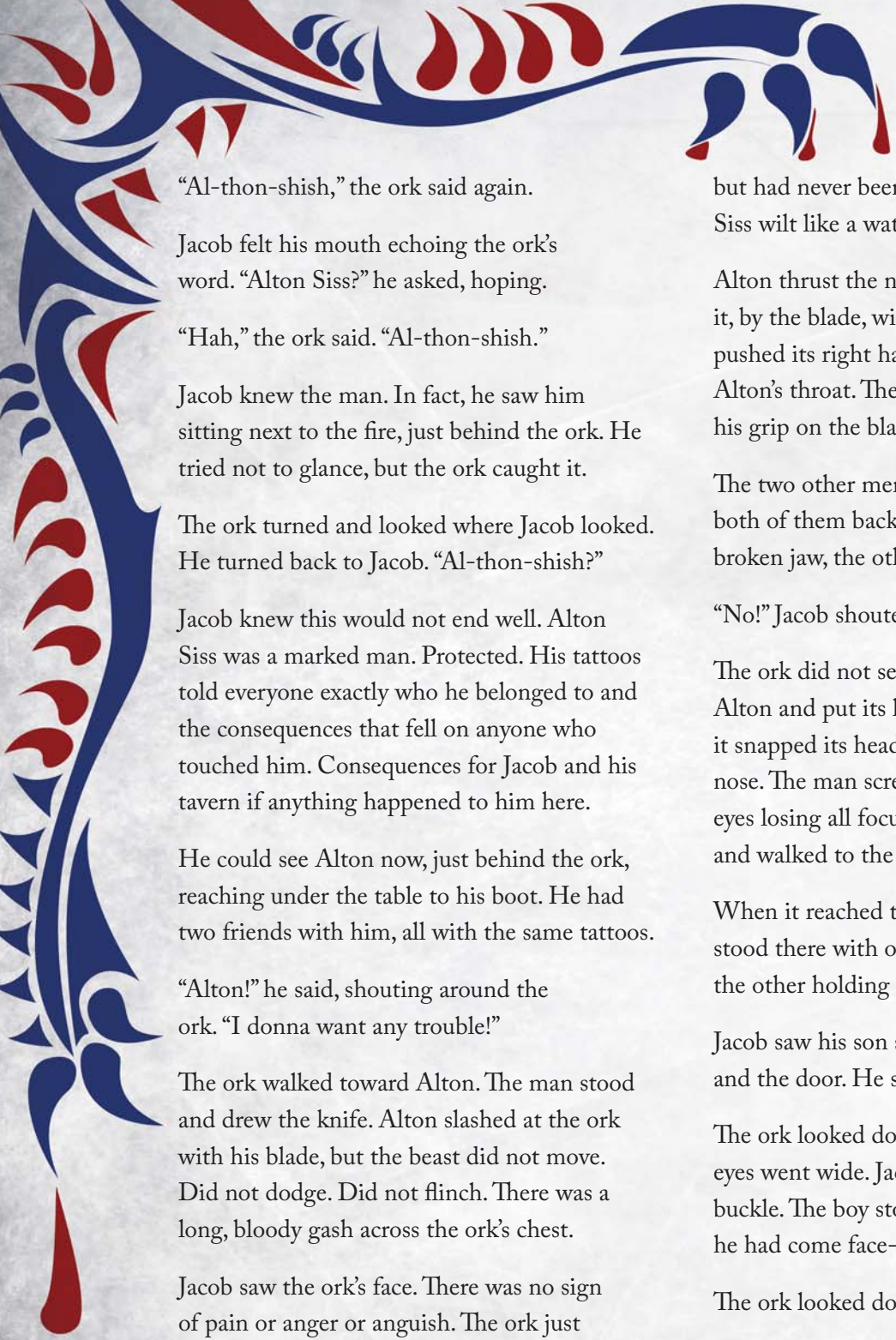
The ork said nothing for a moment, only staring. Then, it said, "Drink."

When Jacob heard it speak, he thought the words were fighting to get between the ork's teeth.

"Yes!" Jacob smiled. "Drink!" At least this ork knew some words.

"Nah," the ork said, shaking its head. Then, it spoke in a slow voice. "Al-thon-shish."

"Althon?" he asked, hoping the ork was not asking for who he thought he was asking. He felt his smile suddenly drop.



“Al-thon-shish,” the ork said again.

Jacob felt his mouth echoing the ork’s word. “Alton Siss?” he asked, hoping.

“Hah,” the ork said. “Al-thon-shish.”

Jacob knew the man. In fact, he saw him sitting next to the fire, just behind the ork. He tried not to glance, but the ork caught it.

The ork turned and looked where Jacob looked. He turned back to Jacob. “Al-thon-shish?”

Jacob knew this would not end well. Alton Siss was a marked man. Protected. His tattoos told everyone exactly who he belonged to and the consequences that fell on anyone who touched him. Consequences for Jacob and his tavern if anything happened to him here.

He could see Alton now, just behind the ork, reaching under the table to his boot. He had two friends with him, all with the same tattoos.

“Alton!” he said, shouting around the ork. “I donna want any trouble!”

The ork walked toward Alton. The man stood and drew the knife. Alton slashed at the ork with his blade, but the beast did not move. Did not dodge. Did not flinch. There was a long, bloody gash across the ork’s chest.

Jacob saw the ork’s face. There was no sign of pain or anger or anguish. The ork just smiled. Then, it spoke in the language of men. “Blood callsh for blood,” it said.

Alton’s face changed. It wasn’t fear. It was deeper than that. Jacob watched a man who used violence all his life to get what he wanted suddenly realize that violence would not save him. He could not intimidate the ork. He could not bully it. He was in a place he had seen others

but had never been himself. Jacob saw Alton Siss wilt like a water lilly in the desert sun.

Alton thrust the nife again. The ork caught it, by the blade, with his left hand. Then, it pushed its right hand forward, just under Alton’s throat. The man staggered back, losing his grip on the blade, clutching at his neck.

The two other men stood. The ork knocked both of them back down. One fell with a broken jaw, the other with a broken arm.

“No!” Jacob shouted. “Please!”

The ork did not seem to hear. It stepped up to Alton and put its hands on his shoulders. Then, it snapped its head forward, crushing Alton’s nose. The man screamed and fell forward, his eyes losing all focus. The ork picked up him and walked to the back door. Nobody moved.

When it reached the door, it opened. Jerek stood there with one arm on his crutch and the other holding a clutch of firewood.

Jacob saw his son standing between the ork and the door. He shouted his son’s name.

The ork looked down at the boy. Jerek’s eyes went wide. Jacob saw Jerek’s knees buckle. The boy stood perfectly still, as if he had come face-to-face with a bear.

The ork looked down at the boy. “Jair-ek?” it asked.

Jerek nodded. “Yes,” he said. “That’s my name.”

Jacob saw every sailor stand up behind the ork. Some grabbed bottles and others grabbed tankards. The ork turned to look at them.

When Jacob saw the look on the ork’s face, he knew the sailors were doomed.

But then, Jerek said, "Please."

The ork turned back and looked down at the boy.

Jerek said, "They're my friends. Please don't hurt them."

Everything stood still. Jacob couldn't even breathe.

After a moment, the ork nodded. "Hah," it said. And it stepped aside. Jerek limped on his crutch, coming in from the cold. The ork waited for him to pass, then stepped out into the winter, closing the door behind it.

The sailors cheered. They rushed forward and lifted Jerek on their shoulders.

"Mighty Jerek!" they shouted. "He stared down an ork and the ork stepped aside!"

Jacob moved through the crowd and embraced his son, his tears of fear turning to tears of joy. The sailors kept chanting the boy's name, but all Jacob could think of were the broken men on the floor of his tavern.

* * *

It was late, and Constable Vennus was working at his desk when he heard someone trying to open the door of his office. He was working by candlelight. He looked up and heard the sound again. Not a knock. Someone was trying to use the handle. Either the man on the other side of the door was the worst burglar in the City or he was someone in desperate need of help.

"Who is it?" he shouted at the door.

A deep voice answered. It sounded like it had marbles in its mouth instead of teeth. "Al-thon-shesh."

Vennus paused. "Alton Sess?"

The voice on the other side of the door said, "Hah."

Vennus got up from his desk and went to the door. He opened the peephole and saw the bloody, broken face of Alton Sess. He was gagged and furious.

"Hehp he." Sess said through the gag.

Vennus looked further and saw an ork standing behind Sess. The same ork he saw earlier in the morning. As soon as he saw the ork, everything made sense.

Vennus unlocked the door and opened it. Alton Sess fell to his feet, gagged and bound. The ork stepped in. "Bown-thee," it said.

Vennus nodded. "Yes," he said. "Bounty."

At his feet, Sess tried sitting up. He made a complaining noise from behind the gag. Vennus walked to his desk, took a knife from the drawer and cut the gag from Sess's mouth.

"Blast this ork!" he shouted. "Vennus," he said, looking at the constable. "This thing assaulted me. In the Hook and Key."


Vennus raised an eyebrow. "Turner's place?"

"Yeah," Sess told him. "Him and his cripple kid. They both saw it."

Vennus looked at the ork. The ork said nothing.

"I'll ask them both all about it tomorrow morning," Vennus told him. "Meanwhile, I think I should hold you overnight."

"Are you joking?" Sess shouted. "You think this is funny? You know who I am? You know who I'm marked to?"



Vennus grabbed Sess's bound wrists and lifted him. "I know," he said. "I also know you have a bounty on your head from three different Cities." He looked back at the ork. "Give me a second, all right? I'm just going to throw him in a cell."

The ork said nothing.

When Vennus came back, it was standing in the same place. Vennus walked to his desk and opened a drawer.

"I can't give your weapons back until you're leaving the city," he said. "As for your payment, I can only give you coins." He looked at the ork. "Is that all right?"

The ork said, "Mishin."

Vennus frowned. "I'm not sure what that means." He counted out the coins, put them in a small paper envelope. "Here are your coins."

The ork looked at the envelope. It took the envelope in its huge claws. Then, it looked at Vennus. "Mishin," it said.

Vennus shook his head. "I dunna know," he said. "But you can sleep here tonight if you like. You saved me a lot of trouble. There's a cot back there." He gestured to the back of the office.

The ork looked confused. "Caht?"

Vennus nodded. "Yeah. Sleep. You know? Sleep?" He flattened out his hands and laid down his head.

The ork nodded. "Shleep," it said. It mimicked Vennus's gesture. "Gah-nah," it said.

Vennus smiled. "That's the first ork word I've ever learned," he said. Then, he said, "Gah-nah."

The ork nodded. "Shleep." It walked to the back of the office, found the cot and laid down. Vennus watched it for a moment, then walked to the door, re-locked it, and went back to work.

Jeff Jonse reached up to the tall shelf to pull down a can of jellied peppers when he heard his shoulder and elbow pop. He said, "I hate winter."

At the bottom of the ladder he was standing on, Missus Petrie got all flustered. "It's only because your joints get stiff," she said. "You aren't a young man anymore Mister Jonse."

Jeff Jonse scowled, but when he turned back to face Missus Petrie, he was smiling. "We only have two more of these left," he said. "You had better make them last."

Missus Petrie giggled. "Mister Jonse," she said, "you have the best shop in the whole City."

Jeff Jonse smiled and nodded. "Thank you, ma'am," he said. She handed him coins and he handed her change. "Thank you for thinking of us," he told her. Then, he watched her leave, letting the cold slip in the door as she did.

"I despise that woman," he said, his voice curdling.

A young woman's laugh reached his ears and he saw his granddaughter smiling at him, peeking down the staircase. "Grandfather," she said. "Were you always so bitter?"

"Go back upstairs and keep studying!" he said. "You don't want to be a shopkeeper when you grow up, do you?"

The girl came bouncing down the stairs. "Mayhap I do!" she said.

Her name was Eloise and she was only ten years old. But, her teachers said she was already ahead of everyone else in her classes. Ready to go to university, in fact.

Jonse ruffled her hair, suddenly finding his smile. “No, you do not. I know you do not. It is not kind to tease an old man like that.”

She grinned with her eyes shut. “Can I have a piece of candy?” she asked.

Jonse made a sigh. “Didn’t you have one earlier today?”

“Nope,” she said, putting her hands behind her back.

Jonse nodded. “All right,” he said. “But you go back upstairs. No more coming down here. I want you studying.”

She laughed and clapped and ran to the candy jar. She got a red one, her favorite, and plopped it into her mouth. Then, she ran back to the stairs.

“Only studying!” he shouted after her.

“Studying!” she shouted back.

“Promise me!”

“I promise!”

He watched the staircase for a while, forgetting that he was smiling. Then, he got his duster and walked over to the back shelves.

The door opened then, whipping in the cold air. Jonse found his frown. He walked from the back shelves to the front desk. “How can I...” he started.

The ork standing in the doorway was almost as tall as the ceiling. It must have turned sideways to come in through the door.

Jonse stood still. He had never seen an ork before, but he knew what one looked like. The soldiers told him. The ones that went off to protect the border villages. They told him orks were big.

“Big” was too small a word.

Jonse felt his jaw tremble. He tried to speak. The ork spoke first.

“Mishin,” it said.

Jonse felt his bones bending. His muscles nearly failed him. The sound the ork made echoed through the small room, shaking the glass.

“I’m -- I’m sorry,” Jonse said.

“I -- don’t understand.”

The ork dropped an envelope on the counter. It spilled open, tossing coins all over the counter and the floor.

“Mishin,” it said again.

Jonse swallowed. He didn’t know what to say. “I...”

The ork spoke again. This time, louder. Angrier.

“Mishin.”

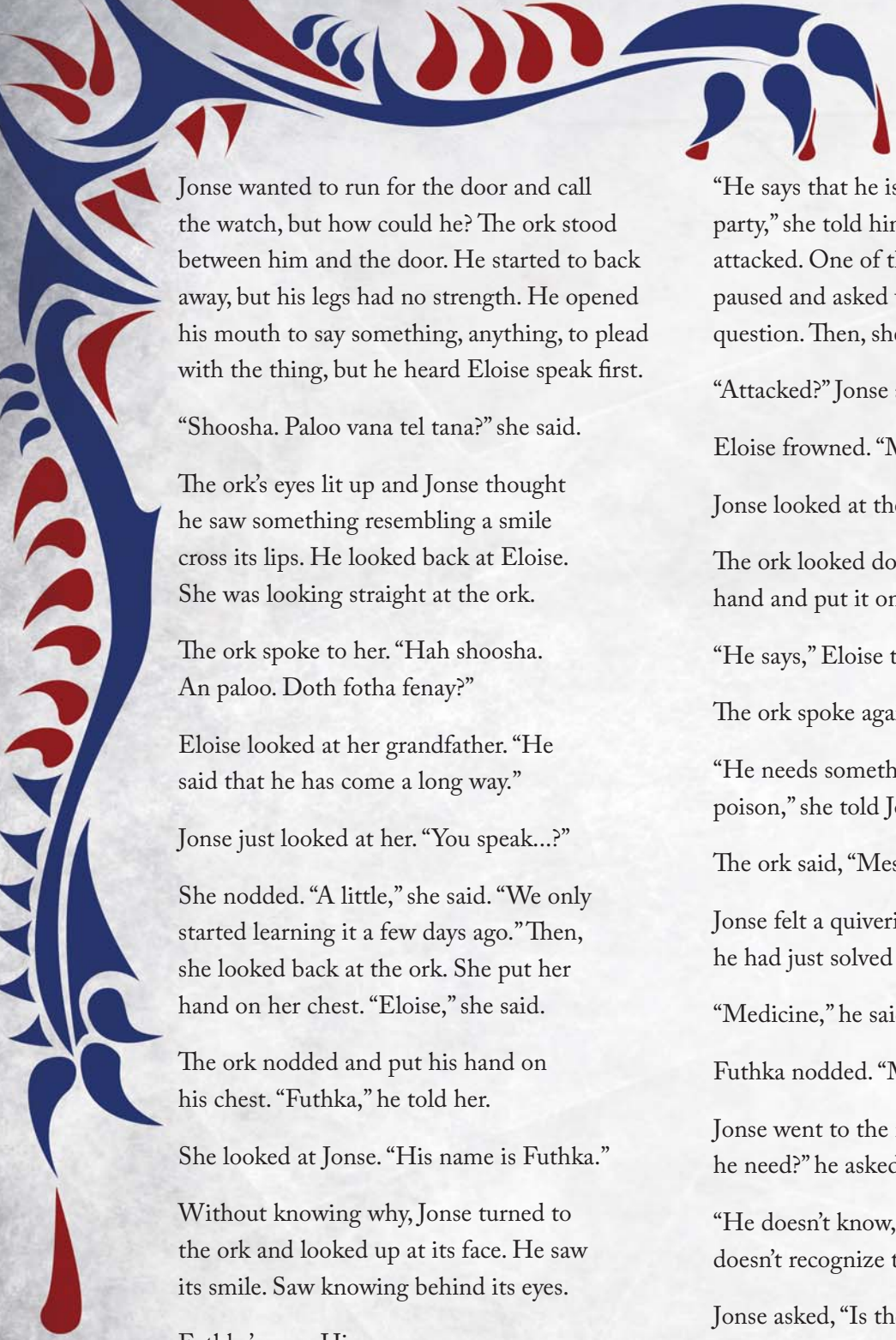
Jonse held himself up on the counter. He could feel his heart pounding in his chest. Then, he heard another voice from the stairwell.

“Grandfather?” Eloise asked.

Jonse spun around. “Get back upstairs!” he shouted.

“Go on! Now!”

The ork’s voice bellowed. “Mishin!”



Jonse wanted to run for the door and call the watch, but how could he? The ork stood between him and the door. He started to back away, but his legs had no strength. He opened his mouth to say something, anything, to plead with the thing, but he heard Eloise speak first.

“Shoosha. Paloo vana tel tana?” she said.

The ork’s eyes lit up and Jonse thought he saw something resembling a smile cross its lips. He looked back at Eloise. She was looking straight at the ork.

The ork spoke to her. “Hah shoosha. An paloo. Doth fotha fenay?”

Eloise looked at her grandfather. “He said that he has come a long way.”

Jonse just looked at her. “You speak...?”

She nodded. “A little,” she said. “We only started learning it a few days ago.” Then, she looked back at the ork. She put her hand on her chest. “Eloise,” she said.

The ork nodded and put his hand on his chest. “Futhka,” he told her.

She looked at Jonse. “His name is Futhka.”

Without knowing why, Jonse turned to the ork and looked up at its face. He saw its smile. Saw knowing behind its eyes.

Futhka’s eyes. His eyes.

“Jeff Jonse,” he said.

Futhka nodded. “Jeff Joh-nsh.”

Eloise spoke again and the ork listened. Then, it replied. She translated.

“He says that he is part of a winter hunting party,” she told him. “And that they were attacked. One of them is hurt badly...” she paused and asked what sounded to Jonse to be a question. Then, she nodded. “He is poisoned.”

“Attacked?” Jonse asked. “By who?”

Eloise frowned. “Men,” she said.

Jonse looked at the ork. Then, he said, “I’m sorry.”

The ork looked down at him. Then, he extended a hand and put it on Jonse’s thin shoulder. He spoke.

“He says,” Eloise translated, “that you didn’t do it.”

The ork spoke again. Eloise continued.

“He needs something to cure the poison,” she told Jonse.

The ork said, “Meshin.”

Jonse felt a quivering in his belly, like he had just solved a riddle.

“Medicine,” he said to the ork.

Futhka nodded. “Meshin,” he said again.

Jonse went to the medicine cabinet. “What does he need?” he asked Eloise. She asked the ork.

“He doesn’t know,” she said. “He doesn’t recognize the poison.”

Jonse asked, “Is the wound festering? Or is it green?”

She talked to the ork. Futhka answered.

“He said it is black. And there is puss.”

Jonse nodded. “I know what they used,” he said. He pulled three bottles from the shelf and came back to Futhka and Eloise.

He spoke to his granddaughter. "Tell him this. Tell him that one of these three will work. He can use all three if he needs to. Apply drops to the wound. If his friend says it burns, then they have the right antidote. If it doesn't burn, they are using the wrong one."

The ork listened to Eloise, then asked a question.

"It won't hurt him if they use the wrong one?"

Jonse shook his head. "No. Old Mother Kane makes her elixirs for just such a circumstance."

Eloise explained that to Futhka and he nodded. He took the bottles, then began walking toward the front door.

"Wait!" Jonse said.

Futhka stopped and looked.

Jonse grabbed the coins on the counter. "This is too much! You don't need to pay me this much."

Eloise translated. The ork shrugged.

"Keep," he said. "You can not eat gold."

Jonse shook his head and gathered up the coins. "No, no," he said. "Fair is fair." He took a few of the coins and put the rest in the ork's hand.

"There are other men," he said, "who will trade you for this. Trade you good things."

Futhka shook his head. "Nah," he said.

Jonse nodded then said, "All right." He turned back to Eloise. "Tell him to take more," he said. "Blankets. Food. Whatever he wants. He just gave us enough coin for ten week's business."

Eloise translated. She opened her hands and gestured around the store. Futhka looked around. Jonse could see he was confused. So, he grabbed a blanket and put it at the ork's feet. Then, he grabbed

some oil and some dried fish. He took handfuls of stuff off the shelves and put it all in a large sack. Then, he handed the sack to the ork.

"Please," he said. "If your friend needs help, I want to give it."

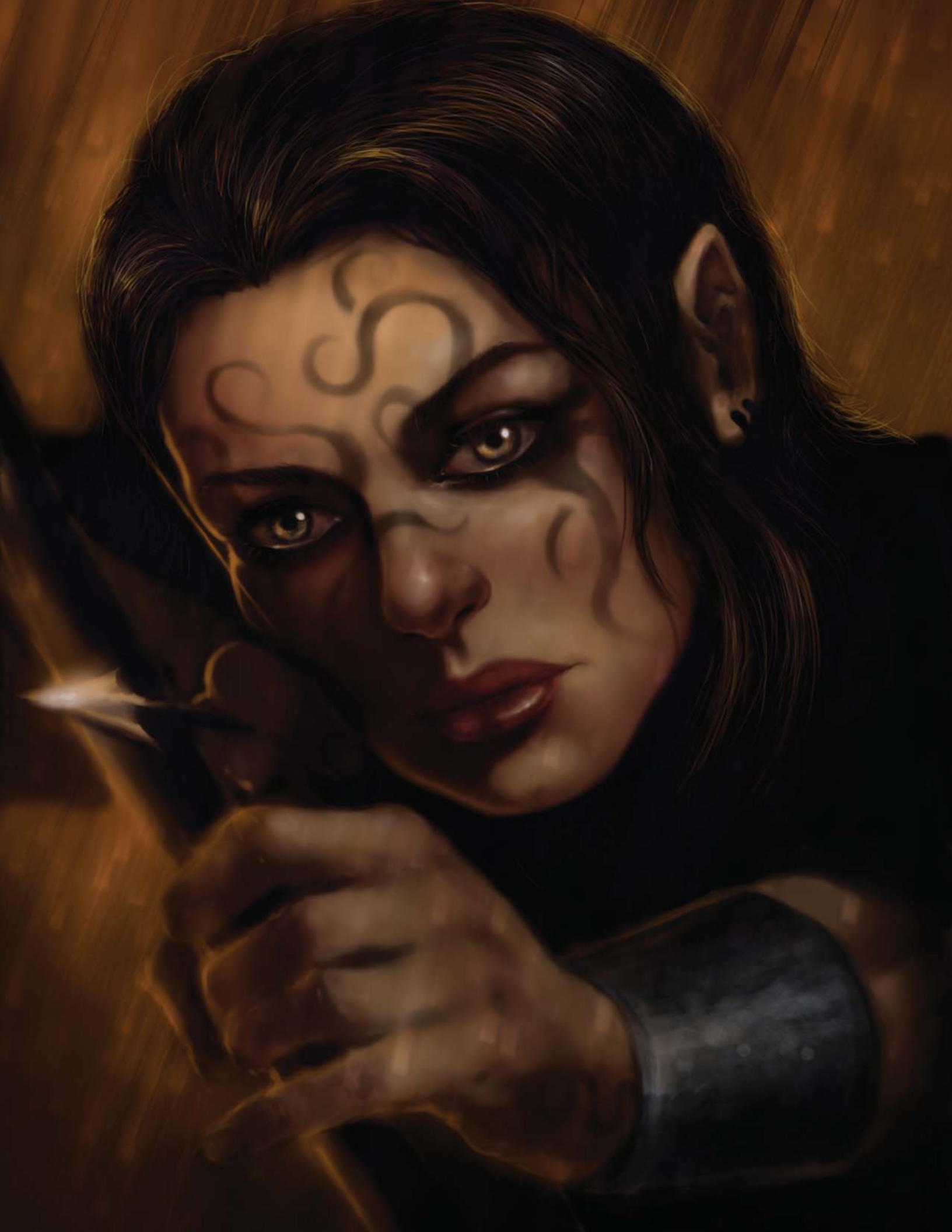
Futhka looked down at Jonse for a long while. Then, he smiled. "Hah," he said. He picked up the bag and gave the coins to the old man.

Just then, Jonse thought of something. He moved as fast as his old bones could carry him to the back of the counter and climbed the ladder. He took the last two jars of jellied peppers down.

"Here," he said, giving them to the ork. "Take these." He rubbed his stomach. "Yum," he said.

Futhka laughed. Laughed as loud as his roar from before. He put his hand on his stomach.

"Yum," he said.





Elves: The guardians of the Wood

Man's first encounter with the elves was the source of what historians would later call "the great forest Wars." Lumber was essential to building the kingdom of Men and when they reached the deep forests of the world, they found the elves waiting for them. The Wars lasted an entire generation but eventually ended with the elves seeking peace. They gave no mention as to why, but one hundred years later, their secret was out.

The elves were losing their souls.

—Donnington True, *The History of the War of the Kingdoms*

Nobody knows how long they have been there, out in the forests, watching man. Some say they have always been there. Others suggest they were given life when the uvandir broke through the soil. The magic the uvandir brought awoke the Great Trees and the elves were born.

In truth, the elves do not know how long they have been in the forests. Elven memory is a strange thing: elves sometimes remember the future and foresee the past. Some elves claim they have always been with the world while others say they were brought into existence three hundred years ago. No one—not even the elves—knows for certain.

But when the elves arrived, they brought with them the Great Trees. These immense timbers reached up higher than any mundane tree, covering the sky with limbs and leaves, plunging the deep forests into darkness. And for reasons kept secret by the elves, they guard the Great Trees with a sacred devotion. They are the guardian spirits of the Trees, keeping mankind away for centuries. Of course, it was mankind's first encounter with these spirits was during lumber expeditions.

The Great Forest Wars lasted for nearly a generation and ended with the elves suing for peace. Mankind had nearly killed all of the Great Trees with fire, axe and saw. But King Aseph was a wise man and he recognized the need for peace. The elves retreated back into the deep woods and men expected to never see them again.

But this was not the case. Hundred of elves came to the borders of the Reign of Men seeking asylum. These wandering spirits, these "fallen elves," were not like the proud and noble creatures man had met before. With the Great Forest Wars, the elven secret was lost: each elf was the living embodiment of a Tree's soul. These "fallen elves" had lost their Trees. Their Trees were dead, but they survived, clinging to life as it fled from them. They were tall and beautiful and elegant... and dying. Disconnected from the source of their life, the lost elves were like ghosts trapped in a rotting prison.

Knowing their own demise, most fell to utter despair. Opportunistic men captured them and put them to work in brothels and dens of inequity. Others wasted their lives in taverns drinking until they died. But a few—a very few—recognized the opportunity they had. To live a brief life full of experience, joy and wonder. A life their cousins in the Great Forests would never see, never know and never understand.

Whenever a Great Tree dies, it leaves its guardian spirit alone in the world. The spirit dies quickly thereafter, but in the time it has left, the elf has the opportunity to live a life of celebration and song. Or, a life of pitiless despair. Or, a combination of both. Most elves seek any experience they can find. They seek out a lover who will break their heart so they may feel the longing of desire, the passion of love and the desolation of heartbreak. They join an army so they may feel the terror of warfare and the bond of camaraderie. They seek fortune and then throw it away. They drink and make merry, then suffer the next day. An elf seeks all experiences so he may die with a head and heart full of life.

Fallen elves die when their time is up: gorgeous, ethereal, wise and clever beyond their years, going to the grave like children robbed of their potential. For a single generation, they lived among men. And, by the time that generation grew to adulthood, the fallen elves were gone. Ghosts of the Great Forest War, it was if they never were.

But that was not the last men heard of the elves.

Protectors of the Aelenderon

The Great Trees—or, as the elves call them, the *aelenderon*—are a rare breed in the Known World. Once, they were plentiful. Once, they towered above the forests like Great Tree lords, looking down on their subjects, the lesser trees. But that day is long gone. Now, there

are, perhaps, a few thousand left. And each of them has a soul. And that soul is an elf.

The word they use for themselves is *aelfanderon*, or “Guardians of the Trees.” They are taller than most humans by a head and a half, but incredibly slender, almost dangerously so. They move quickly, seemingly dancing on the light. One reason for their quickness is their hollow bones, which make them both fragile and nimble. Generally, elves stand taller than men—almost a full head taller in most cases. Elves know men respect size and use it to their advantage.

In addition to their speed, elves also have incredible eyesight and hearing (due to their large eyes and ears). Also, elves can survive a great deal of time without food, surviving on little more than sunlight and water. Meat, fruits and vegetables are more luxuries to the elves than necessities.

Elves also avoid the use of iron—a detail we will cover in more detail later.

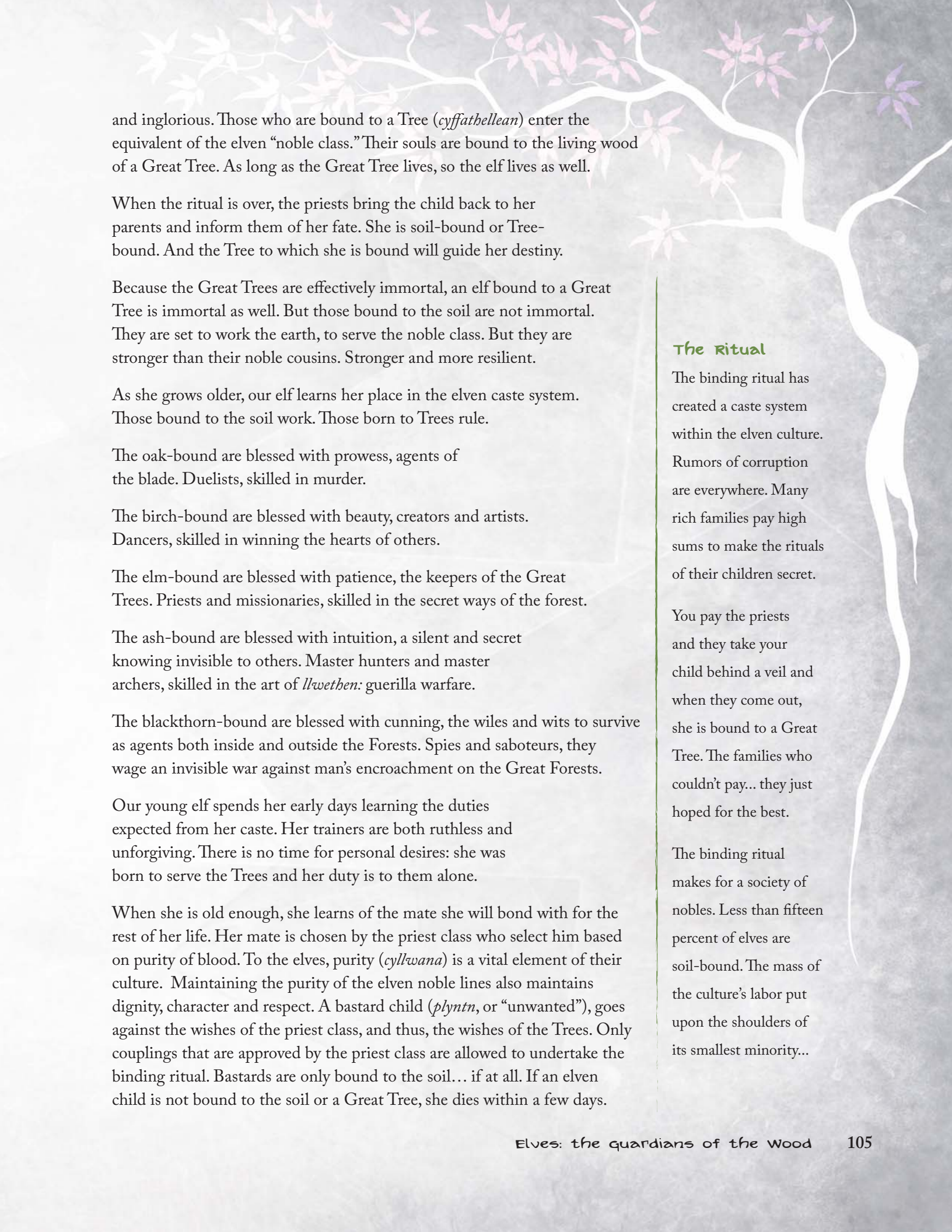
An Elf's Life

This next section details the life of an elf. We look at youth, adulthood and old age.

Youth

Whenever an elf is born, his mother and father bring him to the priests for the binding ritual, *llwaellanon*. The ritual takes place in secret: the parents give their child to the priests and the priests take the child to a private chamber.

First, the priests make a small insertion on the child's chest, drawing blood. The child, generally, begins to scream and cry. Then, the priests drop a small amount of soil on her chest. Then, seeds from the Great Trees. When the child stops crying, her place in elven society is set: the binding ritual is complete. Those who are “bound to the soil” (*cyllabelleian*) are meant for labor, short-lived



and inglorious. Those who are bound to a Tree (*cyffathellean*) enter the equivalent of the elven “noble class.” Their souls are bound to the living wood of a Great Tree. As long as the Great Tree lives, so the elf lives as well.

When the ritual is over, the priests bring the child back to her parents and inform them of her fate. She is soil-bound or Tree-bound. And the Tree to which she is bound will guide her destiny.

Because the Great Trees are effectively immortal, an elf bound to a Great Tree is immortal as well. But those bound to the soil are not immortal. They are set to work the earth, to serve the noble class. But they are stronger than their noble cousins. Stronger and more resilient.

As she grows older, our elf learns her place in the elven caste system. Those bound to the soil work. Those born to Trees rule.

The oak-bound are blessed with prowess, agents of the blade. Duelists, skilled in murder.

The birch-bound are blessed with beauty, creators and artists. Dancers, skilled in winning the hearts of others.

The elm-bound are blessed with patience, the keepers of the Great Trees. Priests and missionaries, skilled in the secret ways of the forest.

The ash-bound are blessed with intuition, a silent and secret knowing invisible to others. Master hunters and master archers, skilled in the art of *llwethen*: guerilla warfare.

The blackthorn-bound are blessed with cunning, the wiles and wits to survive as agents both inside and outside the Forests. Spies and saboteurs, they wage an invisible war against man’s encroachment on the Great Forests.

Our young elf spends her early days learning the duties expected from her caste. Her trainers are both ruthless and unforgiving. There is no time for personal desires: she was born to serve the Trees and her duty is to them alone.

When she is old enough, she learns of the mate she will bond with for the rest of her life. Her mate is chosen by the priest class who select him based on purity of blood. To the elves, purity (*cyllwana*) is a vital element of their culture. Maintaining the purity of the elven noble lines also maintains dignity, character and respect. A bastard child (*plyntn*, or “unwanted”), goes against the wishes of the priest class, and thus, the wishes of the Trees. Only couplings that are approved by the priest class are allowed to undertake the binding ritual. Bastards are only bound to the soil... if at all. If an elven child is not bound to the soil or a Great Tree, she dies within a few days.

The Ritual

The binding ritual has created a caste system within the elven culture. Rumors of corruption are everywhere. Many rich families pay high sums to make the rituals of their children secret.

You pay the priests and they take your child behind a veil and when they come out, she is bound to a Great Tree. The families who couldn’t pay... they just hoped for the best.

The binding ritual makes for a society of nobles. Less than fifteen percent of elves are soil-bound. The mass of the culture’s labor put upon the shoulders of its smallest minority...

Cyllwana: Purity

The concept of purity, or *cyllwana*, is something that permeates almost every aspect of elven culture.

The elves maintain strict breeding to maintain their purity. The priest class maintains this purity through detailed records.

Elves who are subjects of “poor breeding” are often looked down upon by the upper elements of elven culture. This discourages “love children” and “bastards” (which we shall explore later).

Adulthood

As a Tree grows, so does the elf. Great Trees grow quickly, taking root and spreading their branches within ten to fifteen years. When the Tree is mature, our elf child is considered an adult, independent from her parents. She is married to her mate, swears fealty to the Lord or Lady of her Tree and the Queen of her Forest. She serves at the behest of the Lords and Ladies of the Forest, entering the Hierarchy of Trees: a wilderness of intrigue and treachery.

The elven nobility has little to do other than betray each other. Immortal, beautiful, powerful... what else is there to do? Games of deceit and one-upmanship, all hoping to win the favor of the Lords and Ladies of the Forest. Our elf either learns the rules—which no-one will tell her, and she must learn on her own—or she will suffer a fate of inconsequence.

Meanwhile, the soil-bound are busy maintaining the forest. They deal with poachers and brigands—unless the nobility decide to deal with them that day—manage fires, disease and other problems the forest may encounter. They harvest wood, berries, meat and other necessities for the elaborate feasts the nobility throw, sitting outside the firelight, watching as the Tree-bound celebrate their own glory.

As our elf ages, she succeeds in gaining the favor of her Lords and Ladies, and thus, gains position in elven society. What exactly does that mean? Well, it's rather complicated, and I'll explain more in a bit (see *The Hierarchy of Trees*), but suffice to say, she moves up a pecking order based on her ability to trick, befuddle and fool her compatriots. And when that doesn't work, murder is always an option.

Those who move up the ladder gain more access to wealth and power: authority over more elves. Elves do not count wealth as men do. Gold is very pretty, but not very useful. The resource the elves consider most valuable is the Forest itself. Within the Forest are endless resources made available by titles given by the Lords and Ladies. Every Forest is divided into territories, and each territory has its own mistress. As our elf gains titles, she gains additional resources, not all of which are mundane. A magical lake whose waters bring sight of the future and the past. A stone that grants strength to those who whisper its name and give it a kiss. And in the deepest groves are trees so ancient, their power trumps that of even the greatest elf. Trees that no elf can be bound to, but every elf must bow in humility. The Forests contain deep secrets. Secrets every elf wishes to call her own.

Meanwhile, the soil-bound continue to labor away...

Old Age

It is difficult to say exactly when an elf passes into “old age.” Effectively immortal, the very concept of old age doesn’t make sense to the elves. But, there comes a time when an elf becomes introspective, less interested in showing up others and winning titles. This is *llvalla*, or “the time of quiet.” The time when an elf retreats from society and begins her time of reflection.

Elves do not choose to enter *llvalla*, but are called by their Tree. Our elf hears the call of her own Tree and returns to its grove, her eyes sleepy, her limbs heavy. She steps into the Tree itself and sleeps, dreaming of the past, the present and the future. She dreams within the Tree for days, months or even years. When she emerges, she is different. A ghostly figure, both beautiful and frightening. She is above politics and machinations, a true soul of the Tree, speaking in metaphors, mysteries and omens. Some say she might even be mad.

Some elves enter *llvalla* reluctantly, even going so far as to flee the Forest all together, hoping to avoid the call of the Trees. But sooner or later, they must return. They must become one with the Great Trees.

A Tree-bound elf does not “die” until one of two things happens: her Tree dies (by fire, disease or cut down) or she becomes disconnected from her Tree.

As for the soil-bound, they have no such fate awaiting them. They work until they die, and then, their bodies are put back into the soil, hoping their souls will return again, this time to be bound with one of the Great Trees.

The Hierarchy of Trees

Elven society is, all at once, very complex and very simple. On the surface, it appears to be a simple caste system: there are those who are Tree-bound and those who are soil-bound. But once you get beyond that simple distinction, all other distinctions become a lot less simple.

Titles

Every Forest has a Monarch: a Queen or King. Under the Monarch is a Lord or Lady for each of the Great Trees: a Lord of the Ash, a Lady of the Blackthorn, and so forth. Each Lord or Lady has direct command over all elves who are bound to her Tree. And, of course, the Lords and Ladies answer to the Monarch.

An elf may give distinctions (titles) to any elf under her hierarchal command. An elf holds distinction in the Forest because of the titles she holds: the more titles she has, the more authority she has. An elf’s titles add to her name: this is why elven names seem to be so elaborate.

Elven Memory

Memory is a lot more treacherous than most humans think. For elves, this is also true. Just because elves are immortal does not mean they have perfect memories. They remember things the way they want to, forget moments that were uncomfortable or paint them in such a way that the actual facts of the event are completely distorted.

What’s worse, the older an elf gets, the more unreliable his memory becomes. After living for a few decades, you lose essential moments from your childhood; imagine living for 1,000 years. How much of your childhood would *you* remember?

"I am
Llwellyn'alvanan'
ddllvddll'alddwn.">

Elven names are so long because a name includes the elf's titles. For example, the name in the title here belongs to an elf with three titles.

Her name is Llwellyn and her titles include "alvanan," "ddllvddll," and "alddwn." Titles are distinguished with apostrophes and vocalized with a half-pause.

Titles convey a level of responsibility. Just as human nobles are responsible for portions of land, and their titles distinctive of such duties, so elven titles indicate a degree of responsibility for a portion of the Forest. However, unlike human titles, elven titles are far less formalized. An elf may hold the title, "Duke of Shadowglade" and "Baron of Crystal Falls." While in human terms, a duke would have a higher distinction than a baron, the elves hold far less regimented definitions, preferring the title to be poetic rather than accurate. With each title an elf gains, he also gains authority over other elves. An elf with three titles can treat elves with less distinctions with disdain, contempt and even violence. Every elf you meet with more titles is another elf you have to bend a knee and bow. But how does an elf *gain* titles? By entertaining the Lords and Ladies of the Forest.

Distinctions & Favors

Everything an elf does must be linked to the thought, "How will this gain me distinction?" Almost everything in elven culture is built on this premise. Winning the favor of the Lords and Ladies of the Forest gains you titles, gains you distinction, and means you have fewer elves to whom you have to bow.

But how do you earn distinction? You make sure the Lords and Ladies see everything you do. If they don't see it, make sure they hear about it. Earning distinction from a Lord or Lady means you gain more authority, more territory in the Forest, but it also means you owe that Lord or Lady a favor (*ffhrad*). That favor can be called upon at any time. And, here's an important point: an elf can earn distinctions from a Lord other than his own. However, earning a distinction from a Lord who is not your own means you owe him a favor. An elf can reject favors, but seldom do. After all, favors are the only true currency of the Forest...

Exiles, Orphans & Bastards

There are three kinds of elves you can find outside the Forest: exiles (*cwllathanan*), orphans (*dzungandan*) and bastards (*plyntn*).

Exiles are elves who have been forced to leave against their will. Elves are exiled when they lose favor with their Lord, lose a wager that forces them to leave or is commanded to leave by the Forest's Monarch. Exiles may go to another Forest to seek solace there, but once an elf is exiled from one Forest, it is difficult to simply relocate in another.

Exiles are usually banished for a specific amount of time: a year, ten years, etc. While they are banished, another takes their title and maintains the territory they were once responsible for. Of course, most elves realize this means they will *never* get the land back. They will have to return

to the Forest with nothing and win back any titles or recognition they once owned.

Orphans, on the other hand, are elves who have left the Forest voluntarily. They have become disenchanting with the politics, lost titles and/or prestige, found themselves on the bad end of a romance or leave for some other reason. Orphans seldom, if ever, return to the Forest of their home. Elves are subject to extreme emotion, and once they hate something, they pretty much hate it forever. An elf who hates his Forest and his native people... that is the deepest kind of hate. Orphans spend their countless days wandering among the other races, but they may find a new home in another Forest one day. Just don't count on it.

Bastards are children born to an elven family without the recognition of the father. If a father suspects the child is not his own, he may call for a test from the priests. If the test demonstrates the child is not his own, the child is a plynth: a bastard. A bastard is still considered a citizen of the Forest, but is typically bound to the soil and almost never bound to a Tree. Of course, if a mother has the right influence, she may arrange for the child to be bound to a Tree, but he still is regarded as *ugulkha* (impure) by the rest of the Forest.

Dzunkaveth: Half-Elves

The first of them showed up in human Cities around seventy years ago. Since then, there have been reports of hundreds. Perhaps even thousands. Half-elves: the children of human and elven parents.

Of course, the elves don't call them that. The elven word is *dzunkaveth*. "Abomination."

Half-elves are children of two worlds, but belong to neither. Men do not trust them. Elves consider them "tainted" and "corrupt." One might even go so low as to say, "dirty." The Forest does not accept half-elves as fellows but as

mutant aberrations to be ignored or dispatched with prejudice. Yes, that means "violence."

Most elves also regard *dzunkaveth* as cultural embarrassments and failures of elven purity. Perhaps it is merciful that half-elves cannot breed with either humans or elves; a fact that explains the human nickname for them: "mules."

Humans have a slightly more sympathetic view for half-elves... but not by much. Humans don't trust elves, and thus, tend not to trust their offspring. Does this mean a half-elf is unwelcome in every corner of human society? Of course not. But the prejudice against them is intense and wide-spread. If a human and a half-elf walk into a blacksmith's shop, the half-elf can expect to pay more for the same work. He can expect it. That doesn't mean he will, but he shouldn't be surprised if he doesn't.

Half-elves live as long as their human cousins. They do not suffer from "the iron curse" that their elven cousins do. They stand a little taller than the typical human, have fairer skin and finer features. They also tend to be lighter than the normal human, and thus, a little faster.

Half-elves respond to their fate in different ways. Some try to build a relationship with their elven family—often with no or bad results. Most keep to the human Cities, hope to hide their elven features from strangers, and live their lives in relative obscurity.

Iron

Over the years, men have learned much about the elves. One unfortunate truth—for the elves, at least—that has come to human attention is the relationship between elves and iron. The elves call it *cwth*: "the wretched thing."

(The fact the elves has such a short name for it means something, but human scholars have yet to determine what that significance is.)

Here's a familiar story. An elf strays from the forest. He has heard stories of these men and wants to get a good look at them up close. He comes to the local city—where his bare feet cannot feel the earth for the cobblestones—and he is surrounded by scents and sights that blind his eyes and capture his heart. These men are *alive!* He stops in a tavern and has his first drink of wine or mead or some other sweet thing. He eats meat. The smell of fresh baked bread. The kiss of a beautiful girl. Her skin under his fingertips. She lures him upstairs and with his head full of wine and his belly full of food, he follows her.

And in the morning he wakes with an iron band around his ankle. He cannot leave. He belongs to the men who bound him. A beautiful male elf. How many noble women would pay well for a night with a beautiful male elf? How many noble men? And what would they pay? What would they pay?

The Effect of Iron

Iron does not cause elves discomfort. A weapon made of iron will not cause a deeper injury. Nothing so mundane as that. Iron *binds* an elf to you. Makes him yours. Yours to do with as you wish.

Once the iron band is on his ankle or wrist or about his neck, the elf loses connection with his Tree. Both he and the Tree begin to die. As if his Tree were already dead. She becomes *cwthellean*: iron-bound.

How many elves have been captured thus? How many men have gone into the Deep Forests armed with torches, swords and iron bands?

Many. Far too many.

You would think the elves would declare war upon the men again for such atrocities... but they have not. They know better. They remember the days of the axe and fire. They remember the Forest Wars. They know the men are too many. And now, in the decadent days of the Reign of Men, they will find little support or help. Those

who are captured are dead as are their Trees. And even with their number dwindling, the elves have no choice but to stay in the forests and wait. Wait for the day when men will come with their iron and make slaves of them all.

Iron Laws

But a recent spate of human activity has shown the elves some hope. A few human Cities have outlawed the instruction of the ritual and the Wizard's Guild has even heard mention of doing the same. One Senator went so far as to say,

"using such a wicked and unrighteous sorcery is an unspeakable sin. The fact that it uses an iron band, bound around the wrist, should inform us of its immorality. Shackling is, was, and always will be a symbol of the failure of the human imagination."

While a few Cities have made the practice illegal, it goes without saying that others have not. In particular, Cities close to Great Forests. One could make the argument that the Reign has made slavery illegal. But elven slavery is justified with a simple counter argument: "Elves are not human."

The Life of a Slave

Most elven slaves live their lives in servitude to human masters. They must obey direct commands and cannot contradict orders. Elven slaves have been used as labor, sex workers, mercenaries and bodyguards. Having a completely loyal, unbending, unquestioning bodyguard is something some wealthy humans find incredibly useful. Others find it completely disgusting.

Iron-bound elves live short lives. Disconnected from their Trees, they wither and fade quickly. Likewise, their Tree also begins to die in short order. An iron-bound elf can count on perhaps a dozen years before she is too weak to move, her body frail and fragile. Finally, she crumbles like a batch of dry leaves, vanishing completely.

Iron Biters

The rumor first began in the pages of a penny book, *The Iron Biter*. It told the story of a young iron-bound elf who served as a prostitute, then learned the art of swordplay from an infatuated lover, then won her freedom with a spell learned from a wizard. The book was a sensation, opening speculation that it was based on an actual elf, rather than just a fiction. Because the book was published anonymously (like so many penny books), no-one could verify the rumor one way or another.

As the rumor grew, some said they knew the elf the book was based on. Claims of other elves who had won their freedom began to echo down the City streets. Was it true? Could the iron curse be broken? Could an elf reunite with her Tree before it died, thus winning her immortality once again?

So far, the rumor has remained just that. But as it grows, the people wonder...

Durzhah: Dark Elves

There are whispers of things outside the Known World. Powers dark and ancient. And when faced with the possibility of losing their souls, some elves turn to desperate measures...

One of the deepest secrets of elven culture is the existence of the *Durzhah*: the dark elves. The *Durzhah* are a recent... event... in elven history, spawned after the Forest Wars two hundred years ago. Isolated from their Trees, the iron-bound heard a voice calling from the darkness. The *durzhdannada*. A promise of power. A promise of revenge. Those who answered the call became something else. Elves, but not. Their pure elven heritage corrupted by an otherworldly power.

Those who have devoted themselves to this “dark power” retreat to the shadowy places of the world. Most find solace underground, closer to the whispers that call to them. And the dwarves, haffuns and gnomes who hear of such tales grow pale, their faces filling with fear.

Whisper of the Darkness

When an elf hears the *khuzhu* (the whisper of the darkness), it is usually when she has lost all hope. Her Tree is gone, she has been banished from the Forest, an iron band sits around her wrist. She is desperate, alone and afraid. But the whisper calls to her, making promises.

If she heeds the call, she makes a bargain with the whispers. And with that bargain, she is transformed. All the color flushes from her skin and her hair. Her irises fade to white. From tip to toe, she is the color of bleached bone. Her beauty turns into something else: an alien form

A Change of Tone

One may note that the elven words in this section differ greatly from the words in the other sections. That is because the elves have a sub-language called *kbz*, or “the forbidden words.” These are words never to be used in the presence of outsiders. Words and concepts the elves want to keep secret from others. Sometimes out of guilt and sometimes out of shame.

Redemption

Is there a way for an elf to get his soul back? If she has lost her Tree, is there a way for an elf to bind with another?

Some elves say, “No.” Actions have consequences. The world is a dangerous and unforgiving place. Those who cry, “Foul!” and “Unfair!” don’t understand the true nature of life.

Others say, “Yes.” No matter how dark the world may seem, there is always a glimmer of light. There is always hope. It may mean a quest that costs you more than you could ever imagine, but what is too high a price to pay for your soul?

that is both fascinating and horrifying. Like a living statue of pure marble. Only their blood contains any color: black as shadows.

The transformation is not always instantaneous. Sometimes, it occurs over days or even months. An elf who even *hears* the call may awaken with a shock of white hair, or a single fingernail as white as bone. Of course, any elves with such symptoms take great efforts to hide them.

The whispers take an elf’s soul, but in exchange, grant great power. The elf is now, for all purposes, immortal. She cannot die, but she may be killed. She also gains a particular kind of glamour that allows her to alter her appearance at will. Finally, she gains access to powers beyond those of her fellow elves. All she has to do is reach out and take them.

The *Szhaszb* (“he who sells himself,” sorcerer) is an elf who has sold his soul to the khuzhu in exchange for immortality and power. Access to arcane power is something most elves never gain, but with the sacrifice of his soul, the sorcerer may use it at will.

The *Vezbma* (“she who kisses the darkness,” witch) serves the whispers with veneration and sacrifices, giving them what they desire: pain and suffering to the unbelievers. Hunting down elven children before they can become bound to Trees, turning them into pies and cakes.

The *Oghzban* (“caller of the names,” summoner) serves the whispers by helping their allies come into the world. The elves speculate that the darkness did not originate in this world, but came across from another. The *Oghzban* assists his dark masters by thinning the veil between worlds.

Priests and Guardians

Without a doubt, the most powerful caste in elven society is the *cyllawellan*, priest class. They control every element of elven life. They determine if a child is soil-bound or Tree-bound. They determine if a child is legitimate or a bastard. They speak with the Trees. Regardless of how many favors or distinctions an elf may have, the priest class holds the ultimate authority. Get a priest angry with you, and you are asking for trouble.

The priests also employ an order of bodyguards known as the *gorddluydeae* (the best human translation is “shield brother,” but elves have pointed out this does not convey the intimate relationship between a priest and his guardian) who protect the priests caste from physical danger. Most priests have a *gorddllyud*, although a few prefer not to.

Both the priest and the guardian go through a binding ritual, linking their souls and fates together. They can sense each other’s emotions, feel

when the other is in danger and sometimes, when the bond becomes powerful enough, even read each other's thoughts.

The Heart Bound (One Last Thing)

There are stories of elves who have become iron bound but have conquered their curse and regained their souls. Such tales should not be taken seriously. But, if you are willing to listen, I will tell you. Just remember: you trusted me. That isn't always a mistake, but sometimes...

I have heard of an elf who was bound to the iron. She lived for nearly a year, her heart sunk in sorrow. Many times the Darkness came to her, tempting her, but she refused each time. But then, as her light seemed to be almost gone, she met a human with a voice that reminded her of the days in the Forest. They traveled together, the elf hoping that his voice would delay her descent. They risked many perils and dangers together, spilling blood in the dungeons and ale in the taverns, singing songs of their adventures.

And slowly, the two of them fall in love.

One day, the elf and her lover met with another elf who wore the iron band. When she asked, he smiled. "This thing?" he said. "It is no longer my master. I mastered it long ago."

When the elf asked how, he answered, "The same way you can." He brought them back to his home and introduced them to his wife. Then, he told them how they were taught how to break the iron curse. A ritual, under the moon, holding hands and making promises. Together, the lovers and the elf went into the Forest, stood under the moon, and performed the ritual. She hoped it would work. She hoped...

When she woke in the morning, she was holding her lover in her arms. Something was different. She could feel life flowing through her body. His life.

His soul.

Their two souls bound together. Forever. She was freed from the bonds of iron into a different bond. A bond of love.

Is the story true? Can the iron curse be broken?

I do not know. All I know is the story. And, of course, you ask me if it is true.

Of course it is. All stories are true. Even false ones.

Elf Racial Traits

- +2 to Dexterity and Charisma
- **Medium:** Elves have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Movement:** Base speed of 30ft.
- **Low-Light Vision:** Elves can see twice as far as humans in conditions of dim light.
- **Photosynthesis:** Like the trees, the elves can live off of the light of the sun. Elves do not require food if they spend at least 6 hours in the sunlight each day. If an elf cannot be in the sunlight, they can eat as normal to nourish themselves and still require water as normal.
- **Salve:** Elves can create a healing salve from their saliva mixed with dirt or tree sap. The salve heals 1d6 points of damage when applied. Elves can create 1 salve per day. At 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th character level gain an additional application of salve.
- **Heritage:** Pick *cyffathellean* (Tree bound), *cyllabellan* (soil bound), *cwthellean* (iron bound) or *dzunkaveth* (half-elf) to gain the rest of your racial traits.
- **Automatic Languages:** Elves begin play speaking Common and Elven. Elven is

considered a secret language. Elves with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

Cyffathellean – Tree Bound

Ageless

Great Tree elves do not age as long as their Tree continues to live. They cannot be magically aged. If a cyffathellean's Tree is destroyed or they are bound with iron, they automatically lose the *ageless* racial trait and any racial traits granted by a Great Tree. (Instead they gain the *iron bound* racial traits, below.) Choose which Tree you were bound to and gain the benefits below.

Oak Bound – The Duelist/Dancer

Two-Weapon Fighting: Oak bound elves gain the *two-weapon fighting* feat even if they do not meet the prerequisites.

Oak's Prowess: Oak bound elves treat their Dexterity ability score as 4 higher in any combat situation where they are in melee combat with only one target. Both combatants must be using only melee weapons and be no more than 10 feet apart.

Birch Bound – The Kiss

Goodnight Kiss: Birch bound elves can kiss a living creature and render it unconscious; the target may make a Fortitude save against DC 10 + 1/2 character level (round down, minimum 1) + Charisma modifier to negate. This can be done once per day. At 4th level and every 3 levels thereafter, gain an additional use. This is a standard action; if used in combat, it is a melee touch attack with a -5 to hit.

Birch's Beauty: Birch bound elves can force a creature to continue looking at them after they make eye contact; the target can make a Will save against DC 10 + 1/2 character level (round down, minimum 1) + charisma

modifier to resist. If the target fails their Will save they cannot look away until the birch bound elf allows them. This is a swift action.

Elm Bound – The Priest

Tree Speak: Elm bound elves can use branches from their own Great Tree to communicate telepathically with any creature holding one of the branches. They can take a number of branches equal to their Wisdom modifier from their Great Tree and the branches must stay whole. It is a swift action to send a message.

Elm's Patience: Elm bound elves can declare a target and for every round they hold their action they gain a +1 *patience* bonus to their attack against that target. They cannot hold their action for more rounds than their character level.

Ash Bound – The Archer

Precise Shot: Ash bound elves gain the *precise shot* feat even if they do not meet the prerequisites.

Ash's Intuition: Ash bound elves always have at least 1 action in any surprise round, even if they are the ones being surprised.

Blackthorn Bound – The Spy

Quick Death: Blackthorn bound elves can make a *coup de grace* attack as a standard action. If their target has total concealment then they can make a *coup de grace* attack as a full round action.

Blackthorn's Cunning: Blackthorn bound elves can automatically succeed at a bluff check; they can do this once per day. At 5th character level and every 5 character levels thereafter they gain an additional use of this ability.

Cyllabellan – Soil Bound

Human Frailty: Soil bound elves age at a human rate and cannot be magically aged; but they do not physically appear to age beyond adulthood. If they are bound with iron, they automatically lose

the human frailty racial trait and any racial traits granted by the soil. Instead they gain the *iron bound* racial traits and stay their current age category.

Strong Back: Soil bound elves treat their Strength ability score as 4 higher in any non-combat situation (such as determining carrying capacity, lifting objects or a Strength based check).

Rock's Endurance: Soil bound elves gain DR 1 against bludgeoning damage. At 5th character level and every 5 character levels thereafter, the DR increase by 1.

Cwthellean – Iron Bound

Living Ghost: Cwthellean elves do not take penalties to their ability scores for aging and cannot be magically aged. They start at adulthood and for every 1,100 days after they become cwthellean, they move up an age category; age bonuses still accrue. The GM should roll $1d6 \times 400 + 2000$ to determine how many days a cwthellean has to live.

Soul of Iron: Cwthellean do not gain the dying condition until they reach their Will save modifier in negative hit points. If they reach their Constitution ability score in negative hit points, they die as normal.

Sacrifice: Cwthellean can sacrifice days from their lifespan to add a bonus equal to the number of days they sacrificed to any roll. They must use this ability before they roll and cannot sacrifice more days than their character level on any one roll.

Dzunkaveth – Half-Elf

Human Heritage: Dzunkaveth count as both elves and humans for any effect related to race; they age at a human rate and cannot be bound by iron. However, dzunkaveth cannot breed by any magical or mundane means; they are sterile.

Human Racial Traits: Duznkaveth gain 2 human racial traits (see pg. 28). The *hometown*

advantage racial trait requires that the dzunkaveth have the *hometown* racial trait as well.

Ffhrad: Favors

If you are an elf and you are in a forest with Great Trees, then you can accrue points of *ffhrad* (favors). For every 8 hours you spend working, you gain 1 point of *ffhrad*. You can spend points of *ffhrad* to gain items, information or services from other elves. When using *ffhrad* to acquire items, it costs 1 point for every 100 gold value of the item you are trying to acquire. For example, asking for a masterwork backpack (50 gp) would cost 1 point of *ffhrad* but an assassin's dagger (10,302 gp) would cost 104 points of *ffhrad*. Otherwise it is at the GM's discretion how many points of *ffhrad* it would cost to gain services or information. *Ffhrad* is not specific to any elf or forest in particular as trading *ffhrad* owed to you for someone else's *ffhrad* is common.

Durzhab's Redemption

Can a dark elf redeem herself? Must her soul always swim in darkness? Once you have become a *Durzhab*, there is a chance at redemption... although it is very difficult.

First, you must gain an alignment shift from evil to good (GM discretion). Once you have done this, you cannot willingly commit any evils acts. Also you must respect legitimate authority, act with honor (not lying, not cheating, not using poison, and so forth), help those in need (provided they do not use the help for evil or chaotic ends), and punish those who harm or threaten innocents. While you follow this code you lose access to *Oghzban*, *Szhaszh* and *Vezhma* class features, except proficiencies. You may no longer take any levels in *Oghzban*, *Szhaszh* or *Vezhma*. Once you reach the same amount of levels in any non-*Durzhab*'s classes that you have total in

Durzhab's classes, you have gained redemption. You regain the use of any *Oghzban*, *Szhaszh* or *Vezhma* class features you already have. You replace *darkvision* with *low-light vision*, *photodermatits* with *photosynthesis*, *un-aging* with *living ghost* (you have the same amount of days as before you became a *Durzhab*) and *chromatic* with *sacrifice*.

Elf Feats

Human Raised

I never met my father. My mother told me she went dancing in the woods at night, and the next thing she knew, it was nine months later and... well, there I was.

Prerequisite: Dzungaveth (half-elf), Hometown

Benefit: You can trade your +2 to Dexterity for a +2 to Strength or Constitution or trade your +2 to Charisma for a +2 to Intelligence or Wisdom.

Special: This feat can only be taken at character creation but it may be taken twice to modify both Dexterity and Charisma.

Thick Skin

The inferior weapons of the orks seemed to glance off their skin as if it was made of solid oak.

Prerequisite: Elf, Rock's Endurance, Character Level 10th

Benefit: You gain DR *slashing* equal to your DR *bludgeoning*. Whenever your DR *bludgeoning* increases by means of *rock's endurance*, your DR *slashing* increases as well.

Great Tree Weapon

She pulled back the string and whispered something sweetly, as if she was singing to the bow.

Prerequisite: Elf, Cyffathellean (Tree bound)

Benefit: You gain a Great Tree weapon; it's made from the wood of the Tree you are bound to. A Great Tree weapon takes the form and stats of any weapon; once this selection is made, it cannot be changed later. Great Tree weapons are masterwork weapons and can be enchanted like normal weapons. When you wield it, it counts as a magic weapon for bypassing damage resistances and you are proficient with whatever type of weapon it is.

Special: If you become cwthellean (iron bound), your Great Tree weapon no longer counts as a magic weapon unless you enchant it. If you don't have a proficiency in the type of weapon it is, you take you take the non-proficient penalty on attack rolls.

Fool's Luck

I looked at him and said, "You can't do that. You'll die." He smiled at me. "I'm already dead." Then, he jumped.

Prerequisite: Elf, Cwthellean (iron bound), Must be free from iron band

Benefit: Whenever you risk your life, such as throwing yourself between the wizard and the barbarian about to cleave the wizard in two, you gain a +2 *luck* bonus to do it. This is subject to GM Discretion.

Lucky Fool

I thought I was dead. But then, the elf jumped in front of the blade. I saw him go down, but he was laughing as he did.

Prerequisite: Elf, Cwthellean, Fool's Luck, 10 Character Levels

Benefit: Whenever you gain your fool's luck bonus and your actions resulted in your hit points being 0 or below, you retain 1 hit point and gain the *unconscious* condition. This affect happens even if the action should have killed you.

Mistletoe Feats

Mistletoe

He looked into her eyes and she could not move. Then, he kissed her. So sweetly. I saw her lips turn black and she fell to his feet.

Prerequisite: Elf, Cyffathellean (Tree bound), Con 12

Benefit: You can make a melee touch attack as a standard action that causes a living creature to become poisoned by the effects of mistletoe. The target gains the *nauseated* condition and 2 points of Constitution damage; they can make a Fortitude save against DC 10 + character level + Constitution modifier to negate the Constitution damage.

Oak's Mistletoe

She touched him and he burned. We could smell the flesh and see it oozing from his cheek.

Prerequisite: Elf, Oak Bound, Mistletoe, Knowledge (nature) 10 Ranks

Benefit: Your mistletoe touch attack also deal 1d6 acid damage for every 4 character levels you possess.

Birch's Mistletoe

I asked my mother about the scar and she sighed. "Trust me, daughter," she said. "Never kiss an elf."

Prerequisite: Elf, Birch Bound, Mistletoe, Diplomacy 10 Ranks

Benefit: You can add the effects of mistletoe to your *goodnight kiss* ability.

Elm's Mistletoe

He parried the ork's thrust, then sidestepped like he was dancing, running his fingers on the ork's skin, laughing and dancing as the ork screamed.

Prerequisite: Elf, Elm Bound, Mistletoe, Heal 10 Ranks

Benefit: Your mistletoe touch attack also deal 1d4 damage for every 6 character levels you possess. You also regain hit points equal to half of the damage when you use mistletoe.

Ash's Mistletoe

The arrows flew and the uvandir raised their shields. Some were safe, but others fell to the ground, their flesh burning from their bones.

Prerequisite: Elf, Ash Bound, Mistletoe, Craft (bows) 10 Ranks

Benefit: You can add the effect of mistletoe to any wooden arrows you use.

Blackthorn's Mistletoe

I tried calling for help, but all I could do was grasp my throat and try to breathe.

Prerequisite: Elf, Blackthorn Bound, Mistletoe, Bluff 10 Ranks

Benefit: Your mistletoe causes a creature's tongue to swell and vocal chords to freeze up rendering them incapable of speech while affected by mistletoe.

New Druid Archetype: Cyllawellan

The Speakers of Trees, the cyllawellan are the priest class of elven society. They perform rituals, lead ceremonies, and determine the caste of all new-born elves.

Requirements: Elf, Elm Bound

Class Features

The following are class features of the cyllawellan.

Aspects of the Trees: A cyllawellan picks one aspect that she can invoke upon herself as a standard action. This aspect lasts for a number of rounds equal to her Wisdom modifier. At 2nd

level and every two levels thereafter a cyllawellan can choose to gain a new aspect or add a +1 to the bonus of an aspect she already knows. She can use each aspect she knows once per day. At 20th level a cyllawellan can use her aspects at will.

Oak Aspect: If a cyllawellan is in melee combat with only one target while invoking oak aspect gains +1 to attack rolls.

Birch Aspect: If a cyllawellan makes eye contact with a creature while invoking birch aspect, they can force the creature to continue looking at them for the duration of birch aspect +1 round. The creature can make a Will save against DC 10 + 1/2 her cyllawellan level + her Charisma modifier to negate this effect. This is a swift action.

Elm Aspect: If a cyllawellan begins using elm's patience while invoking elm aspect gain a +1 to damage when she actually attacks regardless if elm aspect is still in effect or not. If this aspect is used on a gorddluydeae who does not have *elm's patience* they gain the use of *elm's patience* for the duration of the aspect.

Ash Aspect: If a cyllawellan uses a ranged Great Tree weapon while invoking ash aspect, gain a +1 to attack. Ash aspect can be invoked as a free action to gain 1 standard action in a surprise round in which the cyllawellan was surprised. Adding an additional +1 to ash aspect does not grant a cyllawellan any more actions during surprise rounds.

Blackthorn Aspect: If a cyllawellan invokes blackthorn aspect, gain +1 to *bluff* and *sense motive* checks.

This ability replaces the *wild shape* class feature.

Improved Tree Speak: A cyllawellan gains 3 extra branches from their Great Tree which she can use for tree speak. She may also shape the branches into a bracelet, circlet or other adornment that may be worn.

Druidic functions as normal.

This ability modifies the *bonus languages* class feature.

Gorddluydeae (Guardian): At 4th level, a cyllawellan gains a faithful guardian called a gorddluydeae to protect them; she has two options when selecting a gorddluydeae. The first choice is to gain an NPC cohort as if she had the *leadership* feat; her leadership score is equal to her cyllawellan level + her Charisma modifier. The cohort's class levels must be fighter level and the cohort must be an elf with the cyffathellean racial trait.

The second choice is to have a PC as her gorddluydeae. The PC must be an elf with the cyffathellean racial trait and more levels in fighter than any other class.

If at any time the gorddluydeae does not meet these requirements, such as becoming cwthellean or gaining more level in a class other than fighter, they are no longer fit to be a gorddluydeae and lose all the associated benefits. The cyllawellan is free to pick a new gorddluydeae if this happens.

Empathic Link (Su): A cyllawellan has an empathic link with her gorddluydeae to a 1 mile distance. She can communicate empathically with the gorddluydeae, but cannot see through its eyes. Because of the link's limited nature, only general emotions can be shared. The cyllawellan has the same connection to an item or place that his familiar does.

Share Spells: A cyllawellan may cast a spell with a target of "You" on her gorddluydeae (as a touch spell) instead of on herself. Also, she may confer any aspects of the Tree onto her gorddluydeae.

Deliver Touch Spells (Su): At the cyllawellan's 8th level, the gorddluydeae can deliver touch spells for the cyllawellan. If the cyllawellan and the gorddluydeae are in contact at the time the cyllawellan casts a touch spell, she can

designate her gorrddlyudeae as the “toucher.” The gorrddlyudeae can then deliver the touch spell just as the cyllawellan would. As usual, if the cyllawellan casts another spell before the touch is delivered, the touch spell dissipates.

Spell Resistance (Ex): At the cyllawellan’s 11th level the gorrddlyudeae gains spell resistance equal to the cyllawellan’s level + 5. To affect the gorrddlyudeae with a spell, another spellcaster must get a result on a caster level check (1d20 + caster level) that equals or exceeds the gorrddlyudeae’s spell resistance.

This ability replaces the nature bond class feature

Shape of the Wood: At 6th level, a cyllawellan can cast tree shape at will.

This ability replaces a *thousand faces* class feature.

Treestep: At 12th level, once a day, a cyllawellan can step within an elm and then teleport from that tree to another elm in a manner similar to the *treestride* spell. She gains an extra use of this ability each day at 15th level, and a third use of this ability at 18th level. Furthermore, a cyllawellan can use this ability to teleport up to 300 miles away.

This ability replaces the timeless body class feature.

Special: If a cyllawellan becomes cwthellea (iron bound), she cannot take any more druid levels. She retains the use of any cyllawellan abilities she already knew.

New Summoner Archetype: Oghzhan

Some who have given themselves to the Darkness help murder the light and allow more Darkness into the world.

Requirements: Elf, Cwthellean (iron bound)

Alignment: Any Evil

Racial Features

Like other dark elves, the *Oghzhan* must begin as an iron bound elf. But once he has surrendered to the Darkness, he is no longer iron bound and inherits these racial features.

Darkvision: *Oghzhan* can see in the dark up to 60 feet.

The trait replaces low-light vision

Photodermatitis: *Oghzhan* treats his Strength, Dexterity and Constitution as half when his skin is exposed to direct sunlight. After the sun sets, the *Oghzhan* treats his Intelligence as 4 higher in any non-combat situation.

The trait replaces *photosynthesis*

Un-Aging: *Oghzhan* do not age and he cannot be magically aged.

This trait replaces *living ghost*.

Chromatic (Ex): An *Oghzhan* can change the color of his skin, hair, eyes and nails at will. He cannot change the color of his blood and thus bleeds black. This disguise does not give off a magical aura therefore cannot be seen with *detect magic* but *true seeing* can still see through the disguise.

This trait replaces *sacrifice*.

Class Features

The following are class features of the *Oghzhan*.

Durzhab’s Eidolon: An *Oghzhan* forges a deal with a powerful creature from another plane. In exchange for immortality, the *Oghzhan* summons the creature into a willing or dead vessel on this plane. The vessel must be at least the same size as the eidolon but it does not need to the same amount of limbs as the eidolon. When the eidolon takes hold of the vessel, its form shifts to become the eidolon as if under

the effects of *polymorph*. If the eidolon's base form is serpentine, then it gains the ability increase to Intelligence as a free evolution. The *Oghzhan* cannot be the vessel for his eidolon.

While possessed by the eidolon, the vessel uses the eidolon's ability scores. If the vessel has an Intelligence of 8 or more, it can choose to use its own Intelligence instead; corpses count as having an Intelligence of 0. The vessel gains the eidolon's hit points as temporary hit points. When these hit points reach 0, the eidolon is killed and sent back to its home plane. The vessel uses the eidolon's base attack bonus, and gains the eidolon's armor and natural armor bonuses and modifiers to ability scores. The vessel also gains access to the eidolon's special abilities and the eidolon's evolutions. The vessel is still limited to the eidolon's maximum number of natural attacks. The vessel gains the eidolon's skills and feats instead of its own. The eidolon's temporary hit points can be restored with the rejuvenate eidolon spell.

While possessed, the vessel loses the benefits of its armor. They count as their original type and as an outsider for any effect related to type, whichever is worse for the vessel and eidolon. Spells such as *banishment* or *dismissal* work normally on the eidolon, but the vessel is unaffected. If the vessel becomes unwilling at any point in time, the eidolon is automatically banished back to its home plane. Neither the vessel nor the eidolon can be targeted separately, as they are fused into one creature. The vessel and eidolon cannot take separate actions. In all other cases, this ability functions as the *Oghzhan's* normal eidolon ability (for example, the *Oghzhan* cannot use his *summon monster* ability while the eidolon is present).

This ability replaces the class's *eidolon* ability and *life bond*.

Weakened Wall (Ex): At 10th level, an *Oghzhan's* presence weakens the fabric between the walls of realities. It no longer takes a

minute to summon his eidolon, but instead, the *Oghzhan* can summon it as a full round action.

This ability replaces the *aspect* class feature.

Greater Weakened Wall (Ex): At 15th level, an *Oghzhan* presence makes it easier for others to conjure from other planes as well. He gains a 10 foot aura that augments the casting time for any spell from the conjuration school except his eidolon summoning ritual. If the casting time takes more than a 1 round, subtract the *Oghzhan's* Charisma modifier from the total rounds to a minimum of 1 round. If the casting time is a 1 round, it becomes a standard action. Standard actions become swift actions and swift actions become free actions. In addition he can summon his eidolon as standard action instead of a full round action.

New Sorcerer Archetype: *Szhaszh*

Having surrendered all that he is to the Darkness, the *Szhaszh* gains powers undreamed of by his elven cousins.

Requirements: Elf, Cwthellean (iron bound)

Alignment: Any Evil

Racial Features

Like other dark elves, the *Szhaszh* must begin as an iron bound elf. But once he has surrendered to the Darkness, he is no longer iron bound and inherits these racial features.

Darkvision: *Szhaszh* can see in the dark up to 60 feet.

The trait replaces *low-light* vision

Photodermatitis: *Szhaszh* treats her Strength, Dexterity and Constitution as half when her skin is exposed to direct sunlight. When the sun is completely set

then the *Szhasz* treats her Intelligence as 4 higher in any non-combat situation.

The trait replaces *photosynthesis*

Un-Aging: *Szhasz* do not age and she cannot be magically aged.

This trait replaces *living ghost*.

Chromatic (Ex): A *Szhasz* can change the color of her skin, hair, eyes and nails at will. She cannot change the color of her blood and thus bleeds black. This disguise does not give off a magical aura therefore cannot be seen with *detect magic* but *true seeing* can still see through the disguise.

This trait replaces *sacrifice*.

Class Features

The following are class features of the *Szhasz*.

Bloodline: A *Szhasz* must choose her bloodline from one of the following: abyssal, accursed, dreamspun, fey, infernal, maestro, pestilence, protean, serpentine, shadow or undead.

Baneful Touch (Su): At 1st level, a *Szhasz* grows white scales on the palms of her hands. As a standard action she can make a melee touch attack to deal 1d6 necrotic damage. At 2nd level and every two levels thereafter, she gains an additional 1d6 to damage. A *Szhasz* also gains half of the total damage as temporary hit points; these temporary hit points do not stack with any other temporary hit points. She can do this a number of times a day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

This ability replaces the *Szhasz's* first bloodline power.

Charming Eyes (Su): At 13th level, a *Szhasz* gains glowing amber eyes. As a standard action at close range she can make eye contact with one target and the target become frozen in place like a statue. Every round the target makes a Fortitude save DC 10 + *Szhasz's* Charisma

modifier + *Szhasz's* caster level. If unsuccessful the target takes 1d4 points of damage to all physical abilities (Strength, Constitution and Dexterity). The effect lasts until the *Szhasz* takes any other form of action including talking and other free actions. She may do this once a day per every three *Szhasz* levels she possesses.

This ability replaces the *Szhasz's* 13th level *bloodline feat* and *bloodline spell*.

New Witch Archetype: *vezhma*

She who dances with the Darkness gains gifts for such a sacrifice.

Requirements: Elf, Cwthellean (iron bound)

Alignment: Any Evil

Racial Features

Like other dark elves, the *Vezhma* must begin as an iron bound elf. But once she has surrendered to the Darkness, she is no longer iron bound and inherits these racial features.

Darkvision: *Vezhma* can see in the dark up to 60 feet.

The trait replaces *low-light vision*.

Photodermatitis: *Vezhma* treats her Strength, Dexterity and Constitution as half when her skin is exposed to direct sunlight. When the sun is completely set then the *Vezhma* treats her Intelligence as 4 higher in any non-combat situation. In addition she loses all color to body; her skin, hair, eye and nails turn white. The *Vezhma's* blood turns black and can be seen through her skin.

The trait replaces *photosynthesis*

Un-Aging: *Vezhma* do not age and she cannot be magically aged.

This trait replaces *living ghost*.

Chromatic (Ex): A *Vezhma* can change the color of her skin, hair, eyes and nails at will. She cannot change the color of her blood and thus bleeds black. This disguise does not give off a magical aura therefore cannot be seen with *detect magic* but *true seeing* can still see through the disguise.

This trait replaces *sacrifice*.

Class Features

The following are class features of the *Vezhma*.

Patron: A *Vezhma* must choose her patron from one of the following patron themes: agility, death, deception, enchantment, healing, moon, occult, shadow, stars, transformation, trickery, vengeance, or wisdom.

Durzhab's Familiar: A *Vezhma* must take a viper as their familiar but the viper can speak one language of their master's choice as a supernatural ability. If a *Vezhma* takes the improved familiar feat, she can add the entropic or fiendish template to her familiar and the familiar gains a number of languages equal to her intelligence modifier.

This ability replaces *witch's familiar*.

New Prestige Class: Heart-Bound Elf

Sometimes, if an elf is lucky, he can find a way to circumvent his fate and forge a new one. But only if he can find the most elusive treasure in all the world. True love.

Role: The heart-bound elf is the perfect companion. She compliments other characters and will do anything to protect the one she loves. She is the epitome of wild luck, surviving feats that would kill most others. This is because she rid her heart of the fear of death. Cast spells to frighten her? She laughs in your face. Try to kill

her with magic? She dances through it. Nothing can stop her. Fear is an alien thing now. She may die, but she will die singing, dancing and laughing.

Alignment: Any

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify to become a heart-bound, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Elf

Racial Traits: Cwthellean (iron bound), *living ghost* and *sacrifice*.

Skills: Any two Charisma skills with 4 ranks in each.

Feats: Fool's Luck

Special: The character must have undergone the heart binding ritual with her partner performed by another heart-bound elf. The partner may be of any race or gender but they cannot be cyffathellean (Tree bound) or cwthellean (iron bound).

Racial Traits

Twisted Souls: A heart-bound elf ages at the same rate as her partner and will live as long as her partner is alive. If her partner dies by any means, she will die at the same moment. She cannot be resurrected unless her partner has been resurrected first.

This trait replaces *living ghost*.

Soul Mate: A heart-bound elf always knows where her partner is in relation to herself and the physical condition her partner is in. If she is adjacent to her partner, she can transfers hit points up to her character level to her partner. She can do this a number of times a day equal to her Constitution modifier (minimum 1).

This trait replaces *sacrifice*.

Class Skills

The heart-bound class skills are Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Heal (Wis) and Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill Ranks per Level: 5 + Int modifier

Class Features

The following are class features of the heart-bound.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency:

Heart-bounds gain no proficiency with any weapon or armor.

Spells: A heart-bound gains new spells per day as if she had also gained a level in a spellcasting class she belonged to before adding the prestige class. She does not gain other benefits a character of that class would have gained, except for additional spells per day, spells known (if she is a spontaneous spellcaster), and an increased effective level of spellcasting. If a character had more than one spellcasting class before becoming a heart-bound, she must decide to which class she adds the new level for purposes of determining spells per day.

Iron Resistance: A heart-bound gains DR 5 against any weapon made of iron (magical or non-magical). At 3rd level and every 2 levels thereafter this resistance increases by 5 to a maximum of 25 at 9th level. If her partner is adjacent to her then her partner also gains DR 5 against any weapon made of iron.

Fear Immunity: At 2nd level, a heart-bound is immune to *fear* (magical or otherwise); if her partner is adjacent to her then her partner is also immune to *fear* (magical or otherwise).

Empathic: At 4th level, a heart-bound can see the emotions of a creature within 10 feet. When she concentrates, an aura of colors appears around her target which she can interpret as emotions. If the target is aware that the heart-bound is looking at their emotions they can make a *bluff*

check of DC 10 + her *sense motive* bonus to fool her. A heart-bound can do this a number of times a day equal to 3 + her Charisma modifier.

A Fool in Love: At 6th level, if a heart-bound gains her *fool's luck* bonus and her actions resulted in her hit points being 0 or below, she retains 1 hit point instead and gains the *unconscious* condition. If her actions included protecting her partner, she retains her Charisma modifier (minimum 1) in hit points and gains the *stunned* condition for 1d4 rounds instead. This affect happens even if the action should have killed the heart-bound.

Sympathetic Soul: At 8th level, when a heart-bound is adjacent to an ally, she can touch them to take any number of negative conditions, poisons and diseases from the target. She can make any saving throws against the effects, if feasible, when she takes the condition.

Reason to Live: At 10th level, a heart-bound becomes immune to death effects; she also gains a +5 bonus to saving throws against necromancy spells and effects. If her partner is adjacent to her then her partner also gains a +5 against necromancy spells and effects.

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells
1st	+1	+1	+0	+1	Iron Resistance 5	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+2	+2	+1	+2	Fear Immunity	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+2	+3	+1	+3	Iron Resistance 10	+1 level of existing class
4th	+3	+4	+2	+4	Empathic	+1 level of existing class
5th	+4	+5	+2	+5	Iron Resistance 15	+1 level of existing class
6th	+4	+6	+3	+6	A Fool in Love	+1 level of existing class
7th	+5	+7	+3	+7	Iron Resistance 20	+1 level of existing class
8th	+6	+8	+4	+8	Sympathetic Soul	+1 level of existing class
9th	+6	+9	+4	+9	Iron Resistance 25	+1 level of existing class
10th	+7	+10	+5	+10	Reason to Live	+1 level of existing class

Ex Heart-Bound: If a heart-bound becomes a *Durzhab* (dark elf), she loses access to all of her class features except proficiencies. She may not progress any further in levels as a heart-bound. She regains her abilities and advancement potential if she redeems herself (see *Durzhab's* redemption rules).

The Elven Language

Listed below are the elven terms used in this chapter. Each has a definition as well as a pronunciation guide. Please note that humans have a great deal of trouble pronouncing elven words and not all human vowels and consonants are true representatives of elven sounds.

aelenderon: (ayl-en-der-on) the Great Trees

aelfanderon: (ay-elf-an-der-on) guardians of the Trees, the name of the elven people

cwllathanan: (kwuh-yew-ath-an-an) “exile,” an elf who has been forced from the Forest

cwth: (kew-eth) “the wretched thing,” iron

cwthellean: (kew-eth-cy-yew-ay-an) “iron-bound,” an elf who has been bound to iron

cyllawellan: (kew-ee-au-eyan) the priest class of elven society

cyllabellean: (kee-yew-abay-yew-eyan) the soil-bound elves

cyffathellean: (kee-fhah-they-yew-ay-an) the Tree-bound

cyllwana: (kee-yew-uana) “purity,” or the maintaining of the integrity of elven heritage

Durzhab: (doorzh-ah) “dark elves,” those who have sold their souls or make bargains with the darkness

durzhdannada: (doorzh-dahn-nyada) “the darkness,” the unspeakable power that calls to elves and changes them into dark elves

dzungandan: (zhun-gahn-dahn) “orphan,” one who leaves the forest voluntary

dzunkaveth: (zhun-kah-veth) “abomination,” half-elves

ffhrad: (fhah-rhad) favor

gorddlyydeae: (gordh-ee-yu-de-ay) weapon of the Trees, an order of bodyguards for the priest class.

gorddlyud: (gordh-ee-yud) singular form of *gorddlyydeae*, bodyguard

khuzhu: (khoo-zhoo) the whisper of the darkness

llwaellanon: (yew-ai-yew-anon) the binding ritual

plyntn: (puh-lew-en-ten)
“unwanted,” a bastard child

llwalla: (yew-wah-yew-a) “the time of quiet,” the old age of an elf

Oghzhan: (oh-ghah-zh-ahn) “summoner,” one who opens the doors for the darkness to enter the world

Szhaszb: (zhah-zh) “sorcerer,” one who sells his soul to the darkness for arcane power

ugulkha: (oo-gul-kha) “impure,” an elf who has been declared to be of “lesser blood” by the priest class

Vezhma: (vay-zhem-a) “witch,” one who “kisses” the darkness for power

Approved classes

Listed below are the classes available to elves in *Wicked Fantasy*.

Class	Elf
Barbarian	yes
Bard	yes
<i>Cleric</i>	no
Druid	archetype
Fighter	yes
<i>Monk</i>	no
<i>Paladin</i>	no
Ranger	yes
Rogue	yes
Sorcerer	archetype
Wizard	half-elf
<i>Alchemist</i>	no
Cavalier	yes
<i>Gunslinger</i>	no
<i>Inquisitor</i>	no
<i>Magus</i>	no
Oracle	yes
Summoner	archetype
Witch	archetype
<i>Antipaladin</i>	no
<i>Ninja</i>	no
<i>Samurai</i>	no





Her Name is a Song Your Vulgar Lips could Never Sing

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

The carriage was moving too slow. Menaius knew this, but there was little he could do about it. Last night's rain flooded the roads, making them thick as horse glue. Of course, if he chose to use one of the main roads, he wouldn't have this problem. But, he thought this way would be quicker. The Senate road had cobblestone and regular guard houses. But he chose a shortcut, not counting on the unseasonal rain. Of course, his wife kept reminding him of that mistake.

"We should have taken the Senate road," his wife said.

He answered her, "Yes, Jannika."

It was the seventieth time in about as many minutes she mentioned it. She was sitting on the other side of the carriage next to their son. Haseph didn't even look up. He knew when his parents were fighting and wanted none of it. Only nine years old and already wise to many of the ways of the world. Menaius thought, "A merchant's son has to grow up quick."

His daughter clung to him like a cat looking for warmth. Bellandra was older than her brother, but only by two years. And Bellandra hated raised voices. She wrapped her hands around his arm and stuck her head as deep into his chest as she could. It was one of the things his wife resented about him: Bellandra belonged to him. His wife wanted a daughter. No, not a daughter, but a doll. And she was his. Both Haseph and Bellandra were. And Jannika hated him for it.

"Why didn't we take the Senate road?" Jannika asked again.

He sighed. "I've already told you why."

"Say it again," she said.

He looked out the window. "I'm not going to play this game any more," he told her. He saw the mud and the wet grass. And the trees. Menaius had over three hundred men working for him, sending lumber all across the west of the Reign. He was a wealthy man. Wealthy enough to afford a carriage to carry his family from Vinnick to Ashcolmb. But he should have taken the Senate road. Curse the rain. He should have taken the Senate road.

Jannika kept talking, but he stopped listening. Menaius kept his eye on the trees. He took Bellandra's little hand and squeezed it. She squeezed back. He could feel her smile against his chest. He looked at his son and when Haseph looked back, Menaius winked at him. Haseph dropped his gaze again, smiling, trying not to laugh.

Then, he heard a sound: a heavy thud from the top of the carriage, like luggage shifting or falling. He heard another sound: something falling to the side. "Curse it," he said.

"What is that?" his wife asked.

He shook his head. "We've lost some luggage, I think."

She scowled. "The driver didn't tie it tight enough. I told him to tie it tighter."

Menaius looked out the window for the luggage. What he saw was a body, lying in the mud, slowly bleeding. There was an arrow in his throat. His legs were twitching and his eyes were empty.

"Bandits!" he shouted. "Curse their eyes!"

Menaius heard more arrows. Some hitting the side of the carriage, others hitting flesh.

He heard the second driver shouting at the horses, then a thud, and then a silence. Out the window, he saw the driver fall into the mud, face first, the arrow in his chest cracking.

Menaius turned to his wife. "Take the children," he said. "Take the children and run."

"What?" she asked, her eyes filling with panic.

"Take the children!" he shouted.

"Jump out the door and run!"

Bellandra looked up at him. "Father! No!"

Menaius tore his daughter from his coat and handed Bellandra to her mother. "Go!"

Jannika nodded. By the look of her eyes, she wasn't thinking, only operating on instinct. She grabbed the children, each of them screaming, and pushed open the door, throwing herself into the mud. Menaius saw her hit the ground hard, push herself up, grab the children and run toward the woods. The thick mud sucked at her every stride, and within two steps, she had lost both of her shoes.

For some reason, at that moment, Menaius remembered buying those shoes for her just after they were married. He remembered her laughter and the kisses of thanks. And he remembered what happened afterward. Nine months later, their son was born. And in that moment, Menaius smiled.

But then he heard the shouts of men on horseback. He watched his family running away and he nodded. He stepped outside the carriage into the mud, holding his hands above his head.

"I am unarmed!" he shouted at the men riding toward him. They had bows. None of them had arrows knocked.

"I am unarmed!" he shouted again. "The guards I hired are both dead! I call upon the mercy in all men's hearts!"

The riders stopped just short of the carriage, now stopped in the mud. All of them were

masked. They wore dirty clothes and hoods. He could not tell one from the other.

"I call on the mercy in all men's hearts," he said again. "Please. Take what you want. My family is all that matters to me. Please let them live."

One of the riders looked at his wife and children fleeing across the muddy plain toward the forest. He gestured to another rider and that one went after them.

Menaius looked at the man he assumed to be the leader. "Please," he said. "They have nothing. Everything you want is in the carriage."

The leader got down from his horse and walked toward Menaius. He was taller and stronger. Menaius could also tell he was younger. His eyes were sharp and blue.

The leader asked, "What is in the carriage, rich man?"

Menaius told him, "Coin and paper. Ten thousand worth." Then, he said. "My name is Menaius Wisk of Vinnick. I am a lumber merchant and you are right: I am very wealthy."

The leader nodded and touched Menaius' coat. "Nice," he said.

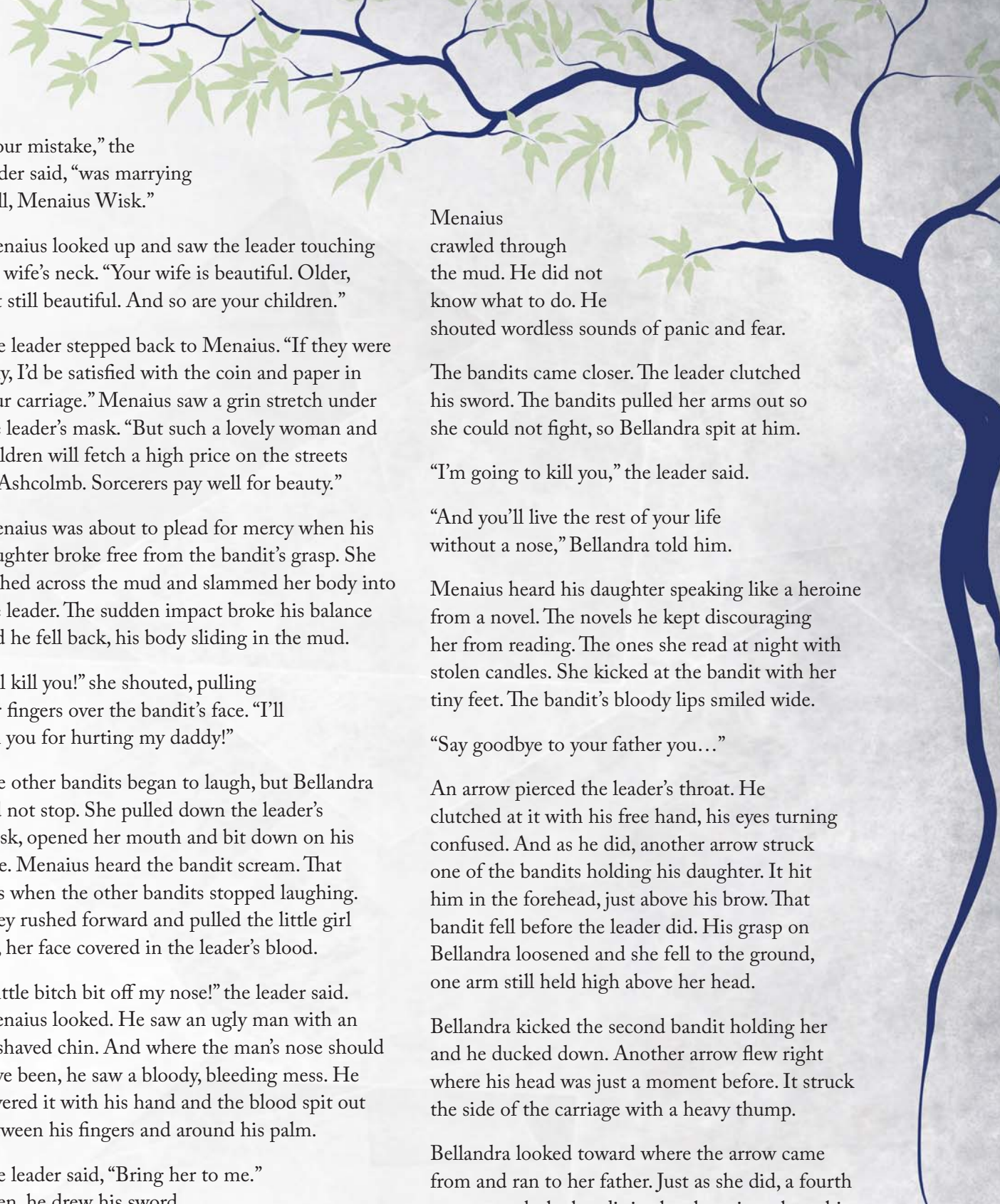
Menaius asked, "Do you want it? It's yours."

Under his mask, the leader chuckled. "Everything that belongs to you is mine," he said.

Menaius nodded. "I will not fight. I will not make trouble here. You control the terms of this negotiation, I understand that."

The leader leaned close to Menaius. "Then why should I honor your request for mercy?"

Menaius felt his heart sink into his belly. Then, he heard the rider return. His wife and son were crying. He did not hear his daughter. He turned to look and the leader struck him across the chin, knocking him down to the mud.



“Your mistake,” the leader said, “was marrying well, Menaius Wisk.”

Menaius looked up and saw the leader touching his wife’s neck. “Your wife is beautiful. Older, but still beautiful. And so are your children.”

The leader stepped back to Menaius. “If they were ugly, I’d be satisfied with the coin and paper in your carriage.” Menaius saw a grin stretch under the leader’s mask. “But such a lovely woman and children will fetch a high price on the streets of Ashcolmb. Sorcerers pay well for beauty.”

Menaius was about to plead for mercy when his daughter broke free from the bandit’s grasp. She rushed across the mud and slammed her body into the leader. The sudden impact broke his balance and he fell back, his body sliding in the mud.

“I’ll kill you!” she shouted, pulling her fingers over the bandit’s face. “I’ll kill you for hurting my daddy!”

The other bandits began to laugh, but Bellandra did not stop. She pulled down the leader’s mask, opened her mouth and bit down on his face. Menaius heard the bandit scream. That was when the other bandits stopped laughing. They rushed forward and pulled the little girl off, her face covered in the leader’s blood.

“Little bitch bit off my nose!” the leader said. Menaius looked. He saw an ugly man with an unshaved chin. And where the man’s nose should have been, he saw a bloody, bleeding mess. He covered it with his hand and the blood spit out between his fingers and around his palm.

The leader said, “Bring her to me.” Then, he drew his sword.

Menaius shrieked. No words, just an undecipherable, helpless yelp. He saw his wife faint. His son began crying. Bellandra kicked and clawed at the bandits holding her, cursing as they carried her to the leader.

Menaius crawled through the mud. He did not know what to do. He shouted wordless sounds of panic and fear.

The bandits came closer. The leader clutched his sword. The bandits pulled her arms out so she could not fight, so Bellandra spit at him.

“I’m going to kill you,” the leader said.

“And you’ll live the rest of your life without a nose,” Bellandra told him.

Menaius heard his daughter speaking like a heroine from a novel. The novels he kept discouraging her from reading. The ones she read at night with stolen candles. She kicked at the bandit with her tiny feet. The bandit’s bloody lips smiled wide.

“Say goodbye to your father you...”

An arrow pierced the leader’s throat. He clutched at it with his free hand, his eyes turning confused. And as he did, another arrow struck one of the bandits holding his daughter. It hit him in the forehead, just above his brow. That bandit fell before the leader did. His grasp on Bellandra loosened and she fell to the ground, one arm still held high above her head.

Bellandra kicked the second bandit holding her and he ducked down. Another arrow flew right where his head was just a moment before. It struck the side of the carriage with a heavy thump.

Bellandra looked toward where the arrow came from and ran to her father. Just as she did, a fourth arrow struck the bandit in the chest, just above his left breast. Blood spurted from his mouth and he fell to his knees, then fell forward into the mud.

“Elves!” one of the remaining bandits shouted. “Run!”

The rest of the bandits got on their horses or turned their horses away, ready to ride. More arrows flew and the riders fell. There were no moans or cries of pain. They were struck, they stopped moving, and they fell. Then, they moved no more.

Bellandra touched his face and kissed him. "Father!" she said. "Father! Did they hurt you?"

Menaius shook his head. "No, no." He looked at the others. "Your mother? Your brother?"

She nodded. "I'll look." Bellandra ran through the mud to where her mother fell. He heard her voice speaking softly.

Menaius looked toward the forest and saw a single figure walking toward them. Just one. As he moved closer, it seemed he was not walking through the mud, but on top of it. He wore a green cloak that moved like leaves in the wind and he carried a bow as tall as he was. As he came closer, he saw that the bandits were right. He was an elf.

Menaius tried to stand, but a pain in his ankle prevented him. He winced and made a noise. His daughter called out for him, but he waved her away. Menaius knew the danger had not passed yet. In fact, they may have just fallen into deeper danger.

He pushed himself to a seating position, feeling his ankle. Yes, it was broken from running in the mud. He wanted to be standing when the elf arrived. He would have to be sitting. In the mud.

The elf was close enough for conversation. Menaius nodded and said, "Thank you, kind elf. Me and my family both th..."

The elf walked by him without even looking. Menaius watched the elf walk to the carriage, and when he reached it, the elf stood perfectly still, staring.

He saw his daughter looking at the elf. She said, "Thank you, sir." But the elf said nothing. He stood perfectly still, staring at the carriage. Then, he reached up and touched where his

arrow had struck when the bandit ducked. His eyes turned soft and wet and his lips trembled.

The elf said something that Menaius did not understand, but the elf's voice sounded as if he was apologizing. The elf broke the arrow, then stepped inside the carriage, pulling out the arrow head from inside. Then, he stepped back out into the mud and touched the hole again, speaking softly. Delicately.

Menaius saw his daughter watching the elf. She was close enough to him that she could reach up and touch him. And that is exactly what she did.

"Sir?" she said.

Menaius tried to cry out, to warn her, to stop her. It was too late.

She touched him, and the elf looked down at her. But he did nothing. He only looked down and stared, as he stared at the carriage. Then, he turned and walked back to Menaius, sitting in the mud.

"Thank you," Menaius said again.

"Your thanks are unnecessary," the elf said in an accent so thick, the vowels nearly devoured the consonants.

"I thank you, nonetheless," Menaius said. "For my life and the lives of my family."


The elf said, "I was hired by Lord Silvsen to protect these lands. They belong to him and I guard them. It is he you should thank."

Menaius nodded. "I will. I promise I will." Then, "Tell me your name so I may tell Lord Silvsen which of his roadmen saved us."

The elf's face did not change. No sign of pride or gratitude. He said, "I am the only one of my kind under his charge."

Bellandra said, "Please. Tell me your name so I may tell others of your courage."

The elf turned to look at her. He bowed his head for a moment and said, "Syn'van Yvani."



Bellandra nodded as well.
“Thank you, Syn’van Yvani.”

The elf turned and stared at Menaius.
The same way he stared at the carriage.
The same way he stared at his daughter.
“Where did you buy that?” the elf said.

Menaius was confused. “I’m sorry? Buy...?”
“The carriage.”

Menaius shook his head. “I did not buy it,” he said. “It was made for me.”

Syn’van Yvani’s face changed. His lips curled into a frown. “Made for you?”

Suddenly, Menaius knew. He understood. He took a deep breath. There was no point in lying now. “Yes,” he said. “From the wood of Alden Forest, near Vinnick.”

Syn’van Yvani clutched the sword at his side. His breath flared in his nostrils.

“Made for you,” he said again.

Menaius nodded. “Yes,” he said. “From the trees in Alden Forest. Carved from the wood of a single tree.” Then, he said, “Please. Do not harm my family.”

Syn’van Yvani spit in Menaius’ face.

“Stupid man,” he said. “I have sworn an oath to protect the travelers on this road.” He moved then, so fast, it was if he were made of the wind. His eyes were next to his. Menaius could feel the elf’s breath on his lips.

“But if it were not so,” Syn’van Yvani said. “I would murder you here. In front of your children and your wife.”

“Please,” Menaius said.

Syn’van spat the word back at him. “Please. Please. That is all I hear you say.” Then, he stood back up and looked down at Menaius, sitting in the mud.

“That girl,”
Syn’van said, “is worth ten of you.”

The elf walked back to the carriage. He touched it again. Then, he looked at Bellandra. “Go from here. Take your family. You may take the horses and anything you like from inside.” Then, he looked back at the carriage. “But leave her here, with me.”

Bellandra stood and looked at Syn’van Yvani. While she did, she braved raising her hand to touch the carriage, keeping her eye on the elf. She touched the wood, uncertain what to do next.

The elf whispered something. She asked, “Was that her name?”

Syn’van Yvani looked down at her. He shook his head. “Her name is a song your vulgar lips could never sing.”

Bellandra looked hurt and confused. Then, she said. “I want to.”

Syn’van Yvani nodded. “I know. And that is what makes you strong.”

An hour later, Menaius was on a horse, his ankle strapped tight, his daughter sitting in front of him. His son and wife rode the other. As they left the carriage behind, Menaius looked at his daughter. He could only see the back of her head, but he knew she far from here.

She turned in the saddle to look up at him. Then, she looked behind him, toward the carriage. He turned, too.

He saw the beginnings of a fire, and he heard the echoes of a song. When he turned back, his daughter was facing forward, humming the tune.



Dach'youn: For the Pack

This wretched, disease-carrying creature is the result of the mating of a gnome and a troll. Its skin is infected with fungus and its hair is always matted, thick with its own filth.

It is a cowardly, carrion creature that feeds on the kills of others. Its heart is devoid of heroism, preferring to attack lone individuals in groups, using superior numbers to compensate for its weaknesses. Their deformity—with short legs and long arms—is an outward indication of inner corruption.

These scavenging disease-bringers deserve nothing more than our complete contempt. I hereby advise His Highness that if his guards come across these worthless things that they be killed, then burned to prevent

the spread of their foulness.
— High Scholar for the King of Men, Edward
Dunzny

Mankind has never held high opinions of things they don't understand. The creatures they call "gnolls" are no exception. But man's opinion of gnolls is based entirely on ignorance and perpetuated by intellectual laziness.

First things first. They are not the result of the mating of a gnome and a troll. Anyone who looks at one could figure that out in five seconds. They look nothing like trolls nor do they bear any resemblance to gnomes. A gnoll looks more like a hyena standing upright.

And gnolls do not call themselves gnolls. That word was invented by the aforementioned scholar and stuck in the human language ever since. "Gnolls" call themselves the *dach'youn*. It means, "we the trodden." (The less formal name is *dach*.) The name does give them a sense of self-awareness, but not as one might think.

It is not a title of self-pity, but only a realistic understanding of their place in the world.

Basics

The typical adult *dach'youn* stands from five and a half feet to six and a half feet tall. *Dach'youn* can and do use tools and weapons. Their legs are much shorter than their arms—a fact observed by the "noted scholar," above—which allows them to both walk upright and drop to all fours for quick movement. Most of their tools are either hand-made from wood or stone, but a few have stolen more sophisticated weapons taken from the corpses of the other races.

The *dach'youn* are not more physically stronger than humans, but have powerful jaws capable of breaking even the thickest bones. While their eyesight is poor, their sense of hearing and sense of smell are incredible. A *dach'youn* identifies an individual not by his face, like humans, but by his scent and the sounds he makes.

The Dach'youn Language

The *dach'youn* language (they don't have a proper name for it other than *tach*, or "speak") is a series of rudimentary sounds represented by iconographic symbols. Because of their long snouts and tongues, most of it is made up of two consonants ("sh" and "ch"), vowels and diphthongs. The most distinctive sound is the almost ever-present "ch" or "*bach*." It is a voiceless velar fricative, much like the Yiddish "khaf" or German "machen." It is the same sound made at the end of Bach (as in, the German composer).

When translating the language, human scholars use the apostrophe to indicate a kind of breathy pause, like a quick exhale between syllables, almost like an aspirated "h."

The *dach'youn* language has no grammar and only two hundred and fifty (or so) words. It consists of nouns and verbs because adverbs and adjectives are not necessary. A tree is a tree. A rock is a rock. And enemy is an enemy.

The oldest symbols in the *dach'youn* language are *shuth* ("enemy") and *bacha* ("food").

The *dach'youn* may fear their enemies, but they *love* their food. While the language is only two hundred and fifty characters, over one hundred of those are devoted to *bacha*. *Vri'baka, ala'baka, und'baka*. With exposure to different cultures, the *dach'youn* language is quickly expanding to include new culinary experiences. In fact, in some parts of the world, *dach'youn* cooks are quickly becoming known as the greatest cooks in the Known World... much to the consternation of haffuns everywhere, of course.

The *dach'youn* believe all life in the Known World was created by the Sun, but because the people of the world so offended their creator (nobody really knows why, although the *dach'youn* have a lot of stories that speculate on what might have happened), the Sun has turned against them. The heat of summer is the Sun trying to burn the world, and when that fails, it leaves the world for a while, leaving it in the freezing depths of winter. But, like a scorned lover, the Sun returns again to see if life has changed, sees that it hasn't, and tries to kill the world again with the burning heat of summer.

Although they fear the Sun, the *dach'youn* do not revere it. Instead, they pray to the Known World's seven moons. "The lights of the night." *Macha'sbach* is what they call them. The *dach'youn* believe that after the Sun abandoned the world (leaving it in endless night), the Moons came to light the way for the lost. It is no coincidence that *dach'youn* are generally nocturnal.

They also love to tell stories about an ancient heroine who had the courage to mock the Sun. Her name was "Poch'tesh," also known as "The Bane of the Sun." While other *dach'youn* feared the Sun's wrath, Poch'tesh dared the Sun to throw his wrath at her. She stole apples from the Sun's garden, seduced the Sun's daughter and even tricked the Sun into coming back to the world after abandoning it to an eternal, freezing winter. *Dach'youn* admire Poch'tesh for her bravery, but also use tales about her to demonstrate hubris. After all her trickery and willfulness, Poch'tesh eventually had to flee the world and the Sun's wrath and hide in the darkness of the night sky. But every once in a while, she returns to create some new mischief, always getting the better of "silly, wicked old Sun."

But what is the life of a *dach'youn* like? Let's take a look.

A Dach'youn's Life

This next section details the life of a *dach'youn*. We look at youth, adulthood and old age.

Youth

A *dach'youn* is born in a *toocha*, or a “pack.” She is also born under the influence of the seven moons hanging in the sky. Each of the moons—the Seven Sisters—serves as a kind of guardian spirit for the *dach'youn* and will influence her for the rest of her life.

Before she is born, a cub spends ninety days in her mother’s womb (about the length of the Green Moon’s cycle). When a *dach'youn* child is born, she enters the world with her eyes open. And even though she is very small, she is still capable of walking and running, carrying small tools and even weapons.

The newborn spends her early days watching, listening and growing *fast*. She weighs eight to ten pounds at birth, but gains up to twenty pounds in the first week. Her mother walks with her and explains the ways of her people. (It is a common misconception that the *dach'youn* give birth to litters. This is incorrect; they give birth to only one child at a time.) A telling trivial note: the *dach'youn* language has no word for “father.” We’ll talk about that more in a bit.

Our young cub spends her first ninety days learning to scavenge and hunt. She earns a reputation with her pack, but is not considered a full member just yet. She is *cha'sha*: a cub. But every ninety days, the Green Moon reaches it’s fullest and the *dach'youn* celebrate with a gathering of packs called an *ou'chala*. During this celebration, the packs mingle and merge as they trade members back and forth. It is also during this time our cub has the opportunity to become a full member of a pack (not just her own). She dances and sings (and mates) with the different packs and tells the stories of her exploits. Granted, she is still young and has little to speak of, but the packs know this. When packs look at young *dach'youn*, they aren’t looking for seasoned hunters; they are looking for *potential*. choose which pack she will go with on her first hunt. She takes the spear her mother made for her and she joins a pack.

Joining with a pack is a great moment: she has entered adulthood. Not joining with the pack is a disappointing but not altogether uncommon occurrence. A youth may go to as many as two or three gatherings before finding her home. Her performance has much to do with her success or failure. If she bonds with the pack, they will perform a ceremony—at night, in a cave, with fire, shadow and masks—and mark her with the symbol of the pack.

Under the Moon

The *dach'youn* are a nocturnal species, spending their waking hours when the Moons are in the sky, sleeping through the hot, sweaty day. They usually rise up late in the day—a few hours before sunset—and go to sleep around mid-morning—just before the day starts getting hot.

The *dach'youn* prefer the cool darkness of night to the hot brightness of day. They move quicker, feel less fatigued and can hunt more successfully. Why the other races don’t understand this is beyond *dach'youn* understanding. Perhaps they like the hot sun making them sweaty, sticky, smelly and tired. Who knows?

Once she has been accepted, the pack serves as her family. They are her brothers and sisters. However, the bond between mother and child is incredibly strong; a link that remains even after years of living in separate packs. And, a mother often hopes her cubs will be strong enough to join *her* pack. Regardless of which pack she joins, she has become an adult and now must serve her function within the pack.

As he grows older, she may also hear (or see) the *ghu'choll*: the junk eaters. Instead of hunting for food, they scavenge what they can from the edges of human society, literally eating the junk the humans throw away.

Adulthood

In *dach'youn* culture, the pack is everything. Packs live together, hunt together, fight together and even die together. The *dach'youn* think less of themselves as individuals and more as an essential part of the pack. Each *dach'youn* brings something to the pack: a valuable skill or ability that no other has. This is called *uch'sha*. *Uch'sha* has no good translation, but some call it “fitting in.” For an adult *dach'youn*, *uch'sha* means finding a place within the pack. Earning your spot. Carrying your weight. But a *dach'youn* would never think, “The pack needs me.” Rather, “The pack has given me a place.” All of these sentiments make up *uch'sha*.

It is a difficult concept for other races to grasp. The surrender of the individual will for the betterment of others? Humans have the best grasp on it, seeing their own definition of courage (understanding that there are things bigger than you) in *uch'sha*. Some human scholars have translated it to mean, “The pack needs me.” The *dach'youn* who have heard the translation nod and reply, “Good enough.”

Each pack has its own hierarchy: an alpha, a beta and so on. Our young *dach'youn* finds her own place in the pack. She has proven she has skills the pack needs and can work together with others to make the pack stronger.

All throughout the year, our *dach'youn* will live, hunt, celebrate and mourn with her pack. Eventually, she will attend a gathering and get pregnant with her first child. Her pregnancy will last for roughly ninety days (just in time for the next celebration). She is considered the only parent; it is assumed she had multiple partners during the *ou'chala* and male *dach'youn* have no claim on the child. After her child is born, she is expected to raise it until it finds a pack of its own. Most mothers wait thirty to sixty days before attempting to get pregnant again.

While she may grow emotionally attached to a single partner, *dach'youn* are far less monogamous than humans or the other races; she may have many mating

Yeah, it pulls
out of the atm
of the article,
couldn't pass
the perfect an
start thinking

you right
nosphere
but I
it up. It's
alogy. Now,
uch'sha!

partners. *Dach'youn* do not recognize the human concept of “romantic love.” Instead of viewing a partner as a lover, she sees him as a more intimate friend.

Old Age

Our *dach'youn* enters “old age” around her thirtieth year. *Dach'youn* recognize this period as the *sha'shana*, or “time of slow running.” Eventually, she will grow too slow to maintain her place in the pack. She can no longer provide *uch'sha*. She eventually leaves her pack and joins a *kah'toocha*. This word means “the pack that cannot run.”

If our *dach'youn* has earned a reputation for herself, if her pack sees her as valuable, the alpha will go to the *kah'toocha* and request that she be allowed to join. The alpha of the *kah'toocha* hears her alpha's request and then decides whether or not she may join the pack. If she cannot, she must leave her old pack behind and go into the wilderness. *Ch'all*. Alone. “Without a pack.” She is expected never to return.

Because the members of the *kah'toocha* can no longer run and hunt, other packs bring food for them. Many tribes have revered members in the *kah'toocha*, and each pack wants to make sure the *kah'toocha* has enough food to survive.

Eventually, our *dach'youn* passes away. Her pack brings her body to a cave and buries her with the bones of other dead *dach'youn*. These caves—called *khaben*, or “bone caves”—can be found all through the wilderness. *Dach'youn* consider them sacred ground and guard them against the curious.

Kachta: The Six Sisters

The *dach'youn* tell a story about the beginning of the world. They say the Sun and his bride—the world has forgotten her name—created the world, but after he saw what they had done, the Sun grew angry and slew his bride and tried to murder the world as well. The Sun's six daughters—the *kachta*—stopped him from destroying the world, but their efforts are only temporary. Soon, someday, one day, the Sun will finally murder the world... unless the *kachta* find a way to stop him.

For now, they chase the Sun from the sky. In the morning, he rises up on one side of the world, a calm and kind father. His warm and gentle rays hint of comfort. But then, as he rises up higher in the sky, that warmth and comfort turns to anger, heat and wrath as he tries to burn the world. Finally, one of the *kachta* rises up to chase him from the sky to the other side of the world. The Sun's Daughters win us another night and another day.

Walking and Running

Dach'youn are capable of both walking on their two hind legs (*choola*: “walking”) and running on all fours (*chaylee*: running). They run poorly when using only their hindquarters. They prefer to stand upright when dealing with humans and other bi-pedal races, but spend most of their time on all fours; that is, unless they are using tools or weapons.

When a gnoll is born, she is born “under the light of the kachta.” The kachta influence her life depending on which moon she is born under. Each of the kachta has a different personality, a different influence and a different way of chasing the Sun from the sky.

***Dach'youn* Astrology**

The *dach'youn* believe that the Moons influence the world and its people. When a *dach'youn* is born, the magic of the Moons influences her birth and her life. Which Moon (or Moons) happen to be in the sky gives a *dach'youn* a good idea as to what actions are appropriate. Finally, the Moons also have a powerful influence on magic: spells and rituals will be stronger or weaker depending on which Sister is in the sky.

The *dach'youn* do not measure time in weeks and months. Instead, they measure the passage of time in Moons. For example, the cycle of the Red Moon is eighteen days. Human scholars have called this “the gnoll week.” Five cycles of the Red Moon are equal to one cycle of the Green Moon (ninety days). The cycle of the Green Moon is the “gnoll month.”

But then again, these are human terms. A *dach'youn* would not understand “week” or “month” or even why humans divide time in that way. The human calendar developed because of agriculture. With no agriculture, the *dach'youn* have no reason for such diligent time keeping.

Cha'ppa: The Swift Red Moon

Orbit: 18 days

Small, red Cha'ppa chases the Sun with her daggers, bleeding him with the Siege of a Thousand Cuts. Those born under the red moon have swift hands and feet. They have an almost supernatural intuition, but are slow to trust others.

Hav'ha: The Deadly Silver Moon

Orbit: 28 days

With her silver helmet and spear, Hav'ha chases the Sun across the sky, threatening him with violence. Those born under the silver moon have a keen understanding of weapons and strategy, but they are quick to act and slow to consider the consequences of their actions.

Gu'sha: The Wise Blue Moon

Orbit: 35 days

Gu'sha always appears with another of her Sisters—usually the Deadly Silver Moon and the Swift Red Moon—but never alone. She provides advice for her other sisters and compensates for their weaknesses. Those born under the Blue Moon make good companions, providing advice for others, but usually suffer from a defect of some kind: a club foot, a stammering voice or even blindness.

Gur'gha: The Enduring Green Moon

Orbit: 90 days

It is said that of all the Daughters, Gur'gha most resembles her mother. Her slow but steady progress through the sky intimidates and terrorizes her father and he flees from the memory of his murder. Those born under the green moon have the endurance of the Lost Mother but are not always the sharpest thorns in the briar patch.

Or'gha: The Cunning Yellow Moon

Orbit: 35 days

The Yellow Moon appears in the western sky just when the Sun is about to set. She tricks the Sun into following her, thinking she is something she is not. Those born under the Yellow Moon are particularly clever, witty and

full of tricks, but this is to compensate for their lack of martial prowess or hunting skills.

Sh'va: The Lovely Violet Moon

Orbit: 45 days

The smallest of the Sisters, Sh'va dances and sings, seducing her father to the other side of the sky. Those born under the Violet Moon are often beautiful and well spoken, but are considered not at all trustworthy: too keen on using their own beauty to get what they want.

Vax: The Black Moon

Orbit: 85 days

Some believe in a seventh sister—the Black Moon, Vax. While humans claim there is a time when there is “no moon” in the sky, the *dach'youn* know better. This is Vax's time. The Seventh Sister, the dark sister, whom even the Sun fears. Those born under the Black Moon are greatly mistrusted by the other *dach'youn*. They are cursed. Powerful, but cursed. They are Vax's children and they are harbingers of doom.

The Khu'chala: The Moon Dance

Every three and a half years, six of the seven Moons are in the sky at once, in their full glory. Every Moon full and present, shining light down to the people below. This is the *khu'chala*, the great moon dance. Celebrating your first moon dance is a significant event in a *dach'youn's* life (many packs don't consider a cub an adult until she has experienced her first *ou'chala*).

Children born during an *khu'chala* are considered very fortunate: all the moons shine their light down and bless the child with their gifts. But such children are also expected to be great, to uphold their birthright. Those who are born during the moon dance are destined for greatness... or great tragedy.

The observant reader may notice a coincidence in the *dach'youn* gestation cycle and the cycle of the Green Moon (ninety days). Often times, the celebrations during the *khu'chala* give a female the opportunity to give birth ninety days later at the subsequent *khu'chala*. Of course, the *dach'youn* see the opportunity as auspicious and do everything in their power to ensure they deliver a child during the celebrations. Unfortunately, this means the new mother misses out on the dancing and cavorting, but a *dach'youn* can't have everything...

The Scavenger Ethic

Like the hyenas that they resemble, *dach'youn* are scavengers. Though they are rugged, they hunt in packs and prefer hunting, gathering, and looting to the actual work of craftsmanship. *Dach'youn* weapons and armor thus tend to be crude, with the brunt of a *dach'youn's* fighting skill stemming from brute ferocity, terrifyingly strong jaws, and bestial hide. Packs will tear through an area and hunt all the livestock, denude the wild edibles, and move on once they've gathered and consumed everything of value. This includes the homes and crafts of other species that happen to be in their path.

The scavenger lifestyle means that *dach'youn* place a high value on survival skill, pathfinding, and location memory. They also have a tendency to hoard food supplies; it's not uncommon to see a line of *dach'youn* carrying haunches of local wildlife slung over the shoulders, loping at a good pace while traveling to an encampment.

This lifestyle also affects the social structure of the pack. Although fighting prowess is respected and magical talent feared, *dach'youn* also show deference to exceptional scavengers. Those who can find food in harsh conditions, drive away competing predators to steal kills, or memorize the terrain well enough to come back to lush and verdant places year after year will garner accolades from the rest of the community.

While each member of a pack brings some necessary skill to bear, every *dach'youn* is something of a scavenger and survivalist, simply out of necessity. They learn to follow tracks of others, find discarded tools, and stomach strange foods that even other *dach'youn* might find questionable. Such skills are very valuable to the pack. The adaptability of the *dach'youn* also makes them capable of working with other species and seeing the value of joining a pack of people who are not *dach'youn*—or of accepting a valuable individual into the pack.

Too'cha: The Pack

Everything in a *dach'youn's* life centers on her pack. But what does that mean? What are the dynamics of a *too'cha*? Let's take a closer look at what the word means to the *dach'youn*.

Bach: The Alpha

First, it is important to know that a pack has a hierarchy. Its leader, the alpha, is called the *bach* (pronounced like the composer). The *bach* determines the character of the pack. The alpha makes all the final decisions regarding the pack's actions. Where to hunt, when to hunt, whom to allow within the pack.

A *dach'youn* becomes alpha through trial by combat—usually during an *ou'chala*. Any member of the pack can challenge the alpha's authority, but must have the support of the pack to do so. "Support of the pack" means the beta and at least half the rest of the pack. If he wins, he becomes the new alpha. If he loses, he is thrown out of the pack.

But a *bach* isn't the only important member of the pack. In fact, some may argue he isn't even the *most* important member of the pack...

Kech: The Beta

Sitting at the alpha's side is the pack's beta, or *kech*. The *kech* has a complicated role in the pack, and

perhaps, the most important. While the alpha is the leader, the *kech* is his most trusted advisor. She keeps pack cohesion, deals with conflicts within the pack, and executes all the alpha's decisions. She is, for all intents and purposes, the alpha's "chief of staff." She makes sure the pack's loyalty and morale are high and serves as a consultant for all the alpha's decisions. You could say that the alpha decides where the pack goes, but the beta makes sure the pack gets there. Good alphas know a strong beta is key to a strong pack.

While the alpha decides who gets into the pack, the beta's advice is always essential. Part of the *kech's* job is evaluating potential members and balancing the pack's skills. If the pack needs a new hunter, it's the beta's job to point out the best candidates and let the alpha make the decision.

The *kech* also deals with diplomatic matters. When the pack needs to talk to strangers—or other packs—the *kech* is the first one who talks. You have to *earn* the right to talk to the alpha, and to do that, you have to get through the *kech*. The *kech* filters out everything the alpha doesn't need to worry about and settles issues that are too small for his attention.

Duch'khu: The Heart and Mind

The relationship between the alpha and beta is a close one. Sometimes, more than close. While there are always exceptions, the *dach'youn* see the role of the alpha as male and the role of the beta as female. Of course, two *dach'youn* in such a close relationship—and in dangerous situations—often leads to sex. *Dach'youn* culture encourages this, feeling that sex between the alpha and beta often leads to a stronger bond between the two.

This relationship between the alpha and the beta is called *duch'khu*. It means, "the heart and mind." The alpha, the heart of the pack, and the beta, the mind of the pack. Just like a *dach'youn*, when these two

work in concert, the pack is strong. When they are in conflict, the pack cannot act. Just like a *dach'youn*.

Eecha: The Nose

While all *dach'youn* have a powerful sense of smell and hearing, some are especially gifted. Pack alphas and betas keep a watch out for those who are so blessed to fill the role of the *eecha*: the pack's nose.

The *eecha* serves as the pack's scout, keeping his ears and nose keen for food, enemies and other dangers. He can smell and hear dangers before anyone else, giving the pack ample opportunity to prepare an ambush (the preferred method of *dach'youn* attack).

Another gift that is important to the *eecha* is speed. Unlike the other pack members, the *eecha* is often apart from the pack, scouting ahead, running back and forth, reporting what he hears and smells. He spends so much time apart from the pack, they sometimes call him, *goocha*, which best translates into the common tongue as "stray dog."

Owoun: The Moonsinger

Each pack also has a mystic to advise the alpha on "invisible matters" outside the scope of the beta's authority. This is the *owoun*, and her role may not be as practical as the beta, but is just as important.

At night, *dach'youn* sing to the Moons. It is a kind of prayer, calling up with song. And only song. One does not simply speak to something as holy as the Sisters; only the sublime act of song is transcendent enough. The *dach'youn* have many songs for the Moons, and every night, they sing. And for a lucky few, the Moons sing back.

They are called *ououn* (one of the few words in the gnoll language that does not include "sh" or "ch"), a word that means "singer to the Moons." A *dach'youn* discovers she is an *owoun* when she sings to the Moons and hears voices singing in concert with her own. A harmonious reply. She

hears the songs in her dreams and between her waking moments, falling into a kind of sleepwalk, softly humming melodies as her eyes glaze over...

Moonsingers commune with the Moons, receiving visions and dreams. She also interprets her pack's dreams—obvious messages from the Moons while they rest on the other side of the world. They fall into waking dreams and speak in a kind of dream talk, mumbling arcane phrases no one else understands.

Shu'sha: The Hunter

Some *yech'cher* are more than trackers and scavengers. They recall the places that the pack has traveled, and they remember where bolt-holes are found, where middens were dug, and where last season's growth was plentiful. They understand that when the pack eats fruits and vegetables, the next year, the old buried middens will be overgrown with the new plants from their waste. They know that when they find the refuse of other people, that sometimes that which is discarded is not useless.

These experts, the *shu'sha*, have a precise memory for landmarks and especially for the scents and sounds of particular places. When a pack settles into an area, the *shu'sha* learns all the surrounding burrows, boltholes, and places to find food and water, as well as the paths and villages used by other thinking beings. When the pack is on the move, the *shu'sha* knows how to return to any place visited before, how to find the food and water in a home from long ago, how to read the terrain and recognize where the people of the moon once visited and will visit again.

Oosheh: The Little Voice

The *dach'youn* word *sheh* is an insult. It means, "the little voice in the back of my head." The voice that makes you second guess your choices, the voice that puts a shadow of doubt over your eyes. That voice. To call someone "Sheh!" is to tell them, "If you don't have a better answer, shut up."

A gnoll courage

A few years ago, a *dach'youn* pack approached a human noble about becoming a Courage (see *The Reign of Men*). The alpha made his case clearly...

"We are a band of hunters, warriors and mystics who can fulfill the duties you describe. We will wear your colors and protect your people."

The noble—Arcturu Vanir—agreed. The pack became the first all-*dach'youn* Courage. Since then, other packs have made their way to the human lands for the same purpose. There are currently seventeen *dach'youn* packs serving as Courages, and while the initial human response was that of ridicule and intolerance, the *dach'youn* Courages have continued to serve and protect human villages and townships on the borders of the Reign. And more are on the way.

But every pack has a *sheh*: a little voice of doubt. The role of the *sheh* in the pack is to question the alpha's choices, and in this context, it is not an insult at all. Rather, the *sheh* is a trusted and valuable member of the pack. It is his job to keep the alpha and beta in line, to point out their mistakes and to use his criticism to help the pack. That's the key phrase there: to help the pack. To just criticize is one thing, but to point out weaknesses in the alpha *so he may overcome them* is another.

For a pack, that voice is called *oosheh*. It means, "Our sheh" or "My sheh." As in, "Don't talk to me that way, cub. You aren't my sheh."

So, in *dach'youn* culture, there are two kinds of *sheh*. The first is an annoying, whiny agitator who complains to hear the sound of his own voice, incapable of finding solutions on his own. That *sheh* gets smacked and told to shut up. But then, there is the pack's *sheh*: the *oosheh*. The voice of the loyal opposition, offering a different solution to the pack's problems, using disagreement to help the alpha—and the pack—become stronger.

Grr'khun: The Talon

And then there's the heavy. Every pack has one. The big, strong (and not necessarily smart) brute who breaks bones at the alpha's command. Grr'khun means "talon," and that's exactly what he is: the pack's deadliest weapon.

He is not the *bach*: he is no leader.

He is not the *shu'sha*: he is no hunter.

He's a weapon. Plain and simple. And that's exactly how the alpha and beta use him.

Pack Conflict

Because the *dach'youn* live in such small communities (a pack is seldom larger than six to eight), they have only a few actions that could be considered "crimes." For example, they don't quite understand the concept of "theft." If one *dach'youn* were to steal a spear from another member of his pack, the pack is small enough to recognize who that spear belongs to. The others would just take the spear and give it back to the owner, commenting on how foolish he was thinking they would not know whom the spear belonged to.

But there are actions the *dach'youn* recognize as "crimes." If a *dach'youn* is accused of a crime, it is usually because he has been caught doing it. The *dach'youn* have no trials, no courts and no juries.

The *dach'youn* have only three crimes: *kh'an* (harming another pack member), *shu'll* (murder) and *kh'all* (cowardice). Harm and murder are easy concepts for humans to grasp, but cowardice is a little trickier. If a pack member

fails to protect another member of the pack he is guilty of *kh'all*. Did the *dach'youn* have an opportunity to protect his packmate? Did that opportunity put herself in danger? Was the danger enough to warrant cowardice? The *dach'youn* see *every* act of “self-preservation” in lieu of protecting another pack member as cowardice. Some actions of cowardice are acceptable, and some are not. But *all of them* are cowardice.

How the pack reacts to crime depends on the pack, but it is always an instinctive reaction. Either the pack ignores the act or they ignore the *dach'youn* who performed it. If they ignore the *dach'youn*, he suffers the only penalty packs hand out: *ch'all*. “Alone.” In other words, exile.

An exiled *dach'youn* has a great deal of trouble finding a place in another pack. They know her crime and are reluctant to accept her. Some may do so because they need a *dach'youn* with her skills, but many respect the judgment of the other pack. Of course, there is such a thing as pack rivalry, and sometimes, an exile from one pack joins the rival pack.

Ka'cha: The Duel

There are times when a pack member questions the authority of the alpha. To do so, she must challenge the alpha to a *ka'cha*: a duel. The alpha must accept all challenges to his authority during the *khoo'tha*. The two *dach'youn* fight until one or the other submits or cannot fight any longer. Traditionally, the *ka'cha* ends when one *dach'youn* has her teeth on her opponent's throat. *Dach'youn* perform this duel under the light of the Moons, trusting that they will give their blessings to the most worthy.

When men first observed this ritual, they found it barbaric and violent. But the duels seldom end with death or serious injury and the loser often spends the rest of the *khoo'tha* finding a new pack.

And, Finally... Mud

The *dach'youn* do not bathe in water, but instead, use *chur*... something humans call “mud.”

Dach'youn take at least one mud bath a day—sometimes more. *Dach'youn* have thick, dense fur that attracts flies and parasites. It also makes even the most temperate climates uncomfortable. Bathing in mud cools them down, displaces parasites and other bothers, and... well, it's fun.

Mud also helps hide their scent from animals they hunt and animals hunting them. It also serves as a kind of camouflage.

And, it's fun.

Unfortunately, this leads most other races to think of the *dach'youn* as “dirty” and “unclean.” Ironic when you consider the *dach'youn* bathe more often than most humans.

Dach'youn Racial Traits

- +2 to Constitution and Charisma
- **Medium:** Gnolls have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Movement:** Gnolls have two base speeds: Two-Legged speed is 30 feet or Four-Legged speed is 40 feet, but both of their hands must be empty to use Four-Legged speed.
- **Scent (Ex):** Gnolls gain the scent special ability. Gnolls have poor eyesight but they compensate with their nose; it also makes them very apt hunters.
- **Pack:** Gnolls gain three pack feats. At 2nd level and every 2 levels thereafter, gnolls gain an additional pack feat. Gnolls live for the pack and travel their whole lives with one.
- **Pack Tactics:** Gnolls grant every member of their pack any teamwork feats they have whenever they use that feat. Packs live and

train together; the packs knows every member's tactics like their own.

- **Ways of the Wild:** Gnolls gain a +1 racial bonus on all knowledge (nature) and survival checks, as well as Wild Empathy checks. The survival skill is always considered a class skill for gnolls. At 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th character level gain an additional +1 bonus. Gnolls are born to nature, they live on the land and will someday return to ground; they understand the lands better than anyone.
- **Moon Sign:** Gnolls can change their ability modifiers based on which moon they were born under. They also gain a blessing and curse associated with their moon. Check the moon sign section below for rules.
- **Scavenger's Meal:** Gnolls gain a +4 racial bonus to profession (cooking) checks. When making a survival or knowledge check involving food, they can replace it with a profession (cooking) check.
- **Automatic Languages:** Gnolls begin play speaking Common and Gnoll. Gnolls with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

Moon Sign

Every gnoll is born under at least one moon and if they are born under more than one moon, they pick one as their *moon sign*. Select one moon from below as your *moon sign*. Each *moon sign* trades or adds to one of your abilities. When your moon is full in the sky, you gain a *moon blessing* and when your moon is new, you gain a *moon curse*.

Cha'ppa

+2 to Dexterity instead of Constitution

Moon Blessing: When Cha'ppa is full, your bonus to *sense motive* and *perception checks* double.

Moon Curse: When Cha'ppa is new, you gain no benefits from morale or rally bonuses. Penalties still apply.

Gu'rgha

+3 to Constitution instead of +2

Moon Blessing: When Gu'rgha is full, you can reroll any failed Fortitude save once.

Moon Curse: When Gu'rgha is new, you cannot make any knowledge check.

Gu'sha

+2 to Wisdom instead of Charisma

Moon Blessing: When Gu'sha is full, you can reroll an ally's failed saving throw once using your own bonus. You can only do this once per ally per full moon.

Moon Curse: When Gu'sha is new, you roll a 1d6 and consult the chart below.

1	You cannot be magically healed in any way
2	You are deaf
3	You cannot use your four-legged speed
4	You are mute
5	You lose use of the scent ability
6	You are blind

Hav'ha

+2 to Strength instead of Constitution

Moon Blessing: When Hav'ha is full, gain +5 to your CMB.

Moon Curse: When Hav'ha is new, you do not gain your Wisdom modifier to any rolls.

Or'gha

+2 to Intelligence instead of Charisma

Moon Blessing: When Or'gha is full, your Intelligence modifier is doubled in any non-combat situations.

Moon Curse: When Or'gha is new, your CMD is 10 and it cannot gain any bonuses.

Sh'va

+3 to Charisma instead of +2

Moon Blessing: When Sh'va is full, all creatures with an Intelligence of 8 or greater start with an attitude two levels better than normal towards you.

Moon Curse: When Sh'va is new, you gain a 10 foot *aura of untrust*. This allows all creatures in your aura to automatically notice you and gain +5 to all contested skill check in which you must your Charisma modifier.

Vax

+1 to any ability score

Moon Blessing: When Vax is full, the first time you make eye contact with a hostile creature it makes a Will save vs. 10 + your Charisma modifier + 1/2 your character level. On a fail the creature flees. This is a fear effect.

Moon Curse: When Vax is new, all creatures with an Intelligence of 8 or greater start with an attitude two levels lower than normal.

Pack Rules

First, some basics. You will see the term "PT" used in this part of the book. "PT" refers to the Pack Total: the number of gnolls in your pack. Your Pack Total consists of basic gnolls and special gnolls. Special gnolls are gr'khun, eecha, kech, owoun, shu'sha and oosheh. You cannot have more special gnolls than basic gnolls in your pack. PC special gnolls do not count toward this total.

You also cannot have more gnolls in your pack than your alpha's Charisma score. If your pack alpha is an NPC, use the highest Charisma score of a PC pack member. Some pack feats require your PT to be above a certain number. All pack feats can be taken more than once unless specified in the feat.

Each special pack member has three feats (ranked I, II and III). When taking rank I feat, you must select one basic gnoll in the pack and change them into a special gnoll. To take a rank II or rank III feat, you must have a rank I special gnoll of that type available to upgrade. To take a rank III feat, you must have a rank II or rank I special gnoll of that type available to upgrade. Special Gnoll Feats (I, II and III) do not stack.

During combat, NPC gnolls cannot themselves attack. Instead they add +1 damage to any PC they are adjacent to. All NPC gnolls must start and end their movements adjacent to another gnoll or pack member. NPC gnolls move during the initiative turn of whoever spent a feat on them.

New Rogue Archetype: Eecha

The eecha is the scout of the pack: "the nose." He moves quickly, gaining information for the pack so it may move in and out of risky territory.

Requirements: Gnoll

Racial Features

The following are racial traits of the eecha.

Fast: Eecha have two base speeds, Two-Legged speed is 30 feet or Four-Legged speed is 60 feet, but both of their hands must be empty to use Four-Legged speed.

This trait replaces *movement*.

Class Features

The following are class features of the eecha.

Scent Tracking: An eecha adds 1/2 her level to Perception checks made using hearing or scent (minimum +1).

This ability replaces *trapping*.

Eecha's Sense: At 3rd level, an eecha gains an intuitive sense that alerts her to danger from surprise and opportunity attacks, giving her a +1 dodge bonus to AC against surprise and opportunity attacks. This bonus rises to +2 when the eecha reaches 6th level, to +3 when she reaches 9th level, to +4 when she reaches 12th level, to +5 at 15th, and to +6 at 18th level.

This ability replaces *trap sense*.

New Fighter Archetype: grr'khun

The heavy hand of the pack, the grr'khun hits hard and hits often. He doesn't need to ask questions later: the rest of the pack can do that for him.

Requirements: Gnoll

Class Features

The following are class features of the grr'khun.

Thunderous Howl: When a grr'khun attempts to demoralize an enemy during combat, she gains a +3 bonus to the roll. If successful, the *shaken* condition lasts for two rounds. Otherwise treat this as a normal demoralize check.

This ability replaces *bravery*.

Killing Blow: When a grr'khun attempts to *coup de grace* an enemy during combat she does not provoke opportunity attacks and increase the DC of surviving by 5. Any ally adjacent to the grr'khun gains a +3 lethal damage to all damage rolls, including non-lethal rolls.

This ability replaces fighter's 2nd-level bonus feat.

Brutal: Any weapon being held by the grr'khun is treated as *brutal* 3. Any ally adjacent to the grr'khun treats all lethal weapons as *brutal* 2. If any affected weapon has another quality of *brutal*, use the higher bonus. This includes ranged weapons.

This ability replaces fighter's 6th-level bonus feat.

New Ranger Archetype: kech

The kech holds the command of the pack. While the alpha is the pack's leader, the responsibility of carrying out the leader's orders falls on the kech.

Requirements: Gnoll

Class Features

The following are class features of the kech.

Commands: At 2nd level, a kech may select a *command* she can issue. As a swift action, she can select 1 ally within 30 feet of her who can see or hear her and give them a command. If the target does as instructed, they gain the bonuses associated with the action. Commands only last for 1 round before they need to be issued again. The target of the command does not have to follow the command if they do not want to. At 5th level and every 3 levels thereafter, the kech gain another command.

This ability replaces *favored terrain*.

Hunting Companions: At 4th level, a kech forms a bond with her hunting companions. This bond allows her to spend a move action to grant half her favored enemy bonus against a single target of the appropriate type to all allies within 40 feet who can see or hear her. This bonus lasts for a number of rounds equal to the ranger's Wisdom modifier (minimum 1). This bonus does not stack with any favored enemy bonuses possessed by his allies; they use whichever bonus is higher.

Command List

Ambush	The target of the command gains a bonus action in a surprise round.
Assist	The target of the command can use an Aid Another action as a swift action.
Attack	The target of the command gains +2 to BAB to attack an enemy selected by the kech.
Charge	The target of the command can move an extra 10 feet while charging toward an enemy selected by the kech. On a successful attack the target also gains a +2 to damage.
Cover Fire	Any targets of cover fire act on the kech's turn. One ally is selected to be the runner and move to a place the kech decides. At least one other ally is selected to provide cover they may a ranged attack against one enemy that the runner will pass by. If the attack is successful they deal no damage but the enemy cannot attack the runner. Must be at least 14th level to take this command.
Crossfire	The kech selects at least two allies and selects one enemy for them to attack. When the ally goes to attack on their own turn they must be at least 30 feet for any other selected ally and gain a +2 to their attack. If at least two attacks are successful the enemy loses their next turn. Must be at least 11th level to take this command.
Distract	The target of the command gains a +2 to any roll to distract a single enemy. If successful the enemy cannot attack any other allies and all attacks against the command target are +2.
Fall Back	The target of the command can disengage from combat without provoking an attack of opportunity.
Flank	If the target of the command moves into flanking as the kech dictates then they do not provoke attacks of opportunity while moving and gain a +2 to any attack against the flanked enemy.
Heal	The target of the command does an extra 1d6 of healing if they perform any healing action on an ally selected by the kech.
Hinder	The target of the command gains a +5 to any action that will stop an enemy selected by the kech from moving. Must be at least 8th level to take this command.
Hold	The target of the command gains a +5 to AC as long as they do not move and gain a +2 to any ranged attacks. Must be 11th level to take this command.
Reposition	The target of the command may switch position with one adjacent ally as their move action.
Take Cover	The target of the command gain an additional +2 AC

gnolls. | Pach'youm; For the Pack

This ability replaces *hunter's bond*.

Simple Maneuvers: At 8th level, a kech can start giving the same command to multiple allies at once. She can command a number of allies equal to half of her kech level (minimum 1, round down); all allies must be given the same command. This is a standard action.

This ability replaces *camouflage*.

Complicated Maneuvers: At 12th level, a kech can start giving different commands to multiple allies at once. This works like simple maneuvers except a kech can give 3 different commands instead of the same command. At 15th level she can give 4 different commands and at 18th level she can give 5 different commands. This is a full round action.

This ability replaces *hide in plain sight*.

New Bard Archetype: Oosheh

The pack's memory—and voice—is the oosheh. It is he who tells their stories, sings their songs and carries their glories with him wherever her goes.

Requirements: Gnoll

Class Features

The following are class features of the oosheh.

Inspiration: At 1st level, an oosheh can spend 1 round of bardic performance when a pack member fails a non-combat skill check; they gain her Charisma modifier as a morale bonus to their next attempt at the same roll.

This ability replaces *fascinate*.

The Pack's Song: At 6th level, an oosheh can spend 1 round of bardic performance when a pack member fails a Charisma based

skill check; they can automatically re-roll and add her Charisma modifier to the result.

This ability replaces *suggestion*.

The Moon Changes: At 12th level, an oosheh can spend 1 round of bardic performance at the start of combat to switch the initiative position of her allies. She can switch a number of allies equal to her Charisma modifier.

This ability replaces *mass suggestion*.

New Sorcerer Archetype: Owoun

The owoun is the pack's "moonsinger." A *dach'youn* cannot simply speak to the Moons, but must communicate in the sacred and holy language of the howl.

Requirements: Gnoll; Celestial, Destined or Starsoul Bloodline

Class Skills

The owoun also has Perform (howl) as a class skill.

Class Features

The following are class features of the owoun.

Howling: At 3rd level, when your moon is visible, an owoun adds half her class level (minimum 1) to all Knowledge skill checks and may make all Knowledge skill checks untrained.

This ability replaces sorcerer's 3rd-level *bloodline spell*.

Commune: At 3rd level, once per day, an owoun can make a Perform (howl) check to ask her moon a question with a yes/no answer. This is treated as Diplomacy check against the moon; the moon is treated as an indifferent NPC with a +5 Charisma modifier, other social modifier can apply. If successful then

the GM must honestly answer the question. At 6th level, and every 4 levels thereafter, the owoun can ask an additional question per day.

This ability replaces sorcerer's 3rd-level *bloodline power*.

New Ranger Archetype: *shu'sha*

The hunter of the pack, the *shu'sha* can always find food and shelter, no matter how harsh Mad Father Sun throws down his wrath.

Requirements: Gnoll

Class Skills

The *shu'sha* also has Knowledge (engineering) and Knowledge (local) as class skills.

Class Features

The following are class features of the *shu'sha*.

Navigation (Ex): A *shu'sha* adds half her level (minimum 1) to Survival checks made to find her way back to somewhere she's been before or to find food and water.

This ability modifies *track*.

Jerry-Rigger: At 3rd level, a *shu'sha* can make any mundane item craft check (except alchemy, armor and weapons) without penalty for not having the proper tools. There is no cost for making the check if there are any materials available and the item costs less than 100g.

This ability replaces *endurance*.

Swift Navigation (Ex): At 8th level, a *shu'sha* can automatically recall the geography of any place she has been before and can always navigate her way back there. She can recognize if anything has changed along the path, such as a road has changed or a bridge has been removed.

This ability replaces *swift tracker*.

New Feats

Pack Membership

Every once in a while, non-*dach'youn* find themselves accepted into a pack. But they must earn the privilege; it is not simply given to anyone. The honor comes from the mouth and hand of the pack leader

The Bonebiter

Garvagra is a gnoll owoun who became "the bonebiter" when his tribe was attacked by a necromancer summoning animated skeletons.

Garvagra was alone: his pack was on the hunt and he stayed behind because he had a wounded paw. The owoun ran into the mass, fighting with the ferocity of a *grr'khun*. He had no time to pick up any weapons, so he fought with his teeth and claws.

His pack came back to find the village safe, a pile of broken bones and a necromancer with a torn-out throat. Garvagra's oosheh called him "bonebiter," and the nickname stuck. Now, he is Garvagra Bonebiter, the owoun who fights like a *grr'khun*.

herself. Prove yourself worthy and you will inherit the benefits of a *dach'youn* pack.

Prerequisite: Permission from the pack alpha.

Benefit: You gain membership in a pack. As a pack member you gain a bonus pack feat at 3rd level and every 3 levels thereafter. You count as a gnoll for the sake of meeting prerequisites for pack feats and for any pack rules. You gain feats retroactively.

Special: Gnolls are not required to gain this feat to join a pack; with an alpha's permission they immediately join a pack. This feat is specifically for non-gnoll PCs who wish to join into a gnoll pack. At pack creation time, a gnoll can spend one of their feats to give the pack membership feat to another character.

Gnoll Pack Feats

More Gnolls

A pack requires members. You earn members through valor and successful hunts.

Prerequisite: Gnoll

Benefit: Your packs gains 3 basic gnolls.

Glory Calls to the Brave

Once others start hearing about your pack, they will be eager to join to share in the glory.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, Kech or Command of the Pack (III), Charisma 15

Benefit: Your pack can be as big as your Charisma score + your alpha's Charisma score. If you have a kech with Command of the Pack (III), your pack can be as big as twice your alpha's Charisma score.

Special: This feat can only be taken once per pack.

Special Gnoll Feats

Grr'khun Feats

With the Talon Beside Me (I)

With the pack's best warrior by your side, it's hard not to find courage in your heart.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, PT 6+

Benefit: When you have the grr'khun adjacent to you, gain a +3 morale bonus to any intimidation checks.

With the Talon Beside Me (II)

Standing next to the grr'khun means you get to pick up his left-overs.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, With the Talon Beside Me (I), PT 9+

Benefit: When you have the grr'khun adjacent to you, gain a +3 lethal damage to all damage rolls, including non-lethal rolls. This includes ranged damage rolls.

With the Talon Beside Me (III)

Standing beside the pack's best fighter, you learn a thing or two about causing pain.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, With the Talon Beside Me (II), BAB +10

Benefit: When you have the grr'khun adjacent to you, treat all lethal weapons as brutal 2. This includes ranged weapons.

Eecha Feats

The Nose (I)

The pack's Nose moves fast, bringing information back to the leader.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, PT 3+

Benefit: The eecha does not have start or end their movement adjacent to another gnoll. You can send them up to 60 feet away and their four-legged movement is 45 feet.

The Nose (II)

When the eecha moves away from the pack, he still carries the pack's blessings with him.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, The Nose (I), PT 9+

Benefit: You can send the eecha up to 120 feet away and their four-legged movement is 50 feet. They can make sight and hearing based perception checks using your bonuses.

The Nose (III)

The eecha's blessings fully eclipse his weaknesses, making him a potent tool for the pack to use.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, The Nose (III), Perception 10 Ranks

Benefit: The eecha has no limitation on how far they can travel from the pack by themselves and their four-legged movement is 60 feet. They can make scent based perception checks using your bonuses as if they were sight based perception checks. For example, they can use scent to determine how many people are in a clearing and where they are without being able to see them.

Kech Feats

Command of the Pack (I)

Using observation and tactics, the kech relies on the pack's strengths while hiding their weaknesses.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, PT 6+

Benefit: You gain 1 command that you can issue to yourself as a swift action.

Command of the Pack (II)

With a greater understanding of the pack, his commands can now turn the pack into a deadly weapon.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, Command of the Pack (I), PT 9+

Benefit: You gain 1 command that you can issue to yourself as a swift action. In addition you can issue any commands you know to pack members instead of yourself as a swift action.

Command of the Pack (III)

His trust in the pack is now equal to their trust in him. Nothing can stop the pack if they work together.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, Command of the Pack (II), Character Level 12th

Benefit: You gain 1 command that you can issue to yourself as a swift action. In addition you can issue a command to a number of allies equal to half your character level (minimum 1, round down); all allies must be given the same command. This is a standard action.

Owoun Feats

Moonsong (I)

We sing to the moons. And sometimes, they sing back.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, PT 6+

Benefit: You gain Perform (howl) as a class skill with 1 free rank. Pick a moon for your owoun to be born under; when that moon is visible you can add half your class level to any knowledge checks.

Moonsong (II)

The wisdom of the moon comes in dreams and omens. And in songs.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, Moonsong (I), PT 9+

Benefit: When your owoun's moon is visible you can make any Knowledge checks untrained.

Moonsong (III)

The moons not only give us wisdom, but sometimes, they give us truth.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, Moonsong (II), Spellcraft 10 Ranks

Benefit: When your owoun's moon is visible you can make a Perform (howl) check to ask your moon a question with a yes/no answer. This is treated as Diplomacy check against the moon; the moon is treated as an indifferent NPC with a +5 Charisma modifier, other social modifier can apply. If successful then the GM must honestly answer the question. You can only do this once per night.

Shu'sha Feats

Pack Knowledge (I)

Like all other things, knowledge is just a tool the pack shares.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, PT 6+

Benefit: You pick a skill from: craft, knowledge (engineering), knowledge (dungeoneering), knowledge (geography), knowledge (local), knowledge (nature), perception, or survival and when you are adjacent to the shu'sha gain a +3 bonus to that skill.

Pack Knowledge (II)

If it is mine, it is also the pack's. All that I make belongs to my brothers and sisters.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, Pack Knowledge (I), PT 9+

Benefit: You can make a craft check to create mundane items at no cost as long as it does not normally cost more than 20g.

Pack Knowledge (III)

While under the light of the moons, nothing is beyond my memory.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, Pack Knowledge (II), Survival (12 ranks)

Benefit: You can automatically recall the geography of any place you have been before and can always navigate your way back there.

Oosheh Feats

No Failures (I)

There are no failures, brother. Only setbacks.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, PT 6+

Benefit: When a pack member fails a non-combat skill check, they gain a +2 morale bonus to your next attempt at the same roll. You can do this a number of times a day equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1).

Special: There can only be 1 oosheh per pack.

No Failures (II)

You may fall, but the pack will carry you.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, No Failures (I), PT 9+

Benefit: When a pack member fails a Charisma based skill check, they can automatically re-roll and use the new result instead. You can do this a number of times a day equal to your Charisma modifier (minimum 1).

Special: There can only be 1 oosheh per pack.

No Failures (III)

When we foresee failure, we can predict victory.

Prerequisite: Gnoll, No Failures (II), Diplomacy 14 Ranks

Benefit: Before the start of combat, after initiative has been rolled, you can switch 2 allies' places in the initiative order. You can do this once per day.

Special: There can only be 1 oosheh per pack.

Approved classes

Listed below are the classes available to gnolls in *Wicked Fantasy*.

Barbarian	yes
Bard	archetype
<i>Cleric</i>	<i>no</i>
Druid	yes
Fighter	archetype
<i>Monk</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Paladin</i>	<i>no</i>
Ranger	archetype
Rogue	archetype
Sorcerer	archetype
Wizard	yes
<i>Alchemist</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Cavalier</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Gunslinger</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Inquisitor</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Magus</i>	<i>no</i>
Oracle	yes
<i>Summoner</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Witch</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Antipaladin</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Ninja</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Samurai</i>	<i>no</i>



Run

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

Gara didn't want to die, but that didn't matter anymore. He ran. Blood oozed from his shoulder. The pain in his leg screamed at him to stop, but he ignored it. The breath in his lungs was fire and his muscles pleaded for rest. But he ran. Down on all fours, he ran. Death lay ahead of him, but he ran toward it with all the speed he could summon because the things behind him were worse than death.

He didn't dare look behind him. He knew how close they were. He heard their hunting cries. Heard their dogs. Those awful dogs. He watched them tear Shosh apart. He was screaming, and they tore him apart. Gara knew what was behind him. He didn't need to look.

Just ahead was the forest. Just within reach. If he could get to the tree line, he had a chance, but out here on the plains, there was no chance. He could have outrun them if his hind leg wasn't bleeding. He could have fought them if his arm wasn't bleeding. But these things were not true, so he ran toward the forest.

Their voices were closer. He could smell the flesh and marrow on their teeth and lips. The darkness of the forest, coupled with the darkness of the black moon, would hide him. Just a few more paces. Just a few more...

Heavy paws pounced on his back, pushing him forward. The talons ripped at his skin. He stumbled, but kept going. Slower now. The dogs were at his heels. He dared a moment to turn and he kicked the beast, just under the jaw. It yelped and paused.

Stupid, he thought. *Stupid. You paused and they are still coming.* He turned again, running for the forest, leaving his blood behind him like a river they could follow.


He felt them getting closer. The trees loomed over him. He leapt at the tree line, diving for cover. Then, he pulled himself back up and ran to a tree. He grabbed the bark, spinning his body behind it. He stopped and looked.

He saw five orks standing at the tree line. They stood there, but they would not cross it. The dogs paused, too, snarling at the forest. He saw two of them arguing. He knew a little of their language and he caught bits of it.

“no go”

“undone hunt”

“go back”



Gara stood silent behind the tree, waiting to see which way they would decide. The orks hesitated. Then, he heard one of them speak a word he knew.

“Elves,” the big one said. The big one. The leader. His name was Ugesh. All gnolls knew that name. Ugesh and his tribe of Black Hands. They killed gnolls and goblins and gnomes. They even killed other orks. The other ork tribes hated them. Everyone hated them. Ugesh. Gara looked at him now, waiting for the ork to make a decision.

And, for a moment, he forgot about the pain. Forgot about Shosh. Forgot about seeing them rip his friend’s heart from his chest and chew it between their teeth. He watched them. Still and silent, he watched.

“Gone now,” said one of them. “Wait too long.”

Ugesh, “Nah!” Then, he started walking into the woods.

Gara turned and ran. He plunged into the forest. He went down on all fours—despite the pain—and made as much distance as he could. He knew the blood behind him left an easy trail. There was nothing he could do about that. If he wasn’t bleeding, he could keep better time ahead of them. But the blood kept them close. Too close.

Gara ran until his fore leg finally collapsed. No more. Gara clawed his way to some underbush and lay perfectly still, waiting for sounds and scents to tell him something. He was still too close to the edge of the woods. Not enough cover. He hid under the leaves and

mud and broken branches, hoping something would find the orks before they found him.

He smelled the ork. He heard it walking the wrong direction. He heard no others and no more scents came to him other than the trees and plants. He should risk the run now. He should. But his leg was no good. He bit his teeth together and tried pushing himself up. The pain shot up his bones into his hip, straight up his back. He heard himself make a sound as he fell back down.

That’s when he heard the ork stop and turn his way.

“Gnoll!” the ork shouted. It was Ugesh. “I hear you!” Then, he heard it chuckle. “I smell your blood.”

Gara pushed himself up against the tree. There was no hiding now. He pulled his hunting knife from his belt. He put the tree between himself and the ork. The pain pulled tears from his eyes.

“Gnoll!” it shouted again. “You and your friend should not have come to the plains alone!”

Gara nodded. It was stupid. And that’s what got Shosh killed. They were careless. And now, Gara was going to pay for it.

“Come out, gnoll!” Ugesh said. “Do not hide. Face me and prove your heart is worth eating.”

Gara closed his eyes and took a deep breath. He looked up to the night sky and saw the sisters there, looking down on him. He looked to the red moon, slowly sinking in the horizon.

“Cha’ppa,” he whispered. “Swift sister in scarlet. You have given me speed. More than I deserve. For what I did to Shosh.” He closed his eyes again. “Thank you.”

Then, he looked at the silver moon. "Hav'ha," he said. "Deadliest of the sisters. I pray to you now. Guide my hand and my blade true."

Then, he looked to a part of the sky that held no stars. He looked there and his heart filled with fear.

"And you," he said. "Dark, shadowed sister." He paused, knowing the danger he was about to invoke. He grinned and said, "If you could manage to send me some luck, I'd thank you. But, if not... just... forget I asked." He paused and added, "Please."

The ork was close now. "I can hear you, gnoll!" Ugesh said. "Whispering. Perhaps asking the trees for help? Hah! No tree will help a gnoll."

Gara heard its footsteps crunching the grass. The ork was making no attempt at stealth. It was not afraid of a gnoll. And as he thought that, Gara saw the yellow moon wink in his eye.

*The ork is not afraid of me. Gara smiled.
Perhaps that gives me an advantage.*

Ugesh stepped up close, sniffing. He stood almost close enough to strike. Just on the other side of the tree. Gara lowered his weight, bent down low.

The ork looked around, as if he had heard something. "Gnoll!" he shouted.

Gara jumped forward, lower than the ork's belt. He cut forward, his blade hitting the ork in the ankle, slicing across the back of it.

Ugesh screamed. Gara turned and ran.

"Gnoll!" Ugesh shouted after him. "I will find you! I will cut you and I will eat your heart before your very eyes!"

I

*have a little time, Gara thought.
That's all I needed.*

And he ran.

His whole body shuddered as he did. He breathed through his teeth. He kept running. He ran by the trees so fast, he barely saw them. He skidded on some wet soil and yelped out loud when he put weight on his paw. The ork heard that.

"You think that is pain, gnoll?"

Ugesh shouted from not far behind.

"I will show you pain. The red pain. The blue pain. I will show it all to you!"

Gara ducked around a tree and slammed into something he did not expect: a tall figure who smelled like a sapling. He looked up and saw what he had run into.

"Elf?" he asked.

The elf looked back down at him.


"Lwwlddy gwdd ffyddyr," he said.

No! Gara thought. Not this! Not now!

Gara tried to stand but the elf pushed him back down. Gara looked back up at the elf. "Ork!" he said, pointing behind him.

The elf heard the word, raised an eyebrow. "Ork?"

Gara nodded. "Ork! Ork! Run!"



The elf shook his head and smiled. He drew his sword, silver and curved, and walked toward the sound of the orks.

Gara thought about stopping the elf. Then, he thought again. He turned toward the south and started running.

To his left, he heard the elf shout something. He was close enough to see movement. He heard singing. He heard a sword cutting. He heard the sound of breaking bones and jaws ripping flesh. And then, he heard screaming. Elven screaming. It was the worst thing he ever heard.

He ran south, toward the creek. His breath hurt him. His leg hurt him. His shoulder hurt him. His tongue rolled over his jaw. He fell, like leaves fall. Slow and without purpose. His head hit the ground and he saw black. He couldn't even breathe.

No!

His whole body faded—

I'm so close!

—into a dim numbness—

not now

—and...

... when he woke, there was a hand on his shoulder. It pushed him over. He opened his eyes and saw Ugesh, looking at him. The ork smiled at him.

"The hunt is over, gnoll," Ugesh said. The ork took the knife from Gara's numb fingers. "I told you

I would eat out your heart while you watched." Ugesh chuckled. "This is when you get to watch."

Gara howled. He saw his breath burst against the ork's face and when he was done, the ork laughed at him.

"No," he said. "Nothing will help you now. The hunt is over." The ork raised Gara's knife.

And something struck Ugesh's hand, knocking the knife from his grip. The ork looked at his hand, surprised.

The sound Gara made was laughter or crying. He could not tell which it was. The ork looked down at him.

"You're right," Gara said. "The hunt is over."

Ugesh looked around at the darkness of the forest. Dozens of red eyes peered back at him.

"What is this?" Ugesh said, his rage slurring his words. "Whutishthis?"

Gara pushed himself away from the ork. He saw the eyes coming forward from the forest. Within a breath, they surrounded Ugesh. Gnolls, every one.

It was Hach'han who lifted Gara to his feet. The massive gnoll was nearly as big as the ork. Hach'han said, "Good work, eeka."

Although he could barely stand, Gara bowed his head. "Anything for my pack."

Ugesh was surrounded now. His eyes showed he understood what had happened.

Hach'han asked, "Where is Shush?"

Gara shook his head. "The orks killed him, my bach."

Hach'han nodded. "Hall'ywah was right," he said. "He was too young."

Hall'ywah stepped forward, her eyes glistening in the moonlight. "Always listen to the little voice, my kech."

The ork roared. Then, he said, "Are you going to kill me or not?" He roared at the gnolls again, pulling his sword from its sheath. "I will kill you all!"

Hach'han looked at Hall'ywah and she took Gara from Hach'han's shoulders. "No, ork," he said. He walked closer to Ugesh. Just out of sword's reach. "We are not going to kill you."

Then, Hach'han smiled. "Not yet." He looked at the rest of the gnolls. "Are we?"

The gnolls all howled. Hach'han looked back at the ork.

"Ugesh, you have hunted across the plains long enough. You have hunted gnolls, you have hunted men, you have hunted goblins and your fellow orks. Even they will not claim you as one of their own."

Ugesh roared again. "They are all weak!" he said. "They want to be like men! I am the true ork! I am blessed by the dark gods who made me! And no gnoll will ever kill me!"

Gara laughed then. It hurt him to do it, but he laughed. A high-pitched yelping sound. A mocking sound. The others followed. And for once, Gara saw something other than confidence in the ork's face.

"Ugesh," Hach'han said. "You stand in the middle of the forest. Alone. And we are many." He gestured to the other gnolls. "We are a pack. And the pack is greater than us all."

Ugesh shook his head. "I will fight you all! To my last breath!"

Hach'han drew his blade. The gnolls all drew their weapons and stepped forward. Even Gara drew his knife. He said the words.

"When my kech draws his blade..."

And the others said, "... so shall I."

Ugesh took a step back. "I am not afraid of you!"

Hach'han nodded and smiled.

"Yes, you are," he said.

Ugesh swung his sword about like a child swinging at a playmate. More threat than anything else.

"There is only one thing you can do, ork," Hach'han said. He looked at Gara. He said, "Tell him, eeka."

Gara looked into the orks eyes and smiled.

"Run."



Gnomes: Shapers of the Land

It was not until two weeks after the arrival of the haffuns and the dwarves that agents of Theodore IV learned of the existence of a third type of small folk who arrived from the other side of the world. At first, miners in the Dragoncoil mountains thought that the mines had become haunted. Later, when stories about the haffun flight from some "great Enemy" started to make their way through whispers, some military advisors cautioned that perhaps the Enemy had arrived quick on the heels of the deep-diggers. Miners reported seeing flitting figures and hearing strange sounds. That it took two weeks to find the first gnome appeared, already out of the mine and setting up a small fortification two hours' walk to the west, just an arrow shot from the local hamlet.

Fortunately, the gnomes proved nearly as affable as their slightly shorter haffun compatriots, and less gruff than the dwarves. Nevertheless, their quick adaptation to the lands of the kingdom, and their ability to move about unseen in the wilds and use simple tools to fabricate weapons, homes, and trade goods in a matter of days, all left a sense of lingering unease in the philosophers who ruminated over such things.

By the next harvest season, the gnomes had already churned out a marvelous ale brew, and gnomish woodsmen had saved the nearby hamlet from both a marauding werewolf and a horrid colony of oozes that devoured everything they touched, so few people continued to wonder: What else were the industrious little men doing in their cloistered homes? And why did little farmers, cobblers, and jewelers also happen to turn out some of the most skillful rangers, foresters, and explorers of the deeps below the mountains?

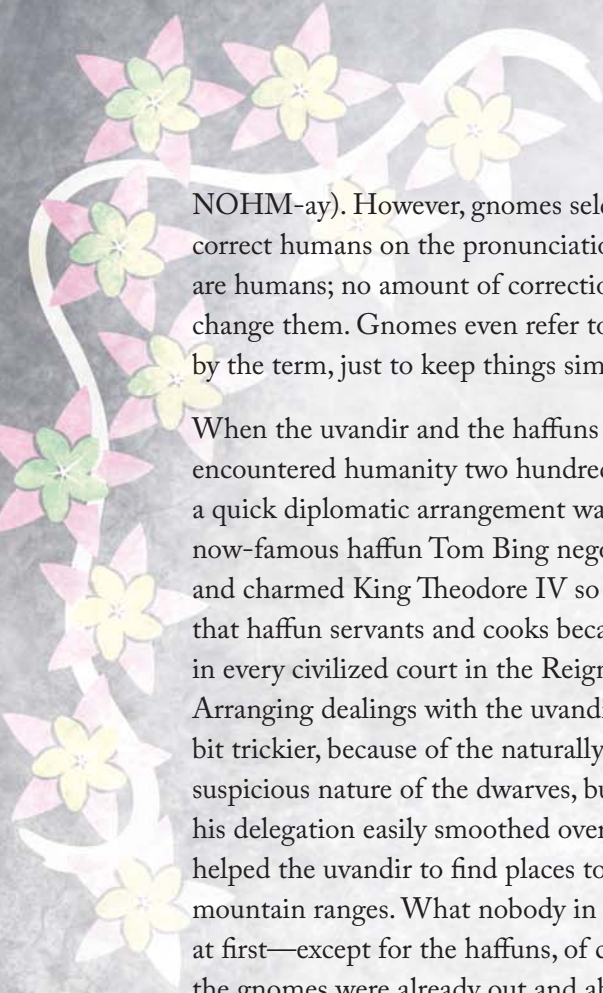
Gnomes seem, to human observers, almost like a bridge between haffuns and dwarves. Though they're not hewn out of stone, like the dwarves, they share that sturdy species' affinity for rocks and underground places. Though taller and less outgoing than haffuns, gnomes seem to emulate the haffuns' general good nature and ability to get along with other folk. In fact, most humans rarely give gnomes a second thought; they're considered provincial, maybe even a little boring. Certainly haffuns make better servants and dwarves make better miners. Gnomes fill a niche in the middle: where haffuns unobtrusively work to fulfill social needs and to promote culture, and dwarves excel in mining and working with hard stone and heated metals, gnomes exhibit a

remarkable craft for dealing with the land, with animals, and with cunning contrivances designed to help people to prosper.

What only a few human philosophers have puzzled out is that, like the other two servant races, gnomes fill a particular role because they were pushed into that niche by their former masters. If haffuns serve in households and dwarves produce the materials of mining and quarrying, someone still has to raise the crops, tend the woods, and hunt—and that is the province of gnomes.

Tamers of the Wild

The word "gnome" is the human pronunciation of the word *ganome* (gah-



NOHM-ay). However, gnomes seldom, if ever, correct humans on the pronunciation. Humans are humans; no amount of correction will change them. Gnomes even refer to themselves by the term, just to keep things simple.

When the uvandir and the haffuns first encountered humanity two hundred years ago, a quick diplomatic arrangement was struck. The now-famous haffun Tom Bing negotiated with and charmed King Theodore IV so thoroughly that haffun servants and cooks became a necessity in every civilized court in the Reign of Men. Arranging dealings with the uvandir was a bit trickier, because of the naturally gruff and suspicious nature of the dwarves, but Tom Bing and his delegation easily smoothed over suspicions and helped the uvandir to find places to settle along the mountain ranges. What nobody in the court knew at first—except for the haffuns, of course—is that the gnomes were already out and about, already scouting the land, and quietly settling into secluded places in case they needed to escape notice or fortify against possible attack. What Tom Bing also knew was that, if his diplomatic work failed, the gnomes would help to secret away those dwarves and haffuns who remained behind, and they would try to find a new safe place to build their lives.

Fortunately for all parties involved, haffun diplomacy won the day, and haffuns and uvandir were welcomed to settle in the lands of Men. When the first gnomes were definitively spotted two weeks after the initial contact, the haffuns did the smartest thing that they could: They told the truth. The gnomes had snuck out of the mines under cover of darkness to scout the terrain, and when Tom Bing and his compatriots were discovered by Alvin Fix and escorted to the court, the gnomes were left behind to wait, to watch, and to see if their cousins would require rescue.

After a few blustery, posturing statements by human military leaders, the Reign of Men settled

on extending its policy to the gnomes as well. After all, what kind of threat could they ever present? They were almost as small as the haffuns, given to hiding in the woods instead of stand-up fighting, and not nearly as tough as the dwarves. Besides, they were probably the smallest contingent from the three races that arrived. A village of quiet little men hurting nobody and keeping to themselves would hardly present a threat to the Reign of Man.

Over the next two hundred years, humans integrated haffuns into their society, and made trade agreements with the uvandir in exchange for trade goods of quality iron and other metals. The gnomes slowly spread out to various pastoral lands, secluded glades, and rolling hillsides, building tiny residences in farm country all across the Reign. Within a few decades of the arrival of the gnomes, it became common for human travelers to see the occasional tiny, quaint house on a hillside, or a small roadside minaret indicating the path to the nearest gnome village. Few humans dealt directly with the insular gnomes, except when a trader or farmer arrived in a human town to sell his wares—often accompanied by several gnomes in green and brown cloaks, carrying crossbows and spears, unassuming but competent as bodyguards.

A few human sages also started to notice another quality that set the gnomes apart from humans, haffuns, and uvandir. A rural farmer would trade each year with a gnomish neighbor for some of the toys, shoes, or brews from just down the road. Years later, his son would trade with the same gnome, and his granddaughter too. The gnomes, it seemed, lived far longer than their other counterparts, and their wizened countenances always had the rumpled look of someone of late middle age, making it nearly impossible to tell how long they actually survived.

Humans living near gnome settlements realized one other change: A sharp decrease in the frequency of terrorizing monsters and woodland menaces. Almost nobody ever actually *saw* a gnome fighting

against basilisks or giant beetles or dire animals, but for years in a row farming villages would find their surroundings unusually sedate, untroubled by the occasional maraudings of dangerous magical creatures that sometimes crawled out of the dark places on the map. Experienced human travelers started to notice tiny pathways in the woods, barely marked, just the right size for gnomish rangers, and began to realize that perhaps the gnomes were doing more than just raising malt barley and crafting trinkets in their burrows.

The Life of a Gnome

The following section details a gnome's life from youth to middle age to old age.

Youth

A gnome is born into a family of one mother and one father. Like humans, gnomes usually give birth to one child; twins are a very rare anomaly. He usually has a great number of siblings: up to five or six. At least, these are his *immediate* siblings. He has many others, but they've moved out of the house by the time he is born, and he will move out when the next "generation" of siblings comes along. (More on that later.)

His house is, more than likely, under the ground. Either a burrow or a basement in a human City. His infancy is much like a human's infancy: he is born completely helpless and needs constant care for the first few years of his life. While he's young, his parents entertain him with handmade toys, music and stories. He spends his entire youth learning the soil.

Gnomes vary depending on their environment. In fact, many human scholars have noted that gnomes seem to have a supernatural prowess at adapting to their surroundings. Gnomes in the forest, gnomes in the grasslands, gnomes by the water... each "breed" takes on characteristics that

help them survive, making gnomes in different parts of the world very different from each other.

Our gnome is born in the forest. As he grows older, his parents take him into the wild to learn its ways. He learns he is an animal, just like the other animals, but with one key difference. He learns the wild is cruel, but he does not have to be. He can choose to be compassionate.

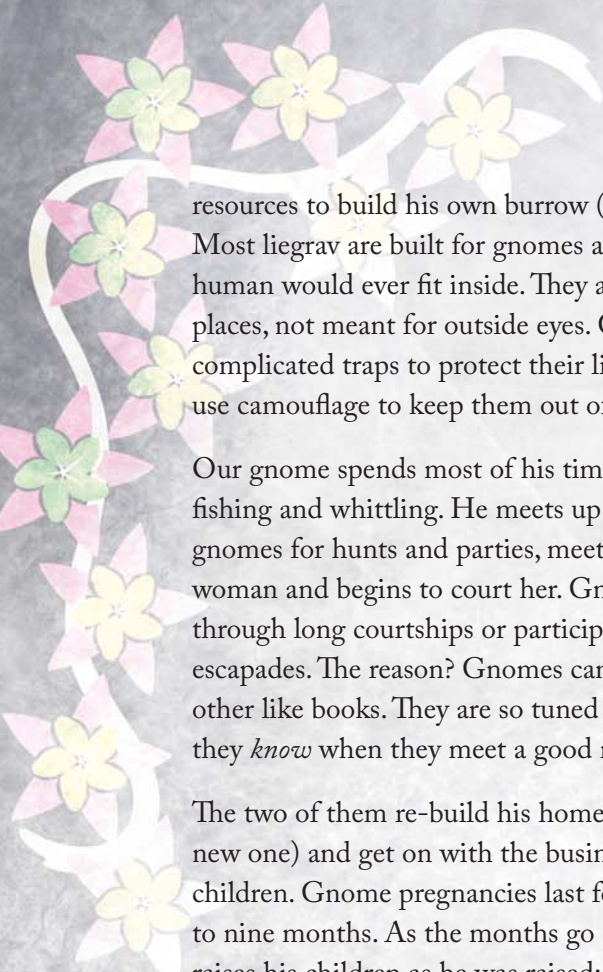
He learns how to speak to the animals of the wild. He learns their names and their ways. He watches them hunt and kill. He learns the *gleithemme*, the horrible truth of life: that in order to live, you must kill and eat other life. Life is cruel, but he can choose to be compassionate. He can kill with respect. He can make the kill clean and merciful. He does not have to be cruel. He learns the lesson of the good death and the bad death: dying swift is good. Dying slowly, in agony, is not.

He learns all the creatures in the wild. He watches them for years. He watches the caribu, the wolf, the troll, the ogre, the bear and the falcon. He learns their ways. The gnomes call this *larae naven*. Learning the name of the beast. Once you know all a creature's secrets, you can speak its name. And you can kill it quickly and cleanly.

Then, he goes on his first hunt. He has watched others -- both gnomes and other animals -- but this is his first time. He finds an animal. He speaks to it. He tells it, "I have chosen you." Then, the animal runs and he chases it. All the while, he speaks to it. If the animal gets away, he thanks it for the chase. If he catches it, he whispers a quiet thank you, then kills it quick. His first kill. The first time his hands have committed murder. Now, he is an adult. A hunter.

Adulthood

When a child becomes a hunter, he leaves his parents' home and makes his own. Literally. He finds wood and mud and other natural



resources to build his own burrow (*liegrav*). Most liegrav are built for gnomes alone: no human would ever fit inside. They are private places, not meant for outside eyes. Gnomes use complicated traps to protect their liegrav and use camouflage to keep them out of sight.

Our gnome spends most of his time hunting, fishing and whittling. He meets up with other gnomes for hunts and parties, meets a handsome woman and begins to court her. Gnomes do not go through long courtships or participate in romantic escapades. The reason? Gnomes can read each other like books. They are so tuned to empathy, they *know* when they meet a good match.

The two of them re-build his home (or build a new one) and get on with the business of having children. Gnome pregnancies last for about eight to nine months. As the months go on, our gnome raises his children as he was raised: in the wild, learning its many names. Gnomes generally stagger the births of their children, spreading them out over the years. And since a gnome lives approximately 180 - 200 years, that means a great number of children. Usually up to thirty to fifty. As the children mature, they move out of the house, looking for a life of their own. This creates “generations” of siblings — groups of children growing up together. These are their “true” siblings, or *stosser*. Other siblings — those who they do not know other than through lineage, are *ellar*.

And while gnomes tend to be reclusive creatures, he still attends the many gatherings his people throw. Gnomes call them *festa*. The gnomes show up with spiced meats, baked goods and other secret recipes. They place all the food on one table and everyone is welcome to share. A common sight on a festa table is a large bowl of butter (flavored with honey) surrounded by slices of bread. A human scholar, Terrvenk Erl, was the first to write about it. “They take a slice of bread and dip it into the bowl, adding a generous dollap to every piece. It was the

only extravagance I saw there. Every other plate was modest and showed no sign of indulgence. But the butter... there was something about the butter. And having a taste myself, I must admit, I fell into the same behavior quite shamelessly.”

Gnomes use festa for other reasons. They pass news, events, gossip and settle disputes. However, it should be mentioned that using the word “disputes” is a bit misleading. Again, scholar Terrvenk Erl. “From everything I have heard, the gnomes are a solitary, unsocial people. Nothing could be further from the truth. They are kind, generous and incredibly kind. They speak with a gentleness I cannot communicate. They seem to take no offense at anything and go out of their way to not offend. Even during their ‘disputes,’ they speak to each other like siblings, hoping to reach equanimity with calm restraint. But even restraint is the wrong word. It would imply an anger that, as far as I can tell, simply does not exist in their character.”

Old Age

Even as gnomes grow older, they are still capable of making children. Some gnomes have been known to give birth a year or two before death. (This makes the human idea of “maiden-mother-crone” very confusing to gnomes.)

Gnomes are a truly monogamous race. There is no such thing as gnome divorce. Over a century and a half of being bonded together, our gnome and his spouse now share a link that is greater than just empathy. They are truly bonded souls. They can feel when their spouse is happy or sad, well or ill. Bonded gnomes can also feel when one of them is reaching death.

When a bonded pair feels death pulling at their souls, they send out a message for a festa, informing their children they are throwing one last party. All the children return, some meeting for the first time, for a celebration of life together. The pair picks out a resting place, throw the festa, then at

the end, walk to their *vesting* (humans translate it as “grave” but it means “last bed”), hands knotted, surrounded by their family. Then, the mated pair lay down, close their eyes, and return to the earth.

After the vesting, their children plant a garden or a tree over the spot, then return to their lives, bearing the memory.

gunahar: Wise of the wild

While haffuns communicate easily and empathetically with other races and dwarves have an intuitive understanding of stone, gnomes have a remarkable facility for understanding animals, plants, and weather. They’re not spiritually tied to the land in any sense; rather, they seem to have an innate weather eye, clever hands that make for fast planting and harvesting, and a good judge of how animals move and react. Gnomes refer to this quality as *gunahar*, the “wise of the wild,” though to them it is not really a learned skill. *Gunahar* is an inherent quality that all gnomes have and many other species lack. To the gnomes, *gunahar* is being in touch with natural cycles and communicating with the animal world on its own level.

For most gnomes, *gunahar* is the means to raise a good crop and to hunt for meat. It is the way to find wild strawberries and blackberries in the brambles, the knowing of where water runs and when it will rain. Some gnomes turn their *gunahar* to more dangerous uses, learning to understand fell beasts as well as animals, or to move through the wilderness with uncanny speed and precision.

Tilsspan: Adaptation

The most curious element of gnome biology and culture is something they call *tilsspan*. Humans translate this as “adaptation.” Like humans, gnomes have an uncanny ability to adapt to any environment. Unlike humans, this is not just a technological adaptation, but a physical

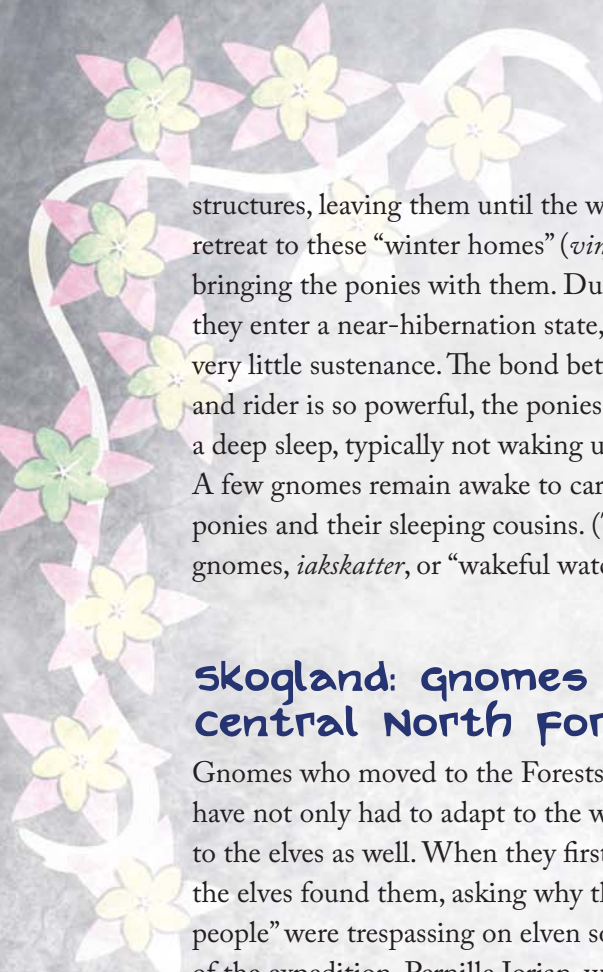
transformation. Gnomes who live in the mountains look different than those who live in the plains, look different than the ones who live near the ocean, look different than those who live in human Cities. The differences are very small, but noticeable. The gnomes who live in the mountains develop strong hands for climbing. The gnomes who live by the oceans develop stronger lungs. The gnomes who live in the plains seem to move with a deadly silence. These are not entirely natural transformations; it seems gnomes have been gifted with this ability. A fact that makes men all that much curious about their origins...

So far, human scholars have identified five adaptations or “breeds” of gnome, each identified by their geographical location.

Ryttervast: gnomes of the central grasslands

Gnomes not only adapt to the region they live in, but also domesticate the local fauna. In the case of the gnomes of the central grasslands of the Reign, there is a breed of pony — the grasslands pony, or the “toy pony” — was too small for men to ride, and thus, were solely used as drivers. Grassland gnomes have not only physically adapted to the region, but have also domesticated the grassland ponies. The grassland gnomes — who call themselves *ryttervast*, or “grass riders” — have transformed into a culture of riders and hunters. The emotional bond between a *ryttervast* and his mount is said to be nearly as powerful as a bond between gnomish mates. Riders communicate instinctively with their mounts, making them some of the most skilled horsemen in the Known World.

The *ryttervast* live as most other gnomes do, but their families are more like wandering clans. They do not live in burrows, but in improvised huts that are easy to lift and move when necessary. They follow herds of animals, migrating as they do. The *ryttervast* do build more permanent



structures, leaving them until the winter. They retreat to these “winter homes” (*vinjerhemme*), bringing the ponies with them. During the winter, they enter a near-hibernation state, requiring very little sustenance. The bond between mount and rider is so powerful, the ponies also fall into a deep sleep, typically not waking until spring. A few gnomes remain awake to care for the ponies and their sleeping cousins. (They call these gnomes, *iakskatter*, or “wakeful watchers.”)

Skogland: Gnomes of the Central North Forest

Gnomes who moved to the Forests of the Reign have not only had to adapt to the wildlife, but to the elves as well. When they first arrived, the elves found them, asking why the “little people” were trespassing on elven soil. The leader of the expedition, Pernille Jorjan, walked to one of the Trees, touched it and looked at the elf to whom the Tree belonged. “This is your soul,” she said to the elf. “We will guard it as if it was our own.” Since that meeting, the forest gnomes — or *skogland*, “forest watchers” — lived in harmony with the elven people. They hunt only what they need. They remove sick and diseased beasts from populations and protect the Trees from fire and insects. Elves called them *aeldanvannomilae*. “Little allies.” Gnomes called the elves, *stalingsteov*. “Tall and proud.”

That was before the First Forest War.

Orks came in from the North, murdering men, elves and gnomes. For a brief time, the Reign of Men allied with the elves and gnomes, fighting off the ork hordes, but not before the orks burned down many of the Great Trees. Those they did not burn down, they spiked (a method of “poisoning” the Tree by pounding a spike of iron through the wood). The hordes were eventually defeated (a loss that spawned the idea of deicide in the orks), but the damage was too great. The elves who

survived the Forest Wars were never the same. Within one generation of gnomes, the Northern elves were gone. Now, only the *skogland* remain.

The northern gnomes remain in the forests, maintaining them as they always have. They also know that when certain trees grow old enough, they will become Great Trees and spawn more elves. The *skogland* culture these trees, hoping one day their “tall allies” will return to the Northern forests.

Coareg: Gnomes of the Eastern Shore

While the vast majority of gnomes live in pastoral farm country, digging into burrows in the hillside and building barns and breweries for their produce, a few small families have taken to the urban life of human cities, and there they turn their *gunahar* to slightly different ends. Where rural gnomes excel at farming and scouting, urban gnomes raise tiny gardens, using every inch of uncovered soil to cultivate flowers and fruits. Given bits of wood and leather and string, they use their *gunahar* to make little contrivances that make life more comfortable, like solid shoes, kitchen utensils, and clever toys. With their understanding of herbs and poultices, they create alchemical concoctions to amaze, delight, and cure all ailments—or to surreptitiously poison the unwary. Their cunning hands, turned to finding uses for pieces of metal and bright stones, turn out intricate jewelry and elegant weapons.

Urban gnomes, by and large, take up residences in basements. In large cities it is not uncommon for well-to-do families to let out a cellar to a family of gnomes in exchange for labor or rents. So long as the gnomes have the peace to live undisturbed and a separate entrance, they are quite content to live below humans among the roots and soil. Certain alleyways have even become “*coareg* paths,” or corridors where the gnomes peddle their wares under tiny awnings set up over the cellar doors of their city homes.

Rural gnomes consider the *coareg* a bit gruff and dour. Lacking communion with the wild, the city gnomes become hawkers and tradesmen, using their cleverness to survive in an environment where *gunabar* is tricked by tall buildings that block the sun and paved streets that drive away rodents and game animals. Even rural gnomes must admit, though, that the *coareg* are tough as nails, and that they perform a very important function.

Like the rangers who patrol the woods for monsters, the *coareg* are watching for enemies. Or for the Enemy.

Forsterken: Gnomes of the Lakes

Found all across the Reign, the *forsterken* are a peculiar breed of gnome. They have not only adapted to the lake regions, but have a spiritual connection to the water itself. Humans have always associated water with oracles and mysteries, but the gnomes have gone further than that. Each *forsterken* finds a lake and performs a ritual, binding himself with that lake. He might say, bind himself with “the spirit of the lake.” Gnomes call this spirit *annven*.

These “lakeside gnomes” use the lake for scrying, predicting the future and other supernatural feats. They are part of the lake. The lover of the lake. The guardian of the lake. Those who have a deep connection with the *annven* may even take the form of water, flowing into the lake, merging with it.

Forsterken families grow up beside rivers and lakes, honoring the spirits that live there. Even if he travels, a *forsterken* will recognize and revere the foreign *annven* he encounters, treating them with respect and kindness. And when it is time to die, the *forsterken* rises up from his deathbed and walks into the waters, to be embraced by his lover, forever.

Haufbreg: Gnomes of the West Mountains

Men go to the mountains of the Reign to be alone. To be rid of the traps and treacheries of society and cities. And while most shun companionship altogether, there is one companion a mountain man may always count on: a *haufbreg*.

The *haufbreg* are gnomes who have adapted to the mountain. Unlike other gnomes, they live in small families — the mountain provides little sustenance for more than that. *Haufbreg* teach their children how to gather food, how to hunt and how to protect the family. They are a simple, honest people who see no room for politics or deception on the mountain. “The mountain sees,” one *haufbreg* said. “And it doesn’t forgive.”

Human mountain men who relish their solitude find solid allies in families of *haufbreg*. They visit from time to time to trade and share stories and food. They teach the young gnomes the knowledge they’ve gathered and they help protect those families in times of trouble. Greggor Uthen, the man famous for writing *Ten Years on the Mountain*, once wrote of the *haufbreg* family he knew,

“I trusted them and they trusted me. They always knew when I was cold or hungry, and they always helped me. It was after I saved one of their kids from the bear that I always knew they would take care of me. I was like an uncle to them and they were like the family I never had.”

He also wrote about their “fierce fury” that he saw from time to time. A kind of fury that “would make a wild man tremble in fear.” He said, “It was as if they summoned the wrath of the mountain itself.”

When he was an older man, Uthen went back to the mountains. He is buried there behind the house of the gnome family he befriended. The *haufbreg* buried him with their own family members.



Vanktjenner: Gnomes of the Xeric Shrublands

Humans call them “gnome orphans.” They wander the world with no mate, never knowing the joys of sex, children or companionship. Gnomes call them the *vanktjenner*. The explicit translation is “caretakers of the world.” The implicit meaning is, “the lonely ones.”

The vanktjenner (vahn-kh-et-yen-ner) come about because of two different circumstances: a *forkshee* or a *kvinnay*.

The Weeping Ones & The Lonely

The first involves the birth of a *forkshee*: a gnome with a particularly powerful sense of empathy. (The word literally means “one who weeps.”) Most gnomes can moderate their empathy, having learned how to do so when they were young. A *forkshee* cannot do that. Her empathy is “always on,” and always at full volume. This makes living with others difficult. Every moment of simple sorrow or joy is a hurricane, blurring her senses, blinding her vision. She is unable to distinguish between her own emotions and the emotions of others. Eventually, she learns to control her empathy, but never to the degree of her siblings. She is always hyper-sensitive, always guarding her own emotions behind a wall.

The second involves a *kvinnay*. There are times when a bonded gnome loses his mate unexpectedly. He is not there with her when she passes, and the bond suddenly breaks. The gnome left behind suffers what the human scholar Jennis Kaspis called, “dire emotional injury.” The gnomes say he has become a *kvinnay*. A lonely one. Struck with sudden separation, the gnome falls into sudden and uncontrollable fits. He screams, foams at the mouth, kicks and squirms. He cannot be controlled. Many lose their tongues between their gnashing teeth. Gnomes know of this madness (all too well) and when they see it

happen to another, they do everything they can to control it. But they also know a *kvinnay* cannot be helped. He will suffer the madness. No one knows for how long. He will suffer the madness and he will forever be changed... or he will die.

After the madness passes, if he has survived, he spends a period of silent mourning. Many retreat into the wild, leaving everything behind them. Sometimes they return, and sometimes, they do not. But if a gnome survives the madness, he is forever changed. His empathy becomes powerful. Too powerful. In fact, he becomes like a *forkshee* — unable to control his own emotions, unable to discern between the hate and love in his head and the hate and love around him. But he may find solace in the same place the *forkshee* seek it. In a kloster.

Klosters & Monachs

When gnomish parents discover they have a child who is a *forkshee*, they send her to live with others who share her condition, who can teach her how to come to terms with her overpowering emotions. When a gnome becomes a *kvinnay*, his friends and family also bring him to those who can help. The *forkshee* and *kvinnay* live in communities far from civilization, far from others who do not understand their plight. Gnomes call these places, *klosters*. At the kloster, the others teach the *forkshee* meditations that calm her anger and teach the *kvinnay* mantras that calm his despair. All those within the kloster are called *monach*: a gnomish word for “alone.” Humans often mispronounce this as “monk” because of the coincidental similarity between the gnome word and the human word.

At the kloster, monachs are often given an animal companion called a *behandlet*. The *behandlet* provides a way of stabilizing their emotions, an undemanding and faithful companion who returns the love it is given.

After she has learned how to master her emotions, a monk learns how her empathy is not only a curse, but a blessing. She learns how her condition gives her a deep empathy with not only living things, but the world as well. She is, literally, in tune with the pains of the world. One of the reasons her emotional state is so unstable is because she is not only feeling the emotions of those around her, but she can feel the emotions of the earth. She can sense the health of the world, anticipate storms and feel the crops growing under her feet.

She can also feel the world's pain. Murder, rape, torture, brutality. The world feels these things and they cause the world sorrow. A monk feels this pain as well. She can sense it. And she can avenge it. Not with murder, but with compassion. She learns how to fight without weapons, how to fight without causing injury. She learns how to meet violence with non-violence. She learns how to turn another's violence into a weapon. A weapon that does not kill. For that is one act a monk should *never* undertake. Murder at a monk's hands is a powerful experience, forever changing her. For some, it is such a powerful experience, it can cause her own death.

And once she has learned these skills, she goes back into the world. She is ready to begin her life again. She is no longer a monk, but a *vanktjenner*. She has taken a vow of celibacy, a vow of poverty and a vow of compassion. All the world's pain is now her pain. And she will bring peace to those who wound the world. Not violence, but peace. She will never find a mate, she will never have children, she will never know love again.

For the world is her mate. It's people are her brothers and sisters. And her love is for the world.

Tegar: The Watchful

Beyond the gnomes who reside in pastoral farmland and cities, some take up a special role.

They wander the roads, never to have homes of their own. They carry messages from family to family without settling down for themselves. They live and move among the other races, learning the craft of men, elves, dwarves and goblins. The *tegar*, the "watchful ones," are gnomes who have taken up the mantle of tireless travel in search of enemies to the gnomish people—and ways to eliminate them.

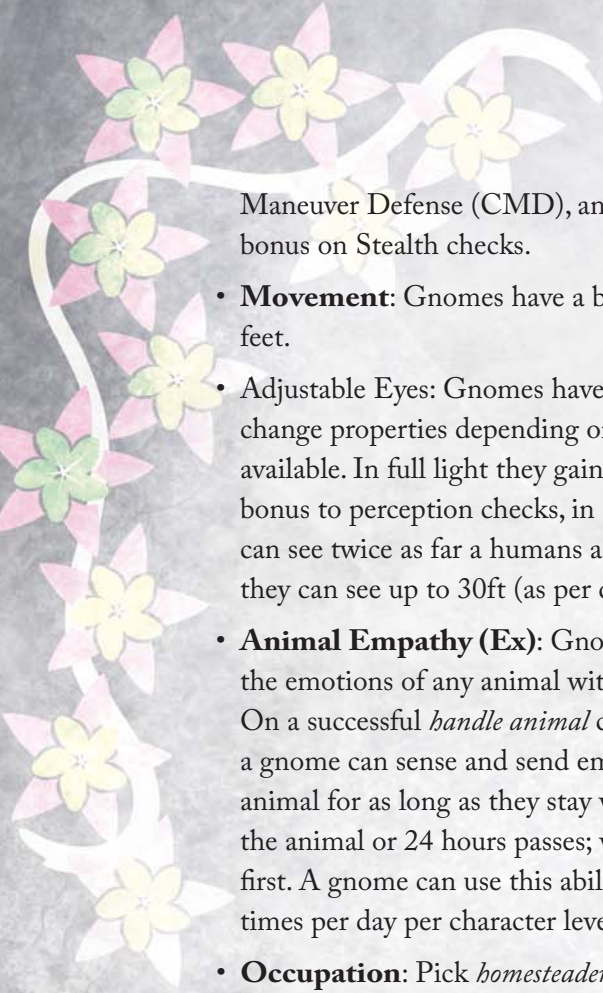
Becoming one of the *tegar* is a personal choice, not a duty thrust upon a gnome. It's not a job in a conventional sense; gnomes do not train to become *tegar*, and the process of passing down advice to younger gnomes is very informal. Rather, *tegar* arise because some gnomes recognize that they have special talents and that they are called upon to use those talents in the wider world.

Not all *tegar* are sterling examples of gnomish culture. Occasionally, a gnome who wanders the world will become corrupted by his interactions with the other races, or deranged from the pressures of the dangerous lifestyle. By and large, though, most *tegar* are known for their ability to survive under harsh conditions and their willingness to put their lives on the line for their friends and even for strangers, so they are often revered in gnomish communities as legendary icons.

Like their city-based brethren the *coareg*, the *tegar* watch most of all for signs of the Enemy. Until the day comes when that Enemy confronts its wayward servants, though, the *tegar* have their hands full rooting out other threats and bringing home magnificent treasures to help their communities prosper.

Gnome Racial Traits

- +2 to Dexterity and Intelligence
- **Small:** Gnomes are small creatures and gain a +1 size bonus to their AC, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, a -1 penalty to their Combat Maneuver Bonus (CMB) and Combat



Maneuver Defense (CMD), and a +4 size bonus on Stealth checks.

- **Movement:** Gnomes have a base speed of 30 feet.
- **Adjustable Eyes:** Gnomes have eyes that change properties depending on the light available. In full light they gain a +2 racial bonus to perception checks, in dim-light they can see twice as far as humans and in darkness they can see up to 30ft (as per darkvision).
- **Animal Empathy (Ex):** Gnomes can sense the emotions of any animal within 30 feet. On a successful *handle animal* check (DC 15), a gnome can sense and send emotions to an animal for as long as they stay within 30 feet of the animal or 24 hours passes; whichever comes first. A gnome can use this ability a number of times per day per character level.
- **Occupation:** Pick *homesteader* or *hunter* to gain your racial traits.
- **Region:** Pick *central grasslands, central north forest, eastern shore, lakes, west mountains or xeric shrublands*.
- **Automatic Languages:** Gnomes begin play speaking Common and Gnome (Regional Dialect). Gnomes with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

Occupation: Homesteader

Catch Off Guard: Homesteader gnomes gain the *catch off guard* feat even if they do not meet the prerequisites. “If you don’t get out of my house, I will kill you with this chair!”

Improvisation: Homesteader gnomes do not take any penalties for Craft and Disable Device checks for lack of proper tools; as long as they have any useful item on hand.

Occupation: Hunter

Gauge Enemy (Ex): Hunter gnomes know the current hit points of any creature they can see; with a swift action they can learn immunities, resistances and weaknesses of a single target

Stalking: Hunter gnomes may add both their Dexterity and Wisdom modifiers to stealth and survival checks as long as they are using both skills at the same time.

Regions

Central Grasslands: Central grasslands gnomes gain a +2 racial bonus to Will and increase of 5ft to their speed.

Central North Forest: Central north forest gnomes gain a +2 racial bonus to Will and a +2 racial bonus to Stealth.

Eastern Shore: Eastern shore gnomes gain a +2 racial bonus to Reflex and a +2 racial bonus to Swim.

Lakes: Lakes gnomes gain +2 racial bonus to Reflex and a +2 racial bonus to Profession (fisher).

West Mountains: West mountain gnomes gain +2 racial bonus to Fortitude and a +2 racial bonus to Climb.

Xeric Shrublands: Xeric shrublands gnomes gain a +2 racial bonus to Fortitude and a +2 racial bonus to Survival.

Gnome Feats

Path of the Woods

Gnomes have an empathy with the wilderness that can sidestep its snares and traps.

Prerequisite: Gnome, Knowledge (nature) 3 Ranks

Benefit: When you may move through any sort of undergrowth (such as natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain) at your normal speed and without taking damage or suffering any other impairment. Also, you may use the concealment provided by such terrain to make a Stealth check while observed in a square with overgrowth. You also gain a +2 racial bonus to knowledge (nature) and survival skill checks.

Friend of the Wilds

A gnome's empathy extends not only to the flora or the wilderness but the fauna as well.

Prerequisite: Gnome, Woodland Strike Class Feature or Path of the Woods, Survival 7 Ranks

Benefit: When you encounter a natural animal, it is automatically indifferent to you. Indifferent animals do not startle or run away from you, so they do not create noise, give away your position, or attack you. Your racial bonuses to Knowledge (Nature) and Survival increase to +4.

Speaker of the Wilds

When a gnome's empathy reaches a certain level, communication is almost instinctual.

Prerequisite: Gnome, Friend of the Wilds, Handle Animal 12 Ranks

Benefit: You may speak to any natural animal; this includes both wild and domestic animals. As a result, you may use the Handle Animal skill checks to influence all kinds of animals. Your racial bonuses to Knowledge (Nature) and Survival increase to +6.

Intuit of the Earth

Like their cousins, the uvandir, gnomes are also diggers.

Prerequisite: Gnome, Homesteader, Speaker of the Wilds, Profession (farmer, gardener or miner) 10 Ranks.

Benefit: You gain a burrow speed of 10 feet, if you already have a burrow speed then your speed increases by 10 feet. As usual, you cannot burrow through rock or metal, but you may choose to leave a tunnel of Small size in your wake. (Medium-sized creatures such as humans would have to squeeze to use the tunnel).

Nature's Imperfections

A gnome's empathy can not only sense strength, but weakness as well.

Prerequisite: Gnome, Hunter, Speaker of the Wilds, Perception 14 Ranks

Benefit: You may take a full round action to observe your enemies and give your allies the advantage. All of your allies that can hear or see you and attack on their next turn any successful attack into a critical hit.

New Cavalier Archetype: Ryttervast

The gnomes of the grasslands are expert riders, protecting their homes from the dangers that hunt there.

Requirements: Gnome, Central Grasslands Racial Trait

Class Features

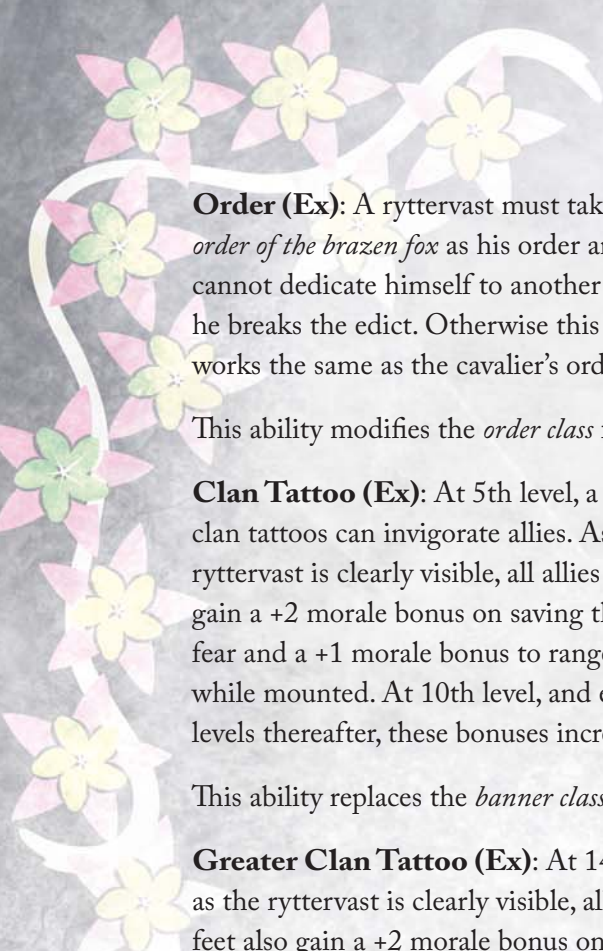
The following are class features of the ryttervast.

Mounted Combat: A ryttervast gains the *mounted combat* feat.

This ability replaces the cavalier's *heavy armor proficiency*.

Ryttervast Mount (Ex): A ryttervast must select a pony as his mount, otherwise this ability works the same as the cavalier's mount.

This ability modifies the *mount class* feature.



Order (Ex): A ryttervast must take the *order of the brazen fox* as his order and he cannot dedicate himself to another order if he breaks the edict. Otherwise this ability works the same as the cavalier's order.

This ability modifies the *order class* feature.

Clan Tattoo (Ex): At 5th level, a ryttervast's clan tattoos can invigorate allies. As long as the ryttervast is clearly visible, all allies within 60 ft gain a +2 morale bonus on saving throws against fear and a +1 morale bonus to ranged attack rolls while mounted. At 10th level, and every five levels thereafter, these bonuses increase by +1.

This ability replaces the *banner class* feature.

Greater Clan Tattoo (Ex): At 14th level, as long as the ryttervast is clearly visible, all allies within 60 feet also gain a +2 morale bonus on saving throws against *charm* and *compulsion* spells and effects. In addition, as a standard action, the ryttervast can grant an ally an additional saving throw with a +10 morale bonus against any one spell or effect that targets them. This save is made at the original DC. Spells and effects that do not allow saving throws are unaffected by this ability. An ally cannot benefit from this ability more than once per day.

This ability replaces the *greater banner class* feature.

Order of the Brazen Fox

Edicts: A member of the order of the brazen fox vows to protect his clan from harm and helps provide food and assistance.

Challenge: Whenever a member of the order of the brazen fox issues a challenge, he gains a +1 bonus on attack when flanking the target of his challenge. If he is riding with other members of his order he gains an additional +1 for every order member also flanking the target of this challenge.

Skills: An order of the brazen fox cavalier adds Knowledge (nature) (Int) and Perception (Wis)

to his list of class skills. Whenever an order of the brazen fox has to make a Ride skill check while riding with at least two member of his order, he receives a bonus on the check equal to 1/2 his ryttervast level (minimum +1).

Order Abilities: A ryttervast belonging to the order of the brazen fox gains the following abilities as he increases in level.

Mounted Mobility (Ex): At 2nd level, while a ryttervast is on his mount and moving he gains a +1 dodge bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity. At 6th level and every four levels thereafter, this bonus increases by 1.

Steady Shot (Ex): At 8th level, a ryttervast does not take any penalties using a ranged weapon while his mount is moving.

Victorious Call (Ex): At 15th level, when a ryttervast delivers the final blow to a challenged target he may make a victory call. His call restores a number of hit point equal to his cavalier level to all allies that can hear him.

New Barbarian Archetype: Haufbreg

Living on the merciless mountain and bringing mercy to those who are strong enough to survive.

Requirements: Gnome, West Mountains Racial Trait

Class Features

The following are class features of the haufbreg.

Weapon Finesse: The haufbreg gains *weapon finesse* as a bonus feat even if he does not meet the prerequisites.

This ability replaces the barbarian's *medium armor and shield* proficiencies.

One Hand for the Mountain (Ex): The haufbreg adds his level as an enhancement bonus on all Acrobatics skill checks made to jump. When making a jump in this way, the haufbreg is always considered to have a running start.

This ability replaces the *fast movement* class feature.

Mountain Training (Ex): At 4th level, the haufbreg gains a +1 bonus on initiative checks and Knowledge (geography), Perception, Stealth, and Survival skill checks when he is in the mountains. At 6th level and every three levels thereafter these bonuses increase by 1.

This ability replaces the *trap senses* class feature.

Precise Damage (Ex): At 14th level, while raging, a haufbreg can use his Dexterity modifier instead of his Strength modifier on damage rolls.

This ability replaces the *indomitable will* class feature.

New Ranger Archetype: Skogland

In the forests, there are those who hunt, and then, there are those who hunt the hunters.

Requirements: Gnome, Central North Forest Racial Trait

Class Features

The following are class features of the skogland.

Sneak Attack: At 1st level, the skogland gains *sneak attack*. This is exactly like the rogue ability of the same name. The extra damage dealt increases by +1d6 every 3 levels (1st, 4th, 7th, 10th, 13th, 16th, 19th). If an skogland gets a *sneak attack* bonus from another source, the bonuses on damage stack.

This replaces the favored *enemy class* feature.

Favored Terrain (Ex): A skogland must take *forests* as his first favored terrain otherwise this ability works the same as the ranger's favored terrain.

This ability modifies the *favored terrain* class feature.

Faithful Companion (Ex): At 4th level, a skogland forms a close bond with an *animal companion*. The companion is treated as a druid's *animal companion* except that his effective druid level is equal to his skogland level -2; animal companion also shares his favored terrain bonuses.

This ability modifies the *hunter's bond* class feature.

Dogged Quarry (Ex): The skogland can designate any creature as his quarry as long as he is tracking within one of his favored terrains. If the quarry leave his favored terrain then he loses that target as if he were dismissing the quarry but he may select a new quarry after waiting one hour instead of 24. Otherwise this ability works the same as the ranger's quarry.

This ability modifies the *quarry* class feature.

Doomed Quarry (Ex): At 19th level, the skogland's ability to hunt his quarry improves. He can now select a quarry as a free action, and can now take 20 while using Survival to track his quarry, while moving at normal speed without penalty. His insight bonus to attack his quarry increases to +4. If his quarry is killed or dismissed, he can select a new one after 10 minutes have passed.

This ability replaces the *improved quarry* class feature.

My Land (Ex): At 20th level, the skogland may treat all enemies on their favored terrains as flat footed for the purpose of using sneak attack.

This ability modifies the *master hunter* class feature.



New Druid Archetype: Forsterken

The forsterken are more than just servants of the water.

Requirements: Gnome, Lakes Racial Trait

Class Features

The following are class features of the forsterken.

Improved Animal Empathy (Ex): When a forsterken uses their *animal empathy*, they can also improve the attitude of an animal. This ability functions just like a Diplomacy check made to improve the attitude of a person. The forsterken rolls 1d20 and adds her forsterken level and her Charisma modifier to determine the animal empathy check result.

The typical domestic animal has a starting attitude of indifferent, while wild animals are usually unfriendly.

This replaces the wild *empathy* class feature.

Scrying Pool (Ex): At 9th level, a forsterken can use any pool of clear water at least the size of a handheld bowl as a *scrying* device, as if using the spell *scrying*. At 15th level, this functions like greater *scrying*. He can scry for a number of rounds per day equal to his forsterken level; these rounds do not need to be consecutive.

This ability replace the *venom immunity* class feature.

Form of Water (Su): At 13th level, a forsterken gains the ability to change into water at will, as if using the *fluid form* spell, but only while in his normal form. In addition, if he merges with a body of water no bigger than a lake then he knows all creatures and substances that have come in contact with the water in the last hour. All of his gear and weapons transform with him and any attack or damage rolls makes in this form have a -5 penalty.

This ability replace the *a thousand faces* class feature.

New Alchemist Archetype: Zaubermach

Those who live in the human Cities have learned to master the wild there as well.

Requirements: Gnome, Eastern Shore Racial Trait

Class Features

The following are class features of the zaubermach.

Hunker Down (Ex): At 2nd level, the zaubermach gains a burrow speed equal to his base land speed; he can dig through sand and dirt but not through rock.

This ability replaces the *poison resistance* and *use poison* class feature.

Landmine (Su): At 4th level, as a full round action a zaubermach can bury a bomb in the ground. Within four hours of its creation, if any creature steps in the spot where the bomb is buried, the bomb explodes. The bomb uses the *thrown splash weapon* special attack rules with the space it was buried as the direct hit. Only unmodified bombs without discovery modifications can be used. Zaubermach can camouflage the bomb with a Survival skill check.

This discovery replaces the alchemist's 4th level *discovery*.

Improved Landmine (Su): At 12th level, the zaubermach can now bury bombs with discovery modifications.

This ability replaces the *swift poison* class feature.

Clever Craftsman (Ex): This functions as the alchemist's instant alchemy except instead of being able to add poison to a weapon as an immediate

action, the zaubermach gains 1/2 his level to his Craft (alchemy) check when using this power.

This ability modifies the *instant alchemy* class feature.

New Monk Archetype: Vankjenner

Sometimes, a gnome's empathy is too great...

Requirements: Gnome, Xeric
Shrublands Racial Traits.

Racial Traits

The following are racial traits of the vankjenner.

Empathic: Vankjenner can see the emotions of any creature within 30 feet; when he concentrates an aura of colors appears around target which he can interpret as emotions.

This traits replaces the *animal empathy* racial trait.

Class Features

The following are class features of the vankjenner.

Monach's Strike: At 1st level, a vankjenner gains *improved unarmed strike* as a bonus feat. A vankjenner's attacks may be with fist, elbows, knees, and feet. This means that a vankjenner may make unarmed strikes with his hands full. There is no such thing as an off-hand attack for a vankjenner striking unarmed. A vankjenner may thus apply his full Strength bonus on damage rolls for all his unarmed strikes.

Usually a vankjenner's unarmed strikes deal nonlethal damage, but he can choose to deal lethal damage instead with -2 penalty on his attack roll. He has the same choice to deal lethal or nonlethal damage while grappling.

A vankjenner's unarmed strike is treated as both a manufactured weapon and a

natural weapon for the purpose of spells and effects that enhance or improve either manufactured weapons or natural weapons.

A vankjenner also deals more damage with his unarmed strikes than a normal person would, despite his small stature the vankjenner deals medium creature damage as shown on the Monk Table.

This ability replaces the *unarmed strike* class feature.

Shared Empathy (Ex): At 3rd level, a vankjenner can touch someone and store their emotions for up to 1 week. He can share this stored emotion with anyone, as a standard action, by touch. He gets a +5 to his Diplomacy checks when sharing an emotion that will help his situation. Due to this, when the vankjenner kills someone with his own hands he gets empathic backlash and becomes *staggered* for 2 rounds.

This ability replaces the *still mind* class feature.

Behandlet (Ex): At 4th level, a vankjenner forms a close bond with an animal companion. The companion is treated as a druid's animal companion except that his effective druid level is equal to his vankjenner level - 3.

This ability replaces the *slow fall* class feature.

Intuition (Ex): At 7th level, a vankjenner has a strange sense when bad things are about to happen. He cannot be surprised and always gets an action during surprise rounds.

This ability replaces the *wholeness of body* class feature.

Empathy Strike (Su): Starting at 15th level, a vankjenner can share his empathy so perfectly with another creature that he can overwhelm the mind of the untrained. He can use this *empathy strike* attack once per day, and he must announce his intent before making his attack roll. Creatures immune to critical hits cannot be affected.

If the vankjenner strikes successfully, the blow succeeds, but the target takes no damage. The target makes a Will saving throw with a DC of 10 + the vankjenner's level + his Wisdom modifier.

If the save is unsuccessful, the vankjenner's empathy overwhelms the target's mind for the next 7 days. The strike renders the victim completely helpless (unconscious); the target cannot be woken until the effect wears off. The vankjenner can dismiss the effect as a free action.

If the saving throw is successful, the target is not affected by the attack, but it may still be affected by another one at a later time. However, the target does not become *stunned* for 3 rounds.

A vankjenner can have no more than one *empathy strike* in effect at one time. If a vankjenner uses *empathy strike* while another is still in effect, the previous effect is negated.

This ability replaces the *quivering palm* class feature.

Vow of Empathy

Requirements: Vankjenner Archetype

Restrictions: A vankjenner is bound by her empathetic bond with the world. She feels the pains and hopes and fears of those around her, making her a compassionate sister to all. She tries to find peaceful resolutions before resorting to violence. She may not make the first blow in combat, but only use violence when absolutely necessary. When she does use violence, she must refrain from murder and accept surrender from any creature who is sentient enough to request it. She learns methods to subdue her opponents rather than cause them permanent injury and uses diplomacy and compromise to resolve conflict. She believes mercy and justice can help turn hearts from darkness to light and that revenge and retribution only continue the chain of violence.

Finally, she recognizes that the world can be a cruel place, although she does not have to be.

Benefit: A vankjenner with this vow increases her ki pool by 1 ki point for every 4 monk levels (minimum +1).

Approved classes

Listed below are the classes available to gnomes in *Wicked Fantasy*.

Barbarian	archetype
Bard	yes
<i>Cleric</i>	<i>no</i>
Druid	archetype
Fighter	yes
Monk	archetype
<i>Paladin</i>	<i>no</i>
Ranger	archetype
Rogue	yes
Sorcerer	yes
Wizard	yes
Alchemist	archetype
Cavalier	archetype
<i>Gunslinger</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Inquisitor</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Magus</i>	<i>no</i>
Oracle	yes
<i>Summoner</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Witch</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Antipaladin</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Ninja</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Samurai</i>	<i>no</i>





Cacilia

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

Cacilia woke from a dream of flying.

Henrich was beside her, sharing his warmth.

The big dog looked up with dozy eyes and she smiled. She scratched his ears and he made a low, grumbly sound of gratitude.

She got up from the grass, still moist from the morning dew, and walked down to the stream. She stood by the edge of the stream and looked into the water. She saw a silver, darting fish and whispered, "The world is a cruel place, my little friend." Then, she snatched up the fish with one quick motion. "I'm sorry," she said. "I am trying to be kind."

When the fish was cleaned and cooked, she shared it with Henrich. He gobbled it up quick. She doused and buried the fire, then moved on.

It was only a quick jaunt back to the road. She knew better than to sleep near the road. Men had too much confidence in their safety. She never slept in one of their wayside houses. The wild was safer. At least, safer for a gnome.

A half day later, she found the bandits. They hid in the high grasses, thinking no one could see them. Henrich gave a low growl. She put her hand on his shoulders. "I know," she said. "I see them." Four of them. Cacilia ducked off the road, out of sight.

The easier choice would be to avoid them. No violence. But, if she took that choice, another

traveler may come along. Cacilia told Henrich to stay behind and he sat down, waiting. She moved through the tall grass toward the first one.

She came up behind him, quiet. He was on his belly, looking at the road. She moved fast, was on his back and slammed his face into the mud. The man struggled, but he could not throw her off. She adjusted her weight, shifting with each movement. With his face in the mud, he could make no sound. Within a few breaths, he was silent. She kept his face there for a while longer, just to make sure. Then, when she was sure, she rolled him over.

Yes, still alive.

"I'm sorry," she said. "You should not have been here."

Cacilia dispatched the other three in a similar fashion. The last one required a bit more effort, but he was unconscious like his friends in a matter of moments. She tied them all to a tree within sight of the road. She used some parchment and ink from her pouch and wrote, Bandits. Take care.

"Curse you, gnome!" one of the men shouted at her as she wrote the sign. "We'll kill Syou! We will!"

She felt their hatred. It was thick and heavy like tar. It oozed over her, trying to get into her heart. Cacilia pushed it away.

Hatred feeds itself, she thought.
No need for me to feed it.

She posted the sign and smiled at them. "I will notify the roadman at the next post that you are here. I sincerely hope a wolf or some other creature does not find you before then."

They shouted curses at her and she tipped her hat. "I'm sorry that you have found yourselves in this predicament, but the wilderness is a dangerous place. A man takes his chances when he goes into the woods without knowing the names of its residents."

Then, she moved on.

She did as she promised. When she came to the way station, she informed the roadman of the bandits. He thanked her, gave her some bread and juice. His name was Dannel. She ate and talked with him.

She asked, "Do you know Far Accord?"

Dannel nodded. "That's the village north of here," he said. "There's a break in the road, just ahead. A dirt path. Take it. You'll find it."

He broke some bread and said,
"You have friends there?"

She said, "No. Family."

Dannel nodded. "There's talk the Senate won't recognize it."

"I don't think they care," she said.

He laughed. "Got to admire that," he said. "If you snub the Senate, you're good with me."

She smiled at him. She could feel his kindness, his caring. He was a good man.

"You would be a good friend," she told him. "I'm glad your post is not far away from Far Accord."

When they were done, he locked the way station and shook hands. He went one way and she went the other.

A day later, she took the branch from the main road, turning north, as her map suggested. Another two days.

Before the sun went down, Cacilia set up camp and read the letter again. She smiled. Henrich sat next to her, putting his head on her lap.

"We're almost there," she told him. He wagged his tail.

Two days later, they found Far Accord.

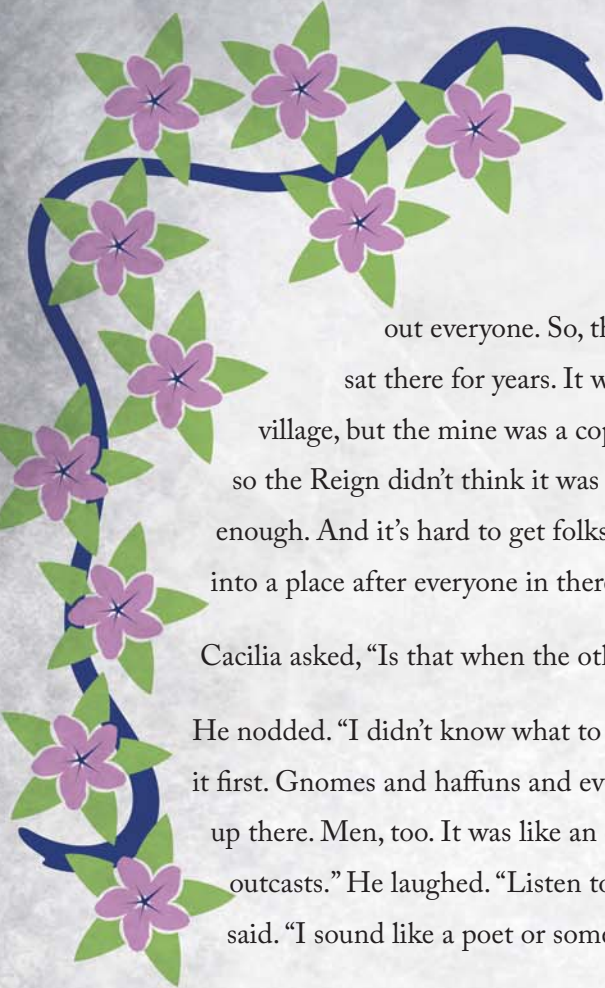
"You know the story?" the roadman asked her, handing her more fruit.

"I know what my sister told me," Cacilia said.

Dannel ate some grapes and told her, "After the plague... you remember that, right?"

Cacilia nodded. "Yes. Awful."

Dannel said, "After the plague, a lot of smaller villages were left empty. Far Accord was one of those villages. It wiped



out everyone. So, the village just sat there for years. It was a mining village, but the mine was a copper mine, so the Reign didn't think it was important enough. And it's hard to get folks to move into a place after everyone in there died."

Cacilia asked, "Is that when the others moved in?"

He nodded. "I didn't know what to make of it first. Gnomes and haffuns and even gnolls up there. Men, too. It was like an outpost of outcasts." He laughed. "Listen to me," he said. "I sound like a poet or something."

You are in your heart, she thought.

"They even have an ork up there. He's the sheriff. Sort of. Like they need one." He handed her more bread. "He just takes care of the bandits that come along. He's a big fellow. I've met him. He has a scar on his face that almost took out his eye and cuts down along his mouth. It makes him look even scarier than most of the orks I've seen."

Dannel paused. "I'm talking too much," he said.

You're just lonely, she thought. Sitting out here all by yourself, day after day. "No," she told him. "You're talking just enough."

"You're kind," Dannel told him. "Why is it gnomes are always so kind?"

"Because the world is cruel enough," she told him. "No need to add more."

He raised his cup. "That's as fine a philosophy I've ever heard," Dannel said. "Here's to bringing some kindness to a cruel world."

She touched her cup with his and smiled. He was a good man.

* * *

The roadman said the village was once a ghost town. Once.

She saw no one in the one street stretching down the village. She saw no movement in the windows. No sounds. No voices. Nothing.

Henrich made a soft sound beside her.

Cacilia felt a small, growing fear in his heart. She touched his head, scratching his ears. "It's all right," she said. "It's all right." Henrich smiled and walked closer to her.

"Hello?" she asked, almost shouting the word. "Anyone? Hello?"

The doors remained closed, the windows dark.

"Margaret?" she said, louder this time. No answer. This time, even louder. "Maggie?"

A door opened. Cacilia saw a man standing in the doorway. "Here!" he said, trying to whisper and shout at the same time. "Quickly!"

She looked at the man carefully, standing still. She felt no hate or malice from him. Only fear. Like

a wave, it washed against her, trying to push her down, then trying to pull her off her feet. Cacilia took a deep breath and walked toward the door.

“Quick!” the man said, urging her with a gesture.

Cacilia picked up the pace and
Henrich followed her.

She entered the doorway and the man closed it behind her, barring it shut. At first, Cacilia thought she misjudged the man, sensing a trap. But then she saw the others.

They were gathered together in a single room. Dozens of them. Men, gnolls, haffuns, uvandir. They shared blankets and plates, although they looked as if they had not slept or eaten in days.

Cacilia looked at the man. “What is this?”

“You are Maggie’s sister?” he asked. “Cacilia?”

She nodded. “Yes, that’s me.”

He told her, “You were a fool to come here.”

Cacilia said, “Where is Margaret?”

A haffun in a ruined dress said, “It took her.”

She turned to look at the haffun. “What took her?”

“The thing in the mine,” the man behind her said. “It took all of them.”

Cacilia looked at them. Fear had murdered their senses. There was no speaking to them this way. She looked for another gnome... and saw none.

“There are no gnomes?” she asked the man.

“No,” he said. “It took them first.”

With no emotion in her voice, the haffun said, “It’s the Enemy.”

The uvandir shouted, “Don’t say that!”

His voice boomed around the room, making the window frames shake.

She shouted back. “It is! It is! They found us! We’re doomed!”

The other haffuns held her, trying to comfort her. She fell into a despair that hit Cacilia like a wall of heat.

“She keeps saying that,” the man said. “What does she mean?”

Cacilia looked up at the man. “A haffun story,” she said. “For frightening children. Nothing more.”

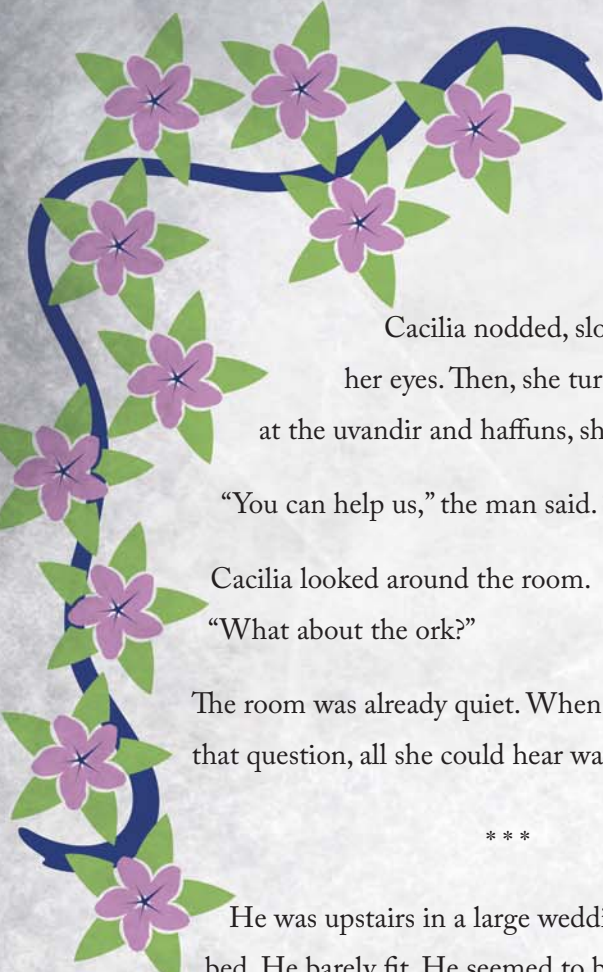
The man did not look convinced. “I think you are lying to me,” he said.

Cacilia took a breath, looking at the man, she said, “I am. But I can tell you no more.” She touched his hand. “Do you understand?”

The man shook his head, pulling his hand back. “No,” he said. “This thing is killing us. One by one. Secrets will only kill us quicker.”

She looked at the uvandir and the haffuns. They didn’t say a word. Just stared at her.

The man said, “Your sister said you were in a courage.”



Cacilia nodded, slowly, lowering her eyes. Then, she turned and looked at the uvandir and haffuns, she said, "I was."

"You can help us," the man said. "You can kill it."

Cacilia looked around the room.

"What about the ork?"

The room was already quiet. When she asked that question, all she could hear was terror.

He was upstairs in a large wedding bed. He barely fit. He seemed to be made of bandages, all blood-soaked.

Cacilia moved closer, hearing the ork's unstable breath. A haffun sat next to him, crying. She looked at Cacilia.

"He went into the mine," she said. "When he didn't come back, we went looking for him. We found him and... he..." Her sobs took over her speech.

Cacilia looked at the man. "Can he speak?"

The man shook his head. "No," he said. "He hasn't woken since we took him from the mine."

She looked at his wounds. He had cuts and burns. Acid burns. And something that looked like...

Cacilia shook her head. "I don't know," she said.

"This isn't like anything I've seen before."

The man took her aside. He looked at the ork, then looked back at her. "Tell me about the Enemy," he said.

She asked him, "What is your name?"

"Benedic," he said.

Cacilia took a deep breath. "Benedic, I assume this thing comes out of the mine?"

He nodded. "Yes."

"At night?"

"Yes."

"Have you ever seen it?"

"No," he said. "But the Gumsh has."

"Is that the uvandir?" she asked.

"Yes."

"Then I need to speak to him."

A few moments later, she sat with the uvandir. His thick fingers played with his braided beard, his eyes focused on his feet. She spoke to him in his language.

"Master Gumsh," she said.

He did not look up.

"Benedic tells me you saw the thing in the mine."

Gumsh kept his gaze where it was, but nodded slightly.

"Was it like anything you've seen before?"

The uvandir raised his gaze to meet hers.
He said nothing, but she understood.

Cacilia looked at the faces in the house. There was no will left. They were broken. This was not simple fear. This was something else. Something that crept into their hearts and squeezed. She could feel it trying to find a way into her chest.

She thought of the roadman... but he was days away. And moving in the opposite direction.

She was alone. She couldn't do this alone. If she had a full courage, then perhaps. But not...

The uvandir reached forward and put his hand on hers.

Help us.

Cacilia's breath caught in her throat. She nodded. "I will," she said.

Under his beard, the uvandir found what was left of his smile.

I know you can.

Benedic offered her torches, but she declined. "I won't need them," she said. "I see well enough."

But when she lost the light of day behind her, a veil of darkness came over her that her eyes could not pierce. A magical darkness. She reached into her pouch and took out one of the stones the uvandir gave her. It lit the mine with a white light, drawing long shadows across the beams.

Cacilia moved forward.

Henrich moved beside her. She felt his worry. She scratched his ears and hugged him. "This is a bad place," she told him. "But if we are careful, we'll be all right."

Henrich wagged his tail. They continued on.

She could feel the same fear she felt back in the village, but it was stronger here. Its tendrils reached between her ribs and sought her heart.

I know what you are, she told the fear.
And I do not belong to you.

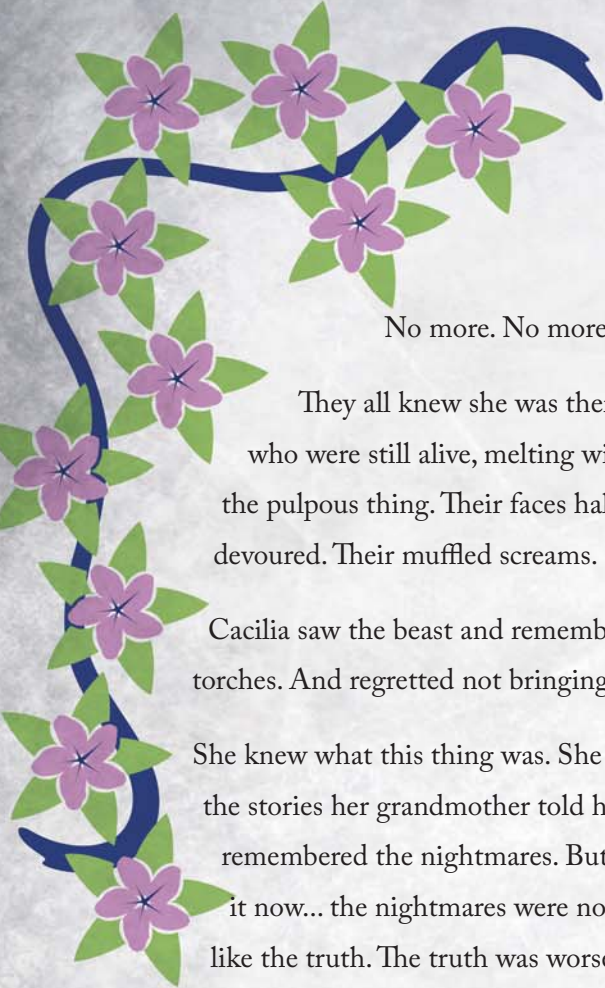
Cacilia heard a sound, deeper in the darkness. It was a wet sound, a slurping sound. She paused, waited. Henrich growled. She heard it moving closer. Slithering. And she heard voices. Dozens of voices. Whimpers and muffled screams. She felt a dozen terrors reach out to her from the darkness ahead. Cacilia clenched her fists. She was ready. She was ready.

Then, she saw the thing. And the fear that had been scraping against her heart finally broke through her defenses.

First, she saw the faces. Silently screaming, their eyes and mouths wide. Wriggling fingers. Then, she saw the ooze that held them. A mucilaginous mass. And she saw the figures of men and haffuns and gnolls and the rest, trapped within it.

Death, they screamed at her.

Mercy, they pleaded.



No more. No more.

They all knew she was there. Those who were still alive, melting within the pulpous thing. Their faces half-devoured. Their muffled screams.

Cacilia saw the beast and remembered Dominic's torches. And regretted not bringing them.

She knew what this thing was. She remembered the stories her grandmother told her, and she remembered the nightmares. But seeing it now... the nightmares were nothing like the truth. The truth was worse.

She felt Henrich's desire to pounce, but she held him back. "No," she said. "Don't touch it. That's how it traps you."

The thing oozed forward. Its mass filled the entire mine. She took two steps back.

I have to run, she thought. I can't fight this thing. I can't even touch it.

That was when she saw her sister's face.

Stuck in the beast, half-devoured, but still alive. Cacilia felt her sister's pain. No thoughts. Only pain. Her chest sank. She lost her breath.

"Maggie," she heard her lips say. She felt tears on her cheek. Her hands trembled. The fear had taken her. She could not move. She could not breathe. The thing moved closer. It

loomed over her. She saw all the faces now. Heard all their voices, felt all their pain.

At least I will be with her, she thought. At least we will die together.

Then, she felt a pain in her leg. A sharp, bloody pain. And something pulled her back. It snapped her out of the ocean of despair that had fallen on her. She looked down and saw Henrich, his teeth in her leg, tugging her away.

She scrambled, pushing with her hands and feet against the floor of the mine. The thing moved closer, the sounds of despair unrelenting.

Cacilia got back to her feet, running backward, putting space between her and the beast. Henrich barked at her. She looked up and saw a lantern. Lanterns everywhere.

Lanterns filled with oil.

She grabbed three of them while the beast lumbered toward her. She smashed the glass, spilling the oil over the ground. Two more lanterns and more oil. Then, she took the wick from a fifth and lit it with the tinder from her backpack. She held the fire up and saw the thing, still moving.

"A little closer," she said. "Just a little closer."

It followed her instruction. It slithered toward her. She tried to look at the beast and not the faces. She tried to drown out the voices. Keep the despair at bay.

Then, it slid onto the oil. She waited a little longer. Just a little longer.

And then, finally, she threw the lit wick. It caught the oil and the mine erupted into fire. The explosion knocked her back and she hit her head on a support beam. Her vision blurred. She fought to get back to her feet.

She saw the beast and saw the fire devouring it. The faces burned now, screaming because of a new pain. She felt all of it.

Every life, burning.

Cacilia let the pain flow over her. The blackening skin blistered and curled. And the fading lives spoke to her.

Thank you, they said.

Thank you.

* * *

She walked back to the village. Henrich stayed close, his furry body always touching hers. All the lives, all the pain, was still with her. She could not cleanse them from her mind. She knew every name. As if they were walking with her now.

But one name was with her most. Maggie.

When she returned, they asked her to tell the tale. She just shook her head. "It's gone," she said. "The thing is gone." And that's all she said. She went upstairs, laid down on a bed. Henrich jumped up and curled at her feet. She fell asleep and didn't wake until the next day.

Later, the uvandir brought her a cup of beer. He said nothing. She nodded and said, "Thank you," and drank it with one long swallow.

She was seated on a bed. He looked at the space beside her. She nodded and he sat. Together, they stayed that way for a long time, saying nothing.

Finally, she said, "They've found us."

The uvandir nodded, just slightly.



Gobowins: The World's Worst Blessing

(With a special tip of the magic hat to P&T for seven very magical class abilities)

At the beginning of time, the Makers agreed to create a race to populate the world, but they could not agree what kind of people it should be. And so, they all agreed that each would create their own. It was a game. They threw gifts into a bowl and each Maker was allowed to draw one gift to give their race. Nobody knew which Maker got which gift.

But when it came time for gowin to draw his gift, there were none left. The other Makers laughed at him and said, "You have no gift to give your people!" And then, they went away and began crafting.

But gowin did not cry or weep or moan. He went to his own place and, like the other Makers, began crafting.

When it was time for the Makers to reveal their peoples, they all arrived smiling. Eaves said, "I have made the elves, and I have given them the gift of Longevity!" Mun said, "I have created the men, and I have given them the gift of Ingenuity!" Durv said, "I have created the dwarves and I have given them the gift of Persistence!"

And when all the races and gifts were revealed, gowin appeared. "I have made a people," he said, "and I have given them *this*"

And all the Makers looked upon what gowin had done and they trembled with fear.
— Gobowin folk tale

What was the Gift Gowin gave his people? Best to show you...

The uvandir went to war with the goblins once. Once.

The uvandir brought their war machines with them. They set up on one side of the battlefield with their catapults and engines while they watched the goblins on the other side of the battlefield with spears and bows and knives. The uvandir laughed to themselves, "This will be a quick battle."

The uvandir were right.

They launched their first volley... and the catapult snapped in half, sending dwarven fire onto the uvandir army. One of their ballista

fired directly into the ground after a wheel broke. A trebuchet... well, that was so ugly, it's probably best not to write about it.

Almost all the uvandir war engines failed in some way or another. And then, the goblins just marched across the battlefield, forced the orks to surrender and won the battle without taking a single life... with their own weapons.

This little creatures—barely larger than a human child, green-skinned and sharp toothed—completely defeated

the uvandir army with nothing more than luck. Bad luck. The worst kind of luck.

The goblins—properly pronounced, “Gobowins” because there is no “L” in the Gobowin language—call this *burwuck*. “The worst blessing.”

A Gobowin's Life

The following section details a gobowin's life from youth, to middle age to old age.

Youth

A gobowin is born in a litter of five to six siblings. Unlike other races, most gobowins make it to maturity. That's because his family protects him. He grows up in a family unit most humans would find unfamiliar. He usually has more than two parents and recognizes all children his age as “siblings.” (The gobowin word for this is *gowana*.)

He grows up in a traveling caravan, learning the ways of his people. The caravan has one leader, the *buk*, and the *buk* has many subservient partners, or *shuks*. While they are subservient, they are considered partners. The *buk* is just the “senior partner.”

Buks are leaders of caravans, or *gofas*. A caravan is a collection of gobowins united for the purpose of survival in a cruel, cruel world. They stick together, stand up for each other and share their resources. While human scholars like to call *gofas*, “goblin families,” they are much more than that. A *gofa* is a community united by the understanding that they need to be together to survive. “The world is out to get you,” an old gobowin proverb goes. “Be sure to get it first.”

The relationship between a *buk* and his *shuks* has nothing to do with gender. There are both male and female *buks*, both male and female *shuks*.

For our gobowin, the *buk* of his caravan is his

father. The caravan has three *shuks*: our gobowin's mother, his uncle and another female gobowin.

Each *shuk* has his own responsibilities, but it is the responsibility of the caravan leader to make sure money comes in. If a *buk* doesn't bring money to the caravan, he isn't worthy of holding the title. Meanwhile, the *shuks* cook, clean, *busk*, trade, swindle, find trinkets to sell, dance and tell stories for money. Anything to earn their keep.

For our gobowin, he spends his time learning the ways of his people from his various relatives. He sees the entire caravan as his family. He learns there are two kinds of people in the world: family and everybody else. And you don't mess with family. The rest of the world? They're suckers. But family is sacred.

Strangely enough, the gobowin word for “family” (*fana*) better translates as “friends.” It literally means “the people you can trust.” Gobowins typically refrain from using this word for non-gobowins, but there are many, many exceptions to this rule.

Our gobowin's family includes sixteen children of various ages. The older ones are getting ready to either lead their own caravans or be a *shuk* in another gobowin's caravan. Our gobowin decides he doesn't want to be someone else's *shuk*, so he tells his father he wants to learn how to be a *buk*. His father smiles — proud that his son has ambition — and begins teaching him the skills he will need.

As he grows up, he learns to rely on his keen hearing. Gobowin eyesight is about average (although they lose it quickly; see below), but their hearing is keen enough to pick out heartbeats. This little trick, along with other skills he learns, helps him determine when and if someone is lying to him. It's hard to lie to a gobowin. Not impossible, but damn hard. He uses this to his advantage in trades and bartering... and other less upfront activities. As Dindritch

Lyn, the goblin scholar at Ajun wrote, “Lying to a goblin is like trying to drink the ocean. The harder you try, the quicker you start drowning.”

Adulthood

At around the age of ten, a gobowin is considered an adult and he must choose whether he will become a buk or a shuk. There are advantages to both. A caravan’s buk is in charge. He holds all the authority. That’s a demanding position. As a shuk, he will have less authority but also less responsibility. But our gobowin is ambitious and wants to be a buk. He does so by buying his own gofa. Of course, he has to find a gofa to buy and not everyone is selling. Older gobowins will sell their gofas to young buks, resigning themselves to the position of a shuk. Often, a gobowin who sells his caravan to a younger buk holds the title of shukbuk, or “trusted advisor.” This shows the older gobowin respect for his former position while not taking authority away from the new buk.

So, until he can find a gofa of his own, he serves as one of his father’s shuks. He slowly takes over daily duties as his father prepares him for becoming a caravan leader. And, when the time is right, as many new buks do, our gobowin buys his caravan from his father. Growing older in age, he wishes to see his son succeed and no longer wants the stress of running the caravan. Our gobowin gives his father the title he deserves and takes over the caravan. He decides where it travels, what Cities it visits, how to divide the wealth among the other members of the caravan.

He meets with other gofas as they travel together on the road making one “grand caravan” or *gangofa*. They set up outside villages and inside human Cities as they barter, trade (and steal) from the locals. During one of these gangofas, he meets another gobowin. They spend the night together and in a month or so, there’s a new litter. The two of them either split the litter evenly (or unevenly, depending on each’s bargaining skills) and go their separate ways. Later in the year, our gobowin meets another caravan, spends the night again in another’s arms, and a month or so later, we have another litter. This time, the other gobowin agrees to be a shuk in our buk’s caravan, bringing along with everything she owns.

Old Age

The life of a gobowin is short compared to the lives of many other races in the Known World. The oldest known gobowin, affectionately known as Ganny Gog, lived to the ripe old age of twenty-seven. (Gobowin legend says she tricked Old Man Death and lives out her unnatural years in seclusion.)

Our gobowin spends his “twilight years” doing what he’s done all his life. He travels, he barter, he trades, he makes children. He raises new

Gobowin Gender

Gender is a tricky subject for gobowins. Each gobowin can be both male and female, depending on the season, the age of the gobowin and a few other factors. (Human scholars call this “sequential hermaphroditism.”)

Each gobowin is capable of both impregnating and being pregnant, but these two states are mutually exclusive. A gobowin is either male or female, but not both. While many gobowins find themselves shifting between genders, some pick a gender and stick with it through their entire (short) lives. Switching genders, short gestation periods and large litters are one three ways gobowins remain a constant factor in the Known World.



Human stupid

“Human stupid” is a phrase gobowins use among themselves and even sometimes among humans.

There is no gobowin word for it; they only ever use the phrase in native human language. (“*Bakka pub sap dukka* human stupid *fava fen fath.*”)

Goblins see humans acting in particular ways, and these behaviors always ask for bad luck to conk them on the head.

“I’ll trust this perfect stranger I’ve never met before!” Human stupid.

“She lied to me before, but she promised she’d never lie again!” Human stupid.

“I’ll jump off this tall ledge and make the water below! Watch!” Human stupid.

“Human stupid” is asking for bad luck. While other races are guilty of it too, no other race is *more* guilty of this irrational behavior than humans. Just asking... *begging...* for bad luck.

shuks and even helps a few new buks find their own caravans. But as the years creep on, he feels the weight of age on his small, slender form.

Gobowins do not age well. While young, they are quick and nimble and clever. But as they gain years, all those crucial advantages slip away. A gobowin enters “old age” around eighteen to twenty and it’s a quick decline from there. His sight goes first and it goes fast (not that it was much good to begin with). Most gobowins die blind. This is balanced by the fact that they have incredible hearing and rely less on their eyes than they do their ears, but when a gobowin loses his sight, he becomes *ganna* (or *ganny*, if female). This word is difficult to translate, but it means, “the one to watch for.” It’s purely coincidence that this word has a double-meaning in both the gobowin tongue and the human language; to watch for because he can’t see, and to watch out for because he’s dangerous.

A *ganna* holds a special spot in a caravan, even eclipsing the buk in some circumstances. The *ganna* is seen as a keen advisor on every matter, and while he is technically beholden to the buk, the buk must show the *ganna* proper respect. In some caravans, the *ganna* and the buk can have a contentious relationship, but it is never antagonistic. According to tradition, a *ganna* can *never* hold the role of buk. All those who do are only asking for bad luck. Likewise, ignoring the *ganna* can bring bad luck to the caravan’s leader. And all gobowins want to avoid bad luck. Asking for it — by ignoring the *ganna* or disrespecting the buk — is just plain human stupid.

As the gobowin reaches the end of his life, the caravan throws a party. They tell stories and sing songs, celebrating their beloved *ganna*. At the end of the party, he makes a speech, and gives away all his possessions to family and friends.

And then, during the party, a band of ogres hunting for food comes across the caravan. Some of them try to fight the ogres and others scatter to the darkness. Most of them, including our gobowin, are killed and eaten. A few escape.

The next day, one of the ogres walks into a river to fish. He pierces his own foot with his spear. The foot goes gangrene and the ogre needs to cut it off. Another is walking through a forest during a storm. Lightning strikes him and he falls over, holding his skull. He loses all sense of who he is. He can’t even speak. He wanders the rest of his days with no knowledge, no understanding. Eventually, a lion eats him. A third ogre falls asleep in a cave. He rolls over on a snake, the snake bites him and the poison makes him blind. He wanders around for a while before wandering over the side of a cliff, dashing his bones against the rocks below. But he doesn’t die. No, that takes another two weeks of slow, agonizing pain before he’s eaten alive by wolves.

Years later, a dark shadow still hangs over the place where the ogres killed the caravan. On a tree, there's a mark. Gobowins left it there to warn others who can read it. Any who sleep under that tree have terrible nightmares, waking in a cold sweat, thinking only of death and ruin for days to come.

That is the life of a gobowin. Always in danger. You are small, weak and defenseless against the world. The only thing you have to protect you is your caravan and a blessing. The worst blessing in the world.

Buwuck: The Worst Blessing in the World

Gobowins tell a story about Gowin, the Maker of the Goblins, bestowing upon them a wondrous gift. The Worst Blessing in the World. This Gift—called *buwuck*—is an aura of bad luck that follows every gobowin wherever he goes. The bad luck doesn't strike the gobowin, but instead, everyone around him. Swords break, bowstrings snap, horses throw shoes and the bard farts at the worst possible moment.

Gobowins are born with the Blessing; they cannot choose whether or not they have it. Also, all gobowins seem to be immune to the Blessing. They never suffer bad luck. As they age, Gobowins get a better hold on buwuck. They are able to direct it, to a certain degree, "throwing" buwuck others. But the Blessing is never completely under a gobowin's control. Sometimes, bad luck just happens. All the gobowin can do is throw up his hands and say, "Wasn't me!"

Wursa: The Best Curse in the World

It would seem that all this bad luck would make gobowins an endangered species in the Known World. That would be the case except for one tiny detail.

The only thing more unlucky than hanging around a gobowin is killing one. You kill a gobowin, you might as well go jump off a cliff. *Wursa*, otherwise known as "the Best Curse in the World" falls on anyone who willfully murders a gobowin. For months—and sometimes *years*—after the act, bad luck follows the murderer wherever he goes. Everything he tries just *fails*. And not just fails, but fails *in the most tragic way possible*.

A rich human once murdered a gobowin for tricking him out of his purse. The human put a knife through the gobowin's throat and left the corpse to rot in the street. Within one week, he had lost all his land, his wife left him for his best friend, his son died of the red fever, he grew warts in places you don't show in public (red, green and purple warts that oozed a thick, yellow puss), he went blind, lost seven fingers and eight toes and broke all four of his front teeth. And when he tried to hang himself, the rope broke.

This could be you.

Don't *ever* murder a gobowin.

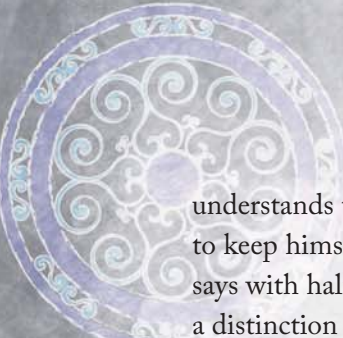
Ufas: Gobowin Ambiguity

Gobowins practice something called *ufus*. Humans translate this as "ambiguity," but it better translates as "you don't know." And gobowins know there is strength in knowing what your enemy does not know.

Confused? Good. That's exactly how a gobowin wants you to be.

They aren't the strongest fighters in the Known World. They aren't the best wizards. They are small, weak and fragile. They needed to find some kind of advantage to keep them alive. Therefore, gobowins have crafted cunning and deception into an art.

You never know when a gobowin is telling the truth. He isn't a pathological liar, he just



understands that keeping others confused is a way to keep himself alive. He peppers everything he says with half-truths and half-lies, never making a distinction between the two. If you're buying a necklace at a gobowin caravan and he tells you that it's a magical charm that protect you from bad dreams, he's probably telling you most of the truth, but definitely not all of it. The charm does keep away bad dreams, but that's because the charm contains a daemon lover who will fill your dreams with visions of sex and pleasure. He won't mention that part. Besides, why do you need to know that? What's the harm in keeping that secret... especially when it will make for such a lovely surprise later!

While you, the reader, are going to learn a lot about gobowins, the people in the Known World know very little. At least, they know very little that's true. They know many stories (most of them perpetuated by gobowins themselves), but the actual *truth* about gobowins remains unknown. Is it really bad luck to harm one? Did you hear the story of the Duke who pushed one down in the street? The man has only one eye now!

Do gobowins really have the Blessing or is it all herbs and poisons? Did that Duke really lose his eye at the dinner table or was it part of an elaborate ruse? Or is it just rumor and everyone is too frightened to ask him?

Nothing about gobowins can be proven. Their curses, their misfortunes, their scheming games... what is real magic and what is sheer con artistry?

It's that ambiguity that gives gobowins their strength. You never know what's real and what's plain chicanery.

The True Origin of Gobowins

Human scholars have tried to pin down where gobowins came from with little success. Gobowins themselves have different accounts for their origins.

First, there's the Tale of Gowin (up above). Humans have taken this to mean that the gobowins were some sort of "formed creature," perhaps given birth by sorcery unknown to men. Gobowins shake their heads. "No, the story means what it says. Stupid human."

There is also a hypothesis regarding a comet that fell in the southern forests near Everwood. Magic emanating from the comet transformed the creatures and the forest, including the elves living there. Yes, there is a possibility that gobowins are actually magically-transformed elves. Gobowins like telling this story to every elf they meet. "I was like you!"

Gobowins may also be creatures who came up from the ground with the haffuns, uvandir and gnomes. Of course, the underfolk deny this claim, but gobowins always nod their heads when asked. "Yes. We came up with them." Gobowins are a little less enthusiastic about telling this story when an uvandir is around.

Are gobowins a breed of ork? The orks don't think so, but gobowins won't deny the claim. "I is an ork!" Whenever an ork threatens to beat a gobowin for making the claim, the gobowin just reminds him, "Bad wuck!" That usually calms down the ork.

("Bad wuck!" Remember, gobowins don't have an "L" in their language.)

Some scholars point to the mysterious origin of the gnolls as a possible link to gobowins. Certainly, the gnolls came from *somewhere*, but nobody knows for certain. Most scholars agree they were almost certainly the result of the Plague. Perhaps gobowins are also a result of a similar event? Gobowins agree and disagree. "You think I'm a sneeze? Hm. Maybe I am!"

Just where did gobowins come from? It all depends on which gobowin you ask.

Gofas: Gobowin Caravans

“Others got Gifts, but traded them for smarts.”

— Anonymous gobowin merchant

As far as history can remember, gobowins have had no homeland. No gobowin owns a castle. No gobowin owns servants or vassals. Instead, they travel together in large extended families called *gofas*. A *gofa* contains many, many gobowin families who travel together for mutual protection. And profit.

Yes, profit. You see, gobowins collect the trash of all the other cultures, peddling it as treasure, and because gobowins have an uncanny sense of salesmanship. “A goblin could sell a drowning man a glass of water and get a dying man’s last healing potion for a copper piece.” They usually make a good living at buying valuable items for a little and selling worthless junk for a lot.

Within a *gofa*, gobowins are divided into families, usually ruled by a single parent figure (a matriarch or a patriarch). The prominent parent is called a *buk*. The subordinate parent is the *shuk*. (Gender is not specific when it comes to these roles.) The *buk* is responsible for the family’s income. The *shuk* is responsible for raising the children, cooking the food and carrying out other household duties.

Gobowin children are born with their eyes open. They spend a week or two before they walk and are expected to be fully independent a month after birth. A *gofa* usually has scores of gobowin children running here and there, making noises, picking strangers’ pockets and bringing home things they “found” while wandering near the local village. A *gofa* only spends a few days in the same place, so if one moves in near your town and you find a few things missing, you have precious little time to buy it back. Besides, any gobowin worth his salt knows to keep the things acquired at *this* village under wraps until he makes it to the *next* village.

The Buk

As head of a caravan, the *buk* has many responsibilities. He chooses where the caravan goes, where it stops, what it sells, what it buys and what it takes from the foolish. He chooses which customers to be honest with and which customers to trick. The rest of the caravan trusts him in times of trouble and praises him in times of prosperity. And, the success or failure of the caravan rests solely on his head.

Each *buk* runs his caravan differently, but one thing is always true. Every gobowin in his *gofa* is family, even children who are not his own. His responsibility is to protect every gobowin head. Not easy in the Known World. Few gobowins make it old age. Lucky there are so many of them, or they’d be nothing but stories.

To become a *buk*, a gobowin has to buy his own caravan. This usually means buying a caravan from another *buk* (who is close to retirement or has failed in his duties), or he can buy a caravan of his own and try attracting other gobowins to follow him.

The first thing a *buk* has to do is get as many *shuks* into his caravan as possible. (“*Shuk*” means “carriage rider.”) Humans equate the relationship between a *buk* and a *shuk* to a human husband and wife, and the resemblance is similar, but there are key differences. A *buk* (the prominent parent) may have as many *shuks* as he or she wishes. If female, the *buk* has many husbands; if male, the *buk* has many wives. But the terms “husband” and “wife” are misleading here. There is no explicit sexual relationship nor is there any romantic link between them. At least, not necessarily. The relationship between a *buk* and his *shuk* is professional. *Shuks* choose *buks* because of their ability to lead a caravan, protect children and make a profit.

Gobowin Groovy

Of course, a romantic relationship between a buk and his shuk is possible. In fact, it's very likely. Gobowins do not have the same sexual taboos humans do. To put it bluntly, gobowins will have sex with other gobowins, regardless of gender. Male-male, female-female, male-female-male, female-male-female, it's all the same to gobowins. However, gobowins will not have sex with other races. As one gobowin put it, "You wouldn't know what to do." In truth, for gobowins, sex is an act of trust. And gobowins simply don't trust non-gobowins that much.

Dun: Tricks

Gobowins have a word that does not translate well into the Common Tongue. The word is *dun*. Technically, it means "trick," but that doesn't convey the full sense of the word. It also has the connotation of "lesson." In other words, "a trick that teaches a fool a lesson."

For example, gobowins would look at picking a pocket as a *dun*. If you find your bracelet has gone missing while wandering a gofa, and you happen to find it for sale at one of the merchant stands, the gobowin will probably say something along the lines of:

"Hey, yeah. I stole it. I stole it to teach you a lesson. You don't pay no attention to nothing. I'm a *bad* thief. A *bad* thief. You see Gimble, over there? He's a *good* thief. If he stole it, you wouldn't know its gone for a week! But I steal it from you and you learn how easy it is to take. I teach you a lesson. You owe me. You give me ten gold and we're even. Or, I keep your bracelet as pay."

This isn't a disingenuous apology for picking your pocket. The gobowin means every word he says. The whole world is full of tricks—full of *dun*—and you are better off learning the lesson from me than from someone else.

Gobowins have a proverb that further explains their attitude toward tricks: "If you buy it, you deserve it." Gobowins divide the world into two kinds of people: *veck* and *faunda*. If someone is foolish enough to fall for a trick, it means they deserve to *get* tricked. They're *veck*. (The word comes from a gobowin tradition of subtly marking a particularly gullible customer with chalk, thus identifying him his gullibility to other merchants. We might translate the word into Common Tongue as "marked one" or simply "a mark.")

On the other hand, those who are clever enough to see through deceptions are worthy of respect. Gobowins have a profound respect for those who can see *dun* and consider such people *faunda*. It means, "friend."

In other words, "Don't treat your friends like marks."

Gobowin Tricks

Gobowins are full of tricks. Here's three to get you started.

The No Sell: If you want to sell something worthless, make sure folks believe they can't afford it. Some mark is looking over your junk and you see his eye catches something. Take it away from him. "This is too expensive for you," you tell him. "You don't want it." When he asks how much it is, give him a reasonable price. You just primed his expectations, then gave him a price lower than he expected. His gold is already yours.

The Wife Sell: Find a mark and look at him with a frightened face. "You got curse!" you tell him. "Cursed! Cursed!" Then, offer him what he needs to break the curse: some worthless bauble. Just put it right in his hands. "Take this," tell him. "You need this." Then, once he starts walking away, the wife shows up. "What you do?" she shouts at you. "Give away for free!" You explain

that the mark needs it (he doesn't) and he can't afford to pay for it (he can). You and the wife bicker. You say he needs it and she says he has to pay.

"Ten gold," she says. "He should pay ten gold for it."

You say, "No! He need it. He should only pay two!"

She says, "Eight!"

You say, "Four!"

Both you and the wife agree to a price. Five. He should pay five for it.

He already thinks it's worth ten (the wife said so), so he'll be perfectly willing to pay five.

The Pickpocket: Most merchants have a pickpocket around looking for loose purses. Of course, you hired him, so when he steals the purse, you can spot him, catch him and give the purse back to the mark. "I catch him for you!" you tell him. "Now come back to caravan. I got something for you!"

Catching the thief establishes trust with the mark. You helped him get his purse back. He'll be more willing to buy something from you now.

Also, a lot of gona have little booths with games of chance and skill. Throw copper coins into a bottle and win a prize. That sort of thing. Of course, all of them are rigged. Plus, why do you think so many games are designed to have you leaning over a railing, focusing on something other than that purse dangling from your belt?

Dunda: The Big Trick

The second most important part of gobowin life is something called *dunda*, otherwise known as "the Big Trick."

Gobowins know what the other races think of them. Small, deceitful, devious, untrustworthy grifters who are only looking to score your hard earned gold.

Well, there's a reason the cliché exists, but not to the level the other races suspect. To put it simply, gobowins play dumb. They know the stereotype other races have made for them and they play it to the hilt. They talk in stilted dialects, mix up verbs and nouns and make animated gestures to further the clownish illusion.

This is the Big Trick. Make all the marks think you're a stupid, uneducated bumpkin who barely speaks the Common Tongue and has no clue about the "real world."

Toowa: The Shunned Places

There are places the gobowins do not go. Places where they leave marks to warn others. Under a tree where a gobowin was hung. At a cross roads where a gobowin caravan was beset by bandits.

There are other places that have nothing to do with gobowin death, but are shunned anyway. These places, these dark, unlucky places, are to be avoided at all costs. Even if you are a gobowin. Sometimes, *because you are a gobowin.*

Only our *tana*, our friends, know the truth.

Fana no Tana

Among the many rules gobowins live by, this may be the most important.

Fana no tana is a gobowin term that has kin in the human language. Human grifters say, “Never play your friends for marks.” The phrase refers to refraining from treating friends like you treat the targets of your confidence games. The gobowin phrase means much the same thing, but with slightly different language. “Fools, not friends.”

Gobowins have many tricks they can play, but they never play tricks on friends. For a gobowin, a friend is hard to come by. A cherished find. That’s why you don’t play your friends like marks. You don’t treat your friends like fools.

Gobowins use their tricks to survive in a cruel world. Friends help survival. Therefore, best not to lose a friend over a bauble or a trick. Don’t do that. If you do, *you* are the one who is the fool, not your friend.

Gobowin parents teach their children that bad luck falls on those who treat their friends like fools. Whether that’s true or not, no gobowin wants to test it.

One and Lots

Gobowins have only two numbers: “one” and “lots.”

That is, they count everything as “one.” Two gobowins standing together? “One and one!” Three gobowins standing together? “One and one and one!” But if you have four or more, you have “lots.”

That is, you have “lots of one.”

And, if they don’t have enough, they “Need more one!”

There are two reasons for this. First, gobowins have an incredible affinity with numbers. Show a gobowin a bucket of apples and he can—almost instantly—know how many apples are in the bucket. This intuitive understanding of numbers completely killed any need—for gobowins, at least—to *communicate* numbers to each other. If one gobowin wants to sell that bucket of apples to another, both of them can look at the barrel, know how many are in there, and barter for the bucket. There’s no need to communicate the apples at all. The bucket is full of “one.” Or, if the bucket has less than required to make the trade, it “Needs more one!”

The second reason for this is that it confuses the other races. That, of course, is exactly what the gobowins want.

sheesa: The unluckiest one

Every once in a while, a particular gobowin is born who is different than the rest. Perhaps she is born at a shunned site (like the place where a gobowin caravan was murdered). Perhaps she is born under that “black moon” the gnolls speak of. Whatever the reason, she is *sheesa*. “The unluckiest one.”

A sheesa is a mixed blessing for a caravan. Her Blessing is greater than any other gobowin, but that Blessing comes with “interruptions of madness.” They are not common, nor are they rare, but they do happen, and when they do manifest, they dissipate as quickly as a summer storm. She speaks to things that other gobowins cannot see. She fights with things other gobowins cannot see. She screams in the middle of the night and weeps during the day.

Sheesa usually have an animal companion of sorts. A trusted friend she whispers to and brings with her wherever she goes. A bird, a dog, a cat. The beast is usually just as mad as she and will only trust the sheesa.

Now, you may ask, “If she is so strange, why would a caravan have her?”

Because her Blessing is powerful. Incredibly powerful. And though she may be mad, she also recognizes her role in the caravan. She knows who she is and what she needs to do. She just has a rather poetic way of going about it. A mad, poetic gobowin kind of way.

Gobowins and the Reign

Tomkin

Despite what others may believe, the City of Tomkin is run by the mistress of the markets, the queen of trades, Auntie Rosie. Rosie allows the gobowins in, but she reminds them she runs a clean market. “These markets are all my friends,” she reminds every caravan. “And you don’t play your friends for marks.” The gobowins understood and have run a (relatively) clean trade there ever since.

Shavay

Caravans love Shavay. The City bustles with travelers on their way to and from some other place. A perfect spot for selling off things they may need and buying things they don’t. But trading in Shavay is tricky: the local constables keep a keen eye on gobowins.

Gobowins also love roadmen. Whenever a caravan meets up with a roadman, they offer him food and shelter and company, following wherever he goes. Gobowins respect roadmen for the protection they offer to the caravan and others. After all, having a roadman with you means a better chance of surviving bandit attacks. Plus, roadmen always trade “safe paths” with caravans. “Don’t travel near the gorge; there are trolls hiding there.” Trading paths is a common activity for roadmen and caravans.

Finally, roadmen have been known to carry messages for caravans. They pick up a parcel or

letter from one caravan and carry it to another. There’s always a warm bed and a hot meal when he picks it up and when he drops it off.

“Nana dun roodmahn.” *Never trick a roadman.*

Jinix

It’s hard for a gobowin to do business in Jinix. The thieves have a solid hold on the streets (with the roddun fighting for every bloody inch). For the most part, merchants do not trust gobowins, and a few even hate them. Like the roddun, the thieves view gobowins as competition, but unlike the roddun, they are terrified to do anything against them. Thieves are, generally, a superstitious lot, and the thought of getting a “goblin hex” thrown over their heads is enough to avoid the things. Still, they do their best to keep gobowins out of the streets, out of the City. “Let them trade out in the roads and farms, just as long as they don’t come in *here*.” So, the guilds bribe the City Watch to make sure no gobowins get inside the walls. But that only stems the tide a little. After all, gobowins can bribe guards, too.

Ashcolmb

The City of Ashcolmb is a dangerous place for a gobowin. A dangerous opportunity. They bring rare and unusual finds to the streets, and the sorcerers are always willing to pay top price, but gobowins also disappear with frightening regularity. In Ashcolmb, the black market thrives stronger than the open market, bringing a high profit to gobowins who dare the streets.

The people of Ashcolmb view the gobowins with a mixed light. They like what the gobowins bring, but resent being tricked by “little, green grifters.” That means the majority of the City (including guards) take any advantage they can to victimize a caravan. In retribution for their dishonesty, of course.

Tamerclimb

Tamerclimb has a strict policy on gobowin caravans: unless you need help, stay out.

Yes, they are small and weak and need protection, but your trickster ways are nothing more than a path to self-destruction.

So, unless you are injured, have been wronged, or otherwise need assistance, keep your filthy, dirty caravans out of our City.

Millford

Millford is a great City for gobowin caravans. Gobowins recognize that Millford is in trouble, and because of that, they generally treat the people there fairly. The markets are full of willing customers who are also savvy to the gobowins ways, which has earned the people of Millford a strange kind of “goblin respect.” Yes, they’re tricksters, and yes, they’re cheaters. We know that. But if you treat them fairly, and with respect, they’ll do the same for you.

You can always find gobowins in Millford. And if you’re a native, they may even tip you off to special deals. But if you aren’t, if you’re just a visitor, and you have no interest in sticking around and helping, then you’re a sucker and worth every trick a merchant can pull from his sleeve.

Vanta

The Iron Edge City of Vanta tolerates gobowins, but not much. Pulling a con in Vanta is dangerous business. You treat them fairly, and they’ll leave you alone. You cheat them, prepare to be stuck on the end of a sharp point.

The people of Vanta recognize the gobowins’ only advantage is trading, and they respect that. But they don’t respect being treated like fools. And more than a few of them are more than willing to risk a curse to keep face. Nobody in Vanta wants the “tricked by a goblin”

reputation hanging around their head. Maybe in Nevernare, but never — EVER — in Vanta.

Ajun

In the City of Ajun, young philosophers consider it a rite of passage to engage with gobowin merchants. The ultimate challenge is not winning a debate with a professor or discovering a new document, it’s arguing a gobowin merchant’s price down.

They play the games, knowing they can’t win. They buy worthless junk at remarkable prices. They participate in “the game” of the gobowin caravan to watch masters at work. Masters of rhetoric. That’s how Ajun sees gobowins.

Nevernare

Nevernare is split between the Upper City (nobles, rich merchants) and the Lower City (the poor, the homeless). Gobowin merchants find their way into the Lowers, but never get by the gates of the Uppers.

In the crowded streets, gobowins ply their trade. And with so many people crammed into the capital, some merchants never even have to move from their spot. They’ve found a corner, set up shop, and stay there for generations. Some of the most famous gobowin caravans can be found in the same place every day of the year on the streets of Nevernare, selling the same wares. One of the most popular merchants is Pyn’k, a merchant who sells bangers (sausages served in split bread). Pyn’k has been serving bangers on his corner for thirty years. The caravan has grown since he first arrived (his son is ready to take it over), and the old, blind gobowin still serves customers all day long, opening at sunrise and closing long after sunset.

Vinnick

The City of Vinnick has a similar attitude toward the caravans as Ajun. The scholars enjoy the interesting things gobowins bring to town and

teachers send their young students to buy them and figure out what exactly they have bought.

But Vinnick's attitude toward gobowins is even more practical than Ajun. Vinnick sees the arrival of a caravan as an opportunity to study a truly unique culture. A traveling, nomadic family who have no home of their own, surviving on wits alone. Many Vinnick scholars have remarked that of all the "other races," the gobowins may have the most common with humans. Vinnick scholar, Aldren Vis wrote, "They are resilient, determined and resourceful. They are clever, ingenious and industrious. What other race can be said to have such *human* traits? Certainly, the uvandir can match our resourcefulness, but lack a sense of friendliness and compassion. What other race can we say has such *human* traits?"

Travel in the Reign

(Note: Although much of this information could be useful in the Reign of Men section, we decided to add it here because... well, Jessica Kauspedas started asking questions when we were designing gobowins. Questions about traveling, mileage, mail, etc. So, we had to start coming up with answers. She didn't like our answers, so she sent us her own. We're using those. We'll also be adding more details to travel in the Reign later in the series.)

Traveling in the Reign of Men is easier than it used to be and harder as well. For hundreds of years, men have built an intricate series of roads linking the Cities together. This made it easier. Unfortunately, as time passed, some of these roads have not been maintained as well as others. This makes it harder. All travel times listed here are *relative* depending on road conditions, weather, bandits, etc.

Currently, the Reign can boast about 10,000 km of roads (about 60,000 miles). Nine great roads, linking the Cities together, each about 1,000 - 1,300 km long each. The Reign built its roads

from stones, cement, sand and other materials. They were built to last. While many of the roads are in disrepair, they are still very serviceable.

When first built, the Reign intended each stretch of road to have way stations at regular intervals. The original intent was to have one station every 10 kilometers (about 6 miles). These days, one can expect to find a way station around every 10 to 40 km.

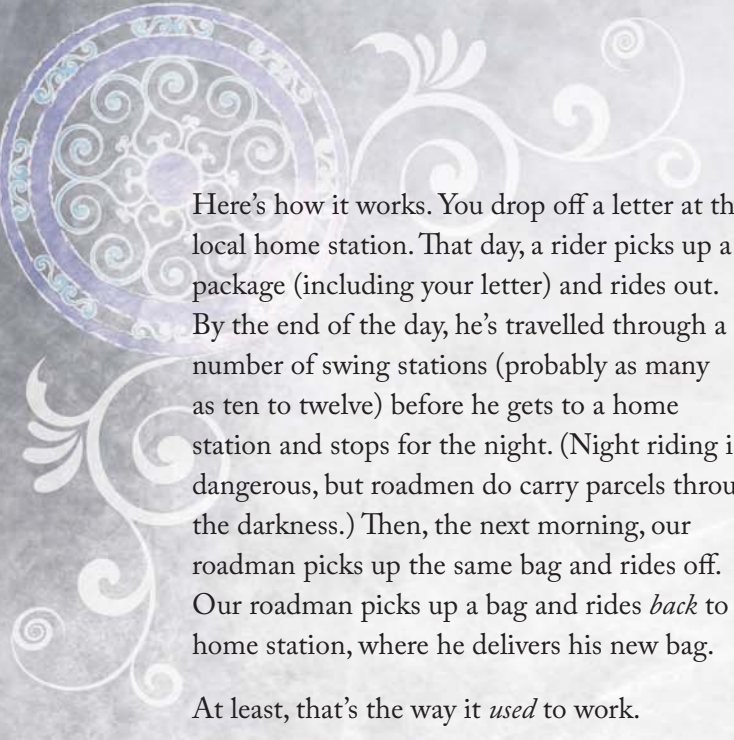
There are two kinds of stations. The first is called a *swing station*. This is a small station designed for roadmen to switch out horses. The second kind is called a *home station*. This is a more permanent station where riders are switched out. It is large enough for multiple riders to spend the night in semi-comfort.

As the Reign grew, villages grew up around the stations. Smaller villages around swing stations and larger villages around home stations. The smaller villages are called (aptly enough) *swing towns*. Swing towns usually only consist of a tavern, an inn and perhaps a small grocery for travelers.

Larger villages, called *hub towns*, attracted larger populations and structures. As the villages grew, so did trade and commerce. Most Lords set up their manors near hub towns to take advantage of the regular arrival of roadmen, merchants and other travelers. That brought castles, walls and other structures.

Roadmen & the Mail

The most common activity for roadmen is carrying mail. Riders carry parcels filled with letters on horseback, following the roads. On an average day, a roadman travels up to 120 km (75 m). Of course, weather and other natural conditions (and bandits) could inhibit that kind of speed. Riders stop at swing stations, get a bite to eat, trade out their horse and move on. The mail carriers are proud to boast that the average rider can cover around 3000 km (over 1,800 m) in ten days.



Here's how it works. You drop off a letter at the local home station. That day, a rider picks up a package (including your letter) and rides out. By the end of the day, he's travelled through a number of swing stations (probably as many as ten to twelve) before he gets to a home station and stops for the night. (Night riding is dangerous, but roadmen do carry parcels through the darkness.) Then, the next morning, our roadman picks up the same bag and rides off. Our roadman picks up a bag and rides *back* to his home station, where he delivers his new bag.

At least, that's the way it *used* to work.

Since the decline in public funds going toward the mail service, roadmen have to travel further than they have before. Fewer funds means fewer roadmen. Usually, that would mean slower mail. However, roadmen are a peculiar lot. Instead of cutting service, they kept up the pace, going further than they ever did before. Instead of traveling from home station to home station, they now travel City to City, carrying mail all across the Reign, riding horses to exhaustion, picking up a new horse, a quick drink and a sandwich "at the switch," and riding on. These days, a roadman can expect to see the entire Reign within a few months.

"Goblin Mail"

As mentioned above, roadmen have a special relationship with gobowins.

"Goblin mail" is not sent to specific caravans; it is sent to all caravans. When a gobowin wishes to share something, they give several copies to the roadman, who gives it to the next set of caravans she encounters. Sometimes, the merchant reads the mail and hands it back, because it is too important for one caravan. Sometimes, he keeps it until the next roadman comes. Sometimes, he will keep it so that a better trusted roadman can carry it. Some goblin mail has been in circulation for 30 years.

Gobowins are welcome at nearly all stations. Their knowledge of sudden changes in the road is vital and they exchange this knowledge (and the entertainment that they naturally bring) for food and a place to sleep. Even swing stations have room for a gobowin caravan. Plus, by waiting for the next roadman, they can hear about conditions up ahead and get the next bit of goblin mail. They form bonds with resting roadmen, and a roadman has even been known to delay the mail to assist a caravan in need. By the same token, there are hushed stories among the roadmen of gobowins who have saved their lives. Many roadmen acknowledge that seeing a gobowin caravan on the road is a sign of good luck.

Most roadmen even have a special pouch for goblin mail. Only a roadman or a gobowin may touch it. It is said to have been touched by the goblins themselves and brings bad luck to any who dare to steal whatever is in it. While roadmen would not break their honor by reading mail, a precious few have earned permission to read it. They never speak of what they read. It is whispered that a gobowin always knows who has read his mail, and only those who have the invisible mark of approval can avoid bad luck. Or worse.

Gobowin Racial Traits

- +2 to Constitution and Intelligence
- **Small:** Gobowins are small creatures and gain a +1 size bonus to their AC, a +1 size bonus on attack rolls, a -1 penalty to their Combat Maneuver Bonus (CMB) and Combat Maneuver Defense (CMD), and a +4 size bonus on Stealth checks.
- **Movement:** Gobowins have a base speed of 20 feet.
- **Keen Senses:** Gobowins have a +2 racial bonus to Perception checks.

- **Buwuk:** Gobowins have 3 points of buwuk which they can spend to make enemies fumble (see *Buwuk: Bad Luck*, below). It's bad luck to try and pick a fight with any gobowin no matter the circumstances.
- **Appraiser:** Gobowins can automatically count any number of items and know the gold value of any item with 1 round of concentration. Even 1 less apple in bag won't fool a gobowin .
- **Cold Read:** Gobowins can use their Bluff skill vs Appraise, Perception or Sense Motive; whichever is lowest. They can use this ability a number of times equal to half their character level. Gobowins can find a mark's weakness whenever they run the con.
- **Caravan:** Gobowins gain a basic caravan (See *Caravans*). Gobowin never travel alone they always bring family and wares along for the trip.
- **Automatic Languages:** Gobowins begin play speaking Common, Gobowin and 1 language of their choice. Gobowins with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

Buwuk: Bad Luck

Gobowins have three *buwuk points* (bad luck) they may use to bestow misfortune on others. As a standard action, you can point at any target you can see and declare them to have bad luck. The next d20 that the target rolls results in a 1 with all of the normal bonuses except *luck* bonuses. There is no saving throw against buwuk. You regain all spent *buwuk points* at the start of the next day.

Every time a gobowin spends a *buwuk point*, the GM gains a point of bad luck which they may spend at his discretion. He may spend it on PCs or NPCs at any time during the game session. Whenever the GM spends a point of bad luck, you do not regain the point of

bad luck. Any bad luck points the GM does not spend by the end of the day are lost.

Guda “Good Luck Charms”

You can protect allies from the effects of buwuk by giving them a guda. A guda is a palm sized, mundane item worth less than 100 gp that you freely give to someone. The act of giving the guda must be in good faith and followed by an act of friendship such as sharing a drink or a handshake.

As long as the owner of the guda keeps it within 15 feet of themselves, no gobowin buwuk may affect them. Gudas only work for the owner; a stolen guda will not protect you.

Caravan

A gobowin character starts with one basic caravan which consist of 1 cart, 1 horse and 2 children.

Caravans have three traits: *children*, *carts* and *credibility*. You start with a children 2, carts 1 and credibility 1. The caravan may be improved at every character level to make it more profitable or useful; you can improve one trait at each level.

Children is number of children your caravan is currently taking care of. This is also how many children you may send out to search for items. When improving your caravan's *children* trait, you may increase it by 1 to gain another child or improve a child to look for specific items.

Once per day, you can send all of the children out to find things for the caravan. Each child brings back a common and mundane item worth 1d20 gp. This means a child who rolls a 2 brings back an item equal to 2 gp in value and a child who rolls a 15 brings back an item equal to 15 gp in value. The item must be small and easy to transport, so a gobowin child could not bring back horse or large iron pot.

When improving a child, you must have a regular child that your caravan is already taking care

of; this child becomes a special child. Special children can either use their special ability to find special items or find a normal item (1d20 gold).

Forage Finder - Instead of finding a normal item this child always returns with something edible. Roll 1d10 and that's how many people his findings can feed.

Big Eye - There is a 2% chance that instead of a normal item this child will return with a randomly generated *minor wondrous item*; otherwise he returns with a normal item.

Gold Sniffer - Instead of finding a normal item, this child returns with 1d10 worth of gold pieces.

Handy Hands - Instead of finding a normal item, this child returns with a randomly generated armor or weapon. There is a 50% chance the found item is broken.

Follow Footprints - Instead of finding a normal item this child can find out where certain people within 10 miles of the caravan are. There is only a 25% chance of finding a person if that person is in hiding.

Whisper Ears - Instead of finding a normal item, this child can bring back town gossip. If you are looking for a certain piece of information there is only 25% chance they will bring back the right gossip. This may be modified at GM discretion.

Carts is the number of carts you currently own. You can search each cart once a day to find items. When improving your caravan's *carts* trait, you may increase it by 1 to gain another cart and horse or you may improve a cart to have a better chance of finding items.

When searching a cart for an item, make a *sleight of hand* check with a DC of 10 plus the item's cost in gold pieces. If the cart has been improved to increase your chance of finding an item, you gain a +1 bonus to the check for

every improvement on the cart. The item you are looking cannot be magical, nor can it be specific (such as the key to a certain door).

Credibility is how well-known and trusted your caravan is. When making *bluff* or *diplomacy* checks to sell wares, add your caravan's *credibility* to the roll. To improve your caravan's *credibility* trait, increase it by 1 to increase the bonus you receive.

Maintaining a Caravan

Once a week, you have to add up the cost of running your caravan and pay it. Each normal child costs 10 silver, each special child costs 12 silver, each cart cost 20 silver per week. If you retain the services of a sheesa, or other important gobowin, you must pay their costs as well.

Gobowin Feats

Forage Finder

Everyone knows pie is best when hot; you shouldn't weave it by the window to cool. Foolwish!

Prerequisite: Gobowin

Benefit: You gain a +4 racial bonus to survival check to forage for food.

Big Magic Eye

You wanna know if its magic? I look with BIG MAGIC EYE!

Prerequisite: Gobowin

Benefit: You gain a +4 racial bonus to spellcraft to discover the properties of magical items.

Handy Hands

Nobody wants to buy something that's broken. So wearn how to hide the cracks.

Prerequisite: Gobowin

Benefit: You gain a +4 racial bonus to craft (armor) and craft (weapons) to fix armor and weapons.

Gold Sniffer

Finding coins is easy. Just find people who have coins.

Prerequisite: Gobowin

Benefit: You can count gold as a swift action, instead of an a full round action.

Follow Footprints

It's easier to know where people are going when you know where they've been.

Prerequisite: Gobowin

Benefit: You gain a +4 racial bonus to *survival* checks when tracking.

Whisper Ears

These ears aren't just here to look pretty, you know.

Prerequisite: Gobowin

Benefit: You gain a +4 racial bonus to diplomacy check when looking for gossip.

Gobowin Buwuk Feats

Bad Luck Back

Some gobowins know how to turn bad luck into good luck.

With a little practice, a gobowin can even turn misfortune into benefit.

Prerequisite: Gobowin, Character Level 10

Benefit: Whenever you roll a 1 on a d20 you regain 1 spent *buwuk* point.

More Buwuk

You can never have too much buwuk... if you know what to do with it.

Prerequisite: Gobowin

Benefit: Gain an additional *buwuk* point.

Special: This feat can be taken more than once.

Even Wursa Buwuk

What's worse than bad luck? Even more bad luck.

Prerequisite: Gobowin, Hex Class Ability, Bad Luck Back

Benefit: Whenever you use a *buwuk* point while casting a hex, the *buwuk* last for a number of rolls equal to your 1 + Charisma modifier (minimum 1).

Gobowin Caravan Feats

Better Cart

Better cart means more coin means better cart.

Prerequisite: Gobowin

Benefit: Gain an additional caravan improvement.

Special: This feat can be taken more than once.

Mighty Fine Cart

Not awa carts are created equaw. And some are built that way.

Prerequisite: Gobowin, Carts Trait 5

Benefit: Instead of pulling a specific item out of your cart, you can pull a good luck item. It can be given to anyone. When holding the item the next d20 rolled will be a 20.

New Witch Archetype: sheesa

Born with too much bad luck, the sheesa is both a blessing and a curse. A blessing for gobowins, a curse for everyone else.

Requirements: Goblin, Female

Racial Features

The following are racial traits of the sheesa.

Blindsight (Ex): Sheesa loses her normal eye sight and gains blindsight based on scent and hearing up to 60ft.

Class Features

The following are class features of the sheesa.

Wursa Hex: Whenever a sheesa uses her *hex* class ability she can also add *burwuk* to the effect. She does not need to have *burwuk points* to do this.

This ability modifies the *hex* class feature.

Patron: A sheesa must choose *luck* as her patron.

This ability modifier the *patron class* feature.

Madness (Ex): At 10th level, as a full round action, a sheesa causes everyone within 150 ft to roll a 1 on their next d20 roll. This affects all targets including gobowins and anyone who is normally protected by a *guda* charm. A sheesa needs at least 1 *burwuk point* to use this ability and uses up all of her remaining *burwuk points* when she does.

This ability replaces the witch's 10th level *hex*.

Luck Patron

Luck: 2nd—*cause fear*, 4th—*alter self*, 6th—*bestow curse*, 8th—*break enchantment*, 10th—*nightmare*, 12th—*curse, greater*, 14th—*spell turning*, 16th—*prediction of failure*, 18th—*foresight*.

New Class: Buk (The Goblin Merchant)

In all the Known World, there is no more cunning adversary than a goblin who has something you need.

Requirements: Gobowin

Role: The buk does not rush into combat. He's smarter than that. He cannot win a straight up fight, but he can help those who can. His tricks, banter and distractions serve to buffer his allies' strengths and expose his enemy's weaknesses.

Alignment: Any

Hit Die: d6

Starting Wealth: 7d6 x 10 gp (average 240 gp). In addition, each character begins play with one outfit worth 10 gp or less.

Class Skills

The buk class skills are Appraise (Cha), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disable Device (Dex), Escape Artist (Dex), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (local) (Int), Knowledge (travel) (Int), Linguistics (Int), , Perform (Cha), Profession (driver) (Wis), Profession (merchant), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Stealth (Dex) and Survival (Wis).

Skill Ranks per Level: 8 + Int modifier

Class Features

The following are class features of the buk.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency:

Buks are proficient with all simple weapons and light armor but not shields.

Load: A buk can retrieve any object in his possession as a free action, even if it is stored in his backpack or similar container. He may make a *sleight of hand* check to hide his actions.

Palm (Ex): A buk adds his Wisdom modifier to his *sleight of hand* check and can perfectly hide small items in his hand. If he closes his hand around a small object, such as a key, it cannot be found until he opens his hand willingly. If the buk's hand is forced open the object remains hidden.

Prestidigitation: Once a day, a buk can use the *prestidigitation* spell. He can use this ability an additional time per day at 3rd level and every two levels thereafter, for a total of 9 times at 17th level. At 19th level, a buk can use *prestidigitation* at will.

Listen First: At 2nd level, a buk can add his Wisdom modifier to all *bluff* and *diplomacy* checks. Gobowins understand that the most important part of talking is listening.

Aura of Misdirection (Su): At 4th level, a buk gains a 30 foot aura that forces any enemy spellcasters to cast defensively as long as they are within his aura. Gobowins know how to use distraction and misdirection to confuse and bewilder enemies.

Caravan Improvement: At 5th level, a buk gains an additional caravan improvement. He also gains an additional improvement at 10th level and every 5 levels thereafter as well.

Flim-Flam: At 8th level, a buk can forgo rolling to gain a 20 on any Charisma based skill check. He can use this ability once a day at 8th level, twice a day at 14th level and three times a day at 20th level.

Ditch (Su): At 9th level, a buk can hide any object he is able to carry by himself. Once the object is hidden on himself it cannot be found until he chooses to reveal it.

Steal: At 12th level, a buk can use *sleight of hand* on any target up to 20 feet away from him. There cannot be any barriers or creatures between the buk and his target; allies do not count as barriers.

Switch (Sp): At 12th level, a buk can switch an object in his hand with an object in another character's hand. He must be adjacent to the target, but the target does not need to be willing to trade.

Simulation: At 16 level, a buk automatically succeeds on any sleight of hand checks to mask actions.

Approved class

Listed below are the classes available to gobowins in *Wicked Fantasy*.

Barbarian	yes
Bard	yes
<i>Cleric</i>	<i>no</i>
Druid	yes
Fighter	yes
<i>Monk</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Paladin</i>	<i>no</i>
Ranger	yes
Rogue	yes
Sorcerer	yes
Wizard	yes
<i>Alchemist</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Cavalier</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Gunslinger</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Inquisitor</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Magus</i>	<i>no</i>
Oracle	yes
<i>Summoner</i>	<i>no</i>
Witch	archetype
<i>Antipaladin</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Ninja</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Samurai</i>	<i>no</i>



Telmar's Helmet

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

His name was Villsus, but the children at the Academy called him “Master Villainous.” They thought he didn’t know, but he knew. He knew everything the little rats did. He knew about the stink bombs, he knew about the secret meetings. He knew all their secrets. And that is why this particular event took him by surprise.

Telmar’s helmet was gone.

Villsus stood in the Academy’s museum, his cup of hot chocolate in his hand, slowly cooling. He kept looking, expecting to see something different. But the image never changed. The glass case open, the purple pillow empty. Nothing broken. The lock looked intact. But he saw no helmet.

He was here for his morning constitutional. A walk through the museum. And then, he saw this.

“Jimmin!” he shouted. He did not look for the master curator, only shouted his name. Then, he shouted it again. This time, he added venom to his voice.

“Jimmin!”

The curator was a fat man. Fat and lazy. Villsus would have gotten rid of him a long time ago if he was not the son of a very important alumnus. When he came around the corner, Villsus imagined the many ways he could humiliate this ridiculous man. But he had to be careful. Curse the fates, but he had to be careful.

“Yes, Master Villsus?” Jimmin asked.

Villsus kept looking at the empty case. “Where were you? Asleep again?”

Jimmin shook his head. “No, sir.”

It was a lie. The man was lying to him. “Perhaps stealing pastries from the kitchen?”

Jimmin changed his stance. “Sir, you shouldn’t talk to me that way.”

Villsus sighed, then gestured to the empty case. “When did this happen?”

Jimmin asked, “When did *what* happen, sir?”

Villsus gestured at the case again. “This, Jimmin.”

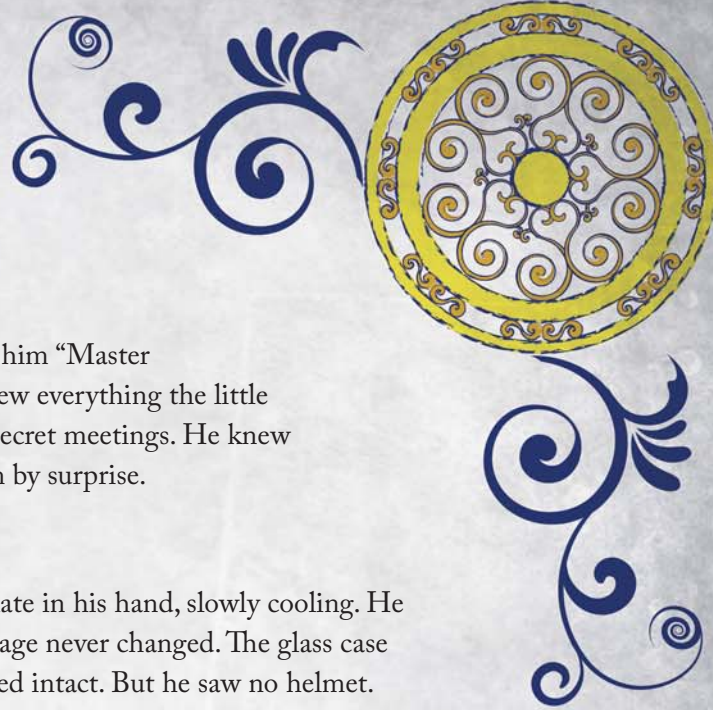
Jimmin looked at the case. His eyes went almost white. “Oh no! Oh no!”


Villsus nodded. “Yes.”

“Telmar’s helmet!” Jimmin shouted. “It’s gone!”

“You are a master of deduction,” Villsus said.

“Sir! I... I...”





Villsus raised his hand. "Don't worry, Jimmin," he said. "It's only one of the oldest artifacts in the museum, enchanted by the hand of Thracus, himself."

"Someone has stolen it," Jimmin said.

Villsus nodded, sadly. "Yes."

Jimmin looked at Villsus, his chest filling with confidence. "We will... we... I mean I... I will... that is... someone... I mean, I..."

"You will find it?" Villsus asked.

"Yes, sir," Jimmin said, putting his hand over his chest. "So I swear!"

Villsus rolled his eyes. "I see." He sipped his hot chocolate. "Call for Agathe," he said. "She will find it for us."

Jimmin nodded. "Yes, sir."

The fat man rushed off. Villsus looked at the empty case, pulled on his beard and sipped more chocolate.

A few minutes later, Jimmin returned, bringing with him an attractive young woman wearing the robes of the wizard's guild. She nodded to Villsus, "Master," she said. Villsus nodded back. "Agathe," he said, and sipped his hot chocolate. He frowned at the cup. It was nearly empty and all that remained was cold.

The young woman raised her hands over the glass case, closed her eyes and breathed deep.

Her fingers made intricate gestures and her lips uttered soft words. Then, she spoke out loud.

"It isn't here," Agathe said.

Jimmin gasped. "Wh... I mean, we know that."

Villsus felt his frown broaden. "She means it isn't on the campus," he said.

Agathe did not look at the fat man, she kept her eyes on Villsus. "It is moving west," she said. "Off the grounds."

Villsus nodded. "Take the courage," he said. "Go after it."

Jimmin gasped. "The courage? Certainly a student prank does not..."

Agathe put her hand on her chest. "Yes, sir," she said. Then, she walked out of the room.

When she was gone, Jimmin said, "Surely a student prank does not deserve the attention of the Academy's courage."

Villsus looked at his empty cup. "The wizard's guild evaluated the helmet's worth at approximately three times your yearly salary. It was a gift from Lord Cennisus. As was this entire wing of the museum." He looked at the fat man. "Can you think of a better reason to send the courage?"

Jimmin bowed his head. "No, Master."

Villsus looked at the empty case. "Until we learn more," he said, "the local blacksmith is cleaning the helmet." Then, he looked at Jimmin. "Go to the blacksmith..."

"Casfus," Jimmin said.

"Yes. Go to Casfus and tell him what's happened. He's a trustworthy man. Pay him if you need to." Villsus stepped away, but then paused. He turned back to Jimmin and said, "From your own pocket, of course."

Villsus stretched his back. He did not like horses, did not like riding, did not like the wilderness. But he was here because of the same reasons he sent the courage. The same reasons he gave

Jimmin. The helmet was too expensive and losing it would cause too much embarrassment. So, here he was, on this horse. When the stable master tried to tell him the horse's name, he said, "I don't care." He regretted that choice now.

He looked at Agathe. She was following an invisible trail he could not see. She also looked paler than yesterday, her eyes dark.

"Are you unwell?" he asked her.

Agathe shook her head. "No," she said. Then, she took a deep breath. "Truth be told," she told him, "I have not been sleeping well."

Villsus asked, "Nightmares?"

One of the courage said, "Naw, she's just not used to sleepin' alone!"

"Watch it, Temkin," she growled. She looked back at Villsus. "It's no matter, sir."

Villsus nodded and let the conversation pass.

A little while later, Agathe paused, pulling the reins of her horse. She looked to the west, then the south. Then, she looked at Villsus.

"It's moving," she said.

"Moving?" Villsus asked.

She nodded. "Yes." She pointed south. "That way." Agathe looked at him, her eyes dark. "This is not a student prank," she said.

"Why do you say that?"

She pointed to the south. "That's a dangerous place," she said. "Gnoll tribes."

That caught his breath. "Gnolls?" he asked.

Agathe nodded. "You should stay behind," she said. "This is no terrain for philosophers."

Villsus didn't like that. "How close are we?"

Agathe looked at the philosopher and frowned. "Master Villsus..."

"How close?" he asked.

She raised her chin, looked down the way. "Those woods," she said. "It's probably in there."

Villsus looked at the woods, then looked at the men and women around him. All armed, all armored.

Villsus nodded. "We go forward," he said. "I have confidence in your abilities."

Agathe turned to the rest of the courage. "First priority," she said. "Protect Master Villsus. Second priority, get the helmet."

Villsus began to speak, but she glared at him. "Not negotiable," she said.

He relented. "Very well."

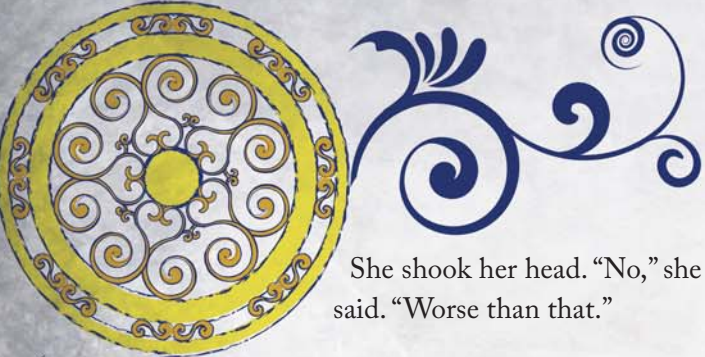
Agathe turned her horse toward the forest, clicking with her tongue. "Let's go, girl," she said to the steed. The courage followed and Villsus did, too.

Hours later and the darkness was across the woods. The courage set up the camp site quickly. Much quicker than Villsus expected. The food was hot and the journey made him not care about how it tasted. Beans, greens and bacon, stewed in a black pot. That was good enough.

One of the men, the tall one with the beard, returned from the forest. He told something to Agathe and she nodded and turned back to Villsus.

"I think I know where the helmet is," she said. "And it's going to be dangerous."

Villsus took a deep breath. "Gnolls?" he asked.



She shook her head. "No," she said. "Worse than that."

"Oh no," he whispered. "Orks."

"Worse than that," Agathe told him. "It's goblins."

He smelled the caravan before he saw it. Creeping through the forest, the darkness and cold making him shiver, he smelled cooking meat and smoke. He heard his stomach growl.

Villsus began to regret insisting he come along. He saw dark clouds on the horizon and knew he would probably be sleeping in the rain. Agathe and the courage could have done this all on their own.

But here he was, in a forest at night, rain on the horizon, cold and hungry. And dealing with goblins.

The caravan was lit up by torches. So bright, it seemed to be a patch of daylight in the middle of the night. They were dancing and singing, little green figures making a strange kind of merry.

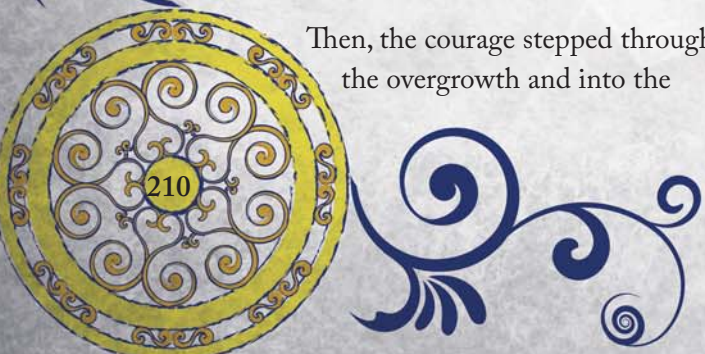
Villsus had seen goblins before, but never so close. The students always enjoyed their visits, but the Academy only allowed them to camp outside of campus. He watched from inside the tall windows of the administrative building, looking down at the mess. Students running back and forth, losing their hard earned allowances for baubles and trinkets. Foolish children.

"Stay close," Agathe told him.

"Let us do the talking."

He nodded, saying nothing.

Then, the courage stepped through the overgrowth and into the



light of the caravan. The music stopped and all the green faces turned to look.

They were all different. None of them came up to his waist, but their faces were like human faces. Noses, brows, eyes, lips, ears. These were not distant figures, but... something else.

One of them stepped forward. Taller than the rest, his ears pierced. "Whatchoowan?" he asked.

Agathe looked at Villsus. He nodded. She turned back at the goblin and said, "We want the helmet."

The goblin laughed. The others laughed, too. It was a maddening sound. Dozens of little voices, all laughing.

The goblin asked, "Whahemmet?"

Agathe wasn't putting up with it. "The helmet. The one that was stolen from the museum."

The goblin's smile turned to a scowl. The other goblins stopped laughing, too. "Stowen? Stowen!" The goblin stepped forward, raising his arms. "You tink eyes a teef?"

Agathe looked confused. "A what?"

The goblin gnashed its teeth. "A teef! A teef! You cannuhear? I says a teef!"

Villsus watched the scene. This was going badly, and they had only just begun.

Agathe made a sound like a deep growl in her throat. "Listen, nobody is accusing you of being a thief."

The goblin pointed at her. "Yajusdid!"

Another goblin spoke up, "Eye herd it!"

And another, "She da big lie!"

It was a crowd of voices now, all shouting her down. She took a deep breath and raised her hands.

"I'm sorry," she said. "It was a mistake."

The goblin waved down the crowd. "Eyes not a teef?"

She nodded. "You are not a thief."

He smiled. "Goodonya," he said. "Now we starts ova."

The goblin touched his chest. "Eyebeminks."

She blinked. "Minks?"

He nodded. "Minks. You?"

"Agathe," she said.

"Good. Agathe." He looked her up and down. "You got curse," he said.

Agathe took a deep breath. "I do *not* have a curse," she said.

But the goblin nodded. "You got curse," he said. "You need fix." He opened up one eye wide and looked at her. "You need fix *now*. Bad curse. Bad."

Agathe raised her hands, palms out toward the goblin. "No," she said. "No curse."

But the goblin was insistent. "Yes! Curse! Curse!" The others started chanting the word, too.

Villsus could take no more. He stepped forward. "Perhaps I could help..."

Agathe spun on her heel. "No!" she shouted at him.

"Who dis?" Minks asked.

Agathe turned back. "He's nobody. My servant."

Minks looked at Villsus. He opened his eye wide.

Agathe touched Villsus' shoulder. "Please, sir. Stay out of this."

Minks laughed. "You say *purwees* to servant?"

Villsus shook his head. "I am Villsus Agan, the Master of the University of Vinnick. And I believe you have one of our helmets."

The goblin asked, "Whahemmet?"

Agathe put her hands on her hips. "Sir, please."

"Whatsir?" Minks asked. "Why you call him sir?"

"Maybe sir-vent, huh?" another goblin laughed. All of them laughed with him.

Agathe looked at Villsus. "This is why I told you to let *us* do the talking."

Minks said to Agathe, "You got curse." He went back to his caravan and picked up a bird feather tied to a piece of string. "You need this," he said. "Need this bad. Got curse."

Agathe raised her hand. "No, I do not. I don't need..."

The other goblins shouted, "*CURSE!*"

Minks nodded. "It bad," he said. "If you don't fix, it spill on us." He nodded, holding the trinket forward. "Take. Just take. No pay. Just take. Bad curse. Bad."

Agathe sighed, her shoulders shrugging. "Very well," she said, reaching for the feather. "Now can we talk about the hel..."

A shrill shriek broke out then and all the humans turned. The goblins, however, did not. Some of them scattered. Some of them flinched. Minks just sighed.

"Whatsthis?" the voice called out.

"Whatsthis?" Villsus turned to look and saw a new goblin, obviously female, carrying a black iron pan, smoking hot.

Minks tucked the feather away behind his back and looked at Agathe. "Here



come Namma," he said. Then, he told her, "Don't you say nothing."

Namma walked straight up to Minks. "Whatchyoudo?" she asked. "*Whaaatchyodo?*"

Minks shrunk as she stood next to him. "I do nothing!" he said, his voice full of apology.

Namma pointed at Agathe. "You give it away? You *give* it away?" She pointed at the children. "They hungry! I feed them! And you *give* it away?"

"She got curse!" Minks said. "Need bad."

"So?" Namma spat at him. "Sowhat? I got kids. They go hungry?"

Minks shook his head. "No, but..."

Namma looked at Agathe. "Then you *buy* it. And go. Don't want curse here."

Agathe said, "I'm here about a helmet."

The female goblin's face turned as sour as lemons. She shouted at one of the younger goblins. "Tik!" Then, she pointed at her feet.

Tik said, "Aye, Namma," and ran forward. He stood behind her, lifted her with his hands, and held her up. Now, Namma stood as tall as Agathe.

"You got curse," she said. "Bad curse. So bad, you can't see. But we don't give cure for free. Wenustupee."

Agathe asked, "Weno...?"

Namma pointed at her head. "Stupee! Stupee! You know! Stupeeinthehead!"

Agathe nodded. "Yes," she said, looking at Villsus. "Stupee."

"Buy cure. Then, helmet."



Villsus stepped forward. "How much?" he asked, opening his coin purse.

The goblins all looked at his hands. They saw the gold and silver in the purse. And just then, Villsus knew he had made a mistake.

"Ten gold," Namma said.

Minks' eyes went wide. "Ten?"

"Aye," she said. "Ten!"

Minks said, "But she need cure! Bad curse!"

"Ten!" Namma said.

Minks shook his head. "Three!"

Namma, "Nine!"

Minks, "Four!"

"Eight!"

"Five!"

"Seven!"

"Six!"

Namma thought for a moment. "Aye," she said. "Six." Then, both Namma and Minks looked at Villsus.

"Six," he said. "And then, we talk about the helmet?"

Both the goblins nodded. "Aye."

Villsus took six coins from his purse.

Agathe said, "Sir, don't you dare."

He looked at her. "Six gold coins for the helmet is a bargain, Captain Agathe." He held out the gold coins, but just as Minks was about to take them, he closed his hand.

"What *kind* of curse?" Villsus asked.

Minks looked at Namma. Namma nodded. He said, "Heartbreak curse."

The goblins all said it together. "*Heartbreak curse.*"

Temkin, on the other side of Agathe, almost gasped. "Bugger me," he said.

Villsus looked at Agathe. The woman didn't show anything. She looked at Villsus. "Give him the coins," she said.

Villsus nodded and gave Minks the coins. Minks smiled. "Tankyou." And he handed the feather to Agathe.

"Wear for long time," he said.

"Until red moon come back," Namma said.

Minks nodded. "Yes. Then, take off and burn."

Agathe looked at the feather, then put it around her neck. She looked up at Namma and nodded. "Now," she said. "About the helmet."

Minks nodded. "Yes, yes. Hewmet." He looked at another goblin. "Whogotit?"

"Pax got," the other goblin said.

"Go get Pax."

The other goblin ran off. Namma stayed on Tik's shoulders. A few moments later, a tiny child emerged, wearing the helmet. It was nearly as big as he was, looking like a tortoise shell.

Namma looked down at the little one, smiling. "Pax," she said, speaking with a voice Villsus recognized. It was the same voice human mothers used when praising their children.

Pax ran forward, wearing the helmet. Or, more appropriately, Villsus thought, the helmet wearing him.

"Hemmet!" the little goblin said.

Minks looked at Villsus. "Hewmet."

Temkin said, "You mean that little bugger snuck into the library and stole the helmet?"

Minks shouted, "Noteef!" The rest of the goblins echoed him.

Namma looked at Agathe and her voice turned to poison. "Muybabynoteef," she said.

"Then how did he get it?" Agathe asked.

Namma held up two fingers. "Two men," she said. "Come here. Puway dice, puway card. They woose coin. Woose hewmet."

Villsus asked, "Do you know their names?"

Minks said, "One cawdaodder Cassus."

Under Namma, Tik said, "The udder cawhim Bruta."

Villsus nodded. He knew exactly who they were talking about.

Minks smiled. "You know dem, ya?"

Villsus said, "Yes. I know them."

"Dey gonna get trouble, ya?"

Villsus refocused. He looked down at the goblin. "You have done me a favor, sir," he said.

The goblin raised his hand and shook his head. "No, 'sir.' Minks."

Villsus smiled. "Master Minks," he said. "May we have the helmet back?"

Minks smiled. "No."

Villsus felt his own smile melt away. "No?"

Minks shook his head, crossed his arms. "No."

"It is not your helmet, Master Minks."

"Dasright," Minks said. He pointed at Pax. "Is *his* hewmet."



Pax looked at Villsus with big, wide eyes. "Hemmet!" he said.

Agathe opened her mouth to speak, but Namma beat her to it. "How we know *you* dunna steal it?"

Agathe's mouth remained opened. She didn't know what to say.

Namma said, "How we know it bewong to you?"

Villsus said, "I assure you, madame..."

"You sure me all day long," Namma said. "Dunna mean nothin." She looked at Minx. "Dodating."

Minks looked at her. "Da ting?"

She looked annoyed. "Ya! Da ting! Da ting! Do! Da! Ting!"

Then, Minks' eyes widened. "Oh! Da ting!" Then, he looked at Villsus. "Eyes gonna do da ting." He walked over to Pax and waved his hands over the helmet. He mumbled some words. Then, he stopped and opened his eyes.

He looked up at Namma. "Yep," he said. "Dey no lie."

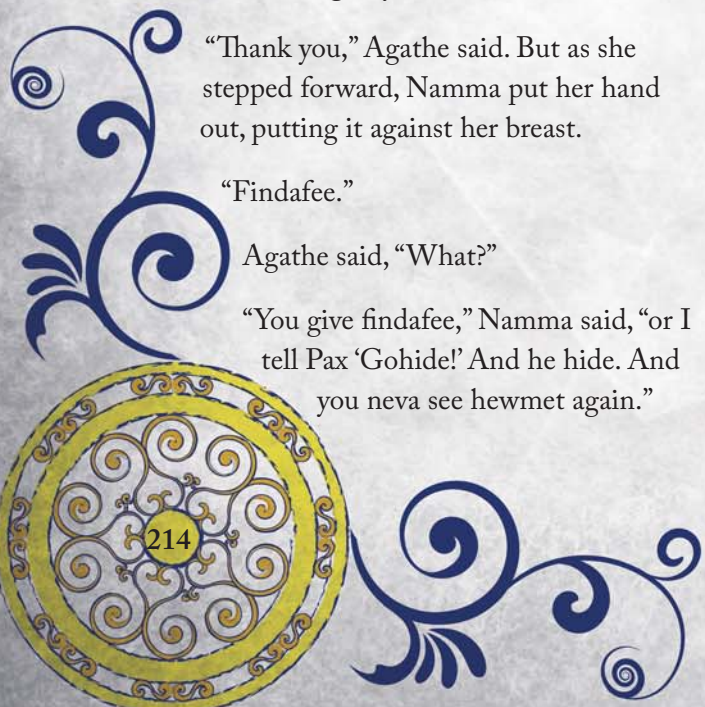
Namma nodded. "Yah," she said. "Dis bewong to you."

"Thank you," Agathe said. But as she stepped forward, Namma put her hand out, putting it against her breast.

"Findafee."

Agathe said, "What?"

"You give findafee," Namma said, "or I tell Pax 'Gohide! And he hide. And you neva see hewmet again."



Agathe's face turned into a snarl. "You little..."

Minks jumped between them. "No, wait. Wait." He looked at Agathe. "No, is no good. Hewmet get stole. You woose. You want back, yah?"

Agathe nodded, still staring at Namma. "Yes."

Minks put his hand on his chest. "We find," he said. "We give you. But fairbefair, yah?"

Villsus put his hand on Agathe's shoulder. "A little gold is worth it," he said. "It will come out of my own pocket."

"Yah!" Minks said. "We be fair. We give you cure! Bad curse! We got hewmet. We give back. Fairbefair."

Agathe said nothing. Villsus opened his pouch again. "How much?" he asked.

Namma shook her head. "No," she said.

Agathe's scowl deepened. "Fair be fair," she said. Namma scowled back.

Villsus looked at Minks. "How much?"

Minks said, "Hewmet worth too much," he said. He pointed at the pouch. "Too much for you."

Villsus nodded and closed his pouch. "Yes," he said. "That's the truth."

Minks smiled. "We make deewa."

Villsus asked, "Deewa?"

Minks nodded. "Yah. I make offa. You make offa. We shake hand, yah?"

"Oh!" Villsus said. "We make a deal."

Minks nodded quickly. "Yah, yah. Deewa. You get hewmet. We get travewaground."

Villsus thought for a moment. "Travewa... trav..." His eyes lit up. "You want to travel the grounds?"

Minks said, "Yah. Travewaground."

Agathe said, "Sir, you aren't seriously going to consider allowing these things on campus, are you?"

Villsus thought about it for a moment. Then, he nodded. "One day a month," he said, holding up a single finger. "You can come on the grounds for just one day."

Minks said, "One?" He looked at Namma. She shrugged. He looked back at Villsus. "Whachyoumean?"

Villsus said, "When the red moon is new, you can come." He crossed his hands. "No more."

Minks said, "Red, green and blue."

Villsus considered it. "No," he said. "Red and blue."

Minks said, "More."

Villsus shook his head. "Two days. That's it."

Minks frowned. Then, he looked at Namma. Then, he looked back at Villsus. "Yes," he said. Then, he walked to Pax and took the helmet.

Pax looked up with sad eyes. "Hemmet," he said.

Temkin looked at the little goblin. He took off his own helmet and put it over Pax's head. "Here ya are," he said. "Don't cry."

Pax looked at Temkin's helmet and then smiled at the man. "Hemmet!" he said.

"We got what we came for," Agathe said to the courage. "Let's go."

The courage mounted up and prepared to leave. Just as they did, Villsus saw Namma run out to Temkin's horse. He saw the goblin reach up and Temkin reach down. He saluted the little goblin, then she ran back to the light of the caravan.

"What was that?" Agathe asked.

Temkin shrugged. "She gave me this." He held up what looked like a finger bone hung on a bronze hook. "Said it would bring me luck."

The courage laughed. Agathe gave the order to ride out, and they left the caravan behind.

On the way home, a storm caught them off guard. Lightning struck the trees, and the falling timber killed most of the horses.

Everyone's horse, but Temkin's.







Uvandir: The Pride of Craftsmen

Never call them “dwarves.” That’s one sure way to get yourself killed. Maimed, at least. That’s a human word and dwarves—I mean, “oo-van-deer”—do not like that word. I’ve worked with many oo-van-dir and I can tell you what they would say. “Pride’ is a tiny, little fragile human word and too small to describe van-dir-too-val-dir-shan.”

Yeah, I had to learn that word the hard way. Had a dwarf hold me down and slap me across the face every time I said it wrong until I finally said it right. And let me tell you: they’ve got damn hard hands.

— Luca Adrente, street thief

One word in the uvandir tongue is key to understanding the relationship between us and them. “Oo-man” is the uvandir word for “pig.” Soft, fat, pink and stupid.

—Adrotus Valus, human scholar

Why did the haffuns go to meet humanity first? To sweeten us up for the uvandir.

—common human joke

If you’ve seen one, you’ve seen them all. They stand four feet tall, just up to your waist, but they’re just as wide. Like square bricks. They have big, thick beards and eyes as wide as saucers. And their hands... hands big enough to hold your head. Hands that can squeeze stone until it shatters. Just one of them is strong enough to lift three men on his shoulders and carry them ten miles before breaking a sweat.

And they always smell like *work*. No matter how much you wash them, no matter how you perfume them, no matter what oils and soaps you use, an uvandir always smells like *work*.

Like their haffun cousins, the uvandir have found a place in human society. A curmudgeonly place. The haffuns brought service, the gnomes brought their gardens and the uvandir brought invention and innovation. Their skills with mechanics and mathematics amazed human scholars, leaping human knowledge ahead by generations. Of course, the uvandir did not give up such knowledge easily. While there are human clockmakers in the cities, none can deny the craftsmanship and artistry of a dwarven—I mean, *uvandir*—masterpiece.

It was this innovation that brought the underfolk to humanity in the first place and without the uvandir, they would have never escaped. The cunning of uvandir mining opened up veins of iron, gold and other metals that humanity never dreamed existed. Metalworking unknown to humans. Craftsmanship unknown to humans. Skills undreamed of by humans.

The uvandir never miss an opportunity to remind humans of this.

Ever.

Uvandir Dialects?

The question arises: “Do uvandir have dialects?”

The answer: No. Their language is too stubborn for such silliness.

Uvandir Gender

There was some talk in the scholarly community of how to refer to the uvandir’s gender. Scholar

Tamik Vasul wrote, “While the uvandir have no gender, we chose to use masculine pronouns because dwarves resemble male humans. The proper pronoun is probably ‘it,’

but that sounded too impersonal. It also made the uvandir sound like objects rather than living creatures. And thus, we chose the male gender.”

An Uvandir's Life

There is no uvandir youth.

There is no uvandir adulthood.

There is no uvandir old age.

Uvandir are what they are, will be what they are, have always been what they are.

One thing humans noticed after only a few days with the uvandir was a curious fact: there were no women. Not one. It wasn’t that they were hiding them, there just weren’t any uvandir women. Of course, no human would dare to ask an uvandir about it—for fear of getting his hair ripped out and shoved down his throat—but no female uvandir has ever been seen by human eyes.

This is because there is no such thing as a female uvandir.

The uvandir are not male, nor they are not female. They are uvandir. They are androgynous. They have no sexual reproductive ability whatsoever. Not male, not female. They are uvandir. That is what they are.

The uvandir do not procreate. They have no biology for doing so. Unfortunately, this also means that all the uvandir in the world are the *only* uvandir in the world. All the uvandir are all the uvandir. There will never be another. Each time an uvandir dies, they get one step closer to extinction.

Also, uvandir do not seem to age. The only distinction a human can make about an uvandir’s age is his beard. The longer the beard, the older the uvandir. It could be that uvandir *never* die of old age... but no human could ever confirm that. And, although they would never admit it, neither could any uvandir.

Each uvandir remembers when they dug themselves out from the ground, the haffuns and the gnomes behind him. Yes, it happened many, many years ago, but each uvandir remembers. And he remembers what they left behind.

An uvandir has no family. His people are his family.

An uvandir never marries. He is wed to his people.

And so, an uvandir’s life is work. Just work. And an uvandir is defined by his work. His accomplishments. And that is enough.

Vandirtuvaldinshan

This word has many meanings and cannot be completely translated into the human tongue. The best attempt was made by the scholar Adrotus Valus: “We do not rest.” (Apparently, this got him kicked in the knee; the slightest injury a human has ever received from a dwarf while attempting to translate their language.)

The uvandir do not sleep. The uvandir work. They’re always working. Always making, always crafting, always always always. Uvandir do not get bored. In fact, it has been noted that uvandir who are *kept* from keeping their hands busy complain even more than usual. Almost as if a secret pain inflicts their blood.

But *vandirtuvaldinshan* means more than just a need for work. It is, for lack of a better word, a kind of racial pride. The uvandir know they are better than men. They know they are better than haffuns. They know they are better than any of the races. This, they know. They are stronger. They are more clever. They are masters of art and craftsmanship. They are *better*. And they don’t tolerate being told otherwise.

Let a man make a better clock. Let him try.

Let a man tell a better story. Let him try.

Let a man dig as we have dug. Let him try.

Let a man walk until he drops. Let us see how far he goes.

It isn’t a matter of belief. For the uvandir, it is a matter of plain *fact*.

Uvandir do not rest because they *need no rest*. Let that be said of men.

Beard

For an uvandir, his beard is a powerful measuring stick of status among his people. While the uvandir do not age, their hair and beards do grow, and after a few centuries, those beards reach the floor. Some uvandir even have to throw them over their shoulders.

The uvandir measure a beard in braids. Ten braid, twenty braid, thirty braid: this is how the uvandir speak of status. The longer his braid, the more respect

“Va!”: Stop Interrupting Me

There is one word in the uvandir tongue that has a single syllable. Only one. It is “va.” The word means, “Stop interrupting me.”

The uvandir are always working. Even when they are sitting alone, quiet, and thinking, they are *working*. They are planning. Ideas spinning through their heads. A quiet time for an uvandir is when he is planning on what he will do next. That’s work. And when you interrupt his thinking, you are interrupting his work.

The uvandir do not like their work interrupted. There is a time for work and a time for talk. They will let you know when it is time for talk. Otherwise...

“Stop interrupting me.”

Crimes Against the People

What exactly could an uvandir do to get shame?

There are only a few crimes the uvandir see as worthy of shame. They are listed below in order of their heinousness.

- **Murder another uvandir.**
(At least 100 braids.)
- **Choosing to assist another race over the uvandir**
(At least 50 braids.)
- **Betray a promise to another uvandir.**
(At least 10 braids.)
- **Grievously injure another uvandir.**
(At least 5 braids.)
- **Steal from another uvandir.**
(At least 1 braid.)
- **Lie to another uvandir.**
(At least 1 braid.)
- **Lie about an other uvandir.**
(At least 1 braid.)

he can demand from his fellows. This isn't to say that an uvandir with a longer braid can boss around shorter beards, but he is right to expect some respect.

A braid usually represents one year of growth (here and there). Thus, a thirty braid uvandir has been alive for thirty years.

The youngest uvandir in the Known World is a two hundred and thirty-seven braid. The oldest is a five hundred and ninety-two braid.

Ushvalashanan: Shame

While a beard measures respect, an uvandir who betrays his people undergoes the ritual of *ushvalashanan*. The ritual of shame.

He is gathered before his fellows, his crimes called out for all to hear. Then, the uvandir give him once chance to explain himself. Those gathered decide whether or not he deserves the ultimate punishment. If so, they shave his beard.

A shamed uvandir can still walk among his people, but none of them will speak to him. They will not even acknowledge his existence. If he asks a question, no-one will answer. If he shouts in another uvandir's face, that uvandir will not respond. He is a true outcast: invisible to all around him. A living ghost.

Humans observe this ritual with some confusion. If a shamed uvandir is truly invisible, what is to stop him from stealing, robbing or even murdering his fellow uvandir? Humans who ask such questions do not understand the psychology. A shamed one has no place in their culture. His behavior while shamed determines the length of his sentence. A shamed uvandir could perform crimes, but what would be the point? His sentence only lasts longer. He is isolated from his brothers with no-one to speak to, no-one to share drink, no-one to share stories, no-one to share accomplishments. But an uvandir who helps, even when not asked or thanked, understands the value of community. The value of being uvandir.

Shame can last for as little as one braid (about a year) to as long as one hundred braids. It all depends on his crime and his behavior while living under shame.

gubn: Wasting Breath

Another uvandir trait that confused men was their silence. The uvandir seldom speak. They do tell stories (see *Bragging*, below), but they don't chat, they don't gossip, they don't *gubn*, ("waste breath"). An uvandir speaks when he's spoken to. He speaks when he has something useful to say, something that will help a troubled situation. Otherwise, the uvandir don't like to speak, and get annoyed when they have to.

Usually, uvandir communicate non-verbally. They communicate with glances and glares and hand gestures. If they must, they will speak, but use as few words as possible when they do. Instead of saying, "I'd like a beer," to the tavern keeper, he will point at a bottle on the table and look at the tavern keeper. If he must, he will say, "Beer." No other words are necessary. If the human *makes* more words necessary, he will probably get a punch to the kidneys.

The uvandir view that bartender — the one who didn't understand the request — as a dullard. A simpleton. Someone beneath contempt. Someone unworthy of speaking to. Because his ignorance is forcing the uvandir into a position where he has to speak to someone who is beneath speaking to... well, you see where this is going.

Violence

The uvandir are tough. Throw a punch at an uvandir's jaw and he'll laugh at you. Head butt him and he'll laugh louder. Try anything else, and you've got yourself a fight.

The uvandir seem to have a casual relationship with violence. Everywhere you go, they seem to

be fighting with each other. But, like watching dogs scrapping, the fight starts suddenly and ends suddenly. But unlike dogs, after the fight, the two grasp each other like long lost friends, laugh, and drink more beer.

The uvandir use violence in two different ways: the first shows respect. The second shows annoyance. We'll tackle both of those in turn.

Gefecht: Fighting

Fighting in uvandir culture is a bit like watching young siblings playing a punching game. Neither has any intent of hurting the other one, but there they are, throwing blows, head butts and kicking each other in the shins. They know they can't hurt each other, and so, fighting for the uvandir is all good fun. A bonding experience. The uvandir show affection through violence. If you give an uvandir a compliment, he'll probably hit you in the shoulder, kick your shin or — if he really respects you — give you a direct shot to the jaw.

The harsher the violence, the greater the show of respect. The greatest sign of respect is a head butt or a punch to the jaw.

The first human scholar to study uvandir fighting, Alsip Vik, wrote this: "I have noticed a particular ritual among them. I was in a tavern, watching a pack of them drinking and telling stories. When one story was done, one of them with a thick beard hit the storyteller straight in the jaw. The storyteller looked at him and threw his head against the other's nose. Then, the one with the beard smiled and the fight was on."

One punch means nothing: a recognition of respect. But, if the punch is returned, it means, "I'm willing to fight, if you are." At that point, the

uvandir who threw the first punch has the choice to start the fight or not. It is not considered an act of cowardice or disgrace or dishonor to not fight: merely a choice. If the fight starts, no other uvandir will get involved until the fight is over.

Fights last for a few moments to a few minutes. The uvandir fight until one gains a clear advantage, and then, the fight is over. Again, there is no shame in “losing” a fight. In fact, some uvandir break away *before* an advantage can be seen by others. This shows further respect for his friend.

Balastven: Annoyance

The uvandir also use violence to show displeasure. If you annoy an uvandir, he won't say anything, he'll just punch you. Not too hard... just hard enough to leave a bruise. If you really get him mad, he'll do something more permanent.

A friendly punch and an annoyed punch can be differentiated by the look in the uvandir's eye, the expression on his face. A friendly punch is accompanied by a smile. A balastven punch on the other hand...

Generally, the uvandir do not use violence against other races to show displeasure. They've learned that most of the other races either don't understand (read, “They're too stupid to get it”) or they take violence too seriously. They won't fight with other races because the other races don't deserve the respect of a friendly fight. They *do* deserve to get their heads handed to them on a silver platter, though. And that's when an annoyance punch turns into a beat down.

Here's how it works: an uvandir throws an annoyance punch. He looks into the other fellow's

eyes and says nothing. (If he *really* wants to insult the other guy, he'll say something.) If the offending party looks like he wants to fight or threatens the uvandir, there are a couple of tactics. First, the uvandir can ignore him (a grave insult, see below). Second, he can start a fight. But not a friendly fight. This time, his intent is harming and humiliating the offending party. Break an arm, break a leg, break out a few teeth, maybe pull off an ear. The greater the injury, the greater the insult. Then again, most non-uvandir don't deserve a great insult, so the most they will do is beat you senseless without leaving any scars.


If you haven't got any scars, you can't talk about the beating the uvandir gave you. And that's the best insult an uvandir can give you.

Beer

Although the uvandir gained much from their encounter with men, the one thing they admire men for most is the invention of beer. If for no other reason, the uvandir admire men for that invention, and for that reason, every man deserves a little respect.

Not much, but a little.

The uvandir love beer. No, that isn't right. Let me say that again.



**THE
UV ANDIR
LOVE
BEER**

They drink it and drink it and drink it. And because of their unique anatomy, they never need to get up from the table. They can keep on drinking, all night long. And it takes a lot of beer to get an uvandir drunk. Usually, when a tavern keeper sees a group of uvandir come in, he just rolls over a barrel, plugs in a spout, and lets them go at it.

“For the uvandir, drinking is an opportunity to tell stories, sing songs and be completely irresponsible. In other words, they stop acting like the grumpy, bullying, boorish curmudgeons they usually are. They get loud. They get friendly. And, they get violent.”

Since their arrival in the Reign of Men, the uvandir have come to associate drinking with storytelling. And the better the beer, the better the story. It is a common phrase heard around an uvandir table: “There are stories in this cup. Let me go fishing for them.”

To human ears, uvandir storytelling sounds a lot like bragging. Many humans see this activity as petty one upmanship. Simple drunken boasting. But for the uvandir, the ability to tell a great story about yourself is seen as a noble skill.

It is a delicate matter, however. An uvandir who only stands up to say “How great am I!” is boorish. He must make a *story* of the incident, making himself the center of a great and terrible tale. He must have moments of foolishness where others got the better of him and moments of weakness where he failed to accomplish his goal. The story does not have to be entirely true, but it must be *mostly* true. The uvandir care little about “truth” in stories. They want entertainment. Besides, everyone knows what *really* happened. “Let Horndun Dugal tell his story!”

The order in which stories are told — around a campfire or in a tavern — depends on the “respect” a story has. Typically, an older uvandir will shout out for another to tell a story. After that, another

uvandir shouts out for another story to be told. Nobody stands up to tell their own story: they must be *asked*. And going out of order is bad form: worthy of a punch (at least). Taking too long to tell a story is also worthy of some abuse: usually heckling. “Has he died yet?” is a common uvandir heckle for a story that has gone on too long.

Stories must be told in their proper order: from least respected to most respected. And once you are in for a storytelling session, you are in for the long haul. Uvandir stories can last for *hours*, and the more respect an uvandir’s story has, the more time he has to tell it. Many humans have tried to stay awake during these long hours (sometimes lasting all day and night). Those who do may earn enough respect to tell their own story at the next meeting. Of course, they’ll be telling their story *first*, and the whole crowd of uvandir will be shouting, “Is this the part where you die?”

Obsession

“The uvandir have a remarkable ability,” the human scholar Kitsen Martyn wrote. “Once they decide upon a path, it seems nothing can break their concentration. Almost as if the uvandir mind can set all of its energies upon a single task.”

The uvandir themselves call this *wvonghest*. The word means, “do it until it is done.” Human linguists have translated this as “obsession.”

When they first appeared in the Reign, the uvandir found a wall of prejudice to overcome. It wasn’t easy, but as the uvandir saying goes, “Nothing that is easy is worth working for.” It took many years, but men recognized an element of uvandir character that would change the Reign’s attitudes. While haffun charm won men’s hearts, the seemingly undying work ethic of the uvandir won the Reign’s respect.

When the uvandir arrived, many human Cities were in dire need of repair. Corruption in the heart

of the Senate pulled deeply needed funds from restoration projects into Senator's pockets. The uvandir saw these projects and began working. Not for any promise of money, but for the prize of accomplishment. They worked through hot days and dark nights, always breaking down old structures and rebuilding. Those parts of the Cities that were rebuilt with uvandir hands were both instantly recognizable and alien. The uvandir did not just rebuild the fallen parts of human Cities, but put their own distinct signature on the restored buildings. Soon, the old ruined buildings where the poor eked out a meager existence became architectural art.

The Lower City began to transform itself. The uvandir dug new wells, using the springs to run rivers through houses and down the streets. They constructed elaborate walkways between the buildings, providing easy transport away from the bustle of the merchant-filled avenues. Uvandir innovation transformed the poorer parts of human Cities. And the Upper Cities, with their wealthy nobles, began to consider the possibility of doing the same. But when the nobles approached the uvandir, the craftsmen turned to the haffuns. "Contract," they said. They would work for the poor for nothing, but for the rich, they demanded the highest prices.

This transformation of the poorer parts of the City came from this very idea of "do it until it is done." The uvandir have an incredible ability to focus on a single task, removing any distractions from their sight. This includes restoring ruined buildings, forging a sword, chopping wood, collecting artifacts and protecting a young ladies' virtue. This ability extends to celebration as well. When the uvandir begin celebrating, nothing can stop them until they are finished.

The uvandir do not only obsess over architecture, but nearly every element of their lives. The uvandir do not study warfare, they study battles from

every angle, going to far as to build miniature reconstructions of one battle, playing out every possibility. They do not study magic, they spend hours reading thousands of pages, rehearsing every word and every gesture over and over again. They do not study picking pockets, they spend every waking moment thinking about new ways to do it. And when they can't, when they are forbidden from practicing their obsession, their fingers tremble, their eyes dart back and forth and they sweat. Yes, they sweat. Not when they are working, but when they cannot practice the thing that consumes their hearts. That's when they sweat.

Melancholy

Don't be fooled by their impassive demeanors: the uvandir are a passionate people. But there is an element of their psyche that does not allow them to become too attached to others. This is the *uvanshuvan*. "The deep sorrow." Human scholars have called this phenomenon, "uvandir melancholy."

When an uvandir cannot indulge in his passions (his obsessions), he feels a deep sorrow reach into his heart. That sorrow is like a shadow, covering his emotions, enfolding his perceptions. He sees the world as a dark place, full of disappointments and failed ambitions.

Nothing matters. Nothing changes. All of my accomplishments amount to nothing. The world turns without me. Why do anything?

And slowly, very slowly, the uvandir's melancholy overcomes him. He sits down and does not move. Lost in his sorrow, he cannot move, not speaking or working or drinking or doing anything for months... even years. He sits, not responding to anything. Sitting in the rain, the snow, as still and silent as a rock. Eventually, the uvandir recovers from his meloncholy... or he doesn't. There are uvandir who have never recovered, still locked in their catatonia, still and silent. Other

vandra

While it seems the uvandir have nothing but contempt for the other races (not an entirely inaccurate statement), there are those who earn an uvandir's respect. Uvandir recognize virtue in others—even other races. While no other race is equal to the uvandir, sometimes a *fratha* (non-uvandir) earns the right to be called “friend.”

The uvandir word is *vandra*.

A vandra is not only someone who demonstrates remarkable virtue but also shows a respect for uvandir superiority. Uvandir show vandra a modicum of respect, even going as far as protecting him if necessary.

You are not uvandir, but you are also no longer fratha.

uvandir come to him hoping to revive him. They put beer in front of him, sing songs, trying anything to revive him. Some succeed, but others fail.

The uvandir who never recover simply turn to stone. Of course, his brothers never speak of his name again. To do so would cause too deadly a sorrow.

This is why the uvandir are so standoffish. It is why they do not make friends easily. It is why they are distant to the point of rudeness. The danger of friendship. The danger of emotion. The danger of melancholy.

Best to be a rude dwarf. Best to live up to the stereotype. Because being distant is safer than being loved. Or loving.

Of course, some uvandir (only a handful) reject this philosophy. They embrace friendships whenever they can. “Sooner or later, I’m gonna become a rock,” an uvandir scribe once wrote. “Best to spend the time I have with friends.”

Uvandir Bodyguards

For a great while, nobles hired uvandir bodyguards for their young daughters. They believed that because the uvandir are asexual, the bodyguard would be completely uninterested in the girl as a romantic interest. Unfortunately, this assumption did not extend to the daughter. Stories of young noble women falling in love with their uvandir bodyguards became so popular, hundreds of stories found themselves in bookstores all across the Reign.

But the books exaggerated and distorted what was actually happening, both on the part of the girls and the uvandir. The girls appreciated a protector, someone who made a vow to keep them from danger. And, more often than not, the uvandir bodyguards were far less likely to keep away all suitors; they usually just kept away the dangerous ones.

But for the uvandir, the difficulty was far more complicated. The uvandir saw himself as faithful to his charge, not the father who hired him. And while he did grow emotionally attached to his charge, it was not in any romantic way. The uvandir call it, *ghushavan*. Human scholars call it, “familial love.” The uvandir see their charges as beloved nieces and nephews, not as romantic possibilities. Records show uvandir staying with a single for their entire lives, even at their deathbeds, leaving only after their charge has departed. So, while young girls were “falling in love” with their protectors (as young girls tend to do), the uvandir were not reciprocating that love in a romantic or sexual way at all. In fact, the uvandir didn’t understand it.

Uvandir who lose a charge often fall into melancholy. The emotional loss is so great, they seldom recover.

Branding

The uvandir's unique condition not only stops any kind of natural aging, but also has a curious side effect. The uvandir do not heal injury as other races do. Scars remain forever. After the uvandir saw the human tradition of tattooing, the uvandir quickly became the most skilled artists in the Reign.

Just ask them. They'll tell you.

Tattoos are a huge part of uvandir culture. Every great event is a new tattoo. And every tattoo is an opportunity to tell a new story. In many uvandir story circles, all a warrior has to do is point at one of his tattoos and the others just nod and smile. That's the story. Of course, if a human wants to hear it...

Music

Another discovery the uvandir made when encountering men was music. It was as if the uvandir had never heard it before. They sat, silent and staring, at musicians, watching every movement, listening to every word. Then, without warning, the first uvandir musicians started showing up in bars and taverns.

They sang working songs. Slow dirges designed to give a working crew a beat to work along with. And they created something human scholars called, "sorrow songs." He went on to say, "The songs are full of misery, and yet, I could not help but clap my hands and sing along with a smile on my face. It is a happy, haunting music that tells the story of work, toil and loss."

After a few months of study, the scholars found that the uvandir built their music around peasant songs. They used basic chord structure and then changed it. Human music was based on mathematics with the emphasis on the even beats (2 and 4). The uvandir took this basic structure and changed it, moving the emphasis

on odd beats (1 and 3). They also introduced asymmetrical arrangements, polyrhythms and other innovations that completely changed how the musicians of the Reign looked at music.

The head music scholar of Shavay, Seldwyn Marle, summed it up well. "It's the uvandir," he said. "They took what they found and made it better."

Technology

As we said before, when the uvandir arrived in the Reign, like their fellow races, they found a way to integrate themselves into the world of men. But not with only architecture. The uvandir brought with them a sense of innovation that humanity had never seen before. The uvandir took what men had constructed and made it better.

It is the one time the uvandir suffer the temperaments of men: in cooperation and collaboration. While the craggy and bearded faces of the craftsmen seem impossible to crack, the one time they seem to smile is when they work with others -- even with men -- to accomplish something great.

And with men, the uvandir progressed technology in the Reign further than men could have done it alone. Men are proud to say the opposite is also true: the uvandir could not have progressed without human ingenuity. The uvandir are less likely to agree, but will not disagree.

Without the collaboration, the Reign would not have clocks and pocket watches. They would have had to wait another century or so for blast furnaces and spinning wheels. Ships carried waterproof clocks, allowing men to search out further into the unknown waters. Faced with the challenge of slowly degenerating eyesight, the uvandir introduce eyeglasses. Together with men, they improve waterwheels, ploughs, and sawmills. Even buttons on coats can be attributed to the combined genius of men and the uvandir.

But the two most important innovations have only come recently to the Reign. And these two technologies completely transform both men and the uvandir forever.

The first is the printing press. The second was is magnetic compass.

The printing press (complete with movable type) changed the Reign by making books easy and cheap to print. Knowledge spread across the Reign quickly, making books available not just for scholars, but for anyone willing to pay a coin for knowledge.

The magnetic compass, on the other hand, has provided men the ability to effectively map out of their Reign. It also provided the uvandir a powerful tool for mining...

Magic

When the uvandir first encountered humanity, they brought with them a kind of magic humans had never seen before. In fact, most humans still don't know of its existence. But humans weren't the only ones to discover a new kind of magic. In fact, the uvandir saw arcane magic and immediately became fascinated. (Some may even say, "obsessed." See below.)

The uvandir brought with them something they called *oberstanvir*, or "gemstone magic." The uvandir found they could tap into energy resting within the stones, draw that power out and shape it. Before they encountered the Reign, they used this power for other means, but when they learned of arcane magic, the uvandir mingled their magic with the magic of men.

The philosophers of the Reign have yet to crack the secret of *oberstanvir*. As far as they can tell, it is an innate ability unique to the uvandir. Men have not been able to recreate the relationship the uvandir have with gemstones.

A few years after the uvandir entered the Reign, they began showing up at arcane academies, looking for apprenticeship. They brought with them hordes of gold and other precious minerals in exchange for magical knowledge. After months of debate, the academy elders agreed to allow uvandir. Soon enough, the uvandir students began to eclipse their human fellows. They proved themselves not only apt pupils but exceptional ones.

The uvandir students didn't sleep, studying all through the night, memorizing spells, practicing and practicing. They also employed their unique relationship to gemstones, incorporating that talent with the human understanding of arcane magic. They found a way to cast spells *into* the stones, then found a way to release that energy on command. Again, human scholars tried to replicate the ability, but so far, no human (or any other race) has been able to duplicate it.

Swakander: Three Craftsmen

The uvandir word *swakander* means many things. First, it means "craftsman." That's the literal definition. But it also carries the connotation of "living alone." An uvandir can only become a master of his craft if he sacrifices everything *for* his craft. There is no such thing as a master carpenter who spends all this time thinking about things other than carpentry. It is the dedication, focus and -- yes -- *obsession* with their craft that makes an uvandir a swakander. One who lives alone.

Listed below are three such craftsmen: uvandir who have driven themselves beyond the limits of even their own incomparable endurance to become one the others talk about. To become swakander.

The Jeweler

He is the newest of the swakander: the uvandir who studied human magic and made it better than before. The uvandir brought gemstone magic to

the humans, but the humans are too... human... to understand it. The jeweler used his knowledge, combined it with human knowledge and created something the world had never seen before.

Humans call him a “gemstone wizard” or even a “glitter wizard.” Those who do usually spend a week in bed. They prefer “jewelers.” Remember that.

Jewelers have found a way to put arcane magic into gemstones, store it there, and then pull it back out again. This “spell storing” has befuddled humans for years. And the uvandir are not giving up the secret.

The Watchmaker

Watches and clocks are the most recent innovation the uvandir brought to the Reign. They’ve changed everything, giving the Known World races the tools to measure time. Cooks could measure the precise amount of time they needed for recipes. Roadmen could measure travel times. It also allowed allied generals to coordinate attacks. Precision has always been an important part of uvandir culture, but when the clock arrived, it became an obsession.

The Scholars from the Reign have translated the word as “watchmaker.” An uvandir who works with delicate tools and machines. The word means “fine fingers” which are necessary for the work a watchmaker does.

But watchmakers have done more than just made clocks. They have also made weapons the likes the Reign of Men has never seen. Powered by gemstone dust, these long rods propel stones with amazing accuracy. The uvandir sets the tube against his shoulder, brings it up to his eye and squeezes a trigger mechanism. Then, his target -- many yards away -- clutches an injury and falls to the ground.

These weapons (the uvandir call them *stormgwar*, humans call them “stormbringers”) have changed warfare across the Reign. Men have tried to reproduce the process, but with no luck. The watchmaker uses some sort of

ritual to bind the weapon to himself so only he can use it. He may pass the weapon on to another, but that other must be an uvandir. And the stormgwar may reject the new user, blowing off his hand if it finds him unworthy.

Now, you’re asking, “Are the stormgwar sentient?”

In a word, “yes.” Stormgwar are sentient weapons who bond with the uvandir who created them and will only fire for their maker. After the maker dies, the stormgwar dies as well, becoming a useless puzzle of tiny, fine pieces of clockwork.

The Woodcutter

Up above the Reign, high in the mountains, the uvandir heard legends of the men who gave up on civilization to live in the wilderness. The uvandir are not a romantic people (so they claim), but the notion of walking out into the unknown with only your tools on your belt and knowledge in your head appealed to something in their spirit. And that is how *some* uvandir “went native.” They became mountain men.

At least, that’s what men called them. But the uvandir preferred a different title. *Holtzchiver*. The woodcutter. It was a craftsman’s title. More fitting for an uvandir. And it didn’t include the word “man.”

The holtzchiver lived on his wits and on his skills. He took no help from anyone. He built his own home, built his own forge, built his own life. From scratch. No help from anyone else. Every meal: killed, skinned, cleaned and cooked with your own hands. Everything is yours. You don’t need to bargain for anything. This is the way a true uvandir should live. Self-reliant and alone.

Unfortunately, most holtzchiver suffered a similar fate: melancholy. Unable to live without being able to share songs and stories, many of the early woodcutters turned to stone. Later, when others learned their fate, the many woodcutters

made a pact to meet once a month to share stories and drink and sing. Soon, they began inviting actual mountain men to such meetings: those who had earned trust and respect. And now, when the moon is bright, at the top of the tallest mountains in the Known World, you can hear the echoes of songs and stories and the clanking of iron cups. Living alone, together.

And Finally... Digging for Their god

The uvandir love to tell stories. They will go on and on and on about any given topic, throwing in seemingly irrelevant details... until the story ends and all of it makes a kind of strange sense. But one story the uvandir tell, they only tell to themselves. Themselves and those who are found worthy to hear it, that is.

Back when the world was very young, you see, the sky and the Earth were brother and sister. (Adrotus Valus has pointed out that the "brother and sister" relationship is odd for an uvandir story, considering their complete lack of gender.) They loved each other more than any brother and sister in all the world. At night, sister sky danced for him with all her children: the many, many lights of the night sky.

But father sun did not approve of their love and he separated sister sky and brother Earth from each other. He put her high above the clouds and the blue curtain of the world where she could not see her brother. He banished brother Earth deep within the soil where he could not see his sister.

And then, to further punish sister sky, he set her to dance forever. For if she ever ceased dancing, all her children—the Lights of the sky—would fall to their deaths to the world below. Sister sky started dancing. She

danced and danced and danced. But soon, her legs grew weak and she fell. And when she fell, her children began falling from the Heavens. And she wept to see it: all her beautiful children plummeting to their doom.

When brother Earth heard her weeping and saw her children falling, he went to his great forge. He took a jewel of each color and created him an arc to hold across his shoulders. And then, he lifted the arc on his shoulders—his Arc of Lights—and held up the Heavens so they would not fall down upon the world.

And that is why when the sky weeps, brother Earth puts up his great Arc of Lights. He holds up the Heavens so she may rest for a little while before she must begin her dance again.

And once in a great while, sister sky sends one of her children down to the world. It smashes into the soil and seeks out father Earth. And he takes the child into his hands—still hot from the Heavens, but nothing may burn his hands—and he puts it upon his forge. And there, he hammers out a child of his own. Forged from the sky and Earth. Uvandir.

The uvandir dig. They create great mines the world has never seen. And they dig for a purpose. Not for gold or jewels or gemstones.

They are digging to find lost brothers. They are digging to find their god.

Uvandir Racial Traits

- +2 to Constitution and Wisdom
- **Medium:** Uvandir have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

- **Movement:** Uvandir have a base speed of 20 feet, but their speed is never modified by armor or encumbrance.
- **Darkvision:** Uvandir can see perfectly in the dark up to 60 feet.
- **Ageless:** Uvandir do not age and cannot be magically aged.
- **Obsession:** Uvandir gain 1 obsession point at every level (see Obsessions Rules). All uvandir become easily obsessed with many hobbies; he'll work his fingers to bleeding while practicing his obsessions.
- **Sleepless:** Uvandir do not need to sleep and cannot become exhausted by mundane means such as travel. They may still become magical exhausted. No uvandir has ever lay his head down to sleep, he has no need for such a long waste of time.
- **Stonemade:** Uvandir gain DR 1 against non-lethal damage. At 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th character level, increase DR by 1. Much like the rocks they work with, uvandir are hardy. An opponent must mean to kill them to do any damage at all.
- **Mental Resistant:** Uvandir gain spell resistance 5% against compulsion and mind affecting spells. Stubborn has been called an understatement when one speaks of the uvandir.
- **Automatic Languages:** Uvandir begin play speaking Common and Uvandir. Uvandir with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

Obsessions

Uvandir gain 1 point of *obsession* every level, starting at first level. Obsessions can be any of the following: *Battle*, *Craftsmanship*, *Friends*, *Gemstones*, *Magic* or *Songs & Stories*; see below for more information on each obsession. Obsession

points (OP) can be spent to gain ranks in an obsession; OP does not have to be spent all in the same obsession. For example, a level 5 uvandir fighter can have a Rank 2 Obsession with Battle and a Rank 3 Obsession with Friends.

Obsession Types

Battle: The uvandir feel a passion for bloodshed, strategy and tactics. Whenever he spends two uninterrupted hours studying battle tactics, or practicing combat, he successfully indulges his obsession. If he engages in a real battle, he also indulges his obsession no matter the length of the battle.

Craftsmanship: The uvandir respect those who can create items of worth. When he creates a an item or spends two hours carefully cleaning his tools, he successfully indulges in his obsession. If he creates a masterwork item, he loses *two points* of melancholy, see below.

Friends: The uvandir revere those who have stood beside him through tough times. Whenever he helps or protects a friend, he successfully indulges his obsession.

Gemstones: These shiny objects beguile every uvandir's eyes and mind. Whenever he ingests gemstones (crushing them into dust or even just swallowing them), he indulges in his obsession.

Magic: The uvandir are fascinated by the magic of men, always seeking to improve their skills. Whenever an uvandir learns a new spell, spends two hours researching arcane lore or spends two hours debating or discussing magical theory, he indulges his obsession.

Song & Stories: All uvandir love to sing and tell stories. If he spends one hour telling stories and singing songs, he successfully indulges in his obsession.

Indulging Obsessions

At least once a day, you need to indulge your obsessions or become Melancholy (see below). Higher ranked Obsessions need to be indulged more. You must indulge an Obsession a number of times a day equal to your total rank of the obsession/5, round up. This is the Indulgence of your Obsession. For example, a Rank 3 Obsession has an Indulgence of 1 but a Rank 7 Obsession has an Indulgence of 2. Indulging your Obsessions can come in many forms as described above.

If you are unable to indulge any of your Obsessions in a normal way, you can drink beer instead (see *Drunk Rules*, below). You must drink one pint of beer (any other alcoholic drink works as well) per rank of your Obsessions. If, by the end of the day, you have not indulged any of your Obsessions or drank, you fall into Melancholy.

Invoking Obsessions

When your Obsessions have been indulged, you may invoke them to gain bonus dice. On any d20 roll where your Obsession may be appropriate, gain a number of d20s equal to your Obsession's rank; you can use whichever result you want. You may use this ability a number of times a day equal to the Indulgence of an Obsession.

You may only use one Obsession per roll.

Melancholy

The uvandir are an emotional race (although they hide that fact well), and every once in awhile, they become overwhelmed with *melancholy*. You earn Melancholy Points every time you fail to indulge in your Obsession. You can also gain Melancholy when you witness or take part in an activity that would trigger sadness, sorrow or depression.

If, by the end of the day, you fail to indulge in your Obsessions, you gain a point of Melancholy for every point of Indulgence you have left. For example a Rank 7 Battle

Obsession has an Indulgence of 2, if you indulged it once then you gain 1 point of Melancholy for the 1 left over Indulgence.

If your Melancholy Points ever exceed your Wisdom score (not the bonus, but the actual score), you fall into Melancholy. You sit down and do not move, slowly turning into inanimate stone. You do not speak. You do nothing.

Friends may try to pull you out of Melancholy. A friend may make a *diplomacy* check against DC 10 + your current Melancholy Points. If successful, you lose one point of Melancholy and you spend one round recovering from the Melancholy before you are able to move. An uvandir then suffers a -2 penalty to all rolls for a number of rounds equal to his current Melancholy Points as he shakes off the effects.

If an uvandir spends a number of days equal to his Wisdom score in Melancholy, he turns to stone forever.

Losing Melancholy

An uvandir can lose Melancholy Points by indulging in his obsessions. Whenever an uvandir gains a crit while invoking one of his Obsessions, he loses one Melancholy Point.

Optional: Drunk Rules

When partaking in alcoholic drinks you may drink as many pints as your Constitution modifier (minimum 1) without any penalty. (A "pint" is a non-specific amount of alcohol. Because different alcoholic drinks have different effects, a "pint" is, essentially, a single serving of an alcoholic drink. For example, one tall glass of beer is, roughly, the equivalent of one shot of whiskey. Both are considered a "pint" for these rules.) Once you drink more than this number, you must make a Fortitude save for every pint beyond your Constitution modifier. The DC of the save is 10 + the number of pints beyond your Constitution modifier.

If you fail the Fortitude save, you gain the *drunk* condition.

A *drunk* character has less control of fine motor skills, but is also a bit more courageous (although a few may call this “foolhardy”). Drunk characters suffer a -4 to all *Dexterity* checks but gain +2 on all *fear* and *intimidation* checks.

Uvandir Feats

Vandra

Your dedication has earned the grudging recognition of the *uvandir*, who may actually refrain from berating or beating you when you try to learn their ways and use their language. As one of the *vandra*, you are actually worthy of consideration to the *uvandir*.

Prerequisite: Non-uvandir, 6 ranks in any Craft, Must know uvandir language

Benefit: You gain a +4 competence bonus to all Charisma checks and Charisma-based skill checks to interact with uvandir, and a +4 bonus to all ability checks or saving throws to resist any effect that would cause fatigue. You may learn Vandirtuvaldinshan feats as if you were an uvandir.

Longbeard

Your long years show in the length of your beard. Other uvandir show you respect and honor your earned wisdom.

Prerequisite: Uvandir, 4 Diplomacy ranks

Benefit: You gain a +1 racial bonus to Diplomacy checks of a non-hostile nature with other uvandir for every 4 levels you possess (minimum +1).

Special: You can take this feat more than once and the bonus stacks. Each time you take this feat, you add 10 braids to your beard.

Two Gun Mojo

The uvandir have a saying: “I have two hands.” Plainly stated, if one hand isn’t working, then what’s the point of having two?

Prerequisite: Uvandir, Watchmaker, Bound Gun: Pistol

Benefit: You gain a second bound gun which is a matching pistol to your first bound gun. It has all the same innovations and remodels that your other gun currently has. Whenever you innovate or remodel your first pistol you also innovate or remodel your second pistol at the same time.

Gemstone Feats

Darkvision Gemstone

Tap into the power of a gemstone and you can pierce the darkness of the Great Mines.

Prerequisite: Uvandir

Benefit: You gain one medium-quality gem (worth 100gp) that enhances your *darkvision* up to 120ft.

Sleepless Gemstone

As if they were made from the same magic of the gemstones, the uvandir can draw from their power to resist even magical slumber.

Prerequisite: Uvandir

Benefit: You gain one medium-quality gem (worth 100gp) that enhances your *sleepless*, making you immune to magical exhaustion.

Stonemade Gemstone

Like the uvandir, some stones are stronger than others.

Prerequisite: Uvandir

Benefit: You gain one medium-quality gem (worth 10 gp) that enhances your *stonemade* DR to 2; at 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th character level your DR increases by 2.

Mental Resistant Gemstone

The uvandir know strength isn't only in the muscles. It is also in the mind.

Prerequisite: Uvandir

Benefit: You gain one medium-quality gem (worth 100gp) that enhances your spell resistances to 10%.

vandirtuvaldinshan Feats

Grand Master Craftsman

Men have a standard for calling their craftsmen "master." Uvandir have a higher standard.

Prerequisite: Uvandir, Master Craftsman, 7 ranks in any 3 Crafts

Benefit: The masterwork component of all your *craft* check costs you nothing and the DC of creating the masterwork component is 10.

Hands of Stone

"When the uvandir reached into the forge and took out the hot metal, I was amazed. When he saw my gaze, gestured for me to take it from him, I was terrified."

Prerequisite: Uvandir, Grand Master Craftsman, BAB + 12

Benefit: Your hands, up to your wrists, are immune to fire damage and can be placed in extremely hot fires or liquids without taking any hit points. This feat does not make you immune to fire, only your hands, any other part of your body that makes contact with fire will burn as normal.

Stand My Ground

"He stood in the doorway, as still as a statue. The beast made its charge, but he just smiled. It rammed into his body, but the uvandir did not move."

Prerequisite: Uvandir, Hands of Stone, Character Level 15

Benefit: Once per day, as a swift action you may declare that you cannot be moved. By no mundane or magical means can you be moved from that spot unless something happens that destroys the ground below you, making it impossible to stand on. You can not be moved for one hour per character level or until you choose to move. You can still take damage while using this feat.

The Long Walk

"I saw the uvandir step into the Mayor's office. He was covered in mud and blood. I asked where he came from. He told me, 'Millford.' I told him that was impossible. He said, 'For you.' Then, he handed me the message and walked away."

Prerequisite: Uvandir, Stand My Ground, Constitution 20

Benefit: Once a day, as a swift action you may pick a spot that you can see or that you know very well. You begin walking there and you cannot be stopped by any mundane or magical means. Any obstacle in your way you climb over, tunnel under or walk around. Any damage you take does not take effect until you reach the spot you picked out.

New Wizard Archetype: The Jeweler

The jeweler is more than just a polisher of precious stones. He is a unique wizard who incorporates uvandir gemstone magic with human arcane magic for spectacular results.

Requirements: Uvandir

Class Features

The following are class features of the jeweler.

Sleepless Spells: The jeweler does not require 8 hours of sleep to prepare his spells but he must spend 8 hours cleansing the gemstones he uses (See *Gemstones* below). Otherwise his spells work exactly the same as the spells class feature.

This ability modifies the *spells* class feature.

Trade Spells (Ex): The jeweler can trade one of his prepared spells for another spell he knows. The spell he trades for must be of the same level or lower than the spell he trades out. It takes 10 minutes to trade out a spell and there is a 10% chance the spell will backfire on the jeweler when he attempts to use it. If the spell backfires, there is an explosion with a radius of 30ft centered on the jeweler. Everyone within the radius except the jeweler can make a reflex save of DC 10 + spell level + the jeweler's Int modifier to take half damage. The explosion deals 1d6 points of damage per spell level to every creature within in the radius. The jeweler is treated as a universalist getting no bonuses for an arcane school.

This ability replaces the *arcane school* class feature.

Gemstones: The jeweler has a spellbook that functions like a normal spellbook. Instead of memorizing spells for an hour every morning, the jeweler attunes gemstones to his spells, storing the spells inside. It takes him an hour to attune all of his gemstones. He starts with a number of gemstones equal to his spells per day and cannot attune more gemstones than his spell per day. Only the jeweler can activate his gemstones.

This ability modifies the *spellbook* class feature.

Craft Wondrous Item: At 5th level, the jeweler gains the craft wondrous item feat.

Intentional Backfire: At 10th level, The jeweler can crack two gemstones with spells

stored in them together and use them as a splash weapon, dealing 1d6 fire damage per combined spell level of spells stored in cracked gemstones in a 10ft burst. Targets can make a Reflex Save of DC 10 + lowest spell level + jeweler's Int modifier for half damage. Even if retrieved, both gemstones used in this ability are broken beyond repair and cannot be used to store spells again.

This ability replaces the wizard bonus feat acquired at 10th level.

New Gunslinger Archetype: The Watchmaker

The watchmaker is not just a clockwork craftsman. He is also an uvandir. And that fact alone makes him deadly.

Requirements: Uvandir

Racial Features

The following are racial traits of the watchmaker.

Gun Obsession: The watchmaker has an Obsession with his firearm. No other Obsession of his can be higher than this Obsession.

Guns: Bound to his weapon through arcana magic, the watchmaker's hands are never far from his creation. The watchmaker must spend two uninterrupted hours cleaning, maintaining and repairing his weapon to indulge in his Obsession. If he engages in a real battle with his weapon, he also indulges his Obsession no matter the length of the battle.

The trait modifies the *obsession* racial trait.

Class Features

The following are class features of the watchmaker.

Bound Firearm: At 1st level, a watchmaker gains one of the following firearms, in good repair, of his choice: blunderbuss, musket, or pistol. He becomes bound to his weapon and is unable to sell or replace the firearm unless it is destroyed beyond repair. The firearm will not work for anyone else and can be enchanted as normal. Once the choice is made, it cannot be changed. The watchmaker also gains *gunsmithing* as a bonus feat.

This ability replaces the *gunsmith* class feature

Innovating Firearm: At 5th level, a watchmaker can improve on his firearm, making it more advanced than before. He can choose any of the innovations below to add to his firearm. All previously selected innovations persist through Remodel and Innovate. Some innovations have prerequisites that need to be met before this innovation can be selected. The watchmaker gains another innovation at 9th, 13th and 17th level.

Durable: Your first misfire in combat does not grant your firearm the *broken* condition, but all other effects still happen.

Increase Capacity: You can increase the capacity of your firearm by 1. This innovation can be taken multiple times.

Increase Critical Range: You threaten a critical hit on a 19 or 20.

Increase Damage: Add your Dexterity modifier to all damage rolls with this firearm.

Increase Range: Add 10ft to all of this firearm's ranges. This innovation can be taken multiple times.

Innovate: You can innovate your firearm into a more advanced firearm. Pistol or any altered Pistol can be transformed into a Revolver. Musket or any altered Musket can be transformed into a Rifle. Blunderbuss or any altered Blunderbuss can be transformed into a Shotgun. You must have at least 13 levels of gunslinger to take this innovation.

Misfire: If you misfire with this weapon your misfire value increase by 2 instead of by 4.

Remodel: You can remodel your firearm into a similar firearm. Pistols can be transformed into a Pepperbox, Double Barreled Pistol, Dragon Pistol, or Sword Cane Pistol. Muskets can be transformed into an Axe Musket, Double Barreled Musket, or Warhammer Musket. Blunderbusses can be transformed into a Culverin. Rifles can be transformed into a Pepperbox Rifle. Shotguns can be transformed into a Double Barreled Shotgun. This innovation can be take more than once.

This ability replaces the *gun training* class feature

One Last Shot (Ex): At 20th level, a watchmaker can take a full round action to fire a single shot at one target. If the attack is successful he shoots the target in a vital spot (the eye, a crack in the armor, etc.) and the target's hit points become 0. This cost 2 grit. For every subsequent use in the same combat this deed costs the previous cost + 1.

This ability replaces the true grit class feature.

Gunpower

The watchmaker does not use normal black powder in his firearms. Instead, he crushes up gemstones and uses the dust. The better quality the gemstone, the more shots a watchmaker can get out of it. A gemstone produces 1 shot per 10 gp it is worth. For example, a low-quality gemstone (10gp) is only worth one shot, but a high-quality gemstone (500gp) has 50 shots worth of powder.

New Druid Archetype: Woodcutter

In the middle of nowhere, reliant on no-one but himself, the woodcutter stands alone against nature. Just as an uvandir should.

Requirements: Uvandir

Class Features

The following are class features of the woodcutter.

Metal Armor Proficiency: The woodcutter is not prohibited from wearing light metal armor, he is still prohibited from wear medium metal armor. While wearing light metal armor he can use his spells and spell-like abilities granted by his class.

This ability modifies the *weapon and armor proficiency* class feature.

Stone's Endurance: At 5th level, the woodcutter gains DR 2/bludgeoning. Whenever his stonemade DR/nonlethal increases also increase his DR/bludgeoning to match. Such as, at 10th level, the woodcutter has DR 3/nonlethal and bludgeoning to a maximum of DR 5 at 20th level.

This ability replaces the *resist nature's lure* class feature.

Hands of Stone: At 11th level, the woodcutter gains *hands of stone* as a bonus feat even if he does not meet the prerequisites for it.

This ability replaces the *a thousand faces* class feature.

Territory (Ex): At 15th level, the woodcutter can declare all of the land in a 1 mile radius around him as his territory. He knows if any person or animal enters or leaves his territory and exactly where they are while there. This effect lasts for 24 hours and does not move with the woodcutter. He can do this a number of times a day equal to his Wisdom modifier but he can only have one territory at a time.

This ability replaces the *timeless body* class feature.

Approved classes

Listed below are the classes available to uvandir in *Wicked Fantasy*.

Barbarian	yes
Bard	archetype
<i>Cleric</i>	<i>no</i>
Druid	archetype
Fighter	yes
<i>Monk</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Paladin</i>	<i>no</i>
Ranger	yes
Rogue	yes
Sorcerer	yes
Wizard	archetype
<i>Alchemist</i>	<i>no</i>
Cavalier	yes
Gunslinger	archetype
<i>Inquisitor</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Magus</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Oracle</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Summoner</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Witch</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Antipaladin</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Ninja</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Samurai</i>	<i>no</i>





A Round on Missus Bing

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

Bing's Tavern sits on the corner of Pape and Danforth. Inside, there's an old haffun who runs the place. The locals call her "Missus Bing." There is no "Mister Bing." He died many years ago. Her two children, Bola and Roda, help out by serving drinks, food and singing for the customers.

And whenever an uvandir comes in, Missus Bing gives him a mug of beer. No charge. The uvandir know it, and they don't exploit it. "A tip for Mister Bing," they say and throw a coin into the copper jar.

And every once in a while, some man will ask, "Why do the dwarves not have to pay for the first pint?"

If his kneecaps survive, Missus Bing throws him out. She does this herself.

Doesn't matter the size of the man or his station. He gets thrown out. And after that, every uvandir in the house gets a round on Missus Bing.

The uvandir sing a song then. One written by an uvandir bard. "A Round on Missus Bing." She laughs as the uvandir sing, but if you look close, you can also see a tear in her eye.

Killian opened the chamber of his rifle and counted the rounds he had left. Three.

He looked at the axe at his side. The blade was red and covered in gore. The handle was loose.

He looked down at his leg. Blood oozed from under the bandage.

Killian then looked at the family of haffuns beside him. The mother and two children just stared at the wall, unable to move. The father stood beside him, short sword in hand. Killian looked him in the eye and the haffun nodded and smiled. "Do this often?" he asked.

Killian did not smile or laugh. He looked back down the small, dark stone corridor, listening to the sounds the horrors down there made. Slowly growing closer.

It was many days ago that they left the Labyrinth of the Enemy. Killian and a few others got cut off by a cave in. They tried to find a way through, but backtracking got them here: trapped in a dead end. Down that corridor, toward the sounds, they left behind scores of bodies, each fighting until his last breath, her last drop of blood. Now, it was down to this. Killian and four haffuns.

Killian didn't know where the others were or how far they made it. Maybe the Enemy caught up with them, too. Maybe they were all dead.

"It was worth a try, wasn't it?" the haffun asked.

Killian didn't shake his head. That was enough.

The sounds got closer. They would be here in a few minutes. The haffun nodded and took a deep breath. He turned to the female.

"My Josie sweetheart," he said. "Give me the beer."

Killian turned and looked. The woman—Josie—opened a pouch in her backpack and took out a bottle. The husband took it and opened it. Killian could smell the liquid from where he stood. His back straightened up. He forgot the pain in his leg. Killian smelled the beer and everything else faded off.

The haffun held the bottle out to him. "Last one," he said. "Brewed with love and attention."

Killian took the bottle from the haffun's hand. He held the top under his nose and sniffed. Then, he smiled. He looked at the haffun.

"Killian," he said.

The haffun nodded. "Tom Bing."

Killian took a swig from the bottle. It was haffun beer. A little sweeter than he liked, but good. Very good. He lowered the bottle from his lips and licked them.

He looked at Tom Bing and said, "Yes."

Bing's smile stretched across his lips. "An uvandir compliment if I ever heard one."

There was a crash down the corridor. Killian and Bing looked in its direction. Bing's fingers clenched the sword at his side.

"They're coming," Bing said.

Killian had nothing to say. He picked up his musket and pulled back the cock. Bing turned to the family. "Cover your ears!" he shouted.

Killian heard the mother behind him telling her children what to do. Then, he heard the sound of dozens of naked feet running against the stone. He knew what was coming. From the look of him, Bing knew what was coming, too.

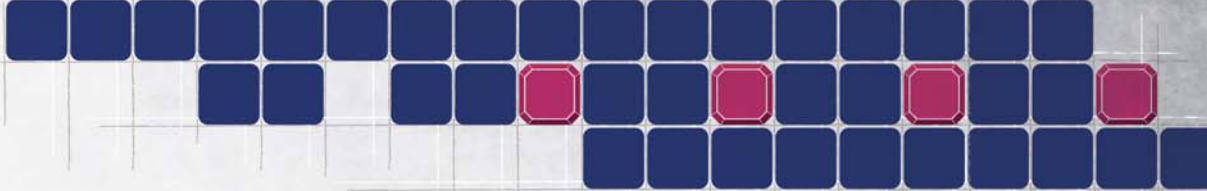
The haffun looked at him. "I lied about the last bottle," he said. "There's another one in the backpack." He winked at the uvandir. "If we survive this wave, it's yours."

Killian smiled. "Good," he said.

Then, the horrors came.

Climbing on the walls, running across the floor. A wall of claws and eyes and talons rushed at them. Killian fired once into the mass, the bullet racing through one of the eyes, crashing into a skull behind it. Then, he threw down the musket and picked up the axe. He sent the edge through a shoulder, feeling the impact in his hands and arms, feeling the hot blood spray against his face.

Other hands tried to take the axe away from him. He slammed his forehead into one of them, more blood and more pain. He swung the axe to the left into the leg of one of the beasts trying to get behind him, trying to



get to the mother and her children. Then, he grabbed another by the throat and squeezed until he felt cartilage pop under his fingers.

Beside him, Bing moved fast. His blade cut flesh down to the bone. He moved like a dancer, stepping between the beasts as they reached for him. He cut off fingers, slashed open stomachs and kicked and punched and bit. Once, Killian heard him make a painful sound. When Killian looked, the haffun was still fighting, but holding a deep gash in his side, blood between his fingers. The haffun saw Killian's look and smiled. Then, he kept fighting.

The horde kept coming. They had no weapons; only talons and teeth. Those ripped and tore at Killian. He payed them no heed. Killian remembered the words of his teacher: *Pain is only a distraction*, he said. Killian gripped his axe tighter. The pommel was slick and sticky with blood. He swung it into a skull and watched the life run out of the creature's eyes.

When the battle was done, Killian looked at the mess. The haffun's strategy had worked. The tunnel was tight, leaving little room. They had to come at them two at a time. The hallways was filled with bodies. Enough to make a wall.

Killian looked at Bing. The haffun, still holding his bleeding side, grinned at him. "Not bad for a haffun, eh?" he asked.

Killian took a deep breath and closed his eyes. When he opened them, he said, "Share the beer?"

Tom Bing laughed, then winced. His wife rushed up, looking at the wound.

Josie poured water over it. Killian could see it was deep. She looked at Killian, a quiet plea in her eyes.

Killian nodded at her. He turned to Bing. "No more," he said.

Bing hissed a breath through his teeth. "No more what?"

Killian opened the beer bottle and gave it to the haffun. Bing sipped on it, then made a sour face. "I hate beer," he said. "I know it's an awful thing to say," he winced again as his wife worked on the wound. "But I really do hate beer."

Killian took the bottle from the haffun's hands. "Doing it wrong," he said. Then, he took a large swig from the bottle.

Tom Bing laughed. The sound echoed down the corridor, across the bodies.

Then, the haffun said to him, "We have to get out of here. Find the others."

Josie said, "Tom, you can't move."

He pushed his hands against the floor, putting his back against the wall. He got to his feet. "I have to," he told her. "Sweetheart, we have to go."

Killian nodded. "Yes," he said. He picked up his rifle and looked at the children. Their eyes were red and swollen, their faces pale. But they could move. They could run if they had to. Their father, on the other hand...

"Let's move," Bing said. He began moving slowly, his wife holding him from falling. Killian waited

for them to move, then stood on the other side of the haffun. He put Bing's arm over his shoulder.

The haffun smiled at him. "I'm precious cargo," he said. "Don't drop me."

Killian didn't say a word.

It was a long time after that when Bing finally said, "I'm sorry," gasping and wheezing. "I have to stop."

Josie and Killian set Bing down.

He bit his lip the whole time.

"I need to do something," he said to Josie, his breath so thin and fragile. "Help me."

Killian looked down the corridor. He didn't hear anything. He also didn't know if they were going the right way. They could be walking straight back to the Labyrinth. All his senses were mixed up. He *should* know. He *should* be able to keep them moving the right direction. But there was magic. Some sort of magic keeping his senses dull. That meant the Enemy knew exactly where they were.

He turned and saw Bing writing something on the ground. It was a symbol in a language he had never seen before. When Bing was done drawing it, the symbol vanished.

"There," he said and fell back against the wall. "I can rest now."

Killian took a breath. The air smelled sharper. Cleaner. He took another breath. It was like a

weight had been lifted from his chest. He breathed again. And a veil was lifted from his eyes.

He knew exactly where they were.

"It was a spell," Bing said. Killian turned and looked at him. "They were doing something... to confuse us."

Killian looked at him, curiously.

"I know because... I've used it... before myself," he said. He gasped at every pause.

Killian looked in the direction they were heading. Yes. That was the right way. They had lost some ground in the passageways before, but they were still headed toward the agreed direction.

He head Bing tell his wife, "He knows the right way to go."

Josie looked at Killian and he nodded. He knew.

"You must rest," Josie told her husband.

Bing shook his head. "No," he said. "We have to keep moving. We have to catch up with the others."

Bing tried to stand, but Killian looked at him. Bing stopped.


"All right," he said, gently smiling.

"For a little while."

After Bing fell asleep, his wife did, too. She fell asleep holding her bleeding, dying husband.

When Josie awoke, she saw her children pushing against Killian. He was standing perfectly still.

"Roda!" she said. "Boda! What are you doing!"



Roda, her daughter said, “Trying to move the uvandir!”

Boda just laughed.

Josie stood up. “Don’t you know?” she said.

Boda asked, “Know what, mommy?”

Josie knelt down in front of her children.

“Once an uvandir doesn’t want to be moved, nothing in all the world can move him.”

Boda and Roda looked up at Killian. “Is that true?”

The uvandir looked at Josie, then back at the children. He nodded, just a little.

“It’s not true!” Boda laughed and both the boy and girl tried pushing him again.

Josie plucked up her children by the scruffs and said, “I have to talk to our uvandir friend for a moment.” She tossed them toward their father. “Make breakfast,” she told them.

The children did as they were told.

Josie took Killian aside.

“Tell me,” she said. “How far are we from the others?”

Killian made a soft sound in the back of his throat. He said, “Far.”

“Can we catch up?” she asked him.

Killian thought about it. The others would be moving fast. They would not need to stop so often. They would probably leave wounded behind.

With that thought, he looked at Bing. Josie saw the look in his eyes.

“No,” she said. “We’re not doing that.”

Killian looked at her children, then looked back at her.

Her gaze turned to steel. “This is not the story where one of us stays behind so the others can escape,” she told Killian. “Either we all make it or we don’t.”

Killian looked at the children again. They looked like weary ghosts. He took the bottle of beer from his pouch and opened it. There wasn’t much left. He offered it to Josie.

“No,” she said. Then, she took a small, metal vial from her pocket. Killian smelled the sweet scent of spiced mead. “I don’t drink beer,” she smiled, sipping from the bottle.

That was when Killian laughed.

Standing on the edge of the crevice, Tom Bing said, “This is how we’re going to do it.”

Killian saw Bing was as pale as his terrified children. He would not last much longer. He could feel the thin pulse through the haffun’s wrist while he helped him walk. Behind him, he heard the frightful footfalls his children made. They knew their father was dying. Perhaps they did not understand it, or know how to say it, but they knew it.

Bing said, "We have rope." He looked at Killian. "Tie this end to that rock over there. Then, tie the other end to Josie."

His wife shook her head. "What are you talking about?"

He said, "We will swing you across to the other side."

Killian looked down the side of the crevice. He could not see the bottom. Killian also knew there was no way they were swinging him across. One female and two children? Maybe if Bing was strong, they could do it.

He tied one end of the rope to a rock. Then, he took up the rope in his thick fingers. He looked at Bing. He was ready.

Josie clutched her husband. "You are coming across, too," she told him. She looked then at Killian, tears in her eyes. "No heroes."

Killian gave her a glance and she knew he understood. She looked back at Bing. "Lower me off the ledge," she said.

Killian and Bing grabbed the rope and lowered her down. Then, they started pulling. Slowly, she started to swing.

The children saw their mother and one of them giggled. "Swing!" she said. Killian did not laugh.

Josie swang up high enough. They twisted the rope. She landed on the other side of the crevice with a heavy, painful sound.

"Are you all right?" Bing shouted to her.

She got up, dusted herself off. "Knocked the wind out of me!" she shouted back.

Killian saw the pain in Bing's face. That was it for him. That one effort.

He looked at Killian. "The children next."

Killian didn't disagree.

First, the boy. He was stronger and could help from the other side. Killian swung him high and he fell into his mother. She collapsed, but caught him. She kissed him and hugged him as she undid the ropes.

"Now," Bing said, "it's Roda's turn."

Just then, a sound came from the corridor behind them. Killian and Bing turned. Footfalls. Not naked feet. Armored. Killian knew what that sound meant.

Bing said the word out loud. "The kaszh'nek."

He said it loud enough to echo through the cavern. His wife heard it, too.


"No," she said, her whisper echoing toward Killian. Then, louder. "*No!*"

Killian looked at Bing and his daughter. He grabbed the girl and tied her around Bing's waist. He pulled the rope tight and Bing winced.

"Tom!" Josie shouted from the other side. "Don't you let him! Don't let him, Tom!"

Killian looked into Tom Bing's eyes. He didn't say a word. He didn't have to. Neither did Bing.

"You promised!" Josie shouted from the other side. "You stupid, stubborn uvandir! You promised!"



Killian picked up Bing and threw him over the side, holding on to the rope with his good hand. Then, he started swinging. Noises from deep in the cavern were getting closer.

“Killian!” she shouted. “Don’t! We can get you across!”

The uvandir pulled on the rope until Bing started swinging. The screams from down the corridor were louder now. Almost here.

He threw the haffun and his daughter. They landed on the other side, landing at Josie’s feet. Bing coughed blood when he landed. Dust, dirt and blood.

“Killian!” she shouted again.

The uvandir turned and looked at her across the crevice.

“Please!” she shouted. “Please! There’s still time!”

He looked at her and she could see across the way.

“I’ll find you,” he said.

Then, he turned back to the corridor. She saw him fire his musket three times as she untied her husband. She saw him drop the weapon and put his axe in his hands. She remembered the words she told her daughter.

Once an uvandir doesn’t want to be moved...

She watched Killian plant his feet in front of the corridor.

... nothing in all the world can move him.

She put her husband’s arm over her shoulder. She couldn’t see for the tears.

Her son shouted the uvandir’s name. Killian didn’t turn back. She grabbed Bola by the collar and pulled him away.

Bing’s Tavern sits on the corner of Pape and Danforth. Inside, there’s an old haffun who runs the place. The locals call her “Missus Bing.” There is no “Mister Bing.” He died many years ago. Her two children, Bola and Roda, help out by serving drinks, food and singing for the customers.

And today is no exception. There’s a table of ten uvandir, drinking and singing. They’ve been sitting at that table for three days straight with no sign of slowing down. Missus Bing smiles as she watches them. Then, the door opens and another uvandir steps in.

“Welcome,” she says to him, standing behind her small bar. “We’ve got beer if you want it. Real beer. Not that flavored water the men sell.”

The uvandir takes off his slouch hat, covered in dust. He looks up at her. One eye missing. A deep scar down his cheek. He takes a deep breath.

“I don’t drink beer,” he says.

Missus Bing’s breath catches in her throat. She drops the glass and it shatters on the floor. Everyone in the tavern stops.

There’s a moment’s pause as she stands motionless, the uvandir in front of her. And then, she hugs him as hard as she can.



Roddun: Scourge of the city

The rats? Why complain? What good will it do? What are you gonna do about them? One day, there was nothing, and the next, they were everywhere. Wasn't like they crept up on us.

It was the plague. That's what it was. Hit every city like a hammer. They had to burn everything. They burned the clothes, they burned the corpses. They had to burn everything. Left entire barrios like blackened scars. And that's when the rats moved in.

They say the rats brought the plague themselves with their black magic. Made way for their move. That's what they say. I don't know if its true and I ain't saying as such, but that's what I heard. I don't want them looking for me, flashing their teeth at me. They're a part of the city now and that's that. Like the haffuns, they're just here and there's no getting rid of them. So, why bother?

Me, I say keep them. Never been so quiet since they moved in. Got rid of all the filth that was running around here. Don't see no more gangs, do you? That's because the rats got rid of them. No more of that.

Sure, I pay them. Why not? If I don't, I'll get them gangs back. Better to have the rats than the gangs. And at least them rats understand *respect*.

— Robin Jestes, Copper Merchant

Historians call it, “the Time of Blue Fire.” Nearly a century ago, “the blue death” ran through the cities of men, devastating almost a third of the population. It was assumed the disease was carried by cats, causing a mass murder of felines. At first, men tried to deal with the disease, but it spread so quickly, those efforts were cut short. Eventually, officials walled off the infected parts of the Cities and left the diseased to deal with themselves.

Those who broke quarantine were killed and burned. The fire that consumed the infected was not red, but a deep blue. And the smell was sweet.

Historians disagree on the events that followed. The plague seemed to have run its course and the walls were taken down. Those who survived the plague were never fully welcomed back, the

infected barrios never fully recovered... and they had new residents. The rats who walked like men.

While the walls stood, the rats made their way into the “blue barrios.” They showed no fear and walked among the men freely. They traded for food and other goods. They cared for the dying and buried the dead. And when the walls came down, it became very clear that they weren't going anywhere.

Men called them “ratters.” They called themselves, “the roddun.”

A Roddun's Life

The following section details a roddun's life from youth, adolescence and old age.



Youth

When a mother roddun gives birth, she gives birth to a litter of around six to ten, but only a one to three of those survive to be young adults. Regardless, female roddun can carry a litter to term every six months. The roddun spread quickly.

When he is young, a roddun is taught the values of his people. He is taught that family—"kin"—are the most important people in his life. He is also taught that anyone outside his family are less valuable, and those further out are even less valuable. "You can't trust anyone who doesn't share your blood," he is told. "Blood is kin and kin is blood."

As he grows older, he learns the place of his people within the Reign of Man. Since their arrival, the roddun have made themselves an essential part of the Reign. They are not recognized as citizens—they are not *men*, after all—but they can expect a degree of protection. For example, roddun cannot own land—only a citizen can do that—but a roddun can expect the City Watch to protect him from gangs of ruffians looking to steal his purse. In short, a roddun can expect the protections of society but none of the benefits.

His mother and father teach him that there are parts of the City that the Reign has forgotten, or chooses to ignore. The City Watch does not patrol these streets. His parents explain to him, "These streets are ours. Men have left them and we have picked them up." They teach him that anyone who neglects an object doesn't want that object and that it is perfectly ethical to pick it up and keep it if you want it. But *only* if you want it. If you don't, leave it for someone else to pick up. Men put things on display and never use them? It's yours, if you want it. They throw something in

a vault and never touch it again? It's yours if you want it. But never pick up something that someone needs. If someone needs something, you should leave it alone. And if you don't need something, you should drop it or give it to someone who does.

As he walks through the streets, his parents introduce him to people he's never seen before, saying, "This is your uncle and this is your aunt and this is your cousin." These people may be roddun or they may be human or they may be haffun, but they are all kin. He learns that the shop owner at the end of the street is his uncle because he protected his father from the City Watch. He learns that the madame in charge of the brothel around the corner is his aunt because she "dropped" goods for protection against the human street gangs. The City alderman is a cousin because he "dropped" a few things in exchange for keeping the streets clean of criminals. And his parents explain that all these people are family members. They are kin. And they deserve respect and protection.

He also sees groups of roddun on the street all wearing similar clothes, marked with similar tattoos. He learns these are the "working families," the *tixtittl*, what men call "mischiefs." They are a family of their own, working to build their reputations, hoping to get the *skitztattl's* attention.

Who is the skitztattle? Glad you asked.

During his youth, parents introduce our young roddun to the barrio *skitztattl*: the roddun men call "King Rat." The skitztattl has the biggest mischief, has control over the most territory and demands the most respect from his fellow roddun. He is in charge of everything. Nothing happens in his barrio without him pointing a finger. He has the most respect because he has the most control



and he has the most control because he has the strongest mischief. There are other King Rats in the City, but this is the one that rules over our young roddun's barrio. And if he wants to become anything, he has to earn the King Rat's respect.

This is what our roddun learns in his youth. But that only lasts for one to two years. After that, his parents give him a stern look, a few things thrown in a pack and tell him, "Go earn respect." Then, they kick him out the door. Either he'll do as he's told or he will die. Either way, it's up to him.

Adulthood

A roddun reaches adulthood after only one to two years. During those years, he learns the barrio, makes friends, makes new kin and establishes his reputation. He also does his best to find a place in a mischief.

A mischief is a "working family." It is a small group of close friends who operate within the City. For a roddun, being invited into a mischief is a great honor. It also means safety and security. Because each mischief controls a part of a barrio, he has newfound respect by the members of that barrio. But keeping that control isn't easy. Human street gangs, thieves' guilds, corrupt City officials and other rivals are always looking to take over a mischief's territory. To keep that control, the mischief has to maintain their respect, otherwise, they'll lose their territory, and thus, lose the respect of King Rat. And once you lose his respect, you're open game.

Meanwhile, our young roddun has a few dalliances with roddun ladies but finally settles on one of his choice (or, perhaps, he is *her* choice). There are no marriage ceremonies in roddun culture. Our male and female make a promise to stay together

and raise children, and that's all the tradition they need. Because once a roddun makes a promise, he keeps it. That's why he never makes a promise he can't keep. Together, they raise litters of little roddun to young adulthood and then give them a pack full of things and kick them out the door, hoping they'll survive, but knowing they can do nothing to help them. You see, there's a word for a roddun who keeps running back to his parents. *Tstortzkee*. "Momma's boy." And that is an epithet no roddun wants to carry. That's why parents kick their children out, telling them, "Don't come back until you've earned your reputation." And once they close the door behind him, they might cry. But never in front of the child. He has to make it or die. That's the way of things for the roddun.

Old Age

A roddun's adult life lasts only five to ten years. Middle age for a roddun is around fifteen years old. And once he starts slowing down, others start looking to steal his reputation. His limbs ache, his eyesight is not so keen and he's not as fast with the blade anymore. His hairs are growing grey, his scars grow deeper as his muscles start to fail. Soon, he will give his farewell speech to his mischief, saying that he can no longer run with them. Then, he goes to his family members, one by one, and gives his goodbyes. He gives everyone a gift: he won't be needing anything where he is going.

And when all of his possessions are gone, when all of his goodbyes are done, he goes to the King Rat. He tells the King Rat what he's done for him, what he's accomplished. A full recounting of his reputation. And when he's done, he challenges the King Rat to a duel. The King Rat cannot refuse any challenges, and so he must accept. And because our roddun is old, because

he is slow, because he is no longer strong, because his claws are dull and he has so few teeth, the King Rat kills him. But he dies adding to his reputation, “I challenged the King Rat.”

And when our old roddun challenges the King Rat, the King’s eyes are full of tears. This is an old friend. A roddun who gave everything to the barrio. A roddun whose reputation was even be greater than King Rat himself. And when the killing blow lands, the King falls to his knees, sobbing helplessly, as his blade spills his friend’s last drops of blood. He whispers goodbye to our old roddun and holds his head in his arms. And then, when he is gone, the King Rat stands and says, “This one was worthy of my title. It was only his age that kept him from taking it from me.”

The Roddun Language

The roddun language is a series of clicks, chirps and other sounds that are almost impossible to translate into the human tongue. Most of the sounds are outside the human audible range. Translating it into the human tongue would be incredibly difficult. For example, the word for their own people, if spelled out phonetically, would look something like, “tchtchleetchtikitchleeti.” We will not burden you, dear reader, with such a labor. We already gave you a difficult enough task with the elven language.

Most of the “roddun language” you will find in this is chapter are roddun-modified words from the human tongue. Most of it is gutter speak, slang and jargon because that’s the kind of language the roddun have encountered. Another reason for the nobility and “higher-ups” to think of the roddun as filthy, dirty beasts: they all speak like sailors.

Instead of forcing men to learn their own language, the roddun adopted human sounding words and

phrases. Thus, the term, “roddun.” It is a word men understand (their own word for “rat”) and makes it easier for both races to communicate.

When the roddun speak the human tongue, they do it with a distinct accent. The roddun are better at making some sounds than others (high pitched clicks and chirps), and those are emphasized in their speech. Other sounds are less pronounced.

The actual roddun language is a series of hieroglyphic symbols. There are many nouns, no adjectives or adverbs and only a few verbs. It is a language of dots and dashes, impressed onto paper, wood or even drawn in the dirt. Most often, it is carved into stone walls. The roddun run their fingers over the impressions, reading the symbols with touch alone. Roddun keep their language a guarded secret: only a few very ambitious scholars have learned a handful of words.

Kinship

When first studying roddun culture, human scholars understandably misunderstood a particular term. They translated it as “family.” But the term does not mean family. The proper translation was “people I know.”

Every roddun has a number of families. Human scholars have called these “circles of kinship.” Imagine a small circle. Now, draw a larger circle around that one. And yet a larger circle. This is how the roddun see the world: in circles of kinship.

For a roddun, his closest kin (or, “first circle”) is his immediate family: his parents and any siblings. His second circle is other relatives such as aunts, uncles or cousins. His third circle is people he trusts. His fourth circle is people he



knows. His fifth circle is people he does not know. (Roddun often refer to these as “first kin,” “second kin,” “third kin” and so on.)

The roddun do not see morality as humans do. A roddun bases his actions on kinship. This has confused human scholars for decades, making roddun behavior seem haphazard and chaotic, when in fact, it makes perfect sense if you understand it.

For a roddun, all behavior stems from one question: “How close are you to me?” A roddun will never lie, steal or kill someone he considers closest kin. That kind of behavior is seen as the highest crime. If he is forced to choose between someone who is closest kin and second kin, he will always choose closest kin.

The further away you are from a roddun, the less “moral” he feels he must act toward you. Someone who is fourth kin does not deserve honesty, integrity or even respect. And someone who is fifth kin... well, what has he ever done for you?

Of course, saying “always” and “never” in these kind of circumstances is using a bit of hyperbole. There are *always* circumstances where a roddun is forced to choose between kin, and sometimes, he goes against what is expected. What maintains his adherence to the roddun ethic is society. If he is seen as one who breaks kinship, other roddun will shun him. Thus, if he wants to break kinship, he must do it secretly. But most roddun keep to the code of kinship. It makes life easier, cleaner and simpler.

Until it gets complicated.

It was this outlook that gave human scholars such problems when trying to interpret roddun behavior. At times, they were caring and compassionate.

But other times, they were ruthless and brutal. It wasn't until scholars gained a grasp on kinship that their behavior started making sense.

A Roddun Barrio

The key to understanding the roddun is an understanding of how a roddun-controlled barrio works.

First, each human City is divided into different districts, or barrios (for more details, see *The Reign of Men*). The roddun moved into the Cities (with different degrees of success, see below) and adopted certain barrios of their own. They chose barrios that men had seemed to forget, or as the roddun would say, “drop.” These were the rundown slums where the City Watch never travelled. They were ruled by criminal gangs, often using shakedowns and extortion tactics. The roddun moved in, provided protection against those gangs and essentially took over. Now, each barrio is governed by a skitztattl with many mischiefs running around, all trying to impress him and earn respect. Let's take a look at a roddun-controlled barrio from the top, down.

King Rat

“You have come to me,” says the King Rat, “telling me a story of your daughter and how these men have beaten and harmed her.” He shuffles in the dark room. “You have always offered my brothers a warm place when the rains came. Always kept their bellies full. Always hidden them when guards come to harm them. You have put yourself in danger to protect my own.” The King Rat makes a small noise in the back of his throat. “Of course I will do this thing for you. You have done so much for me. Such a small gratitude for

the great kindness you have shown us.

Each barrio has its own mischiefs. These gangs of roddun keeps the barrio safe from miscreants. Mischiefs keep the peace in the lower city but even they answer to a single roddun. Humans call him “King Rat.” The roddun call him *skitztattl*, which translates as “poppa.”

The King Rat has a mischief of his own—usually the largest mischief in the barrio. He settles disputes between the mischiefs and directs them in times of trouble.

Typically, the King Rat serves his role until he dies. (Roddun usually live to about thirty years old.) After he dies, another must fill his role. To become King Rat, a roddun must go to all the other mischiefs and ask, “How can I earn your gratitude?” They tell him what must be done. If he can accomplish that goal, he becomes the new King Rat. Of course, the difficulty of the requests is based on how much that mischief wants the roddun in question to become the King Rat.

The King Rat maintains his position through showing his teeth. He is strong and can accomplish what others ask of him. If a King Rat says he will do a thing and fails in fulfilling the request, his title is in jeopardy. If another roddun can fulfill the request, there is a chance the mischiefs may recognize him as King Rat instead. This transfer of power happens is rare, but it has happened.

But there is another way to become King Rat: by killing the current *skitztattl*. A roddun who does that gains the title and authority over the neighborhood. Challenging the King Rat is a dangerous act. A challenge can only end in death. What’s more, a *skitztattl* cannot refuse *any* challenge. Whenever someone

draws their blade before the King and utters the words, someone is going to die.

Every City has its share of King Rats, but there is no “City King.” No roddun rules a single City. Each respects the others’ territories. If one *skitztattl* becomes too ambitious and seeks to gain more territory, the others quickly put him down. That isn’t to say it that King Rats all over the Reign dream of becoming King over an entire City... but so far, no King Rat has done it.

So far.

Mischiefs

Because of their unique circumstance, roddun developed their own unique niche in human cities. They remained in the slums and ghettos, staying far away from the richer, more sophisticated barrios. Organizing themselves into groups—city scholars called them “mischiefs”—they divided the barrios among themselves, serving as unofficial guardians. They routed up the gangs, got rid of the thieves and assassins guilds and kept the streets safe at night. Over many years, they became not only a vital part of city life, but an *essential* part as well. Over the years, the necessity of mischiefs arose. Young, ambitious roddun who sought out reputation by protecting humans from their own.

Each mischief has its own leader, its own *itztitl*: the roddun with the highest reputation. He calls all the shots. He maintains his own territory, he answers to the King Rat, bribes City officials, maintains relations with the guilds (including the thieves guild) and makes sure his barrio is safe. If a member of his mischief questions the *itztitl*’s judgment, the *itztitl* listens. He may accept the advice, he may disregard it. That’s



his right. But if a member of his mischief questions his authority, that's another matter.

When a fellow roddun questions his itztil's authority, it is usually because he has a greater reputation than his leader. The leader has two choices at this point: accept the change in power or defend his title. If he accepts the change, he must leave the mischief and find another. He cannot rejoin his own mischief as a follower. Roddun know this never works, and thus, the tradition stands. If the itztil refuses to withdraw his authority, the two must fight to determine who is the true leader of the mischief. The loser is either killed or thrown out of the mischief, depending on the winner's character.

Gratitude

Because most City Watch refused to enter the ghettos and slums, mischiefs became the only "law enforcement" the poor could rely upon. The merchants and craftsmen knew it and made sure the mischiefs knew it, too. In the lower city, a roddun hardly ever pays for anything. In the pub, his tankard is always full and his plate is never empty. If he needs a new leather jerkin, the leather worker makes sure he gets it. Their knives are always sharp and the ends of their cloaks are never tattered.

This exchange—favors for protection—is what the roddun call *tseet*, or "gratitude." If you do something for someone, they should show gratitude in a tangible way. Not with a "thank you," but with something you can hold—preferably, something you can eat. Above all other things—tools, weapons, clothes—roddun value food. Food keeps you alive. Everything else is *eetsl*—or, "comfort." *Eetsl* makes life *easier*. But to keep on living, a

roddun needs food. It is one of the reasons roddun don't understand the value of coins; you can't eat them and they only seem to serve as a lazy way to say thank you. You didn't give me something in return, you gave me something that will allow me to get something for myself. *Sotzo*. "Lazy."

Teeth

Another important part of roddun psychology is the concept of *tetna*, or "teeth." If a roddun is dangerous, he has teeth. If he is clever, if he is strong, if he is a good fighter, he has teeth. When a roddun says, "He has teeth," it means, "He is someone you just don't want to mess with."

When roddun show their displeasure, they show their teeth. "Look, my mouth is full of sharp, angry things. Don't make me use them."

Roddun don't only use *tetna* in context to themselves. Other dangerous things—dragons, ogres and other large dangers—also have *tetna*. But a beautiful woman can have *tetna* as well. Or a storm. Or a disease. Anything that threatens safety and/or security can have teeth.

If a roddun breaks the rules of a mischief, his fellows will punish him by knocking out one or more of his teeth. That way, when a roddun shows his teeth, and a few are missing, others know exactly how dangerous he is.

Take What You Need

The roddun principle of *tstsotsl*, or "Take what you need" is another part of roddun culture that has confused many human scholars. Roddun only carry what they *need*. The idea



of “pack rats” is completely foreign to them. “Why would you keep things you can’t use?”

What’s more, they feel free to take something they feel someone else doesn’t need. A roddun in a handsome mansion may look at a fork on the table and stick it in his pocket. “They have ten,” he would say. “They only need one. And I don’t have one, so I need it.”

Likewise, they could be in a blacksmiths, find a sword they like and take it. “He has dozens,” he would say. “I only need one.”

It’s a common rule among roddun: only take what someone else doesn’t need. Roddun seldom, if ever, steal from children, the infirm, from widows or the poor. Those people obviously need everything they have.

But the rich... that’s a different story.

Taking vs. Gratitude

At first glance, it would seem “Take what you need” would completely conflict with the concept of gratitude. One says, “I take what I need” and the other clearly states, “Give back when someone gives to you.” But a closer look at the two concepts shows how they work together—at least, in the roddun mind.

Gratitude only comes into play with those the roddun feel kinship with. Roddun feel a deep connection with the barrios they live in. Just taking a sword from the blacksmith would violate gratitude. If you want the sword, you give the blacksmith something of equal value in return.

On the other hand, the rich snobs who live on the other side of town are not part of the roddun’s

community, they aren’t kin, and therefore, the roddun feel no obligation to show them gratitude.

Also, the rich obviously do not understand gratitude. They horde things that other people need. Not because they need them, but because they *want* them. That’s selfish. “Thus,” thinks the roddun, “if I take something that has so little value to him, he should not get so upset.”

Some roddun have even gone so far as to offer gratitude to the rich they take from... they exchange the item with something of equal value. At least, of equal value to the roddun. So, in some opulent mansion, a noble wakes up to find one of his horses stolen, and in its place, he finds a gold coin.

In the roddun’s mind, an equal trade.

Junk Magic

About twenty years after they first arrived, human wizards began noticing a strange phenomenon: the roddun were using magic. With no formal training, these roddun were casting rudimentary spells with mixed results. Sometimes their efforts were successful. Other times, the effects simply fizzled. And then there were the explosions...

After some research, it was discovered the roddun had been watching the wizards closely, imitating their movements. The roddun had an affinity for human (arcane) magic and taught themselves using “discarded” scrolls and tomes. (“The humans dropped them...”) The scrolls and tomes turned out to be ancient, unused relics held in guild museums. Precious for their



antiquity, but filled with simple, routine spells, the books somehow found their way into roddun hands and the roddun put them to good use.

While the Wizard Guild's official policy has been to forbid any unauthorized use of magic, each City has its own standards. Some Cities completely outlaw unlicensed magic, others simply call for a tax on the possession of tomes and spells. When the roddun began using magic, all of those already complicated issues became even more complicated.

Non-humans using what the Reign viewed as human magic. The very notion sent a fury through the Senate. Senators called on a Reign-wide ban, but individual Cities rejected the motion; they wanted autonomy on making that decision. And thus, each City has its own way of dealing with the roddun and their "junk magic."

Tzitik: Gemstone Magic

The roddun have not only "picked up" the dropped arcane magic of men, but have picked up another kind of magic as well.

The uvandir, digging in their vast mines, brought with them a kind of magic men had never seen before — and still do not fully understand. It involves the use of gemstones, tapping into some kind of innate power, and unleashing it on the world. The roddun saw this magic and noticed that the uvandir only used highly valuable stones, discarding the less valuable ones. To a roddun mind, this meant, "You don't need that." And before anyone knew it, the roddun were using gemstones.

They call it *tzitik*. The word is difficult to translate, but essentially means, "what the little ones dropped." Using the gemstones, roddun have discovered they can emphasize strengths already present in their own race. They can climb faster, their teeth and claws are sharper and harder, their senses amplify beyond normal sensitivity.

The Skootztik

The roddun have a delicate situation with the Reign of Men. While the poorer parts of the Cities appreciate them, the richer parts are less sympathetic. To protect that relationship, every King Rat has a special tool: the *skootztik*.

Tzkeet's Secret

The first instance of "junk magic" came from a roddun calling itself "Tzkeet." (The word means, "no name." Obviously a pseudonym.) Little is known about Tzkeet, including his/her gender. Also unknown is Tzkeet's current location. Some say Tzkeet died in an awful arcane accident. Others say the accident transformed him/her into something... different. There are roddun who use the stones more like an oracle than a wizard. When asked how they learned such skills, the roddun say, "That is Tzkeet's Secret."

What exactly that means... well, that's anyone's guess.



Translating *skootztik* is difficult for it has many meanings, but the most literal translation is, “the one who drops my problems.” A more concise translation is “troubleshooter.” And that’s exactly what the *skootztik* does.

Not many roddun know the *skootztik* exist. Many consider them a myth or just an urban legend. A shadowed warrior who serves the King Rat, making his problems vanish. An assassin who makes every kill look like a natural event or an accident. He enters the household of a Governor who won’t be bribed, who wants to see the roddun evacuated from the City, and sneaks right back out without anyone ever knowing. And in the morning, the Governor is dead. How? He tripped on his carpet and fell face-first into the fireplace. What a tragic accident. And, of course, rumors are the King Rat had the Governor killed, but there’s never any evidence of foul play. And when City officials ask the roddun what happened, they just shrug and shake their heads. And when the City officials ask about an invisible assassin, the roddun snicker. “Believe *that* story do you?” And they walk away, laughing about the foolishness of men.

But the *skootztik* are real. And they are fully capable of everything the legends say about them. They can run along the walls as easily as running across the street. They vanish in plain sight. They use explosives and other tools to distract and disarm their opponents and make perfect assassinations that look like perfect accidents.

More than that, the *skootztik* utilize the power of gemstone magic better than any other roddun. Those who show a skill for this kind of magic in their youth are often chosen by other *skootztik* for training. The youth are raised learning how to tap

into that energy, focusing it, and releasing it in the world to serve King Rat and the roddun people.

The cities

Each of the Cities in the Reign of Men view roddun differently. Listed below are each of the Cities and the roddun relations with men.

The Capital City of Nevarnare

The City of Nevarnare is too big for the Reign to manage as it is. How is it going to get rid of the roddun? In fact, Nevarnare is really two Cities: the Upper City and the Lower City. The Senate -- and its wealthy families -- all but monopolized the City Watch, leaving the Lower City a place of violence and crime. But then the Blue Plague swept through Nevarnare and soon thereafter, the roddun arrived. Within one generation, the roddun had all but taken over the duty of protecting the Lower City from crime and violence. In general, the people of the Lowers view them as neighbors, even going so far to learn basic roddun vocabulary and customs.

But in the Upper City, the wealthy Senate families have a different attitude toward the roddun: they ignore them. They even go far as to deny their existence. “No, I have never seen a ‘rat man,’” Ylven Savani said, “and I doubt they are anything other than wild slum talk.”

“Diseased, dirty rats that walk like men?” Senator Ishan Toval asked. “what human would tolerate such filth in their home?”

The City of Ajun

In the City of Ajun, the roddun have found a place among the scholars and philosophers. Unwilling to face the risks themselves, the



colleges hire the roddun to root out ancient ruins, seeking out the treasures therein. They also use the roddun as envoys, carrying messages between colleges. And, finally, they use the roddun to steal old books from rival universities.

Yes, the roddun have truly found a place in Ajun. And because they are so accepted, their hold on the poorer parts of the City has started to encroach on the richer parts of the City as well. With free access to the universities, the roddun started picking up old books, learning the City's laws and are becoming very familiar with real estate regulations. Using humans as fronts, they have begun to purchase land and buildings. To what end? Only the roddun know.

The City of Ashcoln

In the City of Ashcoln, the humans are very suspicious of the roddun. Then again, find me a citizen of Ashcoln who doesn't view general suspicion as a virtue. The sorcerers of Ashcoln see the roddun as an opportunity to gain materials for arcane experiments that standard (legal) channels will not allow. But they have another use for the roddun: contract assassinations.

Calling the sorcerers of Ashcoln, "cut-throat" is like calling a rabid dog, "unfriendly." As such, when rivals seek to undo each other, they usually call on a favor from their local King Rat. While they do not know how the roddun do it, they do know that when the roddun get an order for a murder, nobody ever asks any questions.

On the other hand, the vice lords of Ashcoln are unhappy with the amount of control the roddun are gaining. The various crime lords have clashed with King Rats before, and while

they do not look forward to open warfare on the streets, it seems all but inevitable.

The City of Jinix

In the City of Jinix, there is a war. You would not know it by looking at the City, but its victims are in plain sight. Every shop keeper, every tavern owner, every person who walks the streets after dark knows they are nothing more than collateral damage in this war. And there is nothing anyone can do about it.

The battles are fought between the thieves' guilds and the roddun mischiefs and the casualties are hidden from view. Neither side wants the City Watch to get involved — the City Watch that isn't under their influence, that is — and they certainly don't want to draw the attention of any palatines. And so, the casualties stack up and the invisible war continues.

But the Reign has begun to notice the streams of blood flowing from Jinix's streets and the Senate is now asking questions. What is going on in Jinix's winding streets? Of course, the Mayor and other officials deny knowledge of anything. They'd better. They don't want to end up on the long list of casualties.

The City of Millford

The City of Millford does not understand why other Cities haven't embraced the roddun. In fact, you can't go anywhere in Millford without running into the roddun. On the streets, in the taverns, in the City Hall... the roddun are everywhere. And they seem to be running everything. While the roddun are not allowed to hold any official titles in the City (or the rest of the Reign),



Millford is the only City in the Reign where the roddun openly serve in the City Watch.

And for the people of Millford,
that works out just fine.

The City of Shavay

In the City of Shavay, the roddun have undertaken roles unheard of in other Cities. Shavay is a transitory City with most of its members traveling to and from other Cities. Thus, the roddun fulfill the duties that humans take up in other Cities. The roddun of Shavay protect the City, supplementing its Watch, cleaning its streets and otherwise take care of the City while men are gone.

However, while the roddun are forbidden from entering the City's various post offices, they protect them just the same. In fact, the roddun are nearly fanatical about protecting the post offices, a fact observed by Shavay scholar Isnem Vanir. He said, "With the notion of 'dropping' being so prevalent in roddun culture, one would assume they would see no importance at all in letter-writing and sending. But the opposite is true. Something that must be taken into account when writing of the roddun."

The City of Tamerclimb

Because of its isolated location, Tamerclimb claimed the least number of victims from the Plague. Not only that, but it was also the last City to become infected. Thus, the palatines had a great deal of time to prepare. That meant there were few barrios for the roddun to occupy when the Plague hit.

At first, the palatines hated the roddun and struck them down quickly, but the roddun refused to defend themselves against the purge, which quickly

turned public opinion. Not only that, but the roddun also adopted the high standards of virtue required from the palatine, showing mercy and charity. While Tamerclimb has not fully embraced the roddun, they have grown to see them as something more than dirty rats. One visitor said, "They treat the rats like favorite pets in Tamerclimb. It is both sweet and a little condescending."

Despite all this, the roddun have a difficult time getting a foothold in Tamerclimb. They are in the City's barrios, but their standard tactics are often thwarted by the ever-vigilant City Watch.

One roddun has even been known to call himself a palatine, a claim that nearly got him killed on two occasions. But he defended himself well, disarming his opponents without causing injury to them (the same could not be said of his opponents). His actions have won the favor of a few of the palatines of Tamerclimb, but still others would rather see the dirty rat dead. If only he wasn't so good with that sword...

The City of Tomkin

Let's not mince words: Auntie Rose, the street queen of Tomkin, *hates* the dirty, stinking rats and there is *no way* she's going to let them in to her City.

No. Bloody. Way.

When you find a rat, kill it. End of discussion.

The City of Vanta

The roddun have divided the City of Vanta. At first, they were allowed in the City because of what they did during the Plague, but when they made moves to take over the lower barrios, the City officials turned against them. It was a



bloody purge that ended with the roddun hiding underground and the men of Vanta believing they had gotten rid of the menace for good.

That was a few years ago. And vanity has, once again, proven to be the Reign's greatest weakness.

The roddun returned in great numbers, claiming portions of the City as their own, openly defying the City's authorities. The Mayor has sent legions into the lower barrios looking to root them out, but the barrios protect the rats, hiding them from harm. Then, after the soldiers are gone, the roddun return to their business of running their barrios from the darkness, sabotaging the authority of the City whenever they can. Buildings catch on fire, City officials are found with cut throats and terror reigns.

It is open warfare in Vanta. The Senate has given the Mayor a deadline for dealing with the problem, but he has ignored their warnings. He will deal with the rat problem one way or another. And he will solve it the way all men from Vanta solve their problems: with cold steel.

The City of Vinnick

Vinnick is the City where the roddun first learned how to use magic. Learning the art from discarded scrolls and books, they nearly destroyed an entire barrio with their "experiments." The wizards guilds of Vinnick had to make a decision what to do with the roddun. They knew making magic illegal for them would only cause more problems, so instead, they allowed the roddun to join the Guilds, gain formal training and made roddun using magic in the City a legal right.

The roddun said, "Thank you, but we'll train ourselves. Although thank you for your permission!"

The guilds didn't like that answer, so they changed the law. Now, the roddun *must* join guilds in order to use magic. And while they are members, most roddun still ignore the lessons. They must pay membership dues, must attend meetings, but nothing in the guild laws ever mandated lessons, and so, the roddun just ignored that part of the guilds' services.

Roddun Racial Traits

- +2 to Strength and Wisdom
- **Medium:** Roddun have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Movement:** Base and climb speed of 30ft.
- **Blindsight (Ex):** Roddun have blindsight based on scent and hearing up to 60ft. They also have hairs on their hands that allow them to pick up small details by touch alone.
- **Mischief:** Roddun gain 3 + their Charisma modifier in mischief points. Every time a roddun gains a level, he also gains an additional number of mischief points equal to 3+ his Charisma modifier (minimum 1). The "working families" of the roddun have connections in all of the cities that they live, people owe them for the protection they provide.
- **Plagueborn:** Roddun are immune to all non-magic diseases and they gain a +1 racial bonus to Fortitude saves against magical diseases. At 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th character levels, roddun gain an additional +1 bonus. Being born from the plague that ripped apart many human cities, roddun are especially resilient to disease.
- **Fast Healing:** Roddun gain the fast healing ability at 1 hit point per round. At 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th character level they gain 1 additional hit point per round.

Building a Barrio

A note for Dungeon Masters: when your players want to start taking over their barrio, you'll probably want to determine what kind of businesses it has.

We suggest giving a barrio 100 respect points, dividing those points among the various businesses. The more influential the business, the more respect points it has. If you want a smaller barrio, build it with fewer respect points.

For example, a barrio might look like this:

Building	Respect
Josh's Tavern	10
The Chocolate Rabbit <i>(Brothel)</i>	10
City Watch	7
Thieves Guild	15
Street Urchins	3
Wilson Smed <i>Blacksmith</i>	5
Tom Wink <i>Butcher</i>	8
Orrin Buel's Inn	8
Brigham Bald <i>Barber</i>	9
Tillan Tygast University	15
Balla Dinna <i>Freelance Courtesan</i>	10
Machen Fjon <i>Mercenary</i>	5

- **Tooth & Nail:** Roddun gain a natural bite attack and 2 natural claw attacks (as per the natural attacks rules). The street's protectors have powerful teeth and claws which they can use as well as any sword.
- **Languages:** Roddun begin play speaking Common, Roddun (Hometown Dialect) and Human (Hometown Dialect). Roddun with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

Mischief, Barrios and Respect

Every new level, a roddun gains mischief points equal to 3 + his Charisma modifier. Mischief points can be used to take over businesses (and other buildings and organizations) within your barrio, thus allowing you to become closer to gaining the title "King Rat."

A human City is made up of many neighborhoods or "barrios." Each barrio has "businesses," which represent merchants, brothels, taverns, groups, etc. For example, the barrio's City Watch is considered a "business."

Each business in a barrio has a respect value (usually between 3 and 10, but some may have more). In order to take over that business, you must invest your mischief points into that business, thus winning that business's respect. Each time you spend mischief points, it represents you earning the respect of the business owner, either through good deeds, intimidation, harassment, etc.

Taking Over a Business

If you want to take over a business, you must do so in a number of steps.

First, you spend mischief points on the business. This represents you spending time and energy to win its respect.

Second, when you have spent a number of mischief points equal to the respect value of the business, you can make a diplomacy or an intimidate check (depending on how you've



been trying to earn respect). The check is DC 10 + the business's respect value. If you succeed, you take over the business and gain the associated benefits.

Taking Someone Else's Things

Other people can earn the respect of businesses as well; you aren't alone on the street. If another character owns a business (they've spent mischief points), you must beat the amount of mischief points they've spent in the business before you can attempt to take it over. The DC against a pre-owned business is 10 + the owner's mischief points in the business.

Yes, this means once you've taken over a business, you can continue spending mischief points on it to make it more difficult for others to take it over. For example, if a business has a respect value of 5, you can spend more than five mischief points on it to further cement your ownership.

Favors

When you have invested in a business, you can demand favors from that business. You may demand a number of favors equal to the mischief you have invested in that business. However, the number of favors you may demand cannot exceed the amount of respect that business is worth. For example, if you have invested 10 mischief points in a business worth 7 respect, you cannot demand more than 7 favors from that business.

When using favors to acquire items, it costs 1 favor for every 100 gold value of the item you are trying to acquire. Such as, asking for a masterwork backpack (50 gp) would cost 1 favor but an assassin's dagger (10,302 gp) would cost 104 favors. Otherwise it is at the GM's discretion how many favors it would cost to gain services or information.

Destroying a Business

A way to sabotage a rival's respect in a barrio is destroying the businesses he has invested in. If you destroy a rival's business, he loses any respect he gained from that business, thus deducting from his total respect in the barrio.

A business requires a number of weeks equal to its respect value to re-build before anyone can begin investing mischief into it again. Characters do not permanently lose their invested mischief points, but those points are unavailable until the destroyed business is re-built. Until then, their total respect value is sabotaged.

Details

You may only attempt to take over one business a day and you must be present at the business you are attempting to take over.

Favors are specific to your barrio.

Finally, favors refresh every week.

Businesses

The following is a list of possible businesses a roddun could earn favors from. It is not extensive, but serves as a list of examples. If you think of other groups your roddun can earn favors from, talk to your GM.

Alchemists	Craftsmen	Oracles
Artists	Criminals	Orphans
Bankers	Detectives	Palatines
Bartenders	Doctors	Philosophers
Blacksmiths	Farmers	Pirates\ Privateers
Caravanners	Gravediggers	Playwrights
Carpenters	Grifters	Printers\ Newsmen
Clerks	Innkeepers	Private Spies
Couriers	Merchants	

Prostitutes	Servants	Soldiers
Roadmen	Shadow Hands	Thespians
Sailors	Slavers	Thieves
Scholars	Smugglers	Thugs
Senators		Watchmen

Reputation

A roddun's reputation means a lot in the City. It can make or break him. As he becomes more famous (or infamous), new opportunities become available. You may notice that the people on the street look at you differently. They may offer you a loaf of bread, free night's stay in a warm bed or a bushel of apples. Of course, as your reputation grows, you also attract less friendly elements. Everyone wants to be the one who takes down the big, bad rat.

Reputation represents the shared opinion others hold about your character. It is measured in points.

There are two kinds of reputation: *heroic* and *villainous*. You earn heroic reputation when you do heroic things and villainous reputation when you do less-than-heroic things. Your total reputation score is a combination of both.

For example, if you have 10 points of heroic reputation and 15 points of villainous reputation, you have a total of 25 reputation points (10 heroic + 15 villainous).

The higher of the two determines which attitude others will take toward you. If you have more heroic reputation points, people will tend to see you as a good person who is looking out for their better

interests. If you have more villainous reputation points, they will more likely be intimidated by you.

Whenever you take meaningful actions that may affect your reputation, the GM looks at each exploit and determines if it is worthy of praise and/or condemnation. Actions grant you between 1 to 3 reputation points, depending on the action. Below is list of possible actions that would grant reputation. Of course, every circumstance is different, and the GM will determine whether or not your actions are worthy of heroic or villainous reputation points.

Enemy

When you kill an enemy with reputation of their own, you gain 1-3 reputation points based on that enemy. If the enemy had more villainous reputation, you gain heroic reputation and if the enemy had more heroic reputation, then you gain villainous reputation. The amount is based on the level difference of the enemy from you. If they were more than 2 levels lower than you, then gain 1 point of reputation. Within 2 levels of you grants 2 points of reputation. Finally, if they were more than 2 levels higher than you, then gain 3 points of reputation.

Promises

When you make a promise and follows up on it, you gain 1-3 heroic reputation points, depending on the promise. The promise can't be simple; it must include danger to yourself or group. If you break promises then you gain 1-3 villainous reputation points depending on the promise.



Protection

When you put yourself into danger to protect innocent people against harm, you gain between 1-3 heroic reputation points. A single enemy is worth 1 point of reputation, a small group (2-5) of enemies is worth 2 points of reputation and a large group (6+) of enemies is worth 3 points of reputation.

Terror

When you terrorize innocent people, you gain between 1-3 villainous reputation points. If you bully a merchant for information is worth 1 point of reputation, wrecking the merchant's stores is worth 2 points of reputation and torturing the merchant's son is worth three points of reputation.

Non-Roddu Reputation

You can add reputation to a single PC or to an adventure group. This includes human courages, ork tribes, haffun families, gnoll packs and roddun mischiefs. So, if you want to expand the reputation rules to non-roddun, go ahead! We designed them so you could.

Using Reputation

You can use your reputation once a day to add a bonus to your social rolls. Every ten points of total reputation (a sum of both heroic and villainous acts) gives you a +1 bonus to the roll. If you fail the roll, lose 1 point of reputation for every 5 you fail the check by. (This is why bullies feel the need to beat you up when you aren't intimidated by them; they need to restore their lost villainous reputation points.)

Your reputation must be applicable for the situation: if you have a villainous reputation,

it cannot be used to convince palatines that you are a good and honest person.

If both you and your group have a reputation, you use which every reputation is higher. Reputations do not stack.

Mischief Feats

Mischief Boss

Every mischief has one roddun who takes charge. That guy is you.

Prerequisite: Roddu, Intimidation 5 ranks, Diplomacy 5 ranks

Benefit: You are able to absorb other mischiefs into your own. The owner of the mischief you are absorbing must agree. All of their currently invested mischief points stack with your mischief's invested mischief points. Any mischief points they gain in the future are pooled with your mischief points as well.

Gemstone Feats

Blindsight Gemstone

Using the power of the gem, the roddun gains the ability to expand his senses beyond their usual capabilities.

Prerequisite: Roddu

Benefit: You gain one low-quality gem (worth 10gp) that enhances your blindsight up to 120ft and allows you to automatically memorize any surface you touch. You can only memorize a number of surfaces equal to your Int modifier (minimum 1).

Plaueborn Gemstone

Normally, the roddun are only immune to natural diseases, but their experiments with gemstones have expanded that immunity...

Prerequisite: Roddun

Benefit: You gain one low-quality gem (worth 10gp) that enhances your fortitude by making you immune to magical diseases.

Fast Healing Gemstone

Roddun heal quickly, but with gemstone magic, that quickness doubles.

Prerequisite: Roddun

Benefit: You gain one low-quality gem (worth 10gp) that enhances your fast healing to 2 hit points per round; at 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th character level you gain 2 additional hit points per round.

Tooth & Nail Gemstone

Their natural weapons are deadly enough. With gemstone magic, those weapons become even deadlier.

Prerequisite: Roddun

Benefit: You gain one low-quality gem (worth 10gp) that enhances your natural bite attack's damage to 2d4 and your natural claw attack's damage to 1d6.

New Prestige Class: King Rat

Alignment: Any

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To qualify to become a King Rat, a character must fulfill all the following criteria.

Race: Roddun

Base Attack Bonus: +10.

Skills: Diplomacy or Intimidate 10 ranks.

Feats: Mischief Boss

Special: The character must own the majority of the barrio and must defeat the current king rat in a one-on-one duel.

Class Skills

The king rat's class skills are Appraise (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (king rat's barrio) (Int), and Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill Ranks per Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

The following are class features of the king rat.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency:

The king rat is proficient with all simple and martial weapons. King rat is proficient with light armor but not with shields.

Spells: The king rat gains new spells per day as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before adding the prestige class. He does not gain other benefits a character of that class would have gained, except for additional



spells per day, spells known (if he is a spontaneous spellcaster), and an increased effective level of spellcasting. If a character had more than one spellcasting class before becoming the king rat, he must decide to which class he adds the new level for purposes of determining spells per day.

Discount: At 1st level, whenever the king rat shops in his own barrio he gains an automatic 10% discount before haggling with any merchant.

Bonus Feats: At 1st level, and at every odd level thereafter, the king rat gains a bonus feat in addition to those gained from normal advancement.

Notoriously Hard to Kill (Ex): At 2nd level, the king rat gains a bonus equal to his king rat level on dying saving throws.

King's Mischief: At 3rd level, when the king rat enters a business, he counts as having at least his king rat level invested in the business. The mischief points granted by this ability do not count towards taking over the business.

Enhanced Mobility (Ex): At 4th level, when wearing light or no armor and not using a shield, the rat king gains an additional +4 bonus to AC against attacks of opportunity caused when he moves out of a threatened square.

Wrath of the King Rat (Su): At 5th level, the king rat can spend a full round action to invoke his wrath on a single target. The target must be able to see and hear him. For one round the target takes the king rat's total character level in extra damage when hit and cannot make any saving throws. He can do this a number of times a day equal to his king rat levels.

Ex King Rat: If a king rat loses a duel with a viable challenger he loses access to all of his class features except proficiencies and bonus feats. He may not progress any further in levels as a king rat. He regains his abilities and advancement potential if he reclaims his title in any barrio. A viable challenger is a roddun with the majority of the barrio under their control.

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells
1st	+1	+2	+2	+0	Discount, Bonus Feat	+1 level of existing class
2nd	+2	+3	+3	+1	Notoriously Hard to Kill	+1 level of existing class
3rd	+3	+4	+4	+1	King's Mischief, Bonus Feat	+1 level of existing class
4th	+4	+5	+5	+2	Enhanced Mobility	+1 level of existing class
5th	+5	+6	+6	+2	Wrath of the King Rat, Bonus Feat	+1 level of existing class



New Wizard Archetype: Junk Wizard

Requirements: Roddun

Class Features

The following are class features of the junk wizard.

Eschew Materials: At 1st level, a junk wizard gains Eschew Materials as a bonus feat.

This ability replaces scribe scroll.

Roddun's Magic: Junk wizards are not properly trained in how to use their junk spells, but there is a chance that the spell will work. And if it doesn't work, there is a chance it will backfire on them. When a junk wizard prepares his spells for the day, he can also memorize 3 junk spells that are in his spellbook. A junk spell cannot be more than 3 spell levels higher than the highest spell level he can currently cast. Junk wizards are not properly trained in how to use their junk spells so there is only a small chance that the spell will work. And if it doesn't work, there is a chance it will backfire on them.

To use a junk spell, a junk wizard must expend a spell of their highest level and an extra number of spells equal to the difference between the junk spell and their highest level spell. Such as, for a junk wizard with level 3 spells to cast a level 5 junk spell, he must expend 3 spells to try 1 for the initial spell and 2 more for the difference in spell level. Then, he rolls against the chart below to determine if he's able to cast the junk spell or not.

Success: The junk spell casts normally.

Failure: The junk spell fizzles and does not work.

Backfire: There is an explosion with a radius of 30ft centered on the junk wizard. Everyone within the radius except the junk wizard can make a reflex save DC 10 + junk spell level + junk wizard's Int modifier to take half damage. The explosion deals 1d6 points of damage per junk spell level to every creature within the radius.

	Success	Failure	Backfire
1 level difference	01-70	71-85	86-100
2 level difference	01-40	41-70	71-100
3 level difference	01-10	11-55	56-100

This ability replaces the wizard's 5th and 10th level bonus feats.

New Ninja Archetype: Skootzik

Requirements: Roddun

Racial Features

The following are racial traits of the skootzik.

Quick Ascension: Skootziks have a base speed of 30ft and a climb speed of 60ft.

The trait replaces the movement racial trait

Class Features

The following are class features of the skootzik.

Tzitik (Su): Instead of a ki pool, skootzik have *tzitik*. Mechanically, *tzitik* works the same as ki. She gains *tzitik* points by focusing on low-quality gems (worth 10gp each) in her possession and drawing on power from within them, but she does not need to be actually holding the



gemstones to use her *tzitik*. They only need to be on her in some manner or in a bag she is carrying. While a skootzik can carry any amount of gemstones, she can only focus a number equal to 1/2 her skootzik level + her highest ability modifier. All class features that need the skootzik to spend a *ki* point to activate spend a *tzitik* point to activate the ability instead.

The following ninja tricks function differently for the skootzik.

Darkvision: This trick also grants the skootzik the ability to see on top of her benefits from blindsight.

Ki Block: *Tzitik* counts as *ki* for all intents and purposes, so *ki block* can be used to cut a skootzik off from her *tzitik*.

Wall Climber: This trick adds 20 ft to the skootzik's current climb speed.

The following master tricks function differently for the skootzik.

See the Unseen: This trick also grants the skootzik the ability to see on top of her benefits from blindsight.

Unbound Steps: This trick allows a skootzik to use her *tzitik* to remain running on a vertical surface at the end of her turn when she is using her *vertical runner* class feature. She does not need to be a horizontal surface or make a climb check to remain on the vertical surface. Each use of this ability uses up 1 *tzitik* point.

This ability modifies the *ki pool* class feature.

Vertical Runner (Ex): At 6th level, a skootzik learns to walk up walls or other vertical surfaces. As a full-round action, she can move up to twice

her climb speed, ignoring difficult terrain. She must end her move on a surface that can support her or make a Climb check to hold onto the vertical surface she is on. When moving in this way, she does not need to make Acrobatics checks to avoid falling on slippery or rough surfaces.

This ability replaces the *light steps* class feature.

Approved classes

Listed below are the classes available to Roddun in *Wicked Fantasy*.

Barbarian	archetype
Bard	yes
<i>Cleric</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Druid</i>	<i>no</i>
Fighter	yes
<i>Monk</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Paladin</i>	<i>no</i>
Ranger	yes
Rogue	yes
Sorcerer	yes
Wizard	archetype
Alchemist	yes
<i>Cavalier</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Gunslinger</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Inquisitor</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Magus</i>	<i>Jill says, "Hell no."</i>
<i>Oracle</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Summoner</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Witch</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Antipaladin</i>	<i>no</i>
Ninja	archetype
<i>Samurai</i>	<i>no</i>



NO FAVORS

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

Jerry sat perfectly still. He could see nothing, but he could hear sounds. The hood over his head kept any light from reaching his eyes. He heard footfalls, like the ones he heard behind his walls, but heavier. A skittering sound. He also heard voices, but he could not understand the words. He didn't even know if those *were* words. Just voices making sounds.

Then, they took off the hood. Jerry was in a room lit only by a single candle. He saw a desk, a chair and a dark figure sitting behind the desk. Jerry shivered when he saw it. He had heard stories, but this was different. He was here, right here, in the same room. Red eyes, claws. Standing as tall as a man.

Jerry bowed just slightly, ducking his head down. "King Rat," he said.

The roddun on the other side of the desk nodded as well. Jerry looked around and saw the room also had five more roddun, each of them armed with swords. One stood closest to the King. As frightening as King Rat was, when Jerry looked at the roddun who stood behind him, his fear doubled.

"Speak," said the big rat. His voice was high, but sinister. It was a voice of a thing capable of quick and deadly violence.

Jerry started his story.

"Last night," he said, "I tricks by Tanner's place. You know the place. Kid with the gimp. Kid can sing, though. Fates, he can sing. So, anyway, I'm lookin' for my drop. But Tanner, he tells me that Billy Block's already been by. Says that Billy Block's tellin' him, *he's* pickin' up the drop from now on."

Jerry paused for a moment, looking for any reaction. He got none. He kept going.

"So I tells Tanner he can give me the drop anyways. Tanner says he only pays once and that's it. So, I have to get heavy with him. Now, his kid is weepy and Tanner's tellin' me that he's gonna tell King Rat..."

Jerry paused. Still nothing.

"... says he's gonna tell King Rat that I'm breaking the rules. Well, that chars me, so I get heavier on him. I take what's in the till and move on."

Jerry felt the old anger coming back. His voice got louder.

"Then, I go to Beck's place. You know, the cooper? And he's tellin' me the same thing. Billy Block's been by, picked up the drop already, he don't have to drop twice. So I gave him something to remember who was the heavy in the barrio. I tells him, "The next time Billy Block comes by, you tells him you already dropped to me, whether or not you did.""

Jerry looked at King Rat. He could usually read a man's eyes, but not a roddun. Tiny, red eyes. They never seemed to blink.



“So, it’s clear why I needed to see you,” Jerry said. “It’s Billy Block. The boy’s moving out of his barrio, pickin’ up my drops. And he’s sayin’ that it’s you that gave him the thortee to do that.”

Jerry took a deep breath. “I need Block iced. Need to see him in lavender. He’s messin’ with my drops and that means he’s messin’ with the way you set things up. And that means he ain’t payin’ neither of us no respect.”

King Rat didn’t move for a long time. Then, he turned and looked at the big roddun behind him. The big roddun said, “You go now. King Rat will think.”

Jerry didn’t like that. “Whaddyou mean, ‘You go now?’ I’m tellin’ you, somethin’s gotta be done. Billy Block is gettin’ too big for his own barrio, and that’s a threat to me an’ you.”

The big roddun said, “King Rat hear you. He think now. You go.”

Jerry stood up and nodded. “All right,” he said. He could feel the anger in his chest moving up to his head. “All right. Block takes my drops and you aren’t gonna do nothin’ about it. That means *I* gotta do somethin’ about it.”

That’s when King Rat spoke. His voice was lower than the big roddun’s voice, but it was still high and still sinister.

“You act without my word and there will be regret.”

Jerry nodded. “That’s right,” he said. “We all wait on your word. While I get my ankles cut out, I wait. Like a pigeon.”

Jerry walked toward the door, but stopped there. “You gonna put a hood over my head, or am I gonna walk out on my own?”

Jerry stood there for a moment, then felt the hood.

After Jerry was gone, Skitz walked out from behind King Rat and sat in the chair Jerry was sitting in. He didn’t talk until the guards left.

“Benny Block,” King Rat said.

Skitz nodded. “We’ve been waiting for this.”

King Rat turned and poured milk from a pitcher into two cups. He gave the second glass to Skitz. “And?”

Skitz shrugged, sipped the milk. “It’s a trap,” he said.

King Rat shook his head. “I don’t think so.” He finished the milk with one gulp. “I think it’s a lie.”

Skitz said, “Then, it’s still a trap. You go walking in without knowing anything, it’s a trap. One you set for yourself.”

King Rat smiled and nodded. “You know what to do.”

Skitz finished his milk and put the empty cup on the table. “Yes, sir.”

Skitz knocked on the doors to Tanner’s place. It was still early, and the doors were locked. He heard the sound of a young boy with a bad leg on the other side of the door. Then, it opened and Skitz saw Jerek.

“Hello Jerek,” he said.

Jerek’s face brightened. “Skitz!” he said. Then, he spoke the little roddun that Skitz had taught him.

Skitz smiled. “Better,” he said. “But still work.”

Jerek opened the door and Skitz stepped inside. The language of men was difficult to speak, but he was learning. Just as Jerek was learning. He liked the boy for that. “Is father now?”



Jerek nodded. "He's upstairs," he said. "But he isn't well."

"I hear," Skitz said. "Is you need?"

Jerek shook his head. "Oh, no," he said. "I wouldn't presume to ask King Rat."

Skitz put his hand on the boy's shoulder. "Listen me talk, Jerek. You need, you tell. You yes?"

Jerek's eyes wandered a bit. "Yes. I understand." He said, "My father needs some more bandages and medicine. I have the coin but..."

Skitz finished for him. "You no walk far?"

Jerek touched his leg. "Yes," he said. "I can't walk that far."

Skitz said, "You give me. I take. Bring back."

Jerek smiled. "All right," he said. But then, he looked serious. "But no favors, right?"

Skitz shook his head. "No favor. I like father. I like you. This me, not King Rat."

Jerek said, "Thank you, Skitz." Then, he led him upstairs.

When Skitz saw Tanner, he knew Jerry was lying. The man was hurt. He had bandages on his head and swelling. When Skitz touched the man's arm, he flinched.

"Father sick," Skitz said. "Need more. Need phil-sof-er."

"Philosopher," Jerek said. "I thought so." He sighed. "We don't have the coin for that."

Skitz shook his head. "No pay," he said.

Tanner moaned from his bed. "No," he said. "No favors. Can't afford favors."

Skitz leaned over the man. "No favor," he said. "Jerry pay."

Tanner tried to nod, then winced. "Yes," he said. "Thank you."

Jerek walked Skitz to the front door. When they got there, he said, "Wait a tic."

The boy ran back to the kitchen and came back with a leather bag. "Milk," he said. "For thinking of us."

Skitz bowed to the boy. "Jerek, ork chaser," he said.

Jerek laughed. "That's not the way it happened," he told Skitz.

Skitz shook his head. "No say that," he told Jerek. "What street hear, street believe." Then, he said, "I get phisopher."

* * *

Billy Block didn't know where he was. He couldn't see, could barely hear. He couldn't move his arms or legs. He was in a chair--he knew that much--but everything else was just dark. Last thing he knew, he was in a brothel spending the night with Lady Sapphire. Then, this. This wasn't good.

He tried kicking, but it didn't get him anywhere. He tried tilting back and forth, but that didn't help. Either the chair was bolted into the floor or...

Oh, crap, he thought. The watch. The watch nicked me.

Was he gagged? No. He said, "Anyone out there?"

"Yes," said another voice.

"Who is that?" he asked.

"Who are you?" the voice asked in return.

"Billy," he said.

"Billy Block?" the other voice asked.

"Yeah," he said.



The other voice answered back, "You cursed bastard! I'll cut you!"

Billy recognized the voice. "Jerry, is that you?"

"You're bloody right it's me. Curse your eyes, Block! You've gotten us both killed!"

"What did I do?" Billy asked.

"You cut into my barrio, that's what you did."

Billy shook his head. "You took Valia from me!" He pulled against the ropes. "You took her, so you get what's comin' to you!"

"You bastard!" he heard Jerry say. "I'll..."
Jerry stopped. Then, he started laughing.

"What's so cursed funny?" Billy asked.

Jerry said, "Billy Block had a hood over his head." He laughed again. "Sounds like the beginnin' of some children's rhyme."

Jerry kept laughing. Billy shouted at him to stop. Then, a door opened. Both of them shut their mouths.

Billy felt the bag come off. He blinked, but there was precious little light. They were in a room with no windows. A big roddun held a canlde. Billy recognized him. That was Skitz. King Rat's heavy.

Skitz walked to the other side of the room and took off Jerry's hood. He blinked and looked at Skitz, too.

"What's this?" Jerry asked. "Why am I here?"

Skitz pulled up a chair and sat down. Billy looked around. Yes, the chairs he and Jerry sat in were both nailed to the floor. There was no getting out that way. He looked back at Skitz. This was serious.

Skitz pointed at Jerry. "Break rule," he said.

"What?" Jerry asked. "What rule did I break?"

"Yeah! He did!" Billy shouted. "He stole something of mine. Stole my woman! King Rat says you don't steal from a marked man! And I've got a bloody mark don't I?" He gestured with his chin at the tattoo on his wrist.

Skitz turned to Billy. "Break rule."

Jerry smiled. "That's right! He cut into my barrio! And he said King Rat said he had the right to do it!"

Skitz looked at Jerry. "No talk," he said. "Hear now."

Billy wanted to say something, but he shut his mouth. He looked at Skitz. The roddun did not look happy.

"You," Skitz said to Jerry, pointing at him. Then, he pointed at Billy. "You." Then, he talked to both of them. "Hear now. King Rat mad. So mad, he..."

Skitz ran his thumb along his throat. Both of them knew what that meant.

"You break King Rat rule," Skitz said. "Both bad. One worse."

Skitz looked at Billy then.

Billy shook his head. "I never said I had King Rat's permission..."

"Yes," Skitz said. "You do."

"I'm sorry," he said. "I didn't think it would get back to him."

"Think bad," Skitz said. "Bad think you."

Skitz got up from his chair. Billy felt something warm and wet run down his leg. Skitz pulled a dagger from his belt. He put it under Billy's chin.

"King Rat say kill," Skitz told him. "I say no. Kill make blood. Blood can't clean."

Billy made a sound in his throat that may have resembled words.



"I say let live," Skitz told him. "He pay drop. He get greedy."

"Yuhsh," Billy said. "I got gree--gree-grwndwo..." that last word fell into gurgling.

"You pay," Skitz said. "One moon. You pay all drop. Or you pick new man."

"Whu?" Billy asked. "I p-p-pay all my..."

Jerry said, "You pay all of your drops to King Rat or you pick a new captain of your gang, Billy." He smiled. "Sounds fair to me."

"Yes," Skitz said.

Billy nodded. "All right. I'll pay. I'll pay."

Then, Skitz turned to Jerry.

"Wait a tic," Jerry said. "She came to me! She said he beat her! She came to me!"

"No steal mark man," Skitz said. "You no say when speak King Rat."

Jerry began to shake under the ropes. "I didn't... I swear! I didn't... She came to me, I'm tellin' ya! She came..."

"You say no?" Skitz asked.

Jerry's eyes began to burn. He could feel tears slipping down his cheeks. "I didn't," he said.

"She belong Billy," Skitz said. "You steal." Then, he said, "You steal *because* she belong Billy."

Jerry shivered as he nodded. "Yes."

"Break rule," Skitz said. "Make war. Blood no clean."

"Yes!" Billy said. "You took her because you knew she was mine! And all of this because you wanted to get her into your bed!"

"Yes," Skitz said, nodding. "Bad choose. Lie King Rat."

"I didn't lie!" Jerry said. "I... didn't mention it."

"Break rule," Skitz said. "Pay." Skitz raised the knife under Jerry's chin.

"Please!" Jerry said. "Pl-please!"

"You pay Tanner," Skitz said. "Pay phis-olo-fer."

"Philosopher!" Jerry shouted. "Yes! I'll pay! I'll pay!"

Skitz lowered the blade and put it back in his belt. "Good," he said.

He looked at both of them. Then, he said, "Street quiet. Good. Street bloody. Bad. No blood. King Rat calls blood. Not you."

Both of them nodded.

Jerry said, "Yes."

Billy said, "I understand."

"Break rule and King Rat make you blood," Skitz said.

They both nodded again.

Skitz walked to the door. Jerry said, "Are you going to let us go now?"

Skitz stopped at the door. He picked up a sledge hammer.

"No," he said.

"What is that for?" Billy asked.

Skitz smiled, showing his teeth. "Men forget," he said. "This make men remember."

Then, he swung the hammer at Billy's feet.





Kuba-Chubisi: The Invisible Allies



We were defeated. We were without hope. The Enemy took everything from us. Our pride, our dignity. Everything.

We ran. Helpless and alone, we ran from our Enemy, hoping they would forget us. And then, when we were sure we were out of their sight and memory, we realized we should have let them finish what they began. We wandered the world with only our fear to guide us.

We were dying.

And then, we found something that restored our hope. Like an oasis in an unforgiving desert, we found shelter from our despair. We found a reason to live again.

We found you.

Within the last hundred years or so, mankind and the other races have been plagued by a small, but violent nuisance. Calling themselves “kobolds,” these creatures resemble something between dog and lizard. Hideous, deformed and wretched. They have no culture of which to speak, living in small communities who rely on brute force and bullying to determine pecking order. They cowardly raid villages when the men are away on hunts and ransack unprotected travelers. Nobody knows where they came from.

Well, almost nobody.

The uvandir and their kin whisper to themselves about the horror they left behind. “The Enemy,” they call it, daring not to whisper its true name. When asked, they deny any such conversations or knowledge. And, to this day, they believe they escaped the Enemy, leaving it behind in the tunnels.

But the uvandir, gnomes and haffuns were not the only race to encounter this unnamed foe, nor are they the only race carrying scars from battling it. Long before the “underlings” escaped its clutches, another race did battle with the Enemy. They were once great emperors and mighty kings, but even their might was not enough to gain victory. They, too, fled the Enemy. But where did they go?

Here. Right here. Living among us. Looking as we look, talking as we talk, living as we live. They are the kuba-chubisi. And those wretched little creatures that call themselves “kobolds” are the Enemy’s cruel and cunning message to the kuba-chubisi:

“We found you.”

Kuba-Chubisi PCs

Playing a kuba-chubisi is no easy task. It requires constant deception on the part of the player and an adherence to a long-term goal. Playing a kuba-chubisi requires an incredible amount of responsibility. Be careful.

The Unseen Movers

“Kuba-chubisi” is a compound word. “Kuba” means “mover,” as in, to lift an object by the hand and put it elsewhere. “Chubisi” means “unseen,” or “invisible.” The kuba-chubisi took this title when they arrived in the Reign of Men. They saw themselves not as “unseen masters” but as secret allies. They saw that men would not trust them, and rather than spending centuries winning that trust, they chose to become a part of the Reign and influence men with “an unseen hand.”

Of course, many kuba-chubisi saw this as an excuse to use the Reign as a hiding place from the Enemy that was quick on their heels. They also saw it as a way to distract the Enemy. “Look! A new toy! Don’t worry about the race you just conquered! Play with this instead!”

Like all races, it is impossible to apply a single motive to an entire people. Each kuba-chubisi had his own reasons for hiding in the Reign of Men. Some were honest with those reasons. Others, less so.

The Defeated

Long ago, the kuba-chubisi lived in a culture of peace, philosophy and prosperity. There was no war, no famine, no poverty. But then, very slowly, their civilization began to fall into decadence and corruption. The peace they had worked so hard to achieve was slipping through their fingers. When it was far too late, the kuba-chubisi discovered what had gone wrong: an intelligent and invisible enemy had found them and subjugated their will. They were destroyed in a war they never even knew was happening.

They fled their great cities, racing across the world away from the invisible foe that destroyed them, but the despair of defeat had already settled in their souls. As they wandered, many lost the will to live. Despite their own immortality, the dark clouds of despair overcame their minds. Many simply sat down and chose to die. Others were little more than walking dead. Moving with no intention or destination. It was the *gehalt-gehen*. The Great Walk. Little by little, their numbers fell by the wayside. Soon, the entire population of kuba-chubisi had whittled itself down to a third.

It was nearly a century later, the immortal walkers found the first signs of another civilization. Cautiously, and with great curiosity, they investigated. What they found was the Reign of Men. Still young (only six of the ten Great Cities had been built), the kuba-chubisi were amazed. Here was a culture that valued the same virtues as they. Honor, dignity, respect, intelligence and philosophy. The kuba-chubisi saw mankind as a cultural sibling: still young, still with many lessons to learn, but with the same familial features.

The kuba-chubisi gathered together on the edge of the Reign, debating the next course of action. Some felt the best method to approach humanity was openly. Others argued that men were noble, but mistrusting of those not of their own kind. Therefore, a more subtle approach was necessary. Also, hiding within the Reign made it possible for them to thrive out of sight. They could regain their previous glory while assisting the Reign toward its own noble goals. They would be unknown allies.

The collective agreed: they would infiltrate the Reign and serve as advisors, artists and other patrons of the great arts. They would help mankind reach its own self-determined goals.

Invisible Allies

Using their sorcery, the kuba-chubisi took the shapes of men and infiltrated their culture. Invisible, undetectable, untraceable.

With their advanced knowledge in technology and magic, they decided to aid mankind's advancement. They would place themselves in positions of subtle power—not as kings, but as advisors.

But to their surprise, the kuba-chubisi found their efforts were largely unneeded. The Reign of Men had already dedicated itself to many virtues the kuba-chubisi revered. Honesty, integrity, innovation and justice were already in place before the kuba-chubisi arrived. To the kuba-chubisi, this was an unexpected blessing. Mankind—for all his faults—would not only make a perfect hiding place, but when the time came, would make a perfect ally. Perhaps, even, a good friend.

But the kuba-chubisi kept to their original plan. They took the shapes of men and entered man's world with the subtlety of a whisper. Humanity never noticed.

Hundreds of years later...

The kuba-chubisi have been an invisible element in the Reign of Men, hoping to direct them toward nobility. They have sponsored art, theater and culture, inspiring men to be greater than they already were. They have hand-picked Senators and other officials to maintain the high level of bureaucracy needed to keep the Reign running. All their actions were for that single goal of maintaining the beauty of the human spirit.

That experiment has failed.

Since the kuba-chubisi arrived, something rotten has begun festering in the Reign, poisoning the

heart of humanity. For centuries, they debated on the cause. Perhaps it was their own meddling that caused it. Or, as many feel, perhaps the Enemy has gotten its claws into the heart of the Reign and has begun pulling it apart. It was only the arrival of "kobolds" that the Enemy finally revealed their hand. Yes, the Enemy had discovered humanity. A new toy to play with. New hope to wreck and ruin. The Enemy had found the kuba-chubisi and their pretty, pretty project. And the Enemy would break their hearts by poisoning the Reign, allowing it to fall from within.

The plan was as beautiful as it was simple. As much as humanity adored honor and justice, they were also tainted with pride—a fact the kuba-chubisi were trying to expunge from the human character and a weakness the Enemy would exploit.

Without even knowing it, the Reign has become a chess board for two invisible forces. One side views humanity as allies, while the other sees them as little more than pawns.

Many kuba-chubisi feel it is time to reveal their presence to humanity, to tell them of the invisible threat of the Enemy. But most disagree. The Enemy *wants* the kuba-chubisi to reveal themselves: mankind's mistrust of other races will alienate them from their only ally. And then, with their greatest failure still fresh on their tongues, the Enemy will crush the kuba-chubisi once and for all.

And so, man's invisible allies must remain so. Although a few have made their identities known to close friends. Such an act is a crime in the eyes of their peers, however, and could result in the most severe punishment. It is a dangerous game... the game the kuba-chubisi have been playing for centuries.

A kuba-chubisi's Life

This next section details the life of a kuba-chubisi. While they are, for most purposes, immortal, they still recognize three important phases in a kuba-chubisi's life. These three phases translate, roughly, to “apprentice,” “journeyman” and “master.”

Apprentice

When a kuba-chubisi is born, it is into a family that much resembles a human family. She has a mother and a father who have paired for the purpose of raising children. She will more than likely have no siblings. Childbirth is incredibly rare among her people (a magical consequence of their tragic defeat) and even the children who live usually die within one to six months after birth.

She will not be born looking human, so most kuba-chubisi births are done in secret with only fellow members of their race present. There have been stories in the Reign of “lizard children” born in the Cities, but most of these are discarded as mere fabrication.

Her parents put her through a ritual that disguises her from humanity. The ritual makes her take on the appearance of a human child; one that she may discard for a new identity when she grows older. Other rituals make her immune to certain kinds of human magic (those which would reveal her identity) and she grows up understanding the *chulu-fahn*: the great secret.

As a child, she is taught her lessons using a game called *sash-spelbred*. Sash-spelbred is a complicated game using pieces moving on a checkerboard. It is quite a bit like human chess, but instead of capturing pieces, players score points by forcing your opponent to move pieces rather than capturing them. Pieces are removed from the board when

they can no longer move into “dangerous” areas (where they could be captured). In other words, when a piece is cornered, it surrenders its space on the board. (For chess players, imagine the rules for check and checkmate apply to every piece.)

When you understand the rules of sash-spelbred, you understand the most important element of kuba-chubisi culture. The kuba do not engage in direct confrontation—violent or otherwise. At least, they view direct confrontation as a personal failure. In kuba culture, when two individuals confront each other, they do so indirectly. When one opponent finds he has been outmatched, he surrenders, and he does so gracefully. The winner then provides the loser with compensation for his loss. This is *lankeig*. “Winning and losing gracefully.” The kuba-chubisi recognize that life is a series of struggles between competing wills, but also recognize the need for harmony. Winners and losers must accept the outcome gracefully. Otherwise, there is only bloodshed and chaos.

Our young kuba-chubisi grows up learning all the game's secrets and how they apply to her culture. She also learns all the arts: painting, music, sculpture, etc. She may become a master at one, but kuba-chubisi training focuses on a wide-spectrum of learning, encouraging broad-based education rather than specialization. But the kuba-chubisi do not ignore prodigy: when a child shows a particular talent for one art, above and beyond her fellows, she is encouraged to refine her skills and reach her potential.

A kuba-chubisi reaches “adulthood” quickly: within ten to twelve years. The kuba do not grant a long childhood to their offspring. There is too much at stake. Her parents consider her an adult after rigorous testing, and then, if she is ready, she prepares for the *tey-shalaf*: the deep

sleep. She finds a place where she can be alone, wraps herself in warm blankets, drinks a potion and falls into a dream-filled slumber. When she has awakened, she has shed her skin and undergone a transformation. She may now adopt a new identity and return to the waking world.

Sometimes, a kuba-chubisi does not awaken from the slumber. In a somber ritual, her sleeping body is destroyed, and her name is never spoken again.

If she does awaken, she is granted the right to choose her own name and her own identity. She takes her place in the world under one of the *mahsh-shtahd*, the “city masters.” There, she will grow into her own and take her place in the City.

Journeyman

For each human City there is a single kuba-chubisi “city master.” The *mahsh-shtahd* are responsible for patronizing the City’s artists, playwrights, singers and other *fabrin-din*, or “makers/keepers of art.” Our young kuba-chubisi moves from her home City to her new City where she takes a new identity (this is a common tradition) and serves the *mahsh-shtahd*. She is *detkiv-shta*: the “student under the master.”

Under his guidance, she learns how to inspire and cultivate artists. She sponsors their projects and encourages younger artists to expand their skills and horizons. She does this through direct and indirect patronage, and while the kuba-chubisi are encouraged not to get too involved with their charges, more often than not, the muse and the artist share a more-than-professional relationship.

She also watches other *detkiv-shta* perform their duties. She watches architecture build around her, listens to the songs she inspires, watches the operas, touches the sculptures... art is her heritage.

She also learns the most important rule in kuba-chubisi culture: no direct influence over men. Kuba-chubisi may choose any profession they like, but they may not serve as Senators. No kuba-chubisi is allowed to set foot in the Senate. “Men must be free to choose their own destiny.”

As she grows older, she finds another kuba-chubisi to share her life with. Mating for the kuba is, again, much like their human counterparts. A male and female meet, there is courtship, love, and then marriage. (In fact, the kuba-chubisi introduced the concept of “romantic love”

After the Defeat

The concepts of *sash-spelbred* and *lankeig* are the keys to kuba-chubisi culture. They are also why the Enemy defeated them so easily. The Enemy did not win gracefully. It did not lose gracefully. It fought for one goal: absolute victory. This concept was so alien and foreign to the kuba-chubisi, they could not adapt quickly enough to deal with it. And thus, they were routed in bloody disgrace.

After their defeat, many kuba-chubisi railed against *sash-spelbred*. They argued that it sealed their defeat, and if they abandoned it, they had a chance of victory. But others argued that the acts of one race should not dictate the behaviors of another. Because the Enemy acted without honor or compassion did not mean the kuba had to abandon their own. In the end, tradition held out, and the kuba clung to their culture, albeit with many very bitter dissenters.

to the Reign centuries ago.) The city master performs a bonding ceremony and the two are identified as *liben-echte*: true lovers.

While a kuba-chubisi may have as many human lovers as she wants, she may only call another kuba-chubisi her “true love.” She is expected to use love as another tool to inspire human artists. She must not “commit true love” with a human. As with the rule about the Senate, “Humans must choose other humans as life mates. We must maintain our secret, and when you must choose between our people’s safety and love, you will chose your people.”

While committing true love with a human is not a crime, it is looked down upon by her people. Her primary duty is to them, not to her emotions.

She spends centuries inspiring artists, learning the subtle ways of her people. And then, when she is ready, she becomes a master in her own right.

Master

There can only be one master for each City, but among the kuba-chubisi, there are those who are recognized as masters, even if they do not command a human City of their own. Among their own people, these kuba-chubisi are the ones respected most by all. They have lived for centuries, learned life’s lessons, and can instruct others. They know the perils awaiting their people and can teach how to sidestep them. The masters, the *hapt-uvennen*.

But to become a master, she must first enter the *tey-shalaf*: the deep sleep. This second time, the transformation is even more profound. The creature that emerges is no longer the creature that entered. In fact, this second transformation, often called “the third awakening,” nearly destroys the identity that existed before. This kuba-chubisi has the mind

of a child *and* an adult. Empty of preconceptions, full of wisdom. She often leaves behind old friends and life mates to find a new existence elsewhere. Her memories of that life are gone anyway.

She is a new woman — born again. And yet, deep within her mind is all the wisdom she carries with her from her old life. They are more reflexes than memories. And sometimes, just sometimes, if another life has made a profound impact upon her own, those old emotions will carry through, even if they are distant and hazy and confusing.

As a master, she leads a small cabal of journeymen. She assists them, gives them advice and helping them reach the status of master themselves. She travels from one City to another, providing her wisdom wherever she can, always paying acknowledgement to the City Master who governs over her.

One day, she may even achieve the title of City master herself, becoming the “high muse” of a human metropolis. She governs the other kuba-chubisi, making sure they do not meddle too much in human affairs, picking artists to inspire and helping guide humanity toward its rightful destiny.

But while the kuba-chubisi are immortal, even they grow old. Their bones grow brittle and their muscles fail. This occurs after many centuries—sometimes after two or three millenia—but no kuba-chubisi is *that* old. All of them were captured by the Enemy... and we do not think about that anymore.

Gouss-Kulan: Sacred Geometry

Hiding in the Cities of the Reign, the kuba-chubisi used many tools to help direct the

destiny of men. One of those tools is a unique magic called *gouss-kulan*. This best translates as “intentional space.”

For centuries, the kuba-chubisi have arranged for the construction of structures adorned with powerful symbols in specific locations in the City. (They have done this by putting themselves in important positions within the Reign and then disappearing when no longer necessary.) When viewed from above, the buildings form a kind of net, with each building connected to the other by the City’s streets. This delicate procedure—which has taken the kuba-chubisi centuries to complete—has made the Cities themselves incredibly powerful magical artifacts. In fact, you could say that each of the Reign’s Cities is, in itself, a magic item, capable of great feats... if you know how to use them.

The process begins with the construction of monuments dedicated to significant individuals or ideas. Monuments to heroes of courage, hope, charity and compassion. It also includes constructing buildings with similar symbols prominently displayed. These structures not only provide visible reinforcement to such ideas, but when placed in a specific geographical and geometrical way, they can empower the people of the City with those same symbols.

This is what the kuba-chubisi have been doing in the Reign for centuries: empowering Cities with noble concepts. Not only the Cities, but those who live within the walls as well. Many have said that just passing by a City’s main gates, adorned with all the symbols of hope and glory, one feels... elevated. This is the magic of the kuba-chubisi at work. The City elevates those who live within it, empowering them with the spirits of nobility, honor and dignity.

savu-kaven: sin of the sword

For the kuba-chubisi, murder is a controversial subject. While other races debate the morals of taking life, the kuba have reached a conclusion: murder is always murder. There are no justifications. Not self-defense, not protecting another, not “the needs of the many.” Nothing justifies murder.

The Power of Symbol

Many countries have symbolic monuments or structures. The Statue of Liberty. Big Ben. The Arc d’Triumph. All of these structures are filled with symbolic and historic importance.

Now, imagine your country is being invaded by a foreign force and you are part of the resistance. And in a crucial battle, you stand under the shadow of such a monument. With your bloodied and weary comrades, you look up and see that symbol that you always took for granted. You lived in this city all your life and you walked by it a thousand times. But now, with the lives of your loved ones and friends, you stand under that very monument and you see it for the first time. You see it for what it *means*. And you feel the energy of that thing in your heart, in your veins, in your bones.

What the kuba-chubisi are doing is exactly what marketing companies have been doing for a century. Everywhere you go, you see McDonalds and Coke and cigarettes and chocolate, and they are all just on the edge of your sight. Just on the edge of your mind.

The kuba-chubisi are fighting a memetic war. A war of ideas. Placing symbols all around humanity to remind them of nobility and courage, charity and humility, curiosity and hope. We walk by them every day, barely noticing them. But when we see them for the first time, we never forget them.

The kuba-chubisi believed their culture had outgrown the need for murder long ago. And yet, since their defeat at the hands of the Enemy, this attitude has changed, albeit slightly. Murder is now a part of their culture, but an unspoken part. They don't talk about it. They ignore it, pretending it doesn't exist. The word (*ach-uvven*) is the "forbidden word," spoken by none. But when the need for murder arises, they call the *savu-kaven*. Those who carry "the sin of the sword."

The *savu-kaven* are highly trained assassins who commit murder to protect kuba-chubisi culture, allies and interests. They do so with veils of shame on their hearts. A *savu-kaven* commits murder so other kuba-chubisi do not have to. "I carry the sin of the sword to keep my brother's hands clean."

Savu-kaven are chosen when very young. When a kuba-chubisi shows promise, the kuba-chubisi leave the child with a *savu-kaven* for training. His parents forget his name, pretending the child never existed. Families and friends never speak of him again. He is gone forever.

Other kuba-chubisi treat the *savu-kaven* as humans treat those with communicable diseases. They are outcasts, shunned by their own people. Those who are capable of such sinful acts are not to be treated as equals. They are the untouchable. The wretched. The diseased. Those who are capable of taking another life. And yet, these assassins are exactly the weapons kuba-chubisi culture needs to survive. While others of their kind shun them, the *savu-kaven* are eliminating the things that threaten their secrecy, and thus, their very existence.

Some kuba-chubisi feel guilty about the role demanded upon the *savu-kaven*. They leave anonymous gifts of food, clothing and other goods for the *savu-kaven*, silently showing their support.

Some even go so far as to patronize a *savu-kaven* (again, anonymously), giving them a monthly stipend, leaving notes of encouragement and gratitude, and perhaps even visits under a disguise.

Free-Dienun: Kuba-Chubisi Pacifism

While the kuba-chubisi view violence as abhorrent, they are not true pacifists. Kuba-chubisi pacifism (*free-dienun*) does not forbid violence; it only defines violence as a failure. If you must resort to violence, you have failed in some way. Failed to negotiate, failed to convince your opponent that violence was not the answer.

Self-defense is acceptable under the philosophy of *free-dienun*, but one must try to subdue one's enemy first before taking his life... if possible. Kuba-chubisi recognize that not all races understand the virtue of *free-dienun*, indeed, in some circumstances, murder is the only available choice. Even still, when faced with avoiding a troll or murdering it, a true follower of *free-dienun* will chose the former rather than the later.

It should also be noted that not all kuba-chubisi are followers of *free-dienun*. A few acknowledge the nobility of its intentions, but also recognize that it is an impractical and idealistic philosophy that fails when confronting the real world. While they pay it the proper respect, when push comes to shove, they put the principles aside... as long as nobody is looking and they can tell the story of what happened.

Ber-gemut: Mastery of the Mind

The kuba-chubisi recognized kobolds for what they were: the Enemy's blatant

warning. Since then, the kuba started to arm humanity for the Enemy's inevitable arrival, but did so without revealing their hand.

Like the Cult of the Makers (see *Reign of Men: Shadows & Secrets*), the kuba have introduced a philosophical movement of their own. A few years ago, Almos Tsan, a Philosopher from Vinnick, published a book called *Mastery of the Mind*. In it, he detailed meeting a strange mentor who taught him powers of the will previously unknown by men. The mentor's name was "Sala" (an obvious pseudonym), and over the course of many months, Sala's instructions taught Tsan powers he thought he could never achieve.

At first, many philosophers called Tsan a hoaxer, but after he proved his claims with results, his caught on like wildfire through the Reign. Men and women studied the technique and found themselves performing amazing mental feats. Word spread and the book became one of the most popular ever printed in the Reign.

Verath: Treachery

When a kuba-chubisi violates the rules of his people, the word they use to describe his action is *verath*: treachery.

The kuba-chubisi see any hostile or violent action taken against another of their race as the deepest crime. But exactly how does such a pacifistic culture punish such a crime? Banishment. *Verdi-shtar*.

When treachery occurs, a kuba-chubisi calls for a jury of his peers for judgment. The jury hears pleas from both the accused and the accuser. If the accused is found guilty, he is banished. Likewise, if the accuser is found guilty (of filing a false claim of treachery), he is banished.

The ritual of banishment involves a spell cast upon the guilty party. The spell lasts anywhere from a month to a year to ten years to one hundred years or even greater — depending on the crime. While the spell remains on the kuba-chubisi, he may be seen and heard by others, but he is intangible. He may not interact with the world in any way. He is a ghost. Not a silent ghost, but a helpless one. He cannot eat, he cannot drink, he cannot sleep. He will not die of starvation or dehydration, although at times, he may wish he would, but he will suffer. And worst of all, his people will ignore him. They will not speak to him, they will not address him or acknowledge him in any way. To other races, he is completely invisible—unable to call for help or assistance.

At the end of his sentence, he still suffers the pangs of hunger and thirst, but his people care for him. They will help him recover. His punishment is over and he deserves compassion and assistance.

Banishment is a rare case in kuba-chubisi culture. They all know the dangers of exposing themselves. Not only would they put themselves at risk, but the entire Reign as well.

Zus-shah: Outsiders

There are those within the kuba-chubisi community who do not agree with the prevailing philosophies. They believe they should be open with the Reign of Men, that they should warn humans about the approaching Enemy, and they should share their knowledge freely, not release it in symbols and stories. These are the *Zus-Shah*, the outsiders. Those who operate within kuba-chubisi culture, but secretly work to undermine its authority.

The zus-shah claim the kuba-chubisi have lost the intention of their goal. They say they now direct

mankind, not through politics, but through even more subtle machinations. They are no longer the allies of man, but have become his stewards.

They also claim that all the actions the kuba-chubisi have taken are not to protect man, but to protect themselves. Their anonymity and invisibility are not to provide man with an ally, but to provide the kuba-chubisi with a wall. All their “moral” actions are merely excuses to be disengaged and not take an active role with their ally. “I’m not responsible if anything happens to him. I was only his indirect inspiration and patron.”

This disengagement from their “ally” makes no sense to the zus-shah. They should become part of human culture. They should reveal themselves as who they are. They should use their power to aid humanity openly and honestly.

Of course, if the zus-shah said this, they’d all be invisible and intangible for thousands of years. That’s why they remain silent... but not inactive.

The zus-shah act as a kind of fifth column within kuba-chubisi culture. On the surface, they nod and agree with all the dictates, but secretly, they act against them. They make human allies and expose their identities—but only to one or perhaps two others. They cannot risk too much exposure, otherwise, the kuba-chubisi will discover their actions. Any knowledge or skills they pass on *must* remain secret. If even a whisper makes it to a kuba-chubisi jury, the game is up, and they will be removed from the board. Possibly forever.

Masks

Whenever the zus-shah meet, they do so wearing masks; secrecy is key in achieving their goals. They use code names and never meet in groups of more than three.

There are also no formal leaders of the group. They are individuals led by a single goal, and to achieve that goal, they must remain divided. They communicate through word-of-mouth. No secret must ever be written down. And, they identify each other with vast passwords that take minutes to recite.

Infiltration

The chief goal of the zus-shah is to infiltrate the top levels of kuba-chubisi culture and begin to turn it away from tradition. When they rise high enough, they test those under them for similar sympathies. By writing stories, poems and plays about revolt against tradition, they introduce those ideas to other kuba-chubisi. And with those ideas introduced—in such a romantic way—seeds are planted and eventually sewn.

Freedom

Of all the crimes the zus-shah commit, one is perhaps the most foul in the eyes of the kuba-chubisi... if they knew about it. The zus-shah have found a way to undo the banishment ritual. This recent discovery has led to the freedom of many banished kuba-chubisi who, of course, are grateful to their new-found compatriots. The zus-shah have to be very careful about who they release; they cannot free just any criminal. They must only free those who are sympathetic to the kuba-chubisi cause, or whose sympathies can be won. Once freed, they are made a part of the fifth column and assist the zus-shah in its path to changing the destiny of their own people.

Reaction

Despite all this secrecy, many kuba-chubisi are aware there is some sort of group working against their goals. Most believe it is the corrupting

influence of the Enemy. Some believe it comes from exposed contact with humanity. And there are some who secretly wish they could find a member of the group so they could join the effort...

The cities

The kuba-chubisi have built many structures in the Reign to inspire the hearts of men, but as the Cities grew, they took on their own character. This character was partially shaped by the kuba-chubisi, but in most part, the Cities chose their own destinies.

Virtues guide the Cities. Human virtues. Community, Strength, Innovation, Wit. These are the things that men value and cherish. And each City is a monument to those virtues.

Millford: The City of Promises

Virtue: *Faithfulness*

It is said you cannot make a promise in Millford without keeping it. The virtue of *faithfulness* teaches us that when men make promises, they must keep them. A promise is not something given or broken without just cause. If a citizen of Millford makes you a promise, you can put money on them keeping it.

Nevarnare: The Illuminated City

Virtue: *Inspiration*

While it is also the Capital of the Reign, it is also a center of art, culture and learning. It is “the City of Inspiration.” A light in the darkness. The Illuminated City. You can see Nevarnare from miles away, it’s lights calling to you from the darkness. This illumination is more than just a literal truth: the City itself is a muse to artists from all over the Reign.

Ajun: The City of Memory

Virtue: *Remembrance*

Standing before the Great Library of Ajun, one must walk under an arch to enter, and in the stones of the arch are two words. They are the answer to a question the hero of an ancient play asks of the Fates, “What fault hath man?” The answer: “Man forgets.” The virtue of *remembrance* is knowing the perils of the past to predict the dangers of the future.

Tomkin: We Are All In

Virtue: *Community*

An Ajun scholar once asked Sal Freemon, a famous merchant in Tomkin, why his City was so cordial. Reportedly, Sal smiled and said, “Winter is bigger than me, but it ain’t bigger than Tomkin.” The City’s embrace of *community* has been written about by countless scholars. There are very few that go hungry or cold. Beggars are almost non-existent. If you see someone in need, you help them. That’s the Tomkin way. After all, when winter comes, you can’t stand alone.

Vanta: Strength & the Sword

Virtue: *Strength*

Let’s not mince words: in Vanta, the virtue is *strength*. The Vantans argue that this includes strength of character, but let’s be honest. In Vanta, all that matters is the sword. All other virtues come *after* that. If a man cannot defend himself and others, he is useless to his fellow man. The first, and most important virtue, is strength. All others are secondary.

Tamerclimb: Home of the Palatines

Virtue: *Justice*

The virtue of *justice* demands that all citizens be treated like citizens, fairly and equally. Justice is the source of virtue: it requires every citizen to see every other citizen as a human being. Understanding justice is understanding that some things are bigger and more important than your own desires. The individual protects the community and the community protects the individual. That is justice.

Shavay: Courage, Not Bravery

Virtue: *Courage*

In the City of Shavay, there is no room for cowards. In fact, you can see that sign hanging outside many of the inns and hostels. “No Rooms for Cowards.” The people of Shavay are proud of their roadmen and try to emulate their example. Living in Shavay, living the life of a roadman, means living each day on the edge of a knife. Riding across the wilderness, facing against the horrors that wait there, takes more than just bravery (the *show* of courage), it takes the real stuff.

Jinix: The Curt Lady

Virtue: *Wit*

Many see Jinix as a lawless City—and to a certain degree, they are right. But while nobody in Jinix obeys the laws, they do follow the rules. The first of those rules is simple and plain. “If you don’t think on your feet, you’ll be doing it on your back.” For centuries, Jinix has been known as the “City of Thieves.” Those who live there, however, know her by a different name. “The Curt Lady.” She doesn’t have time for stutterers or stammerers. Do what you need, do it quick, and get it done.

Or she’ll have your throat. That’s the Lady. Play by her rules and you’ll do fine. Don’t... well, you’re the reason the coffin maker still has a job.

Ashcolmb: The Foothold of Lies

Virtue: *Innovation*

Say the name and people shudder. The Shadow City. The City of Secrets. Long, black alleyways with slithering things you can’t quite see and don’t want to see. Ashcolmb was once a hub of invention and innovation in the Reign. Now, it is a place where men practice forbidden arts and perform hidden experiments. Innovation. Degradation. Some say the kuba-chubisi in Ashcolmb have lost control of the City. That the Enemy has taken control: it’s first foothold in the Reign. The mahsh-ahtahd in Ashcolmb throw these accusations away like old socks. They are in control. The Enemy has no hold. But as each day goes by, more evidence arises confirming the kuba-chubisi’s worries...

Vinnick: The Stone Hero

Virtue: *Knowledge*

In the center of Vinnick stands a man made of stone. He reaches out to the sky with one hand, and with his other, holds an open book. His eyes are wide and his lips open, as if speaking. He is Chorel Shavel, the founder of Vinnick. Not a statue of him, but Chorel himself, turned to stone. He stood defending the City against a terrible evil, buying time for his fellows to cast a spell and send it back to wherever it came. At the base of Chorel’s statue is his motto he lived by: “With knowledge, freedom.” A final testament to the man who gave his life for his City and the virtue he believed in.

Kuba-Chubisi Racial Traits

- +2 to Strength and Wisdom
- **Medium:** Kuba-chubisi have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.
- **Keen Senses:** Kuba-chubisi receive a +2 racial bonus on Perception checks.
- **Mimic:** Kuba-chubisi build a new body for themselves composed of part of their old forms and humans. They may pick 4 racial traits from the original kuba-chubisi and human racial traits (See Mimic). This has a side effect of making them seem strange to actual humans.
- **Automatic Languages:** Kuba-chubisi begin play speaking Common, Human(hometown dialect, if choosen) and Kuba-Chubisi. Kuba-chubisi with high Intelligence scores can choose any languages they want (except secret languages, such as Druidic).

Mimic

Human Racial Trait: Kuba-chubisi gain a human racial trait (see TRoM pg. 22). The hometown advantage racial trait requires that the kuba-chubisi have the hometown racial trait as well. This trait can be taken more than once.

Invisible Artisans: Kuba-chubisi gain craft (calligraphy), craft (paintings), craft (pottery), craft (sculptures), profession(composer), profession(writer) and all perform skills as class skills; they may use them untrained and gain +1 racial bonus to all listed skills. At 5th, 10th, 15th and 20th character level gain an additional +1 bonus to all listed skills.

Undetectable: Kuba-chubisi are immune to all detect spells (such as *detect good*) and scrying spells and effects. They are treated as non-existent for spell purposes.

Ageless: Kuba-chubisi do not age and cannot be magically aged.

Patience: Kuba-chubisi are immune to *feints* and cannot be provoked against their will by mundane means.

Strange

For each kuba-chubisi racial trait that you take, you gain a -3 penalty to one of the follow Charisma based skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Handle Animal, Intimidate or Perform. You may choose which skill you take the penalty to and must pick a new skill for each kuba-chubisi racial trait. This does not modify your spells or ability in any way; it only applies to skill checks.

Free-dienun

You may choose to be a free-dienun kuba-chubisi. Free-dienun kuba-chubisi do not believe in murder for any reason, so all of your attacks deal non-lethal damage and you can never accidentally kill a creature while attacking them. To do lethal damage or attempt a *coup de grace* you take a -4 penalty to the attack.

Feats

Extra City Effect

After spending an eternity in a City, you get to learn a few of its secrets.

Prerequisite: *City effect* class feature

Benefit: You gain one additional *city effect*. You must meet all of the prerequisites for this *city effect*.

Special: You can gain Extra City Effect multiple times.

Extra Monument

Prerequisite: *Monument* class feature

Benefit: You gain one additional *monument*. You must meet all of the prerequisites for this *monument*.

Special: You can gain Extra Monument multiple times.

Mundane Semblance

Prerequisite: Strange racial trait

Benefit: You can remove the strange penalty from one of your Charisma based skills.

Special: You can gain Mundane Semblance multiple times.

Back of my Hand

Prerequisite: Kuba-chubisi, Knowledge (local) 5 Ranks

Benefit: You may double your normal speed while moving through the city and you do not require a map to find any widely known location in the city.

Ledge Walker

Prerequisite: Kuba-chubisi, Back of my Hand, Knowledge (local) 10 Ranks

Benefit: You can move through the city by rooftops, bypassing guards, gates and other troubles. Movement is equal to normal movement rate. You can automatically make any jump under 5 feet and gain a plus +4 bonus to making longer jumps on rooftops.

Sewer Crawler

Prerequisite: Kuba-chubisi, Ledge Walker, Knowledge (local) 15 Ranks

Benefit: You can move through the city via the sewers without having to worry about rats, alligators or any other obnoxious hazards. Movement is equal to normal movement rate and you may ignore any terrain that affects your movement.

New Fighter Archetype: Savu-Kaven

The sword of the kuba-chubisi, he wields his weapon with deep shame. But he is a necessary evil in this world corrupted by the Enemy, and he will not hesitate when called upon to commit the greatest evil: murder.

Requirements: Kuba-Chubisi

Class Features

The following are class features of the savu-kaven.

Challenge (Ex): Once per day, a savu-kaven can challenge a foe to combat. As a swift action, the savu-kaven chooses one target within sight to challenge. The savu-kaven's melee attacks deal extra damage whenever the attacks are made against the target of his challenge. This extra damage is equal to the savu-kaven's level. The savu-kaven can use this ability once per day at 1st level, plus one additional time per day for every three levels beyond 1st, to a maximum of seven times per day at 19th level.

Challenging a foe requires much of the savu-kaven's concentration. The savu-kaven takes a -2 penalty to his Armor Class, except against attacks made by the target of his challenge.

The challenge remains in effect until the target is dead or unconscious or until the combat ends.

This ability replaces the *armor training class* feature.

Deadly Strike (Ex): At 11th level, a savu-kaven may choose to use his *deadly strike* as a full-round action against a target he is currently challenging. He makes one normal attack roll with a weapon that has a blade. If he successfully hits his opponent, the attack deals an additional +2d6 points of slashing damage.

This bonus damage increases by an additional +2d6 at 13th level and every two levels thereafter to a maximum of +10d6 damage at 19th level. Any extra damage as a result of a successful deadly strike is not multiplied by a critical hit.

Regardless of whether he hits his opponent with the *deadly strike*, a savu-kaven take a -4 penalty to AC until his next turn and cannot use this ability on the same target more than once per day.

This ability replaces the *armor mastery* class feature.

New class: Mahsh-Ahtaht

The mahsh-ahtaht is the Master of the City. An urban shaman. He speaks to the city and the city speaks back. He bonds with its people, its buildings. His feet commune with the cobblestones as he steps. He will tell you that a City is like any other organism. It has a birth, a life, and even a death. It can become diseased and made well again. He knows these things, and his powers come from that communion.

Requirements: Kuba-Chubisi, Hometown Racial Trait

Role: The mahsh-ahtaht is not one for direct conflict. Instead, he uses the environment around him to invisibly assist allies and hinder enemies. His abilities are subtle, but powerful, designed to keep himself in the background,

manipulating the scene as a chess master manipulates the pieces and controls the board.

Alignment: No Evil

Hit Die: D6

Starting Wealth: 4d6 x 10 gp (average 140 gp). In addition, each character begins play with one outfit worth 10 gp or less.

Class Skills

The mahsh-ahtaht class skills are Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Knowledge (all) (Int), Knowledge (travel) (Int), Linguistics (Int), Perception (Wis), Profession (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis) and Sleight of Hand (Dex).

Skill Ranks per Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

The following are class features of the mahsh-ahtaht.

Weapons and Armor Proficiency:

Mahsh-ahtaht are proficient with all simple weapons, light armor, medium armor, and shields (except tower shields).

Born and Bred: A mahsh-ahtaht is master of the same city he picked for his hometown racial trait and gains the associated bonus.

Ajun: +5 to sense motive and knowledge (philosophy)

Ashclomb: +5 to bluff and appraise

Jinix: +5 to slight of hand and profession (smuggler)

Millford: +5 to survival and profession (trapper)

Nevernare: +5 to diplomacy and perform (oratory)

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1st	+0	+2	+0	+2	Born and bred, monument
2nd	+1	+3	+0	+3	City effect
3rd	+1	+3	+1	+3	
4th	+2	+4	+1	+4	City effect, monument
5th	+2	+4	+1	+4	
6th	+3	+5	+2	+5	City effect
7th	+3	+5	+2	+5	Sacred pathways
8th	+4	+6	+2	+6	City effect, monument
9th	+4	+6	+3	+6	
10th	+5	+7	+3	+7	City effect
11th	+5	+7	+3	+7	
12th	+6/+1	+8	+4	+8	City effect, monument
13th	+6/+1	+8	+4	+8	
14th	+7/+2	+9	+4	+9	City effect
15th	+7/+2	+9	+5	+9	Improved sacred pathways
16th	+8/+3	+10	+5	+10	City effect, monument
17th	+8/+3	+10	+5	+10	
18th	+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	Grand city effect, city effect
19th	+9/+4	+11	+6	+11	
20th	+10/+5	+12	+6	+12	City effect, monument

Shavay: +5 to perception and profession (roadman)

Tamberclimb: +5 to ride and knowledge (law)

Tomkin: +5 to handle animal and profession (Merchant)

Vanta: +5 to intimidate and profession (soldier)

Vinnick: +5 to linguistics and appraise

Monuments: The mahsh-ahtahd adds a monument to his city. The monument gives a bonus while in 200 feet of the monument. Humans can intuitively sense when a monument is nearby, even if they do not understand the magic empowering

it. A knowledge (local) check of DC 15 can be used to determine what a monument does and if the creature is close enough to use it. The same monument can be built more than once in a city, but the monuments must be at least 400 feet apart. At 4th level, and every 4 levels thereafter, the mahsh-ahtahd gains another monument.

Community Monument: Any creature who assists a citizen of the city, at no benefit to himself, gains a bonus equal to the mahsh-ahtahd's intelligence modifier to *one roll* until the end of the day. The bonus may be to any

single roll: attack, damage, saving throw, etc. but the bonus only lasts until sunset.

Courage Monument: Any creature who stands directly between a citizen of the city and an enemy while standing under the influence of the monument gains the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier to their AC.

Faithfulness Monument: Any creature who makes a promise while standing under the influence of the monument gains a +2 bonus to any action while fulfilling that promise. This effect may be used a number of times equal to the mahsh-ahtahd's intelligence modifier.

Innovation Monument: Any creature who successfully crafts a tool gains the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier to the bonus provided by the tool. If they craft a trap, the trap gains the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier to its DC.

Inspiration Monument: Any creature making an Perform (oratory) roll while standing under the influence of the monument gains the mahsh-ahtahd's intelligence modifier to that roll. This effect may only be invoked once per monument, per day.

Justice Monument: Any creature who upholds the law while standing under the influence of the monument gains the mahsh-ahtahd's intelligence modifier to their damage rolls. This effect may be used a number of times equal to the mahsh-ahtahd's intelligence modifier.

Knowledge Monument: Any creature making a knowledge roll while standing under the influence of the monument gains the mahsh-ahtahd's

intelligence modifier to that roll. This effect may only be invoked once per monument, per day.

Remembrance Monument: Any creatures that invokes an old event, such as a past battle, while attempting to make a diplomacy check gains a bonus equal to the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier to the roll. This effect may only be invoked once per monument, per day.

Strength Monument: Any creature making a strength roll while standing under the influence of the monument gains the mahsh-ahtahd's intelligence modifier to that roll. This effect may only be invoked once per monument, per day.

Wit Monument: Any creature making a bluff roll while standing under the influence of the monument gains the mahsh-ahtahd's intelligence modifier to that roll. This effect may only be invoked once per monument, per day.

City Effects: At 2nd level, a mahsh-ahtahd's gains one *city effect*. He gains an additional *city effect* for every 2 levels of mahsh-ahtahd attained after 2nd level. A mahsh-ahtahd cannot select an individual *city effect* more than once.

Unless otherwise stated, invoking city effect is a standard action that does not provoke an attack. The range of a *city effect* is equal to 25 + the mahsh-ahtahd's level x 10 feet. The save to resist a *city effect* is equal to 10 + 1/2 the mahsh-ahtahd's level + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier. He can only have one *city effect* invoked at a time, if he invokes a second *city effect* the first one end immediately.

Architectural Weapon (Su): All allies within range of the mahsh-ahtahd's effect do not take

improvised weapon penalties when using the city's architecture in their attack. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Around The Back Way (Sp): The mahsh-ahtahd's can find hidden doorways or back entrances that others may not know about. This functions like the *detect secret doors* spell using his *city effect* range instead. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

City Swarm (Sp): The mahsh-ahtahd can summon forth a swarm of rats, pigeons or cats that attack all other creatures within its area. The swarm begins adjacent to him, but if no living creatures are within its area, it moves in one direction of his choosing at its normal speed. He can move the swarm or change the swarm's direction by spending a standard action to concentrate on the swarm, otherwise it continues moving in its current direction. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Clean Streets (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd can make any blocked city streets passable as long as it is within his range. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Cobblestone Klutz (Su): All enemies within range must make a Reflex save or be entangled and glued to the floor as if it had failed its save against a tanglefoot bag. Creatures within range only have to successfully save once and cannot be affected again by this effect for 24 hours.

This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Crowded Streets (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd can make city streets difficult to navigate with crowded pedestrians. All ground within range becomes difficult terrain. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Dead End (Sp): The mahsh-ahtahd may create a dead end in any city street, blocking off escape routes; this includes any aerial escape routes within his range. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Gossip (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd can target any conversation within his range that he can see and overhear it as though they were speaking directly to him. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Into The Crowd (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd can automatically blend into any crowd in his city and move through them as though they were his allies. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Lines of Power I (Su): All allies within range of the mahsh-ahtahd's effect do not have to confirm critical hits; all threatened critical hits are automatically successful. Any creature affected by this *city effect* cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Long City Shadows (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd deepens the shadows of the city's already existing

shadows. Any creature using stealth within his range gains a +5 bonus. Any creature affected by this *city effect* cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. This *city effect* is only usable at night and lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Mercy of the City I (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd stops all bleeding within range; this including bleeding damage from attacks and automatically stabilizing a creature who is bleeding out. He may use this ability once per day and one additional time a day for every 5 mahsh-ahtahd's level he possess.

Skeleton Key (Sp): The mahsh-ahtahd can open any locked door in the city. He may not open chests or cabinets; only doors. He may use this ability once per day and one additional time a day for every 5 mahsh-ahtahd's level he possess.

Will of the City (Su): As an acting agent of the city, the mahsh-ahtahd becomes its protector as well. All allies within range gain a +5 bonus to their initiative checks. Any creature affected by this city effect cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Wrong Turn (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd can force a target to get lost in the city's winding streets. The target can make a knowledge (local) to escape the trap, he may make this check every round. Once the target saves or the effect is ended they cannot be effected by this city effect again for 24 hours. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Sacred Pathways (Sp): At 7th level, a mahsh-ahtahd can spend a move action to teleport to

any of his monuments. This is treated as a *greater teleport* spell but he cannot take anyone with him.

Major City Effects: At 10th level, and every two levels thereafter, a mahsh-ahtahd can choose one of the following major city effects in place of a city effect.

City Seer (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd can see through his monuments as per an *arcane eye* with *greater arcane sight* centered on the monument. This effect cannot move. He can do this for 1 minute per day per mahsh-ahtahd level. This duration does not need to be consecutive, but it must be spent in 1-minute increments.

Distracting Happenstance (Su): The sights, sounds and smells of a city can wreck a man's nerves. The mahsh-ahtahd can cause a distraction that requires his target make a concentration check to continue his action. Any creature affected by this city effect cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Lines of Power II (Su): Not only does the mahsh-ahtahd's influence over the city strengthen his allies, it also weakens his foes. While this ability is active, all the effects of *Lines of Power I* are in effect. In addition, the mahsh-ahtahd's enemies always fail checks to confirm a critical hit. Any creature affected by this *city effect* cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Mercy of the City II (Su): While this ability is active, all the effects of *Mercy of the City I* are in effect. In addition, no creature may make a killing

blow against any other creature; this includes a *coup de grace*. This does not stop creatures from attacking each other or rendering their targets unconscious. Any creature affected by this city effect cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Not in My City (Su): A mahsh-ahtahd can target one magic item or weapon, within his range, and suppress its magical properties. While the item remains in his range its properties remain suppressed, once it leaves the range it returns to normal. Any creature affected by this city effect cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. He can do this once a day and on additional time a day for every 5 mahsh-ahtahd's level he possesses.

Patterns of Fear (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd can summon the power of his control over the city, overwhelming his target's senses with terror. The target must make a will save or become frightened. This is a *fear* effect. He can do this once a day and on additional time a day for every 5 mahsh-ahtahd's level he possesses.

Power of the City (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd can channel and focus the energies underlying the city into a single powerful charge. He may make a ranged touch attack against one target that deals 8d8 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier force damage. He can do this once a day and on additional time a day for every 5 mahsh-ahtahd's level he possesses.

Shattering Windows (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd causes every window within range to shatter, sending shards of glass at his enemies. The glass deals 6d6

+ his Intelligence modifier damage and targets can make a Fortitude save for half damage. He can do this once a day and one additional time a day for every 5 mahsh-ahtahd's level he possesses.

Smog (Sp): Any creatures within the mahsh'ahtahd's range must make a fortitude save or become *nauseated*. Any creature affected by this city effect cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

The Madness of the Crowds (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd causes a panic on a city street, sending up to 100 citizens screaming and running for their lives. The confusion causes *difficult ground* terrain and everyone must make a reflex save or take 5d10 damage. This lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + his Intelligence modifier or the mahsh-ahtahd can end this effect as a free action.

Improved Sacred Pathways (Sp): At 15th level, the mahsh-ahtahd gains *improved sacred pathways*. This functions like the *sacred pathways* ability except the mahsh-ahtahd can bring a number of creatures equal to his Intelligence modifier.

Grand City Effects: At 18th level, and every two levels thereafter, a mahsh-ahtahd can choose one of the following grand city effects in place of a city effect.

Lines of Power III (Su): As a final step toward mastering a city's power, the mahsh-ahtahd can fully empower his allies and blister his foes. When this ability is active, gain all the effects of *Lines of Power II*. Also, all allies gain a bonus to AC equal to the mahsh-ahtahd's intelligence bonus, while enemies receive an equal penalty

to armor class. Any creature affected by this *city effect* cannot be affected by it again for 24 hours. This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to 3 + the mahsh-ahtahd's Intelligence modifier.

Lord of the City (Su): Using the lines of power linking his monuments, the mahsh-ahtahd can re-direct magical energy cast at himself or an ally. When a mahsh-ahtahd uses this ability, the spell is re-directed to an appropriate target of his choosing. However, the mahsh-ahtahd can redirect that magical energy to a spell-casting ally, giving them a spell of equal level (caster's choice) that may be cast next round. He can only use this once per day.

Lost and Forgotten (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd can force his target to become lost in the city as per the *maze* spell. He can do this once a day and on additional time a day for every 5 mahsh-ahtahd's level he possess.

Mercy of the City III (Su): The *Mercy of the City* will not allow you or your target to fall. The moment a creature dies, the mahsh-ahtahd interrupts and immediately resurrects the target and restores half of their hit points. He can only use this once per day.

Witch Hunt (Su): The mahsh-ahtahd summons an angry mob that chases and threatens his target with violence. The mob consists of 48 medium sized creatures with 10 AC, +22 to attack and 2d6 per 6 mob members of damage. He controls where the mob goes and who it attacks. he can only use this once per day.

Approved classes

Listed below are the classes available to Kuba-Chubisi in *Wicked Fantasy*.

<i>Barbarian</i>	<i>no</i>
Bard	yes
<i>Cleric</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Druid</i>	<i>no</i>
Fighter	archetype
<i>Monk</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Paladin</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Ranger</i>	<i>yes</i>
Rogue	archetype
Sorcerer	yes
Wizard	yes
<i>Alchemist</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Cavalier</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Gunslinger</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Inquisitor</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Magus</i>	<i>no</i>
Oracle	mystery
<i>Summoner</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Witch</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Antipaladin</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Ninja</i>	<i>no</i>
<i>Samurai</i>	<i>no</i>





A Secret

A Tale from the World of Wicked Fantasy

I have a secret. I cannot tell it to you, I can only show it.

And once you've seen it, you are a part of it.

Those are the rules. As ancient as trees.

I walk in my City and see its people. They do not see me. I am another face without a name. Perhaps they recognize me, but they cannot see me. I cannot allow them to see me. I must walk among them, invisible. Unseen.

I buy an apple from a vendor on Cantor Street. He thanks me and forgets me.

I turn left on Vespian. There, I give the apple to a young boy. He will take it to the stairs of a burned out hovel, still smoking from the fire last night. He will give the apple to his mother, her skin still smoldering. She will die soon. And the boy will be alone. He will turn to the streets for help. Cantor and Vespian. In the center of that intersection, there is a statue of a man the boy has never known. The man once fought in the army when this City was young. He fought against horrors the boy has never seen. Horrors no boy should *ever* see. He died on the end of a spear, protecting this City.

The statue and the boy have the same name. *Alson*. The boy does not know it, but he and the man have the same blood. I taught the first Alson how to fight. I was his sword master. His fellow men loved him and wept at his funeral. I ensured this statue was built in his name, to inspire other men. And now, many generations later, Alson's prodigy runs along a set of dirty stairs, with bare feet, an apple in his hands. The apple he gives his dying mother will ease her pain for a moment. Then, she will die. And Alson will be alone. He will run out into the street and pass by the statue of the man who bears his name. He will not see it. He's never read the inscription. It is a secret he does not know.

But you do. You've seen it.

I turn down Olssen Street. There are women at the washing well, singing and spinning wet clothes. They gossip and banter. One of them is Bethany. Bethany Olssen. She knows she shares the name of the street, but she does not know why.

Many generations ago, another woman named Bethany Olssen was Governor of this City. She gave half her life to it. She married, but lost her husband to drinking and vice. But she did not despair. She fought against the street gangs and the nobility who sought to squeeze and bleed every street, as if it bled coins. She passed legislation that protects her ancestor. And she was killed here, at this washing well. She was speaking at an event when a man shot her with an arrow from a crossbow. It pierced her chest and she fell. Those around her screamed and ran. Other men came forth from the crowd and made sure she was dead with swords and knives.

I watched her die. Her blood flowing into the well.

Bethany Olssen, the governor of this City, died here. Bethany Olssen now washes here. She cleans the filth from the sheets and undergarments. There has always been a Bethany Olssen on this street corner. Her blood and the echoes of her pain still remain. She is a ghost, trapped in the well. And she weeps.

But she does not weep for herself. She weeps for the City.

And, every once in a while, the Bethany Olssen here talks of doing something important. Of changing things. She is a woman of conviction and conscience. But then, something rises up and murders that conviction. The blood and water in the well. She looks at her withered hands, soaked with blood she cannot see. And the other women say, "What can a single person do?" And watching a carriage pass by the well, Bethany Olssen returns to washing other people's clothes.

I turn away.

Marc Harper sits on the corner of Pallas Street, a broken lute in his lap. He has tools to fix it, but he would prefer to sip from the swill he got from the tavern behind him. He has his hat in the street, a few coins inside.

You do not need to travel far into the past to see Marc's history. His father was Ben Harper, a noted bard. He used to play here at the tavern. Marc is a bard as well, as his name suggests. But he is not his father. He is only his father's son. And greatness does not always pass through the blood. That is Marc's curse. He is not his father. Never will be. He does not hear the music as his father did. Cannot play as his father did. And the people tell him.

But inside the tavern is a young boy named Jerek.

He is the son of the tavern owner here, and the boy can sing. The sailors come to hear him and teach him bawdy songs. And when they hear Jerek sing about

mermaids and port women you can't trust, they laugh, buy drinks and throw money at Jerek's feet.

But the best sailor songs are about going home. One day, Jerek will learn why. He will be at sea for only ten days, and he will know why sailors always sing about going home. These are not the songs that make men laugh. These are the songs that make men cry.

Jerek is lame. He was born with one leg longer than the other. Two winters ago, he slipped on the ice fetching a barrel for his father and he broke his short leg. All the people who know Jerek's father said, "Oh, how awful for you." Getting Jerek an apprenticeship was hard enough with his short leg. Now, it would be impossible.

Jacob Turner, Jerek's father, had great hopes for his son. But now, Jerek will have to work the tavern for the rest of his life.

A man sits on the stoop of Jacob Turner's tavern who could change that. He does not have the talent, but he has the knowledge. Soon, Jacob Turner will tell this drunken, broken bard with a broken lute to get off his stoop. He does not know that Marc Harper could turn his son into a bard. Perhaps the greatest bard of his generation. He does not know this.

But I know this. A boy steps up to the drunkard and drops a coin in his hat. He says, "Sing." Marc Harper looks at the boy who dropped the only coin in his hat. The only coin he has seen in a week. He starts to cry.

I turn away.

Men do not see the City as I do. I have been here, watching. I may watch, but I cannot touch. I am not allowed to touch the City. I can only watch, gather information and give it to the City's Master. Then, he decides where I may intervene.

I tell him about the general's descendant and the great leader he will make one day. But I am told, "We must maintain the secret." And I am forbidden from acting.

I tell him about the ghost in the well and how it haunts the women there with sorrow and despair. But I am told, "It is of little consequence." And I am forbidden from acting.

I tell him about Jerek, the boy who may become the greatest bard of his generation, and the drunken man who can help him. But I am told, "Men must make their own choices." And I am forbidden from acting.

Every day, my City weeps. Begs for me. I could help. I could do more than just give a boy an apple or throw give a basket of dirty laundry to the washerwomen or drop a coin in the hat of a beggar. I could do more. But I am forbidden.

We are an ancient people. As old as the mountains. We look at men as if they were young siblings, reaching out into the world for the first time. We are their shepherds. But we cannot make our presence known. These are the rules.

Men have so many blessings. Inspiration. Intuition. Honor. Dignity. Hope. They have so many blessings... and just one curse stops them from becoming more.

Men forget.

They forget who they once were. They forget what they can be. They only remember what they are.

I meet with the others in our secret places. We speak to each other in hushed whispers. We fear that men may discover us, and knowing we are different, declare war on our kind. Cast us out. And all our work will be discarded to the wind.

Or, the Enemy may find us. After so many centuries of hiding, our subterfuge broken. But they can only think of themselves. If the Enemy finds us,

they find the Reign. Our disguise broken, the Enemy will subjugate them as they have all the others.

We are a people driven by fear. You can see it in our eyes. When I look in the mirror, I do not see the disguise I wear to fool the men around me. I do not see the plain, human face. I see a frightened, defeated creature. I am hiding.

I hear the City Master speak of our work. He says that our work elevates men beyond what they are into what they can be. He says that mankind is our greatest achievement. But I do not see that. Men were great before we arrived. Before we chose to hide in their masses. And now, the civilization they built is slowly falling apart. Is that because of us? Or is it because all things must end. Because every action has a consequence.

I listened to two philosophers arguing in a tavern last night. Men and women gathered around them. They were drinking and debating. These men... they have such a camaraderie about them. Even when they argue, they are brothers. They laugh and they jest. They concede when the other makes a point. They are enemies... and friends.

One of them said something that gave me pause. They were debating the virtue of magic. "Should a man use a spell when he can use a hoe?" one asked. "Should he use an enchantment when he could simply use charm?" He touched the barmaid's chin and she blushed. Then, he said, "Is magic a tool or a crutch? A deliberate crutch? One that we choose so we do not need to walk up straight?"

I thought for a moment about what he said. I thought of my own people, hiding in the ranks of men. I thought, *We are using men as a crutch.* And as soon as I thought it, I knew it was true.

I was about to think on this more when his opponent said, "Every intentional act is a magical act."

I could feel my heart sink in my chest. I felt my jaw open. He said it again.

“Every intentional act is a magical act.”

Then, he picked up his tankard of wine and said, “When we intend to do a thing, we change the world around us. Some actions have simple consequences, while others have great consequences.” He drank from the tankard, emptying the wine. Then, he turned the tankard over and put it down on the floor. He had trapped a spider, crawling there.

“To you and I, this is a simple consequence. A spider. It means nothing to you or I.” He smiled, and then looked directly at me. *At me.*

“But to the spider?” he asked. “What is the consequence to *him*?”

He lifted his gaze from me and looked back to the tankard.

“If I choose to lift this cup, I set him free. But if I choose not to, he will die here. Alone. Hungry. Possibly frightened.”

He put his hand on the cup. “Such a little choice for me to make. And yet, it is a choice that will change his entire life.”

He smiled at the crowd. “Every intentional act is a magical act,” he said. “And thus, we are all, every one of us... magicians.”

He lifted the cup and the spider was gone.

The crowd gasped. But then, he turned the cup and showed the spider had crawled up inside. Then, they laughed.

I did not laugh. I could barely catch my breath.

I left the tavern that night with different eyes. I looked up at the night sky, looked down

the dark City street. I looked at the couples walking away, holding each other close in the cold night air. I breathed in, tasting the night for what seemed to be the first time.

And I walked through my City. I saw the monuments we had built, hoping to inspire men to action. Communicating in a silent language of symbols. I passed by an opera, recognizing the music. One of us sponsored the composer, bringing such beauty to the stage. I saw the theater where one of the plays I inspired was playing. I heard the laughter and awe of the audience.

All passive. All invisible. No one would ever see our handiwork. A thousand years from now, when we are all gone and men still remain, no one would ever know we were here.

But our actions linger. A single action can ripple over a thousand years. Every deliberate act...

At the washing well, a passing carriage loses its wheel. No one saw the slight gesture I made, weakening the iron in a cog. The wheel kicks away and the passengers step out. A Senator and his wife. She hears the songs of the washerwomen and she drags him to see. And when they get there, Bethany Olssen sees the Senator and his wife. She pauses for a moment. I see the uncertainty on her face. When the washerwomen finish their song, Bethany starts another. A working song. A song she learned from her mother who learned it from her mother. And the Senator listens. And he laughs. And when the song is over, he thinks. Bethany Olssen says, “Come back tomorrow, sir, and we’ll sing again.”

The Senator’s wife makes him promise he will.

Over there, at the tavern they call “Turner’s Place,” a broken man with a broken lute sits on the stoop. It’s almost time for Jacob Turner to kick the man back to the street. I give a boy two coins: one for him and one for the man on the stoop. He runs up, drops the coin in the man’s hat and the man starts to cry.

But then, he sings.

And the whole street stops to hear him.

Men and women come out of their doors and listen. Jacob Turner steps out to listen, transfixed by the sound. And when the song is over, the boy says, "Thank you." And he rushes off with the other coin in his pocket, itching to be spent.

Jacob Turner looks down at the Marc Harper for a long time. Then, he asks, "Are you a bard?"

Marc Harper says, "I was. Once."

Turner nods and says, "Come in here and be one again."

Inside the tavern, the two men talk about past mistakes. They talk about falling and getting back up. And they talk about Jerek.

"I want him to be a bard," he tells Marc Harper.

Marc Harper says, "So do I."

I walk to a place where a statue stands. A boy runs by me. I give him an apple I bought a moment ago. He rushes home and gives it to his mother. She lives for another day. But that isn't enough.

I arrive at his doorstep with a package and a doctor. The package has medicine. The doctor is there to administer it. I take the boy aside and tell him his mother will be fine. The doctor will heal her. But he and I, we have to talk.

I walk him to the statue. I tell him the story of the man. And then, I tell him a secret.

"I knew him," I say.

"Uh-nuh," he tells me.

I smile and nod. "Yes, I did."

"Prove it," he says.

So, I let my disguise drop.

His eyes light up, first with fear,
but then, with something else.

Wonder.

His smile blossoms. And he thanks me. I tell him to rush home to his mother. He does. I watch him leave, smiling myself.

I have broken the rules.

But I watch the boy run. New emotions in his heart and new knowledge in his head.

I remember the well. I remember the tavern.

I have broken the rules. I was the spider under the goblet, but I have been released.

And it was a man who lifted it. To him, the action was nothing. A simple story. But to me, it was everything.

I watch the boy run. And I know my people will punish me for what I have done. But I no longer follow their rules. I have one of my own now that supplants their own.

No more turning away.