

SUZERAIN



PATHFINDER[®]
ROLEPLAYING GAME COMPATIBLE

Disclaimer

Suzerain is a fictional depiction of our universe. Any resemblance between any proper noun we come up with and any real person/place/whatever is purely coincidental. By the same token, the book you are reading is a game based on a fictional depiction of our universe. It's not reality. The GM sets a scene in a fictional realm and the players play characters in it. Repeat after me, "I am not my character. I can't do the things that my character can do because he is a fictional character in a fictional universe." Don't try to fly just because your character can fly. Don't kill anyone just because your character is a master of the Scottish claymore. Roleplaying is meant to be fun, but comes with serious responsibilities.

We would also like to explain that Suzerain is our take on reality with mythological and magical elements. It depicts religions and mythologies with a twist – that is to say, differently than a true believer might see them. We mean no disrespect if you are such a believer but ask you to respect our right to our own interpretation.

Thank You

Thank you, Gary Gygax! You said it best in *Master of the Game*:

"... a quick shift of gaming milieu would enable play to move to another adventure better suited to the player mood. The Old West, a brush with some World War II events, an expedition into New York City, an inadvertent transportation to a Starship, or a similar trip to some setting conceived by an author such as Edgar Rice Burroughs or Jack Vance—anything was possible."

Those words sum up why we love working on Suzerain! May the Dice Gods smile upon you! -- *Loki*

Loki's Dedication: To those I have lost over the past year: Simon Greydon Barrows, Veronica Russell, Joe LeBlanc, and so many more. Thinking of all of you as we explore the realms beyond. And, as always, to my wonderful wife Alexis Stahl for putting up with my constant geekery.

Matt Medeiros' Dedication: I wanted to say a heart-felt "thank-you" to my wife. If it wasn't for her pushing me to pursue game design I wouldn't be here, and I also wanted to thank her for putting up with all the times she had to put up with me sticking my nose into the computer for hours on end to match another deadline. Without her I wouldn't be where I am!



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Let us know where adventuring through the Continuum takes your heroes, we love epic tales! Check us out at hello@savagemojo.com and say hello.

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For Players



Right out of the gate, adventuring in a Suzerain realm is more or less what you'd expect. There are a few differences, but they're more along the lines of refinements than pulling the rug out from under you. Then your characters hit 10th level, or Folk Hero rank as we call it in Suzerain, and the walls around their world begin to become more malleable, buckling under the forces of ascension. Before they know it, your young gods-in-training will begin influencing events beyond their immediate environs. It's at this stage most characters will first encounter other times and campaign worlds.

How big is the difference from Fated to Folk Hero? Fated will survive the alien invasion and help rebuild society. Heroes sail beyond the sunset and take the fight to their foes' inverted pyramids of crystallized ichor, battling through to the heart of the alien planet where the laws of physics are, well, inverted.

Once you make it to Folk Hero, the stakes get raised a notch and you'll find your characters in ever more demanding situations. At the start of Folk Hero, a character might well be the guardian of a nation or the best con man in the star system. That's small fry compared to what's coming: our reactive protector leads his nation through a world-spanning renaissance, while our con man becomes The Con Man, an idea given flesh. It's time to take him out to new places, and new times.

Come ascension to Demigodhood at 15th level, those will be the cakewalk and salad days. Because once you are tightly tied to the universe as a Demigod, you begin to work not through time but also across alternate realities. Each could easily have the length, depth, and impact of one 'normal' plot campaign, and you will do them all, with one character, across who knows how many realms, through time and across reality. Welcome to Suzerain. Please drive carefully.

Most importantly, Suzerain is about having fun with awesome characters in amazing settings and a chance to create high octane stories with your friends. This book lets you do that seamlessly, in a single overarching continuum.

Imagine the ever-changing experiences of characters in *Doctor Who* and *Sliders*, the potential for genres intermixing from *Rifts*, and the enormous epic storytelling promise of the transformative *Torg*. They're all possible, without being mandatory. One system, endless settings... infinite fun!

The Suzerain Continuum

Suzerain isn't a setting, it's all settings. You've heard that one before, right? It starts out with fun and high promise, but by the end you're a necromantic sharkman with six-shooters for hands and acid for blood and no idea what happened to your original character. We're not like that; we've got standards. Your character will begin in one setting – a particular realm in a particular time – and will grow in capabilities, achieve mighty deeds, and become a big fish in a small pond. From there, he will attract the greater attention of the universe – or at least the universe's housekeepers, who will send your hero hurtling through the Maelstrom of time and space to places where only legends dare tread. This rulebook keys you in to our greater cosmology, some of its notable realms, and the domain of the spirits, which connects it all. All you need to start exploring are your *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* rulebooks... and this book.

What's New In Suzerain?

The Suzerain experience is one that values grand, heroic scope. No longer are heroes constrained to being merely legendary. Instead, they are able to access a wider stage where their very words will shake the heavens. In comic book terms, this is cosmic-level stuff. The fantasists would have you believe that it's 'epic', while classicists would prefer the term 'mythic.' Either way, your characters won't be spending a lot of time fighting rats and bugs in the sewers.

This is represented mechanically with a wealth of new options, both for building characters and interacting with their surroundings. Everybody who's anybody has access to minor special powers, which are fueled by natural wellsprings of bioelectric energy – Pulse. This invigorating life-force is the stuff of spirits: the human soul, specters without a physical form, and gods alike. These spirit forms aren't a natural part of any of the Suzerain realms, but they have ready access to them through the Spirit World of the Ethereal Plane.

In Suzerain, the Ethereal Plane familiar to players of the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* is recast as the Spirit World, a moonlit reflection of the solid world, where every action is suffused with pale light and symbolic gravity. The terrain surrounding these spirits of pure emotion often warps and pools to reflect their inner states. Those rare sages and street-corner madmen who tell stories of such places of pure energy often tease their audiences further with the promise of a layer of reality even deeper than the Ethereal – one where even Pulse breaks down and is reformed into the transcendental residences of the gods. We'll get into all of that before we're done.

Suzerain uses the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* core rules, but adds a few twists; it's best if you are already familiar with those rules before reading this section, starting with....

Terminology

Hero Points. Suzerain uses the Hero Points variant rule from the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*, but with a minor additional twist.

Pulse. See 'Power Points'. Every Suzerain realm knows something about Pulse, but very few know the entire story. What is generally agreed upon is this: everybody possesses Pulse, and it's somehow vital to their living processes. All abilities that are powered by Pulse draw from the same pool.

Realms. Some people call these 'settings' or 'campaign worlds': you have your pirate world, your leprechaun world, your Gothic horror special. In Suzerain, we refer to these as realms in order to avoid confusion. Consider for a moment a sci-fi story where you might visit one hundred planets (or worlds). That is fine for roleplaying games where travel from one setting to another means a new campaign, but that isn't the way Suzerain rolls. Suzerain is the setting (we call it the Suzerain Continuum), and it's a setting with as many places and game genres as you wish to explore. We are always looking for new realm developers, and the Suzerain Continuum has the potential to contain almost anything, so if you think you are up to it – drop us a line!

Telesma. A special gemstone, usually integrated into an object of some kind. Most often jewelry, but sometimes found in other objects too. Your character has one. You'll find out more about that shortly.

Advancement and Suzerain Ranks

Character advancement works as described in the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*, but is further divided into six ranks as shown in the table below. When your hero advances to a new rank, he gains additional benefits (note that these benefits stack with those normally granted by character level advancement as described in the core rules):

We suggest you retire your characters at 20th level to become the founding gods of a whole new pantheon, perhaps even to be venerated by (or become patrons for) your group's next characters. It gives a nice sense of legacy, carrying on your old man's mantle and all that.

The Touch Of Greatness

There's something that links your character to greatness. This could be a profound inner

Lvl	Rank	Benefits
1	Neophyte	Telesma
2-3	God-touched	Bonus feat, +1 permanent bonus to any ability score, 3 Hero Points
4-5	Fated	Bonus feat, +1 permanent bonus to any ability score
6-7	Folk Hero	Bonus feat, +1 permanent bonus to any ability score, 4 Hero Points, +1 to saves, double natural healing rate
8-9	Living Legend	Bonus feat, +1 permanent bonus to an ability score
10+	Demigod	Pulse Pool, 2 bonus Pulse feats, +2 permanent bonus to any ability score, Nexus Flexing, 5 Hero Points, +2 to saves, triple natural healing rate

transformation, a chapter in the tome of blood and glory, or the power to revolutionize the world through the boundless imagination of the mind. What it's not is destiny – destiny's for saps without options. Instead, your character has access to an otherworldly conduit that grants access to Herculean opportunities... or titanic ruin.

This ‘touch of greatness’, as it’s referred to by self-aware mooks and flunkies, is what insures your story won’t slip on a banana skin or rot away in a dead-end plot line. The Suzerain Continuum has detected some spark in your character, and it hasn’t gone unnoticed by the gods in their immortal realms. One way or another, your character has wound up with a physical symbol of this connection – a Telesma. When several Telesmae come together with an adventuring group of heroes, they form a pocket realm within the fabric of the Maelstrom, that ethereal place beyond the Veil where divine entities live. Both these concepts are explained in more detail in the ‘Saving The Universe’ section on page 23.

A lot of heroes will no doubt feel crowded by the ready presence of gods in Suzerain. Nobody likes knowing that there’s someone bigger around, especially the BMoC (Big Men of the Campaign, natch). To be perfectly frank, the gods don’t care enough about the heroes that this should be a concern. Don’t get us wrong – the gods love the characters and hope they’ll be able to help in all sorts of tight scrapes in the mortal realms, but there are dozens and dozens of heroes out there at any given time. The characters aren’t unique and precious snowflakes. Sorry about that.

Not that you can’t change that paradigm. There are always stories about the divine prince (or demon prince) falling in love with an earthborn maiden, and if that’s your shtick go for it. As a whole, though, gods are pretty busy. The tides don’t ebb and flow by themselves, and pushing the sun across the sky all day is tiring work. Messing with the moment-to-moment antics of a stable of strong-minded heroes on top of that? Not likely. The gods hire the characters to deal with problems while they run the universe, not to micro-manage them.

So how does it all work, working for the gods? It’s really like being free agents, guns for hire with a sense of ethics, realm-based problem specialists. Your character can put whatever he wants on his business card. There are all sorts of actions required to keep the universe from tearing itself apart, and a gazillion problems that need fixing lest the Grand Machine busts a piston. For that stuff the gods pass the buck to their intermediaries: demigods or devoutly faithful spirits. From there, it’s just a matter of time until the characters get a knock on their clubhouse door.

All The Detail, All The Time

The Suzerain Continuum is a big place. Lots happening. Very exciting. We’re aware there’s a limit of what your brain can store before the space worms suck it dry, so we’ve created a safe haven for all the best info (and plenty of neat little details): <http://savagemojo.com/suzewiki/index.cfm> . You’ll find extra features on all our realms, and much more besides.

Head over and, in particular, you might want to type “Suzerain Continuum” into the search box. Just a suggestion for a good place to start browsing the universe.

This isn’t to say that the gods are entirely lazy and detached. There are solid political reasons for not fraternizing too closely with their sponsored heroes. For one, it gives the heroes a protective level of neutrality. No one is eager to repeat the massive Hero Wars that spanned the universe in eons past, except for the occasional mad, one-eyed soul eater. And you really don’t want to go back to that.

More importantly, it allows your heroes to go anywhere. If they’re all wearing large, glowing crests of the Firelord on their tabards, chances aren’t so great that the Icelord will let them into his lands. As a result, only the most devout or ground-shaking characters have any direct contact with their particular god. Everyone else can work for whichever mix of deities show an interest in the current crisis.

What sorts of things do the gods need doing? Well, you’ll get the idea from the campaign in this book, but it tends to break down into the three stages of character development. Until your character hits Folk Hero rank you can expect him to be building his skills and proving his mettle to the universe. He’ll be dealing with bigger and bigger adventures, but in his home realm, the world he grew up in. At Folk Hero he gets access to all of existence, every time and place. He’ll be expected to fix the sorts of problems that could threaten entire worlds. Then he hits Demigod at 10th level, and the universe itself is at risk. Well, it was probably at risk many times before, but this time it’s your character’s turn to stop the End Times from crashing the party. Hop around reality, and change it as needed to stop the big bad from happening.

Pulse

Pulse, also called the Pulse of All Things, is everywhere and in everyone. Suzerain introduces a new type of feat, called a Pulse feat, that uses this life force to function. Only demigods have access to a Pulse pool - they are the sole beings in possession of sufficient life force to spare for performing such amazing feats. Note that even if Pulse feats don't have an associated Pulse cost, they still require you to have at least 1 point of Pulse remaining. Your Pulse Pool is equal to 1/4 your character level + your highest ability score modifier. A character's Pulse Pool is restored to its maximum after a full night's rest, although certain uses of Pulse or other in-game effects can permanently reduce a character's Pulse Pool.

Followers And Companions

What's a Gilgamesh without an Enkidu, Robin Hood sans Merry Men, or Batman without Ace, the Bat-Hound? Lessened, that's what. A good hero has allies, companions, sidekicks, or some form of a pit crew that ends up making him look better. That's not to say the support staff are total slouches!

The different kinds of "sidekicks" your character can have all interact slightly differently, both in logic to travel through the Maelstrom and in mechanics.

The following are modified in Suzerain:

Animal Companions: Animal companions are protected by the Telesmae as well as the different nature gods of the different pantheons. We highly recommend that your GM allow animal companions to gain either the "Advanced" template or the "Giant" template as an additional advancement at 10th level.

Cohorts and Followers: Cohorts follow their leader through the Maelstrom, but followers don't. Instead, in every realm, new followers flock to the hero. Whether they're a known entity or not, the inhabitants recognize the influence and power of the individual and decide to aid him. This allows the character to gain a new group of followers that are useful to the current realm - thus a more primitive leader might find that in an advanced realm a techie wants to follow him around and help him with all the advanced technology (driving the party around, leading them through the terrain, answering questions and the like).

Familiars: Familiars are relatively untouched, since they are part of a hero's soul. It's advised, however, that the Improved Cohort feat might be given to wizards and the like as a bonus feat when they advance to 10th level, since the typical increase in danger at that point means that the familiar becomes more of a risk than an asset.



The Ethereal Plane

In Suzerain, the Ethereal Plane is often referred to as the Spirit World. There are no changes to the Ethereal's planar traits. There are a number of cosmetic, and a few small mechanical, differences detailed here.

Heroes And Demigods

As characters rise through the ranks, they become increasingly in tune with the rest of the universe. This isn't just hippie-talk – they physically change as their bodies begin utilizing Pulse more efficiently. Standing against these champions becomes tantamount to telling the universe it's wrong and you are right. It's like willfully disobeying the laws of thermodynamics (in a realm where they apply, naturally). That kind of burden isn't something the Continuum would thrust upon the unprepared – even the smallest licks of phenomenal cosmic power have been known to drive mortals over the edge. With the kinds of challenges that shake the fast-track to godhood, both internal and flesh-eating, the following bonuses are the least that the will of the universe could provide.

Hero Points

The Suzerain Continuum loves heroes – or at least those who have proven themselves. Characters receive 3 Hero Points once they've proven themselves - at "God-touched" rank. This increases to 4 once the character reaches Folk Hero rank and goes up again to 5 at Demigod rank. (For the full details of the Hero Point system, see the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*.)

Recovery

Time and injury just don't mean what they used to when the gods are footing your karmic expense report. Folk Hero-rank characters naturally heal double the amount of a standard character, healing 2 hp per character level after a full night's rest. Demigods heal at triple the natural rate (3 hp per level a night).

Life And Death

Player characters can escape death with alarming ease, and there's nothing wrong with that. The universe loves a good story, especially the slam-bang kind where heroes aren't piling up left and right from boring-yet-efficient sniper fire. Ever since the Underworld replaced its three-headed dog with an honor system, death has just had a hard time sticking to the bold.

God-touched and Fated rank characters in Suzerain only require the expenditure of 1 Hero Point to escape death's clammy grasp. Instead of kicking the bucket, the character is spared by his Telesma sending out a mighty distress signal to the gods, and they orchestrate a suitable coincidence or act of 'dumb luck'. The gods work in ways that can be as humble as a runaway kangaroo or as surprising as a last-minute religious conversion.

In practical terms, the player should look forward to controlling cohorts, summoned creatures, and followers, getting drinks, and ensuring other players never want for snacks for the rest of the session, but his character will return at the start of the next session – no longer near death, but bearing whatever

The Emotional Bond

Let's talk about the 'emotional bond of ownership'. We all get attached to certain items, and develop a sense of ownership to things after we've had them for a while. When a character shifts between worlds, all the items that are bonded refocus too, for as long as he's holding them. If a shaman shifts to the Spirit World, his clothes will most likely shift with him. Similarly with his favorite walking cane (if he's carrying it). It normally takes about half a week for a person to form a bond with an item after becoming its owner, as long as he's using it and doesn't just stick it on a shelf. On the other side of the coin, extreme emotional attachment can happen much quicker. Pick up a sword off a battlefield and immediately use it to save your life a couple of times during the furious fighting, then you'll get that bond pretty much instantly!

wounded dignity he had at the time of 'death'. The gods don't suffer foolish deaths gladly, however; the character starts his second (or third, or fourth) lease on life with no Hero Points for that session. If he dies in that session... well, that's just careless. He had it comin'. With no Hero Points, it's time to roll the credits and think up another character idea.

At Folk Hero and Living Legend rank, a character begins the post-'death' session with 1 Hero Point. Demigod rank characters come back to life packing 2 Hero Points. These numbers aren't modified by Feats, nor by being Folk Hero or Demigod, nor anything else for that matter. Them's the breaks, but it sure beats the alternative.

Now some of you might ask, "What happens when my character flies the nukes into the sun to sacrifice himself for the greater good?" Simply enough... he's dead. Honestly, there's no coming back from that. The Telesma is fried and never gets to send out the distress call. Also, if a character volunteers to make a great sacrifice, his Telesma will pick up on that vibe and let him die a hero's death with full honors.

There are going to be some situations where it's genuinely not right for the story that the character survives, and this rule isn't there to stop that. Instead, consider the following option in those cases: the Telesma scoops up the life essence of the character at his instant of death, then somehow finds its way into the hands of another potential hero, about as skilled as the deceased character (same rank), and

Realm Hopping

Characters have a number of ways to travel between realms. Being given a Telesma by the powers-that-be is one, and it's the one that Savage Mojo's own settings focus on. That's far from the only way, though. Characters can also get drawn through by randomly blundering into a portal, a 'wormhole' between realms. They can find they'd been living inside a virtual reality simulator inside another realm. They can even be caught at the moment of death and find their souls entering new bodies as 'reincarnates' (which is how Suzerain 1st edition worked).

binds itself to him instead – create a new character, but he has the sum of the life experiences of the old character imprinted on his memories. He thinks it's a past life thing, but it's actually the pretty jewel he just found.

Which option you use when a character would otherwise die, that's up to you and your GM. Each situation is different and different results are appropriate for a gritty horror realm than a heroic fantasy realm. Bottom line, though... in Suzerain, death is not the end, even if you have to go questing to some shadowy afterlife realm to bring your character's soul back.

Flexing A Nexus

As your characters reach Demigod rank, they're going to find themselves in some pretty uncommon situations. Time and space will become far less familiar than they are now, and chances are good that you'll end up exploring your world's future or its past. There's a big, complex reason for why time travel doesn't tend to wreak havoc on all events that occur after the insertion point, but we leave that for the scholars (and the GM) to handle. All you need to know for now is that it's all right if you litter in the Italian Renaissance or give Hitler some art lessons – usually. Important historic anchors, known as *nexus points*, are resistant to change.

Demigod rank characters are able to temporarily subvert nexus points as part of their standard skill set. They accomplish this by bending reality until a major nexus on the timeline pops and moves across to an alternate reality. After a while, reality responds to this change and snaps back into place. Although these changes are small in the grand scheme of things, they're still a gleaming shot of divine power that most characters are unaccustomed to. To flex reality, a character pays 1 Hero Point and 1 Pulse (or 2 of each for a major flex).

Minor Flex (1 Point): Flexes of this intensity are able to introduce moderate physical changes into reality. We're talking about things like discovering an overlooked, fully operational hovertank in a post-apocalyptic setting. Or picking the key to an opponent's home out of a nearby flowerpot. It's also enough to drive a bitter wedge of hate between two lovers, ensuring that a particular NPC was never

born. The effect only ever lasts for about five minutes, and the effects need to be able to take shape in a 150-foot radius area, centered on the meddling demigod. For example, in the case of the disappearing NPC, he'll need to be within 150 feet of the character to be flexed out of existence (for those five minutes).

How's about another example of how this might work in a game? The characters are in France, 1944. It's shortly after D-Day and they need to hold a bridge in a small, half-destroyed town against a relentless assault by the enemy. Somebody plays an Edith Piaf record and then all hell lets loose. After furious street fighting, the characters have been driven to the far side of the bridge. Five minutes from now the cavalry will turn up, but for now it's a desperate situation. But what if the bridge was destroyed when the town was bombed a few days before. Suddenly, there's no bridge for the enemy to cross... though the characters know it'll be back in five minutes – just as the cavalry turns up. If there were any troops on the bridge when reality was flexed, the GM gets to pick what happens to them – do they appear on the river bank with their fellow soldiers, or suddenly find themselves trying to swim across instead (blissfully unaware there was ever a bridge)?

Major Flex (2 Points): At this level, demigods can get into the good stuff. Any historical point that you know about becomes a virtual “what if...” point, transforming every event that radiated out from it. For example, our guys in 1944 France could change history so that Hitler was assassinated early on and the war was already over. Reality would warp outward, changing every necessary detail so that the portion of the realm around the character (again, about 150 feet) was reshaped to fit the divine vision. For five minutes, the bit of town around the characters is a bubble filled with a different reality, one of little pastry shops, happy schoolchildren playing by the river, and people talking about getting back to normal after that short but terrible war with Germany.

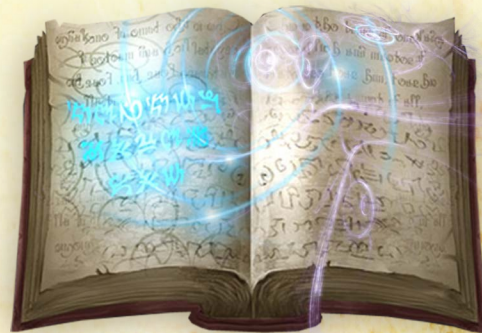
These changes are far-reaching, but limited to the 150-foot radius bubble around the characters. Those people outside the 150-foot radius of effect aren't aware of the difference around the demigod – they're part of one reality, but if they get closer than 150 feet, they become a part of another reality in that instant, unaware of anything else.

In both cases, if you can't describe the changes within one reasonable sentence, the timeline proves too rubbery to mold. Generally, you tell the GM what you want to achieve (“I want to remove the NPC with the rifle from this scene”) and he makes it happen as appropriate (“It turns out he fell and broke his leg this morning, so he never showed up for work” or “Years ago, his parents had an argument about the color of the wallpaper in their home, and the guy was never born” or whatever).

In addition, any creature with a Pulse Pool is allowed to spend 1 Pulse to make a Will save (DC 30) to resist being flexed out of existence. If they succeed, you still expend the Hero Points and Pulse as normal.

There is such a thing as a **Godlike Flex (3 Points)**. Nexus flexes of this level are available only to true gods. They can remake entire realms, not just the area around them... but such power always comes with a price. Somewhere in time and space, someone is paying for what is done. Furthermore, these changes set quickly and can inadvertently become permanent. The resultant tremors along the timeline are something everyone wishes to avoid. No god wants to be responsible for bringing about the End Times.

While changes last up to five minutes, they can be extended using additional Hero Points, with the GM's approval. There's something else you should bear in mind about flexing a nexus, before you go crazy and change the world multiple times per session: your character doesn't get the Hero Points he spent on flexes back at the start of the next game session. Rather like the death penalty in Suzerain, these are major ways to mess with reality, and there's a longer term cost for that power. If you spent 2 Hero Points on flexing during a session, the next session your character will start with 2 less Hero Points.



Character Creation

If you're looking to create a Suzerain character from scratch, this is the right place to be. Before getting to Race, Class, Skills, Feats, etc, think about what role you want your character to have in the story. Will the character be a reluctant hero, dodging every speck of divine interference? A highly trained professional with abandonment issues? A muscled lunkhead with a heart of gold? Go over the possibilities with your GM and the rest of the group so that everybody has a unique, valued voice once play begins. This isn't as simple as making sure that every group of heroes has a tank, an infiltrator, a buffer, and a healer. What's more important is that the characters have points of interest where they will be able to interact with one another and the GM's stories without falling prey to boredom.

Race: Virtually any race is available for play in Suzerain, but there is a new category of feats called a Planar feat that represents your character possibly being a different realm's version of a race which you may want to look at before finalizing this step.

Ability Scores: If rolling for abilities, the roll-4d6-and-drop-lowest method should work fine. If



the GM wants especially heroic characters, they can opt for the following method instead: 6+2d6 per ability score. If point buy is being used, it's suggested that the GM allows a 25-point buy system for "Epic Fantasy."

Feats: While all standard feats are available, two new feat types exist: Pulse feats, which are typically only available to characters of 10th level or higher, and Planar feats, some of which can only be taken at 1st level.

Gear: While starting wealth is determined normally, all equipment isn't necessarily all available. The GM should consider what gear the character would have access to based on their starting realm and make a shopping list to indicate such.

Starting At The Top

If you don't want to start at the bottom and ease slowly into the realm-jumping hijinks, you have a couple of options. All of them depend on the entire group deciding to operate at higher power levels, otherwise you'd just be hogging the spotlight. This works fine for television shows about specific individuals, but not so well with a circle of friends who all want equal input.

The first option is to create a character as outlined previously, and manually advance the character to the Folk Hero (6th character level) or Demigod (10th character level) rank.

The other option is for those of you who are no doubt asking, "Why can't I just do the setting jumping/alternative realm thing from day one, as a starting Neophyte character?" Well, if you want to, of course you can. This is your game now. Write your name on the inside cover if you don't believe us. Plenty of quality stories can (and have) been told about a small band of outmatched protagonists, jumping from dangerous setting to dangerous setting because they had run out of options at home.

Just keep in mind the same caveat as before: the GM and other players should agree that it's an interesting idea. If everyone is prepared to take on some seriously tough challenges with only the abilities available to Neophyte-rank characters, have at it. The official, Suzerain-approved way to run that kind of game is in the GMs section.

New Feats

Pulse Feats

Suzerain introduces a new type of feat, the Pulse feat. All of these feats require a Pulse Pool to function just like a monk's *ki* pool. If a cost is not denoted in the description then it functions so long as the character has at least 1 Pulse remaining. Note that that means a minimum character level of 10 is required to take any of these feats, as a character gains access to their Pulse Pool at 10th level.

Bearer Of Ill Omen (Pulse)

You were born under a bad sign, but didn't let it faze you. Instead of suffering fate's slings and arrows like a commonplace whipping boy, you fought back and learned some tricks about bad luck. All it takes is a slight nudge to redirect the luck toward a more deserving target.

Prerequisites: Wis 13.

Benefits: When an opponent confirms a critical hit against you, you may expend 2 Pulse as a free action to negate the critical hit, and damage is instead rolled normally.

Bearer Of Ill Omen, Improved (Pulse)

You have flirted with bad luck and gone on to seal the deal, as it were. Coils of dodged fates flicker at the feet of your spiritual form, ready to be cast at less adept opponents.

Prerequisites: Wis 15, Bearer Of Ill Omen.

Benefits: When an opponent confirms a critical hit against you, you may expend 2 Pulse as a free action to force your opponent to re-roll the original attack and take the new result.

Carpe Diem! (Pulse)

You have seen enough of the battlefield that its swirling chaos is no longer a cause for alarm, but a source of new opportunities and split-second stratagems.

Prerequisites: Leadership, character level 10th.

Benefits: Immediately after initiative is rolled but before any creature has taken an action, your character may expend 1 Pulse to rearrange their

order. Take the initiative rolls from all willing allied characters, including yourself, and redistribute them as you see fit.

Cat's Descent (Pulse)

Through guided training or extended experience with pit traps, you have learned to fall with preternatural grace.

Prerequisites: Acrobatics 5 ranks.

Benefits: You may land on your feet after a fall of any distance so long as you succeed at an Acrobatics check (DC 10 + 1 per 5 feet).

Furthermore, you may expend Pulse to reduce damage from a fall. For every point of Pulse spent, you reduce the damage by 1d6.

Cat's Descent, Improved (Pulse)

People have expressed genuine concern that your ancestry might possibly involve cats.

Prerequisites: Acrobatics 10 ranks, Cat's Descent.

Benefits: You automatically land on your feet after every fall. Furthermore, you may expend 1 Pulse to ignore all damage from the fall.

Chosen

Faith carries power. The gods have rewarded yours with a small spark of their divine gifts.

Prerequisites: Must worship a deity, must maintain an alignment identical to the deity worshiped.

Benefits: Choose two of the following spells; you may now use them as spell-like abilities three times per day: *guidance*, *resistance*, *stabilize*, or *virtue*. Choose one of the following spells; you may now use it as a spell-like ability once per day: *bane*, *divine favor*, or *shield of faith*. Your caster level is equal to your character level when using these spell-like abilities.

Cool As Ice (Pulse)

You have become a battlefield calculator, confident under pressure that would send lesser minds crawling for the nearest foxhole.

Prerequisites: Wis 15 or base attack bonus +5.



Benefits: When you are subject to a fear effect, you may expend 1 Pulse as an immediate action to ignore all fear conditions for a number of rounds equal to your character level.

Cool As Ice, Improved (Pulse)

When emotions flare, you stay cool, collected, and focused on victory. If you don't already have a godly portfolio in mind, you should consider looking at battle, tactics, or glaciers. Lesser blows are like sparks on a smith's apron to you, or gnats against a tank.

Prerequisites: Wis 16, Cool As Ice.

Benefits: As long as you have at least 1 Pulse, you are immune to fear effects.

Earned Power (Pulse)

Thanks to your unyielding discipline, your magic has an increased chance to overcome elemental resistances.

Prerequisites: Self-Taught, ability to prepare or spontaneously cast arcane spells.

Benefits: Your 3/day spell-like abilities gained from the Self-Taught feat become usable at-will, and your 1/day spell-like ability gained from Self-Taught becomes usable 3/day. In addition, you may spend 1 Pulse as an immediate action when an enemy is damaged by one of your spells to reduce that enemy's energy resistances by 5 each prior to resolving the damage dealt by the spell.

Eldritch Geometry (Pulse)

Your knowledge of symbology expands, allowing you to extend the duration of some spells as well as protect yourself from attackers with your magic.

Prerequisites: Symbolist, ability to prepare or spontaneously cast arcane or divine spells.

Benefits: Whenever you use the Symbolist feat to cast a spell with a range of personal, the spell's duration increases to 24 hours if it would normally persist for less time than that. Alternatively, you may spend 1 Pulse to inscribe a symbol on yourself which contains an embedded spell, using up one of your prepared spells or daily spell slots as if you had cast it normally. This spell can be activated as an immediate

action after an enemy has attacked you to cast the spell with the attacker as the target. If the target is an invalid one, the spell fizzles. If it's an area-effect spell, the spell is centered on the attacker. You can only have one such spell inscribed on your body at once.

Exemplar (Pulse)

Heroes known across multiple realms for their feats of strength don't have bad days where their efforts are stymied by a stubborn door. By the same token, heroes of the mind are able to reason their way through any problem beneath a specific threshold. When so much is at stake, bad days are a luxury heroes can't afford.

Prerequisites: Chosen ability score 20 (see Benefits text).

Benefits: Choose one ability score. On a failed check or roll modified by the chosen ability score, you may spend 1 Pulse to apply a +2 bonus to the check, and may continue to do so until the check is a success or you run out of Pulse. This can be applied to any and all instances involving the ability score (attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and any other instances not listed.)

Special: This feat may be taken more than once. Each time it's taken, it applies to a different ability score.

Exemplar, Improved (Pulse)

When was the last time that Hercules couldn't lift something? Exactly.

Prerequisites: Chosen ability score 24 (see Benefits text), Exemplar.

Benefits: On a failed check or roll modified by the chosen ability score, you may spend 1 Pulse to apply a +2 bonus to the check, and may continue to do so until the check is a success or you run out of Pulse. Additionally, when you roll a natural 1, you may spend 3 Pulse to ignore the automatic failure, calculating the result normally with a roll of 1. This can be applied to any and all instances involving the ability score (attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and any other instances not listed.)

Special: This feat may be taken more than once. Each time it's taken, it applies to a different ability score.

Extreme Luck (Pulse)

The best thing about being you... is everything. Events tend to work in your favor, even when you don't deserve it.

Prerequisites: Cha 15, Luck domain.

Benefits: Once per game session, you may re-roll a failed die roll of any type. By expending 1 Pulse, you can allow one ally within line of sight to re-roll any failed die roll. By expending 2 Pulse, you may instead force an opponent within line of sight to re-roll a successful die roll of any type. You or the target must use the result of the new roll.

Far-Reaching Faith (Pulse)

Your prayers bring solace to more of the faithful, and despair to more enemies of your faith.

Prerequisites: Chosen, Prayer.

Benefits: You can increase the number of possible targets for your spells by 1/4 the standard amount. If the spell normally only targets one creature, it can instead affect one additional creature within 10 feet of the initial target.

Favorite Of Fate (Pulse)

Fortune may favor the bold, but fate favors the compulsive gambler. To make your eventual downfall all the sweeter, fate has decided to give you a slight boost. With all this luck, you're bound to get cocky someday.

Prerequisites: Cha 15, Extreme Luck, base attack bonus +5.

Benefits: You may expend 1 Pulse to add a +5 bonus to the result of a single d20 roll.

Fearsome Presence (Pulse)

Parades halt and guards shake when you get angry.

Prerequisites: Cha 14, Intimidate 3 ranks.

Benefits: When you make an Intimidation check, you may spend 1 Pulse to demoralize all creatures within 30 feet who can see you. The range of the demoralization effect increases by an additional 5 feet for every 5 that your check exceeds DC 20.

Fearsome Presence, Improved (Pulse)

Crowds part and trained soldiers falter when your character gets mad. There's something about him that's just... unsettling.

Prerequisites: Cha 14, Intimidate 8 ranks, Fearsome Presence.

Benefits: You can intimidate more than one target at a time. When making an Intimidation check, you may affect a number of targets equal to 1/2 your level + your Charisma modifier.

The range of Fearsome Presence increases to 45 feet, and an additional 10 feet for every 5 that your check exceeds DC 20.

Feel My Pain (Pulse)

You can make your wounds look worse than they are, sickening and repelling your opponents.

Prerequisites: Con 14, Bluff 10 ranks.

Benefits: As a free action on your turn, you can expend 1 Pulse to cause all opponents in a 10-foot radius to become sickened (Will save negates, DC 10 + your Constitution modifier + 1/2 your level). This effect lasts for a number of rounds equal to your Constitution modifier.

Feel My Pain, Improved (Pulse)

Even if you look like bloody hamburger, you're not the only one suffering. Your wounds are so distressing that even the grimmest torture artists aren't sure how you can carry on.

Prerequisites: Con 16, Bluff 15 ranks, Feel My Pain.

Benefits: As per Feel My Pain, but the radius increases to 20 feet. Furthermore, when triggering the effect, you may choose to expend 3 Pulse instead of 1 Pulse to cause opponents to become nauseated (Will save negates, DC 10 + your Con modifier + 1/2 your level) for 1 round.

Flight of the Ascendant (Pulse)

After a certain level of accomplishment, walking becomes far too prosaic for a certain breed of heroes. They recognize that they're larger than life, and as such must take large steps.

Prerequisites: Acrobatics 10 ranks, Run.

Benefits: You always count as having a running start for your jumps. All DCs for jumping are reduced by 5, and all falls are counted as 10 feet less for the purpose of determining falling damage. You may expend 2 Pulse to jump as a swift action, but can travel no further than you could with a move action.

Flight of the Ascendant, Improved (Pulse)

Whether through sterling muscle control, daily exercise, or a strident disdain for gravity, you can travel in great bounds that approach flight. Doing so is incredibly showy, and a great way to demonstrate one's superiority over lesser foes.

Prerequisites: Acrobatics 15 ranks, Flight of the Ascendant, Run.

Benefits: All DCs for jumping are reduced by 10, and all falls are counted as 20 feet less for the purpose of determining falling damage. You may expend 1 Pulse during a 5-foot step to instead make a jump check and travel up to the maximum distance allowed by the skill check.

Indomitable (Pulse)

The spirit's willing, but the flesh is weak? Not anymore! You can use your faith or unflinching willpower as a battery to power any action.

Prerequisites: Con 14, Die Hard, Endurance, base attack bonus +6.

Benefits: You may voluntarily become fatigued to re-roll any one roll. You may choose which result to use.

Iron Inside (Pulse)

You are accustomed to attempts to break your mind or spirit, and have learned special defenses to resist them. Perhaps you chant sutras, retreat into an alternate personality, or are simply too conceited to be affected.

Prerequisites: Cha 14, Iron Will.

Benefits: You gain a +2 competence bonus on saving throws to resist any non-physical source that would cause you to become fatigued.

Cha-ching!

Different times and different places use different ways of paying for things. From clam shells to precious metals to little bits of plastic, mankind has come a long way... and eCash is just around the corner. As for the future, who knows what a far-flung space colony will use? To keep things simple and not get bogged down in tracking the spare change of a dozen realms, Suzerain works in standard gold pieces (gp) as per the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Core Rulebook*. A realm might use a different name for its currency - crowns instead of dollars in Relic, for instance - but we always keep the exchange rate 1:1. That keeps a little flavor, but it's really simple to remember. 30 Crowns... that's 30 gp to you. If you want more historical accuracy and detail, go for it. But we're happy to have some quick-paced fun rather than doing the precise accounting. Now, back to stealing that million clams we need to bankroll our audacious plan for world domination!

Living Banner (Pulse)

The mere presence of some charismatic figures is enough to change the tide of an entire battle. Your exploits have become legends on several worlds, and victory is assured to those who follow your lead without faltering.

Prerequisites: Cha 18, Diplomacy 15 ranks, Leadership, Master Leader.

Benefits: You grant a +2 morale bonus to all ability checks, skill checks, and attack rolls of any cohorts or followers attracted via the Leadership feat so long as you are within their line of sight. You may expend 2 Pulse as a swift action to share the effects of any teamwork feats you possess with your followers for 1 round.

Master Leader (Pulse)

Master leaders know that they're only as good as the most vulnerable of their troops. In order to survive contact with the enemy, they must look out for even the lowliest of their charges.

Prerequisites: Diplomacy 10 ranks, Leadership.

Benefits: You may expend 2 Pulse to give all of your cohorts or followers attracted via the Leadership feat who are within your line of sight a +2 morale bonus to all saving throws for 1 round.

Opportunistic Push (Pulse)

Just being good enough doesn't always cut it. Sometimes it takes giving 110%, pulling out all the stops, or going completely overboard.

Prerequisites: Wis 14.

Benefits: You may expend 1 Pulse to gain a +2 morale bonus to any die roll. This feat can be used after the roll is made but before the result is revealed.

Overwhelming Force (Pulse)

Your studies have driven your magical power to its peak, allowing you to rip apart enemy defenses with your arcane might.

Prerequisites: Earned Power, Self-Taught, ability to prepare or spontaneously cast arcane spells..

Benefits: When your spells are subject to spell resistance, or when their damage is reduced by energy resistance, you may spend 2 Pulse to negate the defense. This must be declared before any rolls are made.



Prayer (Pulse)

The gods will lend you their ear on occasion. But beware, for even the most benevolent deity tires of failure.

Prerequisites: Chosen.

Benefits: Your 3/day spell-like abilities gained from the Chosen feat become usable at-will, and your 1/day spell-like ability gained from Chosen becomes usable 3/day. You also gain a second spell usable three times per day from the "once per day" list of the Chosen feat. In addition, you may spend 1 Pulse as an immediate action in order to cast one of the following spells spontaneously: *aura sight*^{ACG}, *cure critical wounds*, *inflict critical wounds*, *prayer*, *weapon of awe*^{APG}.

Each time you spend Pulse to activate this feat in this way during a given day, there is a cumulative 10% chance that the prayer goes unanswered the next time you call upon your deity's power. After two such unanswered prayers in a single day, you are subject to the effects of a *bestow curse* spell (with a caster level equal to your character level and no save), and you may not use this ability again until 24 hours have passed and the curse has been broken or dispelled.

Pulse Armor (Pulse)

Sometimes Pulse has subtle effects that could be mistaken for luck. Other times, it turns knives aside and deflects bullets. This is one of those other times.

Benefits: As an immediate action, you may expend 1 Pulse to gain DR 2/—. This DR affects all attacks until the beginning of your next turn. If used in reaction to an attack roll, the Pulse may be spent after the attack is confirmed, but must still be spent before damage is rolled.

Pulse Armor, Improved (Pulse)

Sometimes Pulse turns aside knives and deflects bullets. Other times, the hero has a castle dropped on them and walks away unscathed.

Prerequisites: Pulse Armor.

Benefits: As Pulse Armor, but each Pulse spent grants a cumulative DR 5/— against all attacks and lasts until the end of your next turn.



Pure Strain

Your character's mind and body are perfect, absolutely flawless—and he probably does everything possible to keep it scar-free because he's so proud of it.

Prerequisites: Racial-preferred ability score 16 (see Benefits text), non-half breed race, non-Human.

Benefits: Your character eliminates one negative penalty for your race and increases the race's bonus to their primary physical ability score by 2. For instance, increase a dwarf's Constitution bonus and eliminate their Charisma penalty, increase an elf's Dexterity bonus and eliminate their Constitution penalty, increase a halfling's Dexterity bonus and eliminate their Strength penalty, etc. For other races, please see the appropriate source book, as well as consult with your Game Master.

Special: This feat only requires access to a Pulse Pool to take it. You don't lose its benefits if you spend all your Pulse.

Raptor's Eye (Combat, Pulse)

You deal death from a distance.

Prerequisites: Dex 16, Improved Critical, base attack bonus +10.

Benefits: You may spend 1 Pulse to ignore an enemy's cover or concealment to your attacks for 1 round.

Resonance (Pulse)

Your character's Pulse is such a roiling tempest of activity that it's just bubbling to get out. Your ethereal representation looks like a chained thundercloud. When the fury is unleashed, every ready source of Pulse nearby sings in harmony. The effect is quite forceful.

Prerequisites: Cha 16.

Benefits: As a standard action costing 1 Pulse, your character may create an effect equivalent to a *gust of wind* spell radiating from him in all directions out to a 60-foot radius.

Resonance, Improved (Pulse)

In the Spirit World, your character is now constantly sparking with untapped Pulse. In moments of strong emotion, the energy flares and dances visibly around him. This resonance is no longer a song, but a penetrating howl.

Prerequisites: Cha 18, Resonance.

Benefits: As Resonance, except that the *gust of wind* effect persists for 1 round per 4 character levels or hit dice you possess.

Ritualist (Pulse)

Things not of this world shrink beneath your power.

Prerequisites: Speaker, Seer.

Benefits: By expending 2 Pulse as a standard action, you may stagger an outsider or incorporeal creature for 1 minute. In addition, by expending 3 Pulse as a standard action, you may target any creature with the extraplanar subtype with a *banishment* spell effect. The effective caster level of the *banishment* effect is equal to your character level.

Run Like The Wind (Pulse)

Some people start running one day, and never really stop. No world is too large for your journey.

Prerequisites: Acrobatics 15 ranks, Fleet, Improved Flight of the Ascendant, Run.

Benefits: When running, you move ten times your normal speed (if wearing medium, light, or no armor and carrying no more than a medium load) or five times your speed (if wearing heavy armor or carrying a heavy load). If you make a jump after a running start (see the Acrobatics skill description), you gain a +10 bonus on your Acrobatics check. While running, you retain your Dexterity bonus to your Armor Class.

Furthermore, by spending 2 Pulse as a swift action, you may move horizontally without regard for the surface underneath—so running over rice paper, wet cement, water or even lava is possible (but not over empty air). You may move across any surface so long as the movement begins and ends on solid ground.

Seer (Pulse)

The mysteries of the universe are laid out in plain sight for you. Whether by a blessing of the gods, blind fate, or random chance, you see the strings of destiny in all things.

Prerequisites: Wisdom 12.

Benefits: You can see outlines of ethereal and incorporeal creatures, thereby negating any associated miss chance. By spending 1 Pulse, you can treat a natural 1 as a roll of 2.

Self-Taught

While your fellows learned their craft in classrooms from accredited masters, you taught yourself magic with naught but a few hard-won arcane notes and possibly an excerpt from another wizard's tome.

Prerequisites: Intelligence 12.

Benefits: Choose two of the following spells; you may now use them as spell-like abilities three times per day: *acid splash*, *detect magic*, *light*, or *prestidigitation*. Choose one of the following spells; you may now use it as a spell-like ability once per day: *mage armor*, *magic missile*, or *true strike*. Your caster level is equal to your character level when using these spell-like abilities.

Sidekick (Pulse)

Your animal companion, cohort, or familiar's fate becomes intertwined with that of your character. Rare are the moments when he is not by your side, and most people have trouble conceiving of one without the other.

Prerequisites: Cha 16, Leadership feat or animal companion or familiar class ability.

Benefits: Choose one of the following benefits:

Animal Companion: Your animal companion gains a +2 bonus to both its Strength and Constitution, and a +2 natural armor bonus to its AC.

Cohort: Your cohort gains a +2 inherent bonus to all ability scores, as well as a +2 insight bonus to AC while within 10 feet of you.

Familiar: Your familiar's maximum hp are equal to yours, and their Strength, Dexterity, and Constitution scores all increase by 2.

In addition, any creature who benefits from this feat gains a +10 circumstance bonus on Will saves against effects that would force them to work against you in any harmful manner.

Special: This feat may be taken more than once. Each time, it applies to a different animal companion, cohort, or familiar.

Speaker (Pulse)

Your seer abilities grant you insight into dealings with extraplanar creatures as well as a means of communicating with all creatures.

Prerequisites: Seer.

Benefits: You gain a +4 bonus on Charisma-based checks with any creatures with the extraplanar subtype or the outside type. In addition, by spending 1 Pulse, you gain the benefits of a *tongues* spell for 1 hour.

Strong Grip (Pulse)

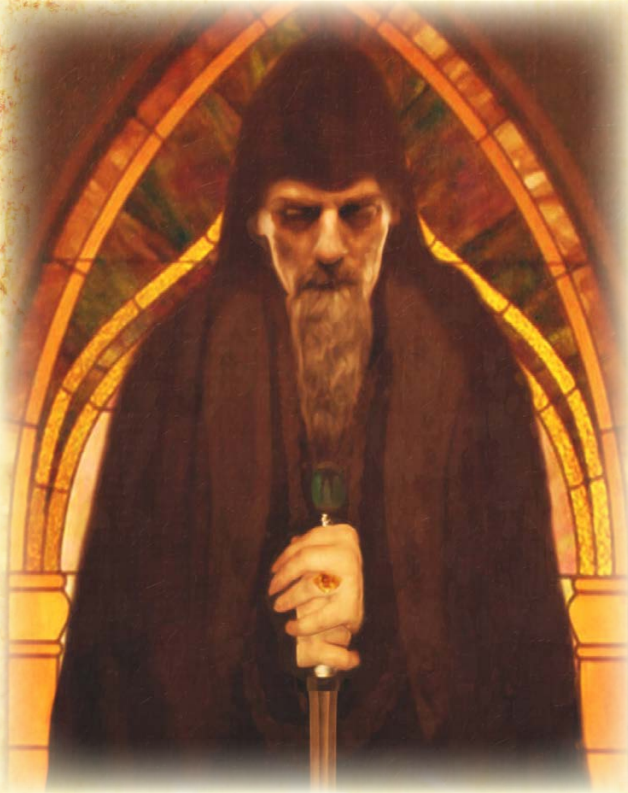
Prerequisites: Str 14, base attack bonus +9.

Benefits: You may choose to wield a two-handed melee weapon in one hand with a -2 penalty on attack rolls while doing so. The weapon must be appropriately sized for you, and it's treated as one-handed when determining the effect of Power Attack, Strength bonus to damage, and the like. This does not allow you to wield a two-handed weapon in each hand, nor does it allow you to use over-sized weapons. However, it does allow you to use a shield with a two-handed maul, or answer your cell phone while firing an AK-47.

Strong Grip, Improved (Pulse)

Prerequisites: Str 16, Strong Grip, base attack bonus +13.

Benefits: You no longer take a -2 penalty on attack rolls while using the Strong Grip feat, and you may expend 1 Pulse to throw any weapon you can hold in one hand for 1 round. The weapon is treated as a throwing weapon with a range increment of 10 feet.



Stutter (Pulse)

Your character's Pulse is so potent that it has begun to warp time.

Prerequisites: Con 14, Int or Wis 14.

Benefits: You may spend 1 Pulse as a swift action to activate a *haste* effect (as the spell) for 1 round.

Surge (Pulse)

The blast doors are closing, the villain is escaping, the ground is crumbling beneath you. Just... a little... faster. Your muscles shriek; something surges within you. Jackpot!

Prerequisites: Endurance, Run.

Benefits: As a free action costing 1 Pulse, you can double your base move speed for 1 round.

Surge, Improved (Pulse)

Three seconds, and nothing will be left of the city. The coruscating artifact is so close to the portal, yet still so far away. Time slows; the faces of your companions begin to blue-shift as you rush past them. You're in the zone.

Prerequisites: Endurance, Run, Surge.

Benefits: When using the Surge feat, you can spend 1 additional Pulse to instead triple your base speed.

Symbolist

You understand the power of symbology in magic. Your extensive studies have allowed you to master a means of spellcasting that would otherwise be impossible.

Prerequisites: Ability to prepare or spontaneously cast arcane or divine spells.

Benefits: By increasing the casting time of a personal-range spell to 1 minute, you may cast it on a willing target instead of yourself by first scribing a symbol on their person, typically on their forehead or chest. You also gain *arcane mark* as an at-will spell-like ability.

Titanic Blow (Combat, Pulse)

When you strike true, few are left standing.

Prerequisites: Str 16, Improved Critical, base attack bonus +10.

Benefits: Whenever you confirm a critical hit in melee with your preferred weapon, you can spend 1 Pulse to increase the critical multiplier by 1.

Transference (Pulse)

Your understanding of symbols expands to allow the transfer of one symbol to another.

Prerequisites: Eldritch Geometry, Symbolist, ability to prepare or spontaneously cast arcane or divine spells.

Benefits: As a standard action, you can transfer the effects of a symbol (one of your own, or any other mark- or symbol-based spell) from one willing creature to another. Unwilling targets receive a Will save (DC 10 + 1/2 your character level + your Cha modifier) to negate this effect. In addition, by expending 1 Pulse as part of this standard action, you can cause a spell you cast to originate from a creature bearing your arcane mark, thus allowing you to cast a spell from a different angle or around a corner.

Saving The Universe

Suzerain makes your characters truly heroic and then turns them into demigods, before they finally (hopefully) transcend to godhood. That's about as epic as it gets. They're obviously going to need some help to face the challenges that inevitably turn up to sour their day. They get Hero Points, extra feats, and additional ability score increases. Once they hit Folk Hero rank, they get double the natural healing rate, and they pick up a Pulse Pool at Demigod. And let's not forget the ability to avoid death at the cost of a single Hero Point.

It's still not enough. Trust us, these challenges aren't little niggling issues like finding matching socks in the morning. They're not minor impish problems biting their ankles and trying to undo their shoelaces. We leave that stuff to other settings. These are serious challenges for mortals who are favored by the very gods themselves. As such, your characters get two additional bits of supernatural aid: a fortress of their own and a tour guide to the universe.

Your Pocket Realm

After a few Telesmae get close to each other, they communicate with one another and start forming strange, interconnected geometries that burrow through the Veil separating the mortal realms from the Maelstrom. If the gods can strike an accord over the gathering of champions, the Telesmae's connections deepen, hollowing out a section of the Maelstrom for their bearers.

The creation of this pocket realm is a subtle event. Just because the gods have chosen to back a gathering of heroes doesn't mean they'll immediately break out the golden drinking horns and mythic taxidermy. More than likely, your characters will first notice their new safehouse when they keep on returning to it, no matter how unlikely the circumstances. That'll be the Telesmae chirping amongst themselves, trying to return to their god-blessed home. As the forces of history bend around your characters' actions, the links between them, their Telesmae, and the Maelstrom will become ever deeper.

It's comforting to know your adventuring group has access to a base of operations – a pocket realm crafted of Pulse and capable of surreptitiously

transporting itself from one realm to the next, along with your characters. The pocket realm is a relatively stable area of the Maelstrom that is maintained for the characters by their Telesmae, but without your characters knowing about it at first. Until Folk Hero rank, Telesmae keep a low profile, and the pocket realm will look like any other accommodation that's suitable for the local environment – a cozy inn room, a sturdy tent big enough for the whole group, etc. Your characters' Telesmae maintain this space, as well as its contents. For example, if characters leave some possessions in the closet of their cheap motel room while beating a hasty retreat, those same items will be waiting for them in the next dusty motel in the next tumbleweed town. This might give some sharper characters pause to think that things aren't exactly what they seem...

The pocket realm grows and becomes increasingly grand as the characters increase in rank. The quality of the hotel rooms they get seems to improve, until they have a nice suite at Fated rank instead of a roach-infested basement at Neophyte. But it's still a place that looks right for the local environment.

As soon as the average rank in the group reaches Folk Hero, everything changes. The characters are contacted by their Telesmae, and it's time to see the universe for what it really is. Their souls are now strong enough to handle the transition to different times and places through the Maelstrom. As a first step, though, they need to meet the representatives of the gods, and that happens in the pocket realm. As the characters step through the door into their realm, suddenly they're aware they've traveled through a portal to another place. It's like a veil has been lifted and they see what's really going on – the space inside no longer matches the space outside (sort of like a certain blue police box...). And there, in the middle of the main room, is the welcome party made up of various senior spirits and demigods who want to check out the newbies. If the GM has any 'big reveal' secrets about the workings of the universe, this is a good time to slip them in. Otherwise, the new Folk Hero characters are clued in to what you, the reader, already know about the wider Suzerain Continuum.

As part of their Folk Hero rank briefing, the new kids are taught how to rearrange their pocket realm. From then on, the characters are able to modify the

trappings of their realm to suit their tastes. Since it's a shared resource, dependent on the psyche of each of the characters, its architecture and particulars will be tailored to the group. Followers of the Grand Singularity can expect an eventual technotopia of free-flowing information falls; a group with strong patronage from Relic's Etaro, the Wanderer, is more likely to be granted an ever-evolving hunting lodge with room for a great number of interesting guests. As the heroes prove their worth to the universe, their Telesmae work to strengthen the realm's ties to the Maelstrom. By Demigod rank, the realm will be saturated with enough Pulse that it could easily reach the size of a palatial estate, complete with its own ecosystem.

No matter what its internal trappings, access to the pocket realm is always through an unassuming entryway. Everyone who isn't capable of traveling to the Maelstrom (including most mortals) will just see the normal room beyond, while the owners will see the entrance lobby to their realm. As they step through, they disappear from the mortal world – leaving any observers with a new tale to tell about our heroes' many wiles. Animal companions, familiars, and cohorts get to travel with their character using the same rules as people carrying items to and from the Maelstrom.

When characters travel into a mortal realm, the flow of time in the pocket realm synchronizes with that realm. If characters hide in their pocket realm for ten minutes, ten minutes pass on the other side of that unassuming doorway too. If the characters go back through a portal to the Maelstrom, the pocket realm synchronizes to 'Maelstrom time' instead of 'mortal time'.

So, How Big Is It?

Treat the pocket realm as a *mage's magnificent mansion*, but one that creates up to five 10-foot cubes per level instead of three. Use the sum of all the heroes' levels when calculating the size. A pocket realm can't be dispelled, although it can be rendered temporarily inaccessible by a *wish* or *miracle*.

The pocket realm is a home away from home, a secret hideout, Fortress of Solitude, and private lodge. Because of the pocket realm's deep ties to the characters' great potential, the messengers of the gods also prefer it as their meeting area. When the higher powers want the heroes' help, they send a high-ranking functionary (say, an angel or a Demigod-level phoenix) into the pocket realm to share what's going on and what bold hearts can do about it.

A Character's Telesma

We've mentioned Telesmae a few times so far, but what are they exactly? Each is an individual gem, usually part of something else, like a ring that has been handed from seventh son to seventh son for generations. Or a smooth rock that your character picked up one day, and never got around to tossing. Or an ugly tourist charm, which nevertheless ends up hanging in conspicuous locations, that your character bought to get rid of that weird old lady at the side of the road. Just one of those things, right?

Wrong. That little gem casts eerily familiar patterns when it catches the light, and silently hums of nostalgic times. It feels like a mix between an old friend and a favorite pair of pants. Also, it's sentient. Maybe it's not very smart – in the area of a cat or dog – but that's still a serious step up from most jewels. Whatever shape the Telesma is in now, it was originally created by a divine power and designed as a conduit to a chosen one: your character. (Note the difference between being a chosen one and The Chosen One. Gods know that heroes often fail – heroically. It's good planning for them to keep a few spare chosen ones up their nigh-infinite sleeves.)

The gods discovered early on that repeatedly pulling mortals through the Veil between realities could destroy their very soul, shredding it like so much tissue. Not wanting to add to the growing pile of pulped heroes, one of the gods had an idea. Nobody remembers who, but it was a good enough idea that everyone took the credit, as divine egos tend to do.

At any rate, one of the gods created a small yet flawless gem, which he filled with one of his spirit servants. Its job: to guide the appointed hero as he fulfilled his divine purpose. Each major deity has hundreds of lesser spirits at his beck and call, so

bonding a few to gems wasn't a great loss. The god set this gem into a piece of jewelry, divinely beautiful, and offered it to his hero.

This was the first Telesma, the first talisman of the gods.

A powerful bond grew between Telesma and human. Better still, the god could bring the human to and from the Maelstrom by summoning the gem back – it would then bring the human with it, safely cocooned in its power.

Time passed and more gods gave Telesmae to their followers, each creating new designs as they went. Not all Telesmae guided their appointed heroes as closely as the first. Over time, most gods agreed it was better to have a pool of free agents, unfettered by the eon-spanning politics associated with being a direct servant. If your character has Faith in a particular deity, his Telesma will inevitably have been created by that deity for him. Otherwise, it's likely the Telesma was created by the gods as a group without a particular one-to-one relationship between a god and your character.

Although there are exceptions, Telesmae tend to have only limited consciousness. While they are generally obedient and are strongly loyal to the human they have bonded with, it's a narrow intelligence. Telesmae can be playful, or even mischievous, but also contrary if asked to work against their core purpose. Like any divine artifact with the intelligence of a golden retriever, bribery and tricks may be necessary to guide them toward individual goals rather than godly dictates.

Telesmae are incredibly useful items for your character. They transport him through portals and across the Veil, and they ease the transition into each setting. Telesmae can learn different additional powers, too. Characters start to feel the benefits of the Telesma before they even hit Folk Hero rank, but it's only then that the gods let the Telesma reveal itself and open its direct telepathic link.

It's impossible for a hero to lose his Telesma: the two are connected by a force deeper than Pulse. Each can sense the other's approximate location from any distance within a realm, and precise position from close range (within 1km). But that doesn't mean they are physically bound. Your character can still take off

Telesmae In Play

There are three basic approaches to playing Telesmae. You can ignore the fact that they're sentient and just play them as magic items with a narrative purpose. Or you can decide on a basic personality and let the GM handle all Telesmae like they're NPCs. Or each player's Telesma gets played by the player on his left, and everybody plays both their character and occasionally a Telesma. Try them all out and see which is most fun for you.

his Telesma just like any other piece of jewelry. That means they can be stolen. Certain mortal legends involve heroes seeking enchanted items, and growing in power and prestige once those are located – those stories may actually be about heroes fighting to claim stolen Telesmae, or reclaiming one stolen from them. Excalibur was encrusted with jewels, after all ...

There are also drawbacks to having a Telesma. The first is that it links the character to the gods, allowing the gods and their representatives to contact him and call him back to the Maelstrom. This can be annoying, because the view across the Veil is misty, fading in and out of focus, so the gods might choose an inappropriate time to call a hero back for an update. This can make for some fun roleplaying, and it also provides a handy excuse when one of the players can't make it to a session.

The second is that anyone with the power to see the Ethereal Plane will instantly notice a Telesma and recognize it as something not native to their





realm. Beings of opposed philosophy are drawn to it, good to evil, chaos to order. The character stands out mystically because of the touch of the gods, making him a clear target for demons and devils and evil spirits and all manner of nasty beings who want to tear down anything good or heroic, those involved in whatever the characters are there to thwart can feel that the characters are going to be major players in the coming days. And if your character is the sly, malicious sort, he'll find himself a target for every do-gooder in the universe. It's not fair, but that's why most heroes find themselves at the center of plots and plans, forever being assaulted from all sides. And there always seems to be a nemesis lurking in the wings. The character-and-Telesma's bonded aura draws danger to him and makes him a temptation to anyone who can see or sense his enhanced power. Subconsciously, unknowingly, opposites attract – and it's not a good thing!

The third problem is Telesmae do have some sentience, and aren't always perfectly obedient. Again, this is great for roleplaying – you get to give your item a bit of personality. Your GM also gets to have some fun; if your character tries to use his Telesma to do something that's inappropriate for his patron god (if he has one), he needs to make a Diplomacy check with a DC based on how inappropriate the action is. Fail, and the Telesma stubbornly refuses to help out. The fallout could be embarrassing, or merely deadly, depending on the circumstance.

Only a mortal who has been flagged by the gods as a potential Hero can own or use a Telesma, and even then only the one that's bound to him. This describes all characters in a Suzerain game, even if they don't have the Patron God feat – that's for characters who want an extra close relationship with a particular deity. Characters who don't know they have patron gods or don't believe in the divine right of the space faeries to control their destiny aren't exempt either. There's a Maelstrom full of gods and great spirits who've marked him for greatness, like it or not.

Other people may be able to force a Telesma to share its power, but their body, mind, and soul are not prepared for the exchange. The granted power is too much for them to handle, and they will go insane. All those tales of men and women driven mad by cursed relics has some basis in fact – many of those people foolishly tried to wrest power from a Telesma and were overwhelmed by the experience.

The Mechanics Of Telesmae

A Telesma becomes part of the character during character creation, and you have some say in its appearance and personality. A Telesma is like having a wizard's familiar, only it's a magical gem. It has some sentience and it has certain powers. The Telesma has a spiritual link with its owner, and is unlikely to disobey a direct order. But because it has intelligence, it also has a personality. And that's something you can work out with your GM.

Is your Telesma snarky? Is it eager? Is it hesitant? Is it playful? Aggressive? Afraid to be left alone? And what form does it take? All Telesmae are gems, but the type, color, and cut vary. Is it a large square ruby, set in a heavy gold ring? Will it be a round star sapphire, suspended from a fine gold chain? Or a small, rough quartz attached to a watch fob? Decide what would be fun to play and what would suit your character.

Mechanically, the Telesmae are powerful, intelligent magic items with the following statistics:

Telesma

Aura moderate abjuration, divination, illusion; **CL** 20th; **Weight** 1 lbs.

Slot none; **Price** priceless

Alignment varies; a Telesma's alignment is never more than one step away from its owner's

Senses Senses 30 ft.

Intelligence 10; **Wisdom** 10; **Charisma** 10; **Ego** 10

Language telepathy

Folk Hero Rank powers:

Mutual Locator: The Telesma and its owner know each other's location so long as they're in the same realm.

Spirit Senses: The Telesma is a creature of the spirit realm. It can see the Ethereal Plane clearly, and sees the Material Plane just as a being on the Material Plane might see the Ethereal Plane... hazily.

Control Portal: The Telesma and its owner, when working in tandem, can locate portals with a DC 20 Knowledge (planes) check. The distance to the portal increases the DC by 1 if the portal is outside a 30-foot radius, by 2 if it's outside a 300-foot radius, by

4 if it's outside a 1-mile radius, and by 6 if outside a 10-mile radius. Portals farther away than 75 miles can't be sensed. Success on this check reveals the location and general direction to reach the portal, as per the *find the path* spell. When the chosen is within 30 feet of the portal, they can visually perceive it as shimmering, liquid glass caught in moonlight. It looks transparent, but obscured on the far side. Activating the portal requires the expenditure of 1 Hero Point and 1 minute of concentration. Some portals are harder to open than others, and heroes usually find them while fleeing from some army of formless horrors. A portal stays open for 24 hours, usable by anyone who has a strong enough soul not to get bounced out or utterly destroyed by the forces of the Maelstrom, before it closes again.

Localization: In a new realm, characters suffer a -2 penalty on all social checks for the first 1d4 days that they're there. The Demigod can choose to have the Telesma grant him the ability to speak all languages, as per the *tongues* spell, as well as subtly alter their physical appearance slightly to fit in more easily, as per the spell *disguise self*. Finally, the Telesma grants its Demigod the ability to tap into a latent, subtle informational network inherent to the realm, allowing the chosen to make untrained Knowledge checks on realm-specific topics with a DC of 20 or less at a -2 penalty (as opposed to being completely

clueless). Another benefit's that the Telesma picks up on the way local people talk, allowing its owner to communicate as per the *tongues* spell. It takes a couple of minutes to kick in when first arriving in a new place, after which the telepathic link to the Telesma keeps the translation pretty smooth while in that realm. This function costs no Pulse to utilize and is always active.

Masking: Even better, the Telesma can also make the character look like a person native to his new realm. This ability costs no Pulse to activate, but requires a full round to manifest. The Demigod's face and body change slightly to give him a thicker or more slender frame, darker or lighter skin, local facial features, etc. This won't change his race or make him more than 10% taller or shorter, and it won't make him look like a different person. The effect is subtle enough that most people won't even notice it - subconsciously, they simply treat him as a local when he's using this ability. Even clothes and equipment can be masked to blend in: a futuristic Demigod's laser rifle might be masked by the illusion of being a bow in the eyes of the locals of a fantasy realm, for instance. Masking costs nothing, and it's one of the most important functions of a Telesma. This ability generally functions as *disguise self*, but provides a +15 bonus to the Disguise check.



Telesma Growth

At 11th level, and every 3 levels thereafter, Telesmae evolve and improve their connection to their master, growing and increasing in power.

Telesma Special Abilities

Owner Level	Int Adj.	Wis/Cha Adj	Special
6th	+0	+0	Control Portal, empathic link, localization, mutual locator, personality, spirit sense
11th	+1	+0	Telesma growth
12th	+2	+1	—
13th	+3	+1	—
14th	+4	+2	Telesma growth
15th	+5	+2	Telepathic speech
16th	+6	+3	—
17th	+7	+3	Telesma growth
18th	+8	+4	—
19th	+9	+4	—
20th	+10	+5	Telesma growth

Telesma Growth

Telesmae evolve along with their owners – indeed, many believe it's that constant contact with a Hero that allows the Telesma to change and grow and improve in the first place. However it happens, Telesmae can't only become smarter but also more powerful, exhibiting new abilities and fine-tuning old ones.

This growth happens even before the character is aware of the true nature of the gemstone he never seems to lose. Starting at 11th level, and every 3 levels thereafter, his or her Telesma gains an ability from the following list:

Allure

Your character's Telesma is sexy, convincing, or some combination of the two. This benefit's shared telepathically, giving your character a +3 bonus to Bluff and Diplomacy checks.

Assistant

Your character's Telesma can concentrate on maintaining his spells for them, allowing the Hero to maintain two concentration spells at the same time without additional penalty.

Ability Synergy

Your character's Telesma is particularly adept in one of the six core attributes (Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma) and able to guide and influence the same attribute in your character. Any skill or ability check made with the chosen ability score receives a +2 circumstance bonus to the roll. This option can be taken multiple times, applying to a new attribute each time.

Balm

Your character's Telesma can soothe ability score damage, exhaustion, and fatigue, functioning as per the *lesser restoration* spell once per day.

Forced Manifestation

Your character's Telesma can trick or drag spirits into the physical world. This causes the target to lose the incorporeal type temporarily. Doing so costs your character 2 Pulse. This effect lasts for five rounds, and can be extended another 5 rounds by paying an extra 2 Pulse.

Karma Bank

Your character may store 1 unspent Hero Point in his or her Telesma at the end of a session. The point

Telesma Personalities

This list can be determined randomly by rolling a d20 and consulting the table.

Personality	Benefit to Owner
Adventurous	+2 Survival
Artistic	+2 to any one Craft skill
Anxious	+2 Initiative
Bitter	+2 to resist Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate rolls
Cunning	+2 Disguise
Delighted	+2 Diplomacy
Devilish	+2 Bluff
Ecstatic	+2 to saves vs. fear
Fearful	+1 to Reflex saves
Greedy	+2 Appraise
Happy	+2 Perform
Hateful	+1 to confirm critical hits
Hostile	+2 Intimidate
Mischievous	+2 Sleight of Hand
Observant	+2 Perception
Optimistic	+1 to Will saves
Playful	+2 Acrobatics
Sadistic	+1 to Fortitude saves
Sincere	+2 Sense Motive
World Weary	+2 to any one Knowledge skill

may be used in later sessions normally. The bank can hold only 1 Hero Point at any given time.

Protective

Your character's Telesma emits a protective field of Pulse around his or her physical body, shielding the Demigod from harm. This grants your character a +1 insight bonus to AC.

Psychically Aggressive

Your character's Intimidation checks can incapacitate opponents, thanks to the assistance of his or her Telesma in the Ethereal. When you succeed at demoralizing an opponent, they also gain the sickened condition for the same duration.

Pulse Battery

Your character's Telesma acts as a battery containing 1 Pulse per rank of the owner. This replenishes every 24 hours.

Spirit Interaction

Your character can pay 1 Pulse as a free action to become able to influence the incorporeal. For 1 round, all of your equipment gains the *ghost touch* quality, and your spells and other abilities affect both the Material and Ethereal Planes.

Telesma Radio

Your character's Telesma is capable of broadcasting information to familiar Telesmae within 3 miles without the need for line of sight.

Touch Link

The spirit housed within your character's Telesma can move up to a foot away from the gemstone, giving you a +2 circumstance bonus on melee attack rolls for touch-range spells.

Unbounded Adjustment

Your character's Telesma is an expert in helping with quick adjustment to new realms – your character no longer suffers the –2 penalty for a session's duration after arriving in a new realm.

Relic, Yr208

There is no default Suzerain realm where everything works exactly as described in the preceding pages. In order to demonstrate these concepts more concretely, here's a quick look at Relic, our realm of sword-and-sorcery.

Relic has centaur tribes, dragon-men who evolve to be full dragons over their lives, sea elves with an Egyptian-style society, wizards and alchemists rubbing shoulders with the Church and her questing knights, a huge Greco-Roman civilization of intrigue and organized combat, shamans, warlocks, priests of a dozen flavors, elemental humanoids, barbarians, charging monsters the size of mountains, gremlins who have metal pass right through them, dwarves

that pass right through stone, and much more. It's a proving ground for heroes, and a great first stop for the career-focused would-be god. The Lich Queen from our *Dungeonlands* books started her life here. In fact, an uncommon number of the most powerful Suzerain gods started their ascent to power here, so it has a well-earned reputation in the upper circles.

That's getting too epic, too fast, though. For now it's enough to say Relic is your realm if you're looking for high adventure and deep intrigue. If you don't have any other characters you want to use for your Suzerain campaign, this is a good place to start one.

The Past And Present

Past and present are interesting terms in Suzerain since characters can come from anywhere and anywhen. There are certain points in the history of each realm that simply resonate as junctions of the time stream. Called nexuses, these times and places tend to be incubators for potential heroes, and Relic has a couple of good ones in the first three Ages of existence. The biggest nexus forms in the 208th year of the Third Age, but it's worth knowing a bit about the rest of history too:

In the Second Age, the Trader Imperium built great walled cities and fortress-markets across the center of the grand continent of Austeria. The excesses of these metropolises have been relegated to folktales, but rare is the historian who doesn't express nostalgia for the misted corridors of the past. Iron-shod caravans connected the land, spreading peace and culture across a network of wide, paved roads, some stretching over a thousand miles.

The Traders were the dominant civilization of their age, their ziggurat temples towering over the landscape. Then the Warlocks came, destroying everything in their path with earth and fire, bringing about the War of the Wild. They called the earth to swallow entire towns, and all that now remains are buried ruins and overgrown stretches of the imperial road.

If that sounds interesting, check out our *Caladon Falls* book, which focuses on the first year of the War of the Wild.

Now fast forward 200 years into the Third Age when the days of jumping at shadows and starving from spell-tainted wheat are at an end. Scavengers

mine the land for Trader relics and sell them in bustling, if lopsided cities protected by knights who can trace their lineage back to old Caladon. Wizards tear into the fabric of reality, providing luxuries for the burgeoning nobility, earning new riches for their moldering universities. Across the Great Expanse where the Imperium once flourished, nomadic tribes no longer disappear without a trace on account of demonic predators. Life is still harsh, but for the first time in generations, there is a peaceful calm and hopefulness. Where there is hope, there are heroes, and that's why we'll focus on that nexus for a while. The War of the Wild is a pretty big nexus too, though....



Characters In Relic

The following are just a few of the new Planar feats available in the fantasy realm of Relic, a little taste of the sorts of things you can expect to see in our meaty realm books. If your character grew up in that realm, or spent a chunk of time there, consult your GM to see if he's eligible for these goodies.

Planar Feats

Planar feats are a new feat type that can only be taken at 1st level (except for other feats further down the chain that are opened up by taking the 1st-level prerequisite feat). These feats should also only be taken with the approval of your GM due to the heightened power level they introduce. In addition, they typically have special prerequisites that are atypical - such as not being a specific race or lacking a certain ability or trait.

Aurora (Planar)

After the War of the Wild, the shattered nations experienced a great number of dark days. Aurora tradition claims that they appeared during these years to drive back the worst excesses of the night. The way their skin and hair shine in the light lends credibility to the tale. However, auroras are as comfortable in darkness and shadows as they are underneath the sun-catchers that adorn the halls of Hela, the sun goddess. Indeed, in shadow the same skin and hair



turns to midnight black, making them fine sneaks and assassins. Apart from the skin and hair, auroras tend to be tall and wiry people, strong yet lean.

Prerequisites: Not a dwarf, 1st level only.

Benefits: You gain the following special qualities:

Enhanced Vision (Su): You reduce penalties for seeing in the dark by half, as well as gain a +2 bonus on saving throws against the dazzled condition.

Channel Light (Sp): You can cast *light* (as the spell, with a caster level equal to your character level) at will as a standard action. The light only emanates from your bare skin, so the range is altered to personal and the duration is half what it normally would be.

Improved Aurora (Planar, Pulse)

Focussing on your heritage, you have improved your mastery of light and shadow.

Prerequisites: Cha 14, Aurora, not a dwarf.

Benefits: You increase channel light's duration to the normal duration and gain the following ability:

Shadowstep (Sp): While in complete darkness, you can spend 2 Pulse as a standard action to *dimension door* (as the spell, with a caster level equal to your character level) to another area in complete darkness within your line of sight.

Greater Aurora (Planar, Pulse)

Your natural control of luminescence has grown to a mastery of both light and dark.

Prerequisites: Cha 16, Improved Aurora, not a dwarf.

Benefits: Your channel light ability can now also darken the area as a *darkness* spell. You suffer no penalties as a result of being in dim light or darkness. You can now transport other creatures with you during a shadowstep by paying an additional 2 Pulse per creature.

Child of the Arrow (Planar, Pulse)

Thirteen constellations mark the months in Relic, each with its own myths and earthly resonance. The Arrow is swift and purposeful, constantly moving towards the object of its desires. It's the star sign of subtlety, rather than raw brawn or muscle-bound

machismo. Children who are marked by these stars tend to become hunters, decisive leaders, and monomaniacs.

Prerequisites: Dex 14, Weapon Focus (any bow), Strength may not exceed 12, 1st level only.

Benefits: When you threaten a critical hit with a bow, you may spend 1 Pulse to increase the damage die of the attack by 1 size category, to a maximum of 1d12 or 2d6.

Improved Child of the Arrow (Planar, Pulse)

The stars have called to you, and you have answered. The Arrow has a greater influence on your life, bolstering your greatest desires with celestial energy.

Prerequisites: Dex 16, Child of the Arrow, Improved Critical (any bow), Weapon Focus (any bow), Strength may not exceed 12.

Benefits: You may increase the size of the damage die any number of times, but each increase costs a cumulative additional Pulse (so increasing by 2 sizes costs 3 Pulse, 3 sizes costs 6 Pulse, etc). In addition, any creature you hit with a ranged attack suffers a -2 penalty to AC for 1 round.

Greater Child of the Arrow (Planar, Pulse)

Your connection to the Arrow is complete. Your purpose is evident, and the silent sky points the way.

Prerequisites: Dex 18, Child of the Arrow, Improved Child of the Arrow, Improved Critical (any bow), Weapon Focus (any bow), Strength may not exceed 12.

Benefits: The Pulse cost of increasing the damage die of your ranged attacks is reduced to 1 Pulse per increase and is no longer cumulative. In addition, increase the penalty to the target's AC by the number of increases to the damage die.

Living Rock (Planar, Pulse)

For many years after the Warlocks were defeated, it was widely believed that they took all their servants with them. The Warlocks' foul magic had corrupted the earth, turning farmlands to ash and tainting



stone with corrosive impurities. Although scattered bands of these servants fought back, the assault was too pervasive for anything but heroic last stands. Although many died during the War of the Wild, a few families survived—and as time passed, their numbers slowly grew again.

Living Rocks are a remnant of these beings. They resemble and function as other races but are ultimately walking rocks, one of the elemental races of earth. Their stony nature makes them resilient to some attacks, but also slower than other races. Some even have a rudimentary control of earth and stone.

Prerequisites: Con 15, not an elf, 1st level only.

Benefits: You gain DR 2/bludgeoning, but your base speed is reduced by 5 feet. In addition, if you have Pulse, you can spend it in the following way:

Transmute Mud to Rock: For 2 Pulse per round, the character can transmute mud to rock. This requires concentration and otherwise functions as though it were the spell *transmute mud to rock*, with an effective caster level equal to half your character level (minimum 1).

Special: You can take this feat without first possessing a Pulse Pool, but you can't use the Pulse-based benefits of the feat without one.

Improved Living Rock (Planar, Pulse)

Over time, some Living Rocks focus on their control of stone and earth, developing even greater abilities.

Prerequisites: Con 17, Living Rock, not an elf.

Benefits: Your body hardens, increasing your DR to 5/bludgeoning. In addition, the cost to transmute mud to rock is reduced to 1 Pulse per round, and your effective caster level for this ability is equal to your level.

Greater Living Rock (Planar, Pulse)

Your power over your essence reaches its climax. You expand your control over rock, and are even able to speak with the stones for a time. Additionally, your ability to transmute rock has become a nearly effortless task for you.

Prerequisites: Con 17, Improved Living Rock, Living Rock, not an elf.

Benefits: Your body becomes a stalwart bulwark of stone, and you gain DR 10/bludgeoning. In addition, your ability to transmute mud to rock no longer requires concentration, and you gain the following abilities as well:

Stone Speak: For 4 Pulse, you may converse with stone as though under the effects of *stone tell* (as per the spell) with an effective caster level equal to half your character level.

Earth Glide: For 2 Pulse per round, you may benefit from an effect that functions exactly as the *earth glide* spell with an effective caster level equal to half your character level.

Move Earth: For 4 Pulse, you may cast the *move earth* spell with an effective caster level equal to half your character level.

Fury (Planar, Pulse)

Furies are a subrace from Relic, a breed of humanoids who used to be able to shift into a “werewolf” form. Tall, feral-looking, and paired with a beast’s spirit, they are strong, fast, quick to anger, and possess natural weaponry, which can become impressive for the few that learn to shift. In humanoid form, they tend to be taller, darker, and hairier than average for their race. They also tend to be on the leaner side— a fat fury is a rarity, and most are sleekly muscled. After generations, most of the breed have lost the ability to shift and could fit among non-furies. However, the rare few have regained the ability to shift. Their hybrid form is a tall man-wolf combination much like the classic “werewolf”, with fur matching their hair color—usually grey, black, or white, although reddish varieties are known among the barbarian clans of the mighty Lehr Peaks.

Prerequisites: Str 14, Con 14, must not be bestial (ratfolk, catfolk, etc.), 1st level only.

Benefits: As a typical member of this subrace (which spans all humanoids), you have two claw attacks and a bite attack that deal damage as appropriate for your size. You also naturally heal at twice the rate of a normal creature of your race.

Shifting costs 3 Pulse, lasts 1 hour, and requires a full-round action. While transformed, you gain a +5 circumstance bonus on Intimidate checks, but suffer a –10 penalty on Diplomacy checks with non-furies due to your frightening appearance. While in this form, the damage dice of your claw and bite attacks are increased by one size category, but you can no longer manipulate anything with your hands. You can spend another 2 Pulse to increase the duration for another hour.

Special: A fury that later contracts “real” lycanthropy can use this feat to increase the damage dice of their natural attacks instead of shifting into a new form.



Improved Fury (Planar, Pulse)

As furies grow in power, they gain finer control of their shifted form.

Prerequisites: Str 16, Con 14, Fury, must not be bestial.

Benefits: The cost to shift is lowered to 2 Pulse, and only requires 1 Pulse per hour thereafter. You may shift as a standard action. Your claws also ignore DR as though they were magical and silver.

Special: A fury with this feat that later contracts lycanthropy treats all their natural attacks as magical and silver.

Greater Fury (Planar, Pulse)

The fury has gained a perfection of form that baffles their less skilled fellows.

Prerequisites: Str 16, Con 15, Fury, Improved Fury, must not be bestial.

Benefits: The cost to shift and maintain your form is reduced to 1 Pulse. You may shift as a move action. You heal at triple the natural healing rate for a normal creature of your race, and your claws ignore DR as though they were cold iron, magical, and silver.

Special: A fury with this feat that later contracts lycanthropy treats all their natural attacks as cold iron, magical, and silver.

Patron God (Planar, Pulse)

This is an example of how a specific patron god might cross the boundary from the standard faceless archetypes like Patron God: Fertility or Patron God: War. There are thousands of patron gods out there. As long as you and your GM agree on what powers the Patron God might give, feel free to make up your own. We'll certainly have more for you in individual realm books as we release them.

Patron God: Zanua (Planar, Pulse)

As the goddess of deep thinking, strategic cunning, and righteous honesty in the Valon empire, Zanua is rarely without her symbol - a round hoplite shield with the chess board pattern on it (complete with chess pieces set up for the start of a game). She is the helper of heroes and, as such, a perfect patron for you.

Prerequisites: Must not possess another Patron God.

Benefits: In exchange for your devotion, you are granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. Pick one at Folk Hero rank, and then a second one when you reach Demigod rank (or pick two immediately, if you take this feat when you're already a Demigod).

Aura of Truth: By spending 1 Pulse as an immediate action, you gain a +10 insight bonus on Sense Motive checks to detect deception and feints in combat.

Resilient In Battle: By spending 2 Pulse as an immediate action, all allies within a 30-foot radius gain a +2 insight bonus to AC as well as gain DR 1/evil. This bonus lasts for 1 minute and can be extended by spending an additional 1 Pulse per minute.

Divine Understanding: By spending 2 Pulse as an immediate action, the character gains a +10 insight bonus on a single Knowledge type. This effect lasts for 5 minutes.



For GMs



In the Player's Section you've learned about the nuts and bolts of the Suzerain Continuum, been given an overview of the mortal realms and introduced to the idea of the Maelstrom, shown glimpses of the power of demigods and gods, and more besides... which is great, but now we're into the GM's Section. How's about we take the lid off and see what makes the Suzerain Continuum tick?

First up, we'll look deeper at the nature of the Spirit World, and give you some sample stats for spirit beings. From there we'll focus on the Maelstrom, and while we're there we'll give you a little walk-through of some god realms. Following that, we'll detail how portals and the Veil work, and what it means for characters who are trying to move around time and space. Yes, we'll cover what happens if someone tries to change the past or the future. The aim here is to show the true flexibility of Suzerain, and seed your mind with various ideas on how to tailor the setting into that rarest of things – the perfect gaming environment for your gaming group. Flexibility and choice are really important, but you don't need to put all the options into one campaign. Rather, pick and choose. Take a new idea out for a test drive and see if your players like it. If not, swap it out for something else the following week.

Having talked about all that, the next stage is to discuss the Folk Hero/Living Legend and Demigod rank experiences, and what makes them special. We won't get into the Neophyte/God-touched/Fated experience here, since we covered that in the Player's Section in detail (and there aren't too many secrets the players shouldn't know about).

Finally, we're including a full campaign that goes all the way into Demigod rank, and along the way you'll find assorted stats for a variety of wonderful critters to populate those adventures.

Ready? Okey dokey then – let's go for it.



Playing The Spirit World

Welcome to the weird and less-traveled lands of the Ethereal. Don't worry; the Material Plane will still be here when you get back. The ethereal plane is where the incorporeal dwell, with no physical matter at all, yet the two impact each other greatly... well, as much as is right for your game!

The Ethereal Plane and Material Plane are living mirrors of one another, the yin and yang of matter and energy. Moving from one to the other requires magic, unless you're an inhabitant already (then it's a hop, skip, and an *ethereal jaunt*).

Why Visit The Spirit World?

If the Ethereal echoes the solid world so closely, you might wonder, why would anybody want to go there? If it's just a silvery, shadow-free look at what already exists, wouldn't a strobe light be cheaper? The primary reason is its inhabitants. Those who make the Ethereal their home aren't necessarily paired up with anyone in the solid world. They are their own beings, able to observe, reason, and possibly even manifest, briefly becoming solid. It's important to know that spirits aren't all ghosts of dead people. While they *could* be run-of-the-mill poltergeists out to cheer up a dreary afterlife, they could also be fallen gods with a mere fraction of their former power or scientists trapped between the realms by an experiment gone wrong. Mostly, though, they're beings just like us... except without a body. Irrespective of their origin, they'll be different enough from the characters encountering them that their weirdness will be memorable.

Even though great swaths of the Ethereal map directly over the solid realm, it's a much bigger place than that. Where the Ethereal spills out beyond its physical twin, there you'll find reason enough to pay the place a visit. A waterfall of dying souls that sends them coursing off the edge of the world and into oblivion would make a great location for a parasitic necromancer to fill up on free souls; it would be an even better place for a team of heroes to stop the freak where he stands – and bid farewell to a fallen friend in the process. The characters just need to deck themselves out with a few shamanic charms to help them jump the gap, and that climactic scene is yours for the taking.

Regions of spiritual importance in the solid world tend to have more grandiose reflections on the other side. The site where a saint was martyred may warp the mirrored realm so that it contains a Pulse oasis, while the death of a god is enough to raise an entire immaterial mountain range (not that the gods should be outside of the Maelstrom, but that's another matter). Both locations will throb with energy, sending mortals on the flipside into unexplained ecstasies, or driving them to sinister ends.

Death isn't the only way to modify the spiritual landscape. All sorts of things leave their own impression, like the footsteps of enlightened monks, infernal devices, and consecrated shrines.

Religion also plays its part in shaping the movement of Pulse that creates the Ethereal. If we're talking about a temple to proud ol' Zeus, chances are it'll look more magnificent in the Ethereal. Lightning spirits will course up and down its ornamented columns, while a cluster of storm spirits lounge against the altar and talk about the gossip on Mount Olympus. A dilapidated old shrine to Guanyin, Bodhisattva of Mercy, is less likely to represent itself as a structure, but perhaps as a broad river from which Sighted travelers may refresh themselves – the echoes of physical objects can linger long after the object itself is gone. Lesser spirits may cluster in a nearby depression of forgotten piety, attacking or advising travelers depending on their mood.



In some far-flung realms, the spiritual reflection is the senior partner of the two, blasting duplication into outright control. Physical bodies are nothing more than ambulatory meat chariots here, discarded in fits of evolution or fashion. Slippery-minded fleshcrafters take up the mantle of shamans in these bizarre realms, championing the esoteric pleasures and mortifications of the physical body. It's an opportunity for a unique roleplay experience in a futuristic world of shapeshifters, an alien encounter, or all manner of other plot possibilities. Use the idea if you like it; ignore it if you don't – that's what the Ethereal is to a clever GM, a bunch of opportunities.

Sight Beyond Sight

Characters tend to be more comfortable in the physical plane, so any excursions to the Ethereal will be limited. Someone will pop in to converse with a spirit, explore an area's spiritual reflection, and then return to business as usual. Here are a few ways that trips to the Ethereal can be worked into a predominantly solid-side adventure:

The characters are exploring a grounded cruise ship that is suspected to be haunted. Unidentifiable fluid with the chemical composition of tears leaks continuously from the walls, and whispered conversations can be heard at the end of several flooded corridors. Looking into the Ethereal reveals that the ship's reflection is still in full repair, and the spirits of the passengers are reliving their final hours. They will break from routine to converse with the characters, but won't accept that they are dead – merely trapped on a cruise ship with a deadly neurotoxin.

Members of a big-city social club have been having an uncommon number of psychotic outbreaks of late. What's worse, when the police attempt to restrain them, the crazed citizens respond with savage violence and sprout weedy tentacles from their mouths. This matches the pattern that any occultist worth his protective salt circles would be able to recognize. Viewing the Ethereal, it's easy to see undulating, thick-bodied trees sprouting from each of the infected people. If they're allowed to blossom, the spirit will manifest and all sorts of havoc will result.

A psychic detective in modern Chicago is able to detect peoples' inner thoughts as buildings that extend into the Ethereal. A quiet, but imaginative accountant might project an office building filled with traps and gravity defying projections, while a tough-as-nails secretary would have a medieval fortress manned by spiritual sentries. Understanding the motives of the buildings' owners is as simple as infiltrating the spiritual constructs and talking to the correct facet of the person's personality. It's also the secret to solving a murder. The only problem? The detective being driven insane by his 'gift'.

If people as buildings aren't your thing, how about flat-out ghost buildings? Certain locations have existed long enough to attract an aura of permanence, even if their physical forms have been destroyed. There's no better source for information on the ancient world than the ghost Library of Alexandria, and any hero would be glad to hide behind the walls of ghostly Troy to repel an invasion of rage shades.

Many warriors have spiritual protectors – a boon from a goddess of luck perhaps, a guardian angel, or the ever-watchful eyes of their ancestors. If those spirits could be presented with strong arguments (or strong warding sigils) to convince them to rescind their aid, the mortals in question would be significantly easier to handle.

The keypoint to remember when using excursions to the Ethereal is that not every character may be able to take part in the action. Unless everybody has the ability to interact with spirits, any trip beyond the pale is going to end up with part of the team staying in the physical world and babysitting the others. This isn't ideal, but there are two solutions:

Give the guys in the physical world something dynamic to do during this time, like distracting the marks who're having their psychic joints cased, or hold off the horde of radiation-enhanced zombies until the spiritually sensitive characters can uncover the root of the infection.

Invent a way to send everybody. This is the preferred option if the jaunt into the Ethereal will take more than a short amount of game time. The group's shaman gets the perk of going into the Ethereal for the short visits, but if you're planning a whole session over there, best arrange a way for everyone to travel.

New Creature Abilities

Among the creatures in Suzerain, some are entities of fate as much as the player characters are. Those that benefit from the whims of destiny gain the following template:

Pulse-touched Creature

Some creatures gain immense power by hard work and perseverance; they defy the natural order of things simply by working to achieve their desired ends. Others gain such power simply because of their place in fate's design. While the gods would prefer for demigods to earn their power and position, these other beings who have attained a demigod-like state become fulcrums of fate in their own right - for these beings are touched by Pulse.

"Pulse-touched" is an acquired template that can be added to any creature. A Pulse-touched creature retains all of the base creature's statistics and special abilities except as noted here.

CR: Same as base creature +2.

Defensive Abilities: A Pulse-touched creature gains the following.

Pulse Armor (Su): A Pulse-touched creature gains the Pulse Armor feat as a bonus feat upon attaining the template. If they have 11 HD or more, they gain the Improved Pulse Armor feat.

Feats: A Pulse-touched creature gains one additional feat for each two hit dice it possesses, which can be Pulse feats.

Special Qualities: A Pulse-touched creature gains the following qualities.

Demigod-like (Su): The creature gains triple the natural healing rate, a +2 luck bonus on saving throws, and 5 Hero Points.

Pulse Pool (Ex): The creature gains a Pulse Pool. This pool functions exactly as it would for player characters and makes the creature eligible to take Pulse feats. The creature treats its hit dice as its effective level for the purpose of determining how many Pulse Points it has.

Abilities: A Pulse-touched creature gains a +2 inherent bonus to three of its ability scores.



Meeting With Spirits

Spirits are native to the Ethereal. Some can be found in the part of the Ethereal that overlaps the physical world, while others largely remain in the Maelstrom. You might find a Minotaur spirit in the Ethereal around ancient Greece, for instance (or any place where there's a good maze), but mostly they are servants on Mount Olympus, and that's where you'll meet more than one at a time.

Spirits are different enough from solid folk that their ways of causing harm may come as a surprise. These abilities fall into two broad, painful categories. The first is through manifesting. Some spirits are able to use their Pulse to temporarily burrow into the physical world. Manifested spirits are physical beings for all intents and purposes. They may be clammy, dank, and barely cohesive, or as hard as steel, depending on the spirit in question. Some spirits are clever enough to only manifest parts of their bodies, such as the hands of a strangler spirit or the fanged tentacles of the gland-eaters of Zardozz IV. There are enough different types of manifestations to keep players guessing; what works for the ghost won't work for the salamander.

The second means of assault that spirits have at their disposal is psychic in nature. These attacks cover everything from sanity-sapping fatigue to vampiric Pulse drain. Although each is treated as an attack, many spirits are so alien that they cause damage by mere exposure to the human mind. Emotion spirits are good examples of this principle. A greed spirit does not desire to cause avarice to bloom in the breasts of men any more than a fire decides to burn. The spirit appreciates all of the ambient emotions that it creates, but it can hardly be said to be a predator. This is little consolation to prosperous merchant families who are tainted by spiritual backwash, nor the lives that they inadvertently ruin as a result. When this kind of spirit starts hanging around your neighborhood, then it's time to get a shaman! Please remember, though – while all this is possible, it's not necessarily fun. If the characters have no way to get to the Ethereal to combat one of these spirits with psychic attacks, it'd be a pretty frustrating game where you populate your setting with them. Save it for the group of characters who want to fight that kind of opponent and who are prepared for the challenge.

Here are a couple of examples of feral spirits for the characters to get their teeth into (and vice versa!), and an interesting type of 'half spirit' to spice up your adventures, the Mael-born.

Spirits Of Feral Glee

Spirits of feral glee resemble small silvery men with goat-like features and a single horn in the center of their heads. Slow to fight, they would much rather caper around any new strangers and entertain (and bother) them with jokes and insipid observations. Despite possessing several abilities that should add up to utter annoyance, spirits of feral glee are hard to turn away. Even if their upbeat nature is overdone at times, it's nevertheless reassuring.

These spirits never stay in one place for long, always moving their herds in search of the latest rumor or shiny piece of optimism. They can be encountered anywhere, and as a result know a little bit about everything. Getting it out of them without a two-hour sidetrack is another story.

Spirit Of Feral Glee

CR 11

XP 12,800

CN Medium outsider (incorporeal)

Init +2; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +19

Aura glee (30 ft., DC 22)

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 20, flat-footed 18 (+8 deflection, +2 Dex)

hp 120 (16d8+48)

Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +13

Defensive Abilities incorporeal; Immune undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (average)

Melee incorporeal touch +12 (glee)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th; concentration +10)

3/day—*hideous laughter* (DC 14)

1/day—*irresistible dance* (DC 18)

STATISTICS

Str —, Dex 14, Con —, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15

Base Atk +12; CMB +14; CMD 26

Feats Ability Focus (glee), Iron Will, Noble Scion Of The Arts, Prodigy, Skill Focus (Perform [comedy]), Perform [dance]), Stealthy, Toughness

Skills Escape Artist +4, Fly +20, Perception +19, Perform (comedy) +31, Perform (dance) +31, Sense Motive +14, Stealth +19

Languages Sylvan

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Glee (Su) A spirit of feral glee's main ability is that it can inflict a state of glee on those around it. Anyone within 30 feet of, or touching, the spirit must attempt a Will save (DC 22) or be unable to be anything but joyous. Those under the effects of glee can't attack or otherwise intentionally inflict harm on anyone or anything as they joyously celebrate. For every round this goes by, the victim must succeed at another DC 22 Will save or suffer 1 point of Wisdom damage as they slowly lose their sanity. This effect fades 1d4+1 rounds after the spirit of feral glee is no longer around.



Spirits Of Feral Empathy

Spirits of feral empathy are slight, bipedal creatures that resemble featureless humans. Their faces are blank except for large, round eyes and projecting ears. They're always looking for other sentient beings to examine, as they have no emotions of their own. When a spirit of feral empathy discovers a living being nearby, it begins to probe its soul with long, prehensile fingers and toes. As it feels out the mechanics behind its target's inner workings, it flickers rapid-fire through a dizzying array of colors.

When the process is complete, taking about five minutes, the spirit manifests fully in the solid world. Using the primary guiding emotion of its target, it's able to craft a makeshift identity. What happens next rather depends on that guiding emotion.

Spirit Of Feral Empathy

CR 11

As Spirit of Feral Glee, except for the following changes:

Melee incorporeal touch +12 (*sleep*)

Altered Spell-Like Abilities replace *irresistible dance* with *disguise self* and *hideous laughter* with *detect thoughts*

Remove glee

Mael-born

Mael-born are the offspring of powerful spirits and mortal creatures, born in the Maelstrom but with one foot in both the spirit and physical world. Due to the variety of spirits and creatures out there, Mael-born may have many forms. Each is marked by one trait that makes it stand out from others of its general form. Human-shaped Mael-born may boast horns or swooping wings, while Mael-born sired by efreet might shimmer with inner fire rather than cast visible heat. Although spirits themselves, many are able to manifest at will and pass for flesh-creatures despite their odd markings.

Because of their parentage, Mael-born are natural links between the spirit and solid worlds. Though they aren't dual-aligned, they're able to converse with spirits even when manifested, and are often accompanied by a squirming aura of lesser spirits including emotion wisps, feral spirits or sprites. Because of their ease in talking with spirits, Mael-born often become shamans when they choose to live in the mortal realms.

Mael-born

CR 11

XP 12,800

N Medium outsider (native)

Init +5; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +16

DEFENSE

AC 24, touch 15, flat-footed 19 (+3 armor, +5 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 101 (7d10+63)

Fort +10, **Ref** +10, **Will** +10

SR 22

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee +2 scimitar +11/+6 (1d6+4/18–20)

Ranged shortbow +12/+7 (1d6/x3)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +10)

Constant—*detect magic*

At will—*protection from law/chaos/good/evil*

3/day—*control summoned creature* (DC 15)

1/day—*speak with dead*

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 20, **Con** 26, **Int** 10,
Wis 20, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 24

Feats Alertness, Endurance, Light
Armor Proficiency, Toughness

Skills Bluff +9, Diplomacy +12,
Knowledge (planes) +9, Knowledge
(religion) +9, Perception +16,
Sense Motive +7, Stealth +11,
Survival +14, Use Magic Device
+11

Languages Common

Gear studded leather armor,
+2 scimitar, shortbow



Welcome To The Maelstrom

The Maelstrom is what happens when you're tripping the razor's edge between the solid and Ethereal and you run out of land. The spirit realm keeps on going, more or less forever, kept afloat by a steady stream of Pulse; it's pretty much composed of 'beyond the edge of the map' territory. There's no longer anything with which to anchor the dizzying burst of spiritual emanations, so everything really goes nuts. The far reaches are a chaotic display of power and light and color, where dreams and beliefs tangle with the unthinkable. The logic of mortals is likely to get one killed here unless tempered with equal shots of willpower and legend.

Out beyond this weirdness lies the Veil, a barrier that signals the end of the mortal realms and beyond which exists the endless roiling Pulse of the Maelstrom. There is very little solid ground within the Maelstrom, and what substance does exist was created by the gods as bastions of order amid the ever-changing patterns. The mountain of Olympus is just a giant cloud of raw Pulse sculpted by Zeus and the other Greek gods into forested slopes and marble columns. Fly too far from its sylvan splendor though, and the eternal storm resumes once more. This is the playground of the gods, their laboratories and natural habitat. Great, grand ideas have room to grow without the small hindrances of finite realms, feeding off the chaotic energies until they influence the fates of millions or collapse under their own bloated weight.

Most pantheons echo the example of the Greeks, shaping a comfortable corner of the Maelstrom into a form that suits them. These are the sections of the Maelstrom that most heroes will be visiting: domains called Immortal Realms that follow a semblance of earthbound rules. These focus points can range in size from a single, chicken-legged hut to an entire realm populated by the scions of an alien intelligence. The deep reaches of the Maelstrom have their pleasures as well, but they are primarily reserved for madmen and martyrs.



Entering The Maelstrom

Without a god's protection the mere act of entering the Maelstrom would be enough to turn most mortals into sticky statistics as their soul collapses from the huge psychic pressure of crossing the Veil. Luckily for the characters, the standard-issue Telesma cushions the impact. There are still conceptual predators, nomadic gods' spawn, and mimetic parasites to deal with, but basic existence is possible.

Even after dealing with the Maelstrom's sensory overload and its inhabitants, it's not the greatest place for a mortal to vacation. The air feels thick, like a leaden apron tossed over a storm. That feeling is all around because there's no hard distinction between ground, sky, or water. Instead it's all closer to a gelatinous, cosmic gumbo. This isn't to say that slogging through the Maelstrom is anything like drifting through lukewarm chowder. It's more akin to a dream of flying, although many denizens prefer rather to swim or simply... move.

New visitors to the Maelstrom find themselves hovering perfectly still as the landscape swirls past at a breakneck pace. Trying to interact with the cacophony of energy is as appetizing as diving into a maelstrom (aha!). A lot of first-timers try running and discover that they can move forward even though their feet strike nothing solid. Others sit down and find themselves sinking like they're in adventure movie quicksand. It won't devour them, though it will get ether into all sorts of unpleasant nooks and crannies.

Terrestrial boundaries disappear as soon as anyone tries moving vertically in the Maelstrom. Although a thought is all that's necessary, creatures from most realms are more comfortable pumping their legs as if climbing a steep slope or making arms-extended flying gestures. It's initially enough to throw anybody for a loop, especially those versed in two-dimensional tactics. Every direction becomes a potential ambush point, every patch of 'ground' somebody else's 'up'. The unsurpassed mobility can be viewed less cynically as well; some of those who visit the Maelstrom cavort like small children, spinning, leaping, turning circles and swooping like birds, twirling toward infinity through sheer force of will.

As if the Maelstrom wasn't dangerous enough to linear-thinking squares, time flows differently there. The daily grind as we know it doesn't exist within the Maelstrom. How could it? It touches upon every second of all realities, both bizarre and blasé, simultaneously. Upon first entering the Maelstrom, every living being drags a portion of their home realm's chonal flow with them, like an invisible bubble. Over time (as you understand it), this pocket full of hours begins to decay.

On the GM-side, that means you have full and proper authority to play around with time when the characters exit the Maelstrom. Maybe they've been sloppy or had to leave in a dash, so they end up ten years in the future. Perhaps someone's spending too much time in the Maelstrom and not enough time being a hero? Oops, better get to work before his supply of native time runs out. Instantaneous aging ain't pretty.

If you want a neatly ordered sense of time then go with relative chronology instead – time passes one second at a time for the characters whether they're in a mortal realm or in the Maelstrom. Ten years of character time ages them ten years. It's easy to fathom and many of us find it comforting. Traversing the Pulse currents between immortal realms, though, it doesn't have to be that way. Time is as flexible as everything else out there.

Mapping The Maelstrom

As a domain of endless potential, it would be impossible to chronicle what every corner of the Maelstrom is like. At the same time, it would be an act of high treachery to throw you to the wolves unarmed. As a happy compromise, we've provided examples of some of the Maelstrom's most visited hotspots. This is by no means a comprehensive list; the price-point for infinitely-paged tomes is pretty awful, in these troubled times.

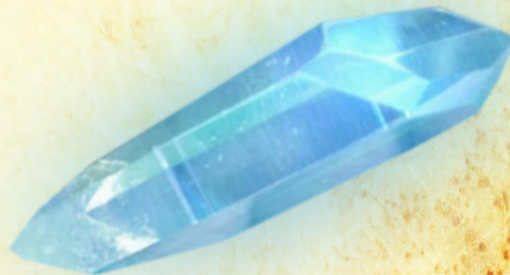
There's one thing to bear in mind about the immortal realms, those permanent places created in the Maelstrom by gods and great spirits: these realms feel just as solid and real as any physical realm across the Veil (well, unless its creator wants an abstract region to live in). The immortal realms of the gods are places where spirits and visitors from the physical world interact equally. The boundary between spirit and solid worlds is blurred in most Maelstrom realms.

Realm-Jumping Neophytes

In the Player's Section, we hinted that it's possible for Neophyte characters to go from realm to realm rather than waiting to hit Folk Hero rank. Anything's possible, but you'll need to take care how you make it happen. The Maelstrom is a dangerous place which Neophyte characters will be ill-suited to handle. As a result, the best way to travel is to find another way. Our suggestion is to use the network of atrophied portals.

Many portals eventually stiffen and close up entirely, no longer letting characters through to the other side of the Veil. At that point they cease to be important... mostly. Heroes and demigods stop using them, taking alternative routes instead. However, some of these ancient portals still have a little life in them, and given enough of a jump start they might open from the mortal realms, even if they can't push through to the Maelstrom.

Where do they go? That's where the spirits of the Veil come in, linking the portals up inside the Veil itself. Yes, there are spirits living inside the Veil, as you'll discover when you get to the campaign later on. These spirits use the old network of portals to tunnel from one place to another, say from modern Manhattan to ancient Greece. There's no map of this network, and the links keep changing at the whim of the spirits, making it a perfect opportunity for lots of Neophyte adventures. It's not the conventional way of doing things, but it's possible. We'll let you figure out how the characters discover these portals and get them working.





Realm Of The Archangels

The Goddess Trinity is worshipped by her Hussar faithful in Suzerain's Untamed Empires realm. She is the Goddess, the Light, formless but eminently beautiful. She remains distant from her followers, delivering all communication through her council of Archangels. In Her Maelstrom realm, the Archangels' winged magnificence is the word of the Goddess, and they rule in Her name. Yet each of the pearly-white towers that rise from the clouds of Her realm is home to many other servants, including thousands of lower-ranked angels. Any visiting mortals are likely to live among them, lulled to sleep by the sourceless celestial choirs, despite the eternal brightness that lights the clouds with a diffuse white glow.

However, there is another side to this realm. A dark and shadowy side. Down, through the clouds under the foundations of those glorious towers there is perpetual night, lit only by the unending fires of war and torment. Here, deep below, is the home of the Dark One, an Archangel who was cast down in chains for his transgressions against the Light. The Dark One slowly bleeds out in his rusted prison, kept conscious only by the souls fed to him by his demonic spirits. Twisted and bitter, he is utterly evil; rare is the soul that is not subjected to hellish tortures before being consumed.

Where Light and Dark meet, there is an endless war being fought, with angels defending the base of their towers against waves of demons who hurl themselves at the gates above, clawing for freedom. For now, the Dark One remains caged in the lowest reaches of the realm, unable to breach the formidable defenses of his prison. But he has started a new war, a war of propaganda against Trinity and her angels.

On every world where Trinity is worshipped, heroes of devil-kind seek to infiltrate Her churches and strike at the untempered souls of Her clergy. If they can be turned toward heresy, the powers of the Archangels will falter, and the Dark One will gain new grist for his ever-thrumming engines of despair.

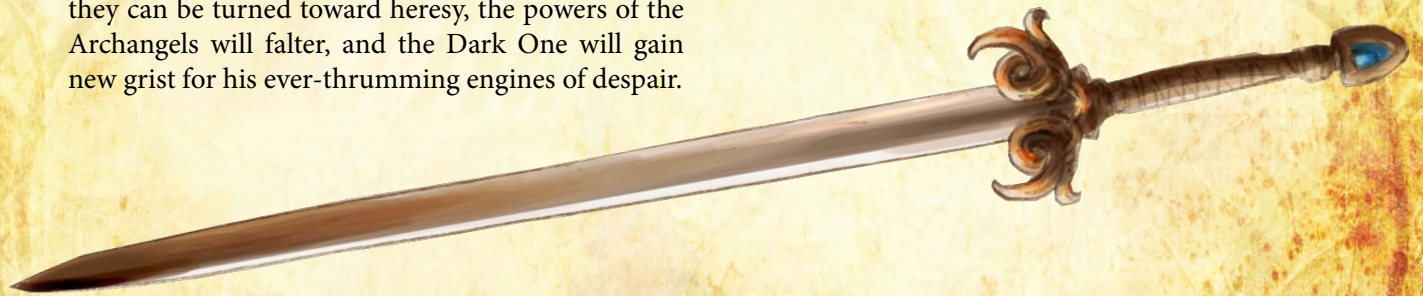
Realm Of Yggdrasil

The Realm of Yggdrasil appears in the Maelstrom as a giant oak tree with a huge snake wrapped around its entire length. Any who seek to enter must first navigate past the perimeter created by its snapping maw. Lord Odin, ruler of the realm, encourages the serpent. It's a fine first challenge for any who seek his pantheon of warrior gods or their thanes.

In the years before the beginning, Lord Odin and his allies fought a valiant war against a race of feral spirits who had powers equal to the gods themselves. The invaders struck deep and fast, tunneling straight to the core of Odin's realm. Its native civilizations fell one by one, buried with their honor intact. Odin's last remaining allies rallied and sealed the invaders on the site of their final battle, weaving a labyrinth of wood and courage in which to imprison them. This maze became the roots of Yggdrasil, the World Tree.

Inside the trunk of the tree is a world similar to our own, with cities, mountains, and lakes. Several different layers exist here, massive continents floating above, below, or even beside each other. It's not uncommon for a traveler to see cascading waterfalls tumbling from layers above, falling impossible distances, to finally pool into one massive ocean. Heroes from all over visit frequently, to trade, gamble, or to seek employment. As a result, many different leaders have emerged to make terrible war against the realm's cities, historic monuments, and layers. This sort of behavior is not only allowed by the ruling gods, it's encouraged. After all, it's only through the fiery furnaces of trial and tribulation that great heroes will emerge and provide guidance for the chosen people. The gods are always on the lookout for such hero potential, sometimes even appearing in person and giving the proper nudges and hints.

Inside the branches of the World Tree, Odin has created his grand palace of Valhalla and locked it



away from the rest of the realm. Only brave warriors who have died in a great battle are allowed inside the broad halls of Valhalla. Odin's Valkyries are constantly sent out into the mortal realms in search of brave warriors, and if a mortal is deemed worthy he is guided by the maidens back to Valhalla.

Deep inside the roots of Yggdrasil, the feral god-spirits have not forgotten their embarrassing defeat. Having secretly broken the bonds of their prison long ago, they travel the Maelstrom and the mortal realms looking for allies, gathering their strength, slowly infiltrating the hearts of those who follow Odin, luring them to commit acts of cowardice and treason. One day, when they are ready, they will surge out of the roots of Yggdrasil and once more clash on the battlefield with their hated rivals. This time they won't lose.

Realm Of The Pure Mages

The Realm of the Pure Mages is a cosmic concert of scientific genius and raw mathematics. From the outside, it looks like a giant, ever-shifting puzzle box that completely reconfigures itself every hour, on the hour. Each of its 108 different layers is a self-contained world governed by the strictest scientific principles. These principles vary from layer to layer, always containing new systems to observe and integrate. Each world has, at its core, a riddle of sorts that, if solved, unlocks a door to the next layer. After the final layer resides the creators: the pure mages.

The pure mages don't consider themselves 'gods,' in the religious sense of the term, but rather believe they are sentients who have unlocked the great mysteries of the universe and have transcended their mortal frames as a result. For all intents and purposes, each of them is a god-rank character, but this is due to evolution and self-purification rather than any degree of belief or wizard tricks.

It's a rare event for any traveler to complete a circuit of the 108 realms, but rumors claim that great rewards await any who succeed. Many try, but few are able to wrap their minds around the abstruse mathematical riddles and secular challenges that stud the trail. If anyone actually makes it, a seat among the pure mages themselves awaits... If the rumors are to be believed.

The inner sanctum of the pure mages is marked by bio-organic architecture designed to replicate a perfectly balanced cycle of life and death. It's lit by fractal pocket universes, which cast the light of a thousand miniature suns from each floating encasement. The optimal position for every aspect of sanctuary has been computed in advance, but new experiments are always spilling out from behind their reinforced lab doors.

Although the pure mages don't overly concern themselves with the subjective realities outside their labs, they do make it a point to intercede in events that supposedly break the laws of science. "Rubbish!" they scoff. "A sufficiently developed science can explain anything, given enough will." To this end, many followers of the pure mages find themselves sent on fact-finding missions to the most nonsensical of realms.

Realm Of Mount Olympus

Among the Maelstrom's psychotic momentum, there aren't too many landmarks. Mount Olympus is one of them – and the only one where the roast mutton can honestly be called mythical. This realm is the abode of Zeus, Hera, and the rest of the god-spirits of Greek myth. From the air, it's a sprawling landscape of verdant valleys and snow-covered mountains, whose roots reach deeper than the basement of the World Tree. The walled city of Olympus tops the peak of the tallest mountain, shining into the Maelstrom like a marvelous, fractured beacon of stained glass and back-alley intrigue.

Spirits and heroes from a library's worth of mythology books call this massive city their home. During the day, even its spacious courtyards are packed with teaming bodies and busy hands. It's a city of art and light, saturated with marketplaces bearing goods from across the realms. Locals tend to keep from the wilder markets, preferring to live in line with the Classical ideal.

The god-spirits who created this realm are far more involved with the lives of their subjects than most gods, and are often seen administering justice to individuals who anger, displease, or irk them. This is a cause of continued strife in Olympus, as it's difficult to please all of the gods all of the time. Zeus is the

undisputed ruler, but those who he favors tend to get in trouble with the other gods, who are as jealous as they are bold. Each of the gods and goddesses who make Olympus their home has a string of palaces and shrines in the city, as well as a hand-picked priesthood to watch over them and act as a private spy network.

The favored shrine of each god is equal parts ministry of propaganda, center of religious ceremonies, and awe-inspiring collection of marble columns. Individually, each building is a wonder; together they're one of the sights of the Maelstrom. Functionality and craftsmanship kiss lewdly in the ivy-strewn halls, conspiring archly over the heads of senators and their shrine intermediaries. Unofficially, the shrines serve as the center of Olympus's government, as each of the priesthoods holds a great deal of influence among the elected senate of wise senior spirits.

Apart from their individual vendettas, the gods take little notice of the day-to-day affairs of the city dwellers. As long as their rules are being followed, they care not who gets stabbed, what gets stolen, or what breed of shady deals are being made. Such concerns don't pose any danger to them or their realm, and are thus beneath their notice. As a result, several interlocking hives of criminals and malcontents ferment inside the city walls, and political murder has taken on an almost festival air.

Realm Of Fire

At a glance the Realm of Fire seems like a place no mortal would want to go. It's hot and dry enough that the locals have over two-hundred different words for 'hot', most of them on the far side of 'blisteringly unpleasant'. The realm's most generally acceptable features are its ubiquitous lava fields, marred only by



the occasional pyroclastic surge. Serpentine creatures wend beneath the surface in violent dance, but those mortals who have viewed the mysteries can be counted on one charred hand.

The inhabited regions of the Realm of Fire are more controversial in travelers' minds. Yes, they can always be counted on for a nice, warm bed or a piping hot drink. Unfortunately, the inhabitants aren't exactly friendly. They live in the only habitable corner of the realm -- although legends of an inverted volcano archipelago persist despite lack of concrete information. The inhabited oasis is located in the middle of an ever-burning forest, with rings of geysers and steam tunnels running above and below.

This is the Pyre, a grim, high walled town of soot and stone. The town is a lawless one, but only because of the mercurial nature of its iron-clawed enforcers. These native spirits can enter and leave the blazing flames at will, and thus care little for those who must hide behind the chimney-brick barrier. They care more about the hateful efreets, who ever plot the Pyre's downfall from their desert island of black sand.

Deep in the furnace realm stands a singular mountain top, which pierces the sulfurous clouds that roll across the glowing sea. It's here where the Great Spirit of Fire surveys its realm, pondering. It has been said that the Great Spirit of Introspection posed it a riddle eons ago, and is still waiting for a response.

The Red Realm

The color red is symbolic of so many things such as romantic love and passion. Once, these elements were in harmony with the more violent aspects of 'redness' and the Red Realm was a balanced place. Not any more. The Great Spirit of Red had been descending into rage and pain, blood and anger, all the negative aspects of the color. He associated with the Great Spirit of Hate, whose influence is everywhere. Finally, sickened by what he was becoming, the realm's creator fled his creation and is rumored to be building a new realm elsewhere.

These days, the Red Realm is a sore upon the Maelstrom, a merciless tangle of rusty iron fortresses and crumbling bloodstone towers. It's a dark and twisted land, clouded by the stench of ever-present

swamps and the deafening buzz of predatory insects that swarm the bloody River Crimson. Giant rats, spiders, scorpions, and more terrifying beasts provide additional hazards, most of them carrying diseased and poisonous bites.

This harsh realm now serves two purposes. The first is as a hunting preserve and testing ground for the Great Spirit of Hate's malevolent creations. Only the nastiest of fiends would be allowed to express the great spirit's utter contempt for creation.

Since the Great Spirit of Red left, the realm has been locked in a power struggle between the lesser native spirits. This spiritual battle royale centers on the Desolation Engine, a nightmare factory from the Great Spirit of Hate, where negatively charged Pulse is transformed directly into bitter monstrosities.

Because of what it has become, the Red Realm's second notable purpose is a prison, used by gods and other beings of god-like power. Evil mortals that can't be killed due to prophecies, curses, or potential political backlash are deposited here to suffer for their ability to evade death. Trust us, this is not a place the characters want to end up. Not unless your players like a good challenge.

Realm Of Ascendant Order

The Great Spirit of Order looked upon the shrieking Maelstrom and was appalled at the furious disharmony in its clashing elements. It was as the din of copper pot cymbals to his refined ears.

With a shake of his heavenly mane, stars died and he declared war on the very nature of the Maelstrom. Compromise was not possible. The Realm of Ascendant Order stands as a redoubt against the raw power of the outside universe, a perfectly measured society that is nevertheless in a state of constant war.

In this ever-expanding fortress realm, the numbers of the great spirit's troops swell regularly thanks to pilgrimages made by strong-willed mortal heroes. Any sentient with order in his heart is given one of the great spirit's scales to wear as armor in the grand crusade. As the wearer's sense of devotion to justice increases, he syncs with the scale causing it to grow into a massive construct of solid Pulse. For this reason, the great spirit grants special boons to crusaders who join before attaining adolescence.

Saved from the confusing influence of the outside world, none are able to doubt their devotion to order or to beating back the eternal wave of the Maelstrom.

To some, the mighty walls of the Realm represent the epitome of divine creation, standing proud as seas of Pulse crash against them and are repelled. To others, the same walls are an unnatural abomination, holding back the pure and natural chaos of the Maelstrom. By choosing to wage war on the very nature of the Maelstrom, the Great Spirit of Order has made friends of orderly-minded gods, but others whisper the word 'hubris' and eagerly await his downfall.

Here's another example of an inhabitant of the god realms:

Lords Of Order

Each scale of the Great Spirit of Order is an individual Lord of Order. However, the term is more commonly used to refer to the fusion of a scale with a mortal host. The paired organism forms one being, like a knight wearing a sentient suit of armor. As the mortal's devotion to justice and order strengthens, the godscale evolves in shape and power. Initially it looks like armor formed of semi-opaque Pulse. Mid-ranking Lords of Order tower above their underlings, reaching 12 to 15 feet in height, their war masks resembling the fierce but noble features of mythical beasts. The elite among them no longer wear armor, instead operating immense machines made of pure light, with additional armament befitting their gigantic stature. Eyebeams are a good start... but really, we're going to need missiles too.

Fey Realm Of Dreams

The realm of the fey is a magical place where Pulse-laden breezes blow like an eternal spring night. Wild, picturesque forests cover most of the realm, each gnarled and ancient tree dusted with enough greenery to hide the grasping branches beneath. Animals frolic in great abundance, satisfying the fondest of dreams and rending flesh with every star-blessed leap and flicker of their shapely forms. The sameness of the forest is broken from time to time with radiant fields of flowers that could dope a crash of rhinos, and gentle peaks of beauty and terror. Underneath run crystalline caves that spiral downward into the soil's frozen heart. Travel down

and you shortly emerge on a new landscape, the upside down of the realm above... or are they the other way around? This reversed twin is identical to the land above, but day replaces night and night replaces day, always the opposite where fair becomes foul, deadly become benign.

The rare thatched cottage, surrounded by well-kept apple orchards, are the only signs of civilization in either land, but they're more unsettling than comforting. Who would live so casually in such a place, where a single breath could kill?

At night, the moon gives off an eerie glow like the Great Fey Spirit's single, winking eye. This is when the realm's true masters come out to play. They are the fair-folk of Earth's legends, the mind-killers of colonial Mars, and the bright-eyed revelers who flit across a thousand realms. They are silly faeries who spin razor-ribbon garlands, industrious sidhe who craft gemstone mazes never meant to be seen by mortal eyes, and many other types of fey besides. The trees move as they see fit, going from diversion to diversion with patience unshared by the smaller beings, whose lives are measured in mere centuries. Fragments of world-shattering incantations mingle with children's rhyme, carried ever onward by the multi-layered lovers' lips, and all is right with the realm.

Great power and insight can be found in the Fey Realm of Dreams, but their acquisition is a task unlike most. Conventional logic does not apply, nor do the prevailing mores of Suzerain, where daring heroics are rewarded. Instead, the masters of the realm are those who can understand dream logic, with all its symbolic traps and abstract forms. Nothing is what it seems to be on the surface, except when it actually is. Familiar faces and echoes of the past reveal themselves in the most innocuous of places, first taunting visitors then bowing gladly to their wills, before spinning off once more into the night.

It's said the fey are able to cross the Veil directly from their realm, visiting the dreams of sleeping men and manifesting in their world during the night time hours, bringing the dreams (and sometimes the dreamers) back with them. If so, they have one of the few conduits between the mortal and immortal realms that don't require portals. This may be a useful thing to remember for your games....



Travels In Time And Space

With all the upcoming information about time travel, this is a good place to explain exactly what characters of each rank are able to do. Heroes are able to use the Maelstrom to travel through time and space. Demigods are able to do all that as well as knock down the doors into alternate realities.

What this means is that Folk Hero rank characters can reach any conceivable type of world or setting or genre, but not alternate versions of existing places. For example, the characters can't go to a 1970s Europe where the Allies lost World War II. Why not? It doesn't exist as part of the 'prime reality'. That said, there are plenty of blank spots on the cosmic map of reality, just like that chart from *Time Bandits*. Remember that? If not, go rent the movie; it's a good model for an atypical Suzerain campaign that dials down the heroics a few notches.

What we're getting at is this - even if your campaign is set in the 'real world', feel free to spice it up. In the distant past, Camelot existed if you say it did. If you want there to be centaurs in enchanted parts of ancient Greece and modern archaeologists have just mistaken their remains for man/horse mass graves, then that's what really happened. Another option is that most of the weird aspects of ancient history have been obscured as a result of, say, Zeus showing up and leaving huge Pulse ripples wherever he trod during his searches for comely females. Really, it's no surprise the gods have an agreement to stay out of the mortal realms after something like that happens a few times.

As for the future, that's unwritten. If you say that there's a cyberpunk cityscape realm in the future, so be it. After the technocratic oligarchy that funds that city crumbles, why not have the realm grow into one of shiny starships-and-spandex sci-fi? No problem there. Even the grandest utopia can't last though, so there's also room for a scoured post-apocalyptic world of genetic rejects and filthy scavengers. Not every era needs to be plotted out before the story begins, but it's a fun thought exercise to fill your notebook. Just remember to leave space for your heroes!

Once you decide on the core events of your Continuum, past, present, and possibly future, it's

your Suzerain. That's your supplement-spanning metaplot, right there! But once you've set reality, it's concrete for Folk Hero rank characters and below, with the standard battery of provisos and notable exceptions. Full-out alternate histories, like Viking Mars or the Earth where the Black Death killed 99% of Europe, are reserved for Demigod rank characters. Theirs is a noble stature, able to cross into That Which Never Was with impunity.

Of Travel: Portals

The Maelstrom and the mortal realms - both spiritual and physical - are bound together, much like two twists of bread braided into a single loaf. Just like those twists, there are points where the two planes touch and points where they are farther apart. At points of contact between the two planes, the Veil is the most receptive to being crossed. Gods use these regions to pry into the mortal realms, gather their agents, and generally play havoc with the whole 'free will' game. Travelers who have tired of their own realms also frequent these weak points between realities. You know these places as portals.

On the Maelstrom side, portals are visible as hungry-edged patches of darkness or light, little more than shadows or subtle auras. The mortal world isn't as lucky: go solid-side and portals are much more difficult to notice - in fact, they are invisible to anyone without the necessary mystical sight. Telesmae have the ability to sense portals, and it's rumored that a wizard once trained a portal-sniffer dog. Otherwise, most people can't see them.

Portals aren't absolutely necessary for travel to and from the Maelstrom. The gods can breach the Veil at other points, but only do so in times of dire emergency. That said, they have an agreement not to enter the mortal realms in person - not since a string of incidences that embarrass them to talk about. They rely on their representatives to, well, represent them. That's why heroes are so important to them. Even the most black-hearted rabble-rouser will stick to these rules; if nothing else, godhood is about politics on the big screen.

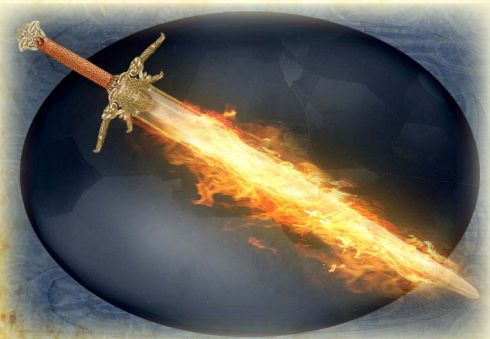
Portals don't stay open long; Telesmae can force them open for a while, but only the gods have the power to hold a portal open indefinitely. A portal might also have material defenses... which means

when it does open, it's showtime! Spirits surge forward to hit the next stop on their structured pilgrimages, desperate prisoners hop worlds without a second glance, and plots that may have been decades in the making receive their vital shock. Portal-jumping will become pretty routine if the characters are good at their jobs, but that doesn't mean that it can't also be wonderful. This is the safety valve on reality popping open; take that as license to be unexpected.

But wait! Fun with portals doesn't end there. Gods and heroes aren't the only ones who know about portals. Demons, spirits, and demonic spirits know all about portals, as do villains of a more arcane bent. Given the chance, they could use portals as choke points where they ambush the characters.

Some scholars have theorized that portals are the source of magic in the mortal realms. Pulse flows through them like water from the grand reservoir of the Maelstrom. If this is true, damming up a realm's portals would not only put a lock on inter-realm travel, but put a number of honest wizards out of their jobs. Far be it for us to suggest that only magic-hating simpletons would want to put a stranglehold on portal operation, however. They do add a random element to the terrain that causes city planner and tree-hugger alike cause for concern.

Common opinion among portal-watchers is that the landscape surrounding portals tends to take a turn for the... uncommon. This may have some truth to it, if only because the gods are more likely to send their agents through at those points and because those with mystic sight may be drawn to portals out of curiosity. Also, some portals leak traces of latent Pulse into their surroundings, which tend to soak into the ground, imbuing local trees, water supplies, and animals with supernatural abilities. Use that to create weird and wonderful locations at your discretion.



Talk About Moving

Remember, you can make time travel as difficult or as effortless as you like. What kind of mood are you going for? Do you want to ruffle the minds of your more impressionable players by messing with their senses, or will the group just brush you off as an armchair thespian? Consider the mood of the night and tailor your dramatics accordingly. Sometimes it's fun to drag out the process, describing in detail what it's like to feel your atoms pulled apart as your very being is sieved through the barrier that is the Veil, every iota strained through that filter and barely allowed passage, then slowly and painfully reassembled at the other end, back safe in the mortal realms. However, that can get old after the first few sessions, just like stock footage in a low-budget action show. Unless you're mixing it up and the group is staying entertained, "You push through the portal, faces almost blistering from the heat of the volcano on the other side", should be enough.

Put another way, how does your favorite movie treat scenes where the main characters are riding their horses, driving their car, or otherwise moving from place to place? Is it just an assumed action, unworthy of your time? Does it build suspense, highlighting the special nature of the characters? Or is it not a statement about the characters at all, but a chance to focus on the sweep of the background? Consider a bedraggled caravan, tiny as it struggles against stinging winds and never-ending hills. Here, the focus is not on the caravan, but the dangers that the travelers are hazarding on the way to the exciting part of their adventure.

Alternatively, try using portal travel to key the players in to how a scene sounds and feels before they arrive. Imagine two criminals, meeting in the ruins of an abandoned cathedral. They are grateful for the rain, for nobody else would be out on such a rotten night. One of them hears voices. He tenses, ready to bolt. His comrade assures him that it's nothing. The voices get louder. Ghostly faces appear, laughing and jeering. Your characters burst through the Veil, interrupting the deal. The thieves scatter! You've established a mood for the realm, and everyone has just arrived.

Another way to interact with portals is to play up their attachment to objects in the mortal realm. Some portals masquerade as common items - which doesn't mean they always go unnoticed, however. While it's unlikely anybody would suspect anything amiss about a portal hidden at the back of a stuffy wardrobe, a free-standing drawbridge, or a glittering force-door at the peak of a mountain are more conspicuous.

Then there's the prospect of additional defenses to deal with. Some defenses are built by the local populace, such as barricades and warning signs placed around a pulsating rift in the sky. Others are created by the portal itself in order to blend in with its surroundings. Examples include a rusted iron lock and a numeric keypad whose combination is only known by the local electricity spirits. Not every portal needs to be as ostentatious, but remember that they are an option - especially when characters are Unlucky or on a travel god's bad side.

The Veil

Because the Maelstrom exists outside time, it overlaps the mortal realms, both solid and spiritual, at every point simultaneously. The barrier between the two is the milky, cloudy Veil. It's not unknown for heroes to dive into the past to match arms and minds with the great legends before flashing forward to the future to complete their training. In fact, we encourage it. Shake hands with your idols and save your grandchildren from your crazy mistakes! It'll create a story with a personal timeline as well as a worldwide one.

Before setting off on the time traveler's Top Three (the Crucifixion, JFK, and the Second Great Robot War), be warned: heroes aren't the only ones who have access to time travel. Craven villains who would fain strike from the shadows of the past rather than enter a head-on confrontation prefer this route. To make the characters' jobs even more difficult, Maelstrom travelers aren't limited to 'official' timelines and histories - even places we would consider the stuff of myth, legend or idle speculation have their place in the Maelstrom. Not all of them, mind you, but enough to make one wonder if the writers of ancient tales knew more than they were letting on.



What this means is that you can travel to any time period, any setting, and any genre. 1940s New York, where two-faced triple-crossers match wits with steely-eyed dames and men of tarnished honor? Not a problem. A medieval fantasy world where knights battle acid-tongued dragons? You hardly need our help on that one. How about a realm of silicon and high-impact plastic torn asunder by virtual hotshots and dripping biological monstrosities? Absolutely.

The only limit's what you can get away with. There are some guidelines to avoid the worst excesses of time travel and multiversal goat rodeos, however. Demigods and higher are able to muck around with these guidelines, but we'll get to that later on. Let's focus on characters up to Folk Hero rank for now.

The foremost guideline for realm travel is that outsiders follow the realm's rules rather than vice-versa. This means outsiders' internal clocks synchronize to whatever realm they visit. There's no outrunning Death by continually sprinting into the past, or hiding in pocket realms with favorable choral exchange rates. Everyone dies one minute at a time, heroes included. That's one of the reasons immortality is typically painted as being so appealing.

As a side effect of internal choral synchronization, no individual can exist more than once in the same point of time – at least, not without some serious wiggling. If the wily White Warlock fails in his mission to lift the Amulet of Greed from Victorian London, he can't simply re-enter his favorite portal and try again under the same conditions. Every time he jumps to Victorian London, he'll always appear where and when he left, plus as much time as went by according to his internal clock. If it was midnight on May 9, 1871, and he leaves for exactly 24 hours, he can try to come back a few days earlier, or a few miles away, but he'll end up in the same place he left at midnight on May 10, 1871. If he tries to reappear using a portal that's in Paris, he'll still wind up in London, at the same portal he left by. If he wants another shot at the Amulet of Greed, it will have to be through more conventional measures, such as mystically tracking it to its new location. It's not the phenomenal cosmic power that merchant gods make realm travel out to be, but at least it keeps the timeline intact. Those who aren't as accepting of such petty restrictions have an additional reason to strive to become demigods.

What's the limit to an anchor point's stickiness? Wiser minds than us have tried to calculate it, and were only able to settle upon a general rule of thumb. Here it's: characters appearing within a decade of the point they have already visited, or within a few hundred miles, tend to snap into the same anchor point as they have already established. Anchors do fade over time though, and lose their stickiness. Give it a few years (according to the character's internal clock) and it shouldn't be any trouble at all to use new, nearby portals.

From a GM's perspective, it may be easier to establish a handful of popular eras and limit the players' access to portals leading anywhere else. For example, throughout the course of their adventures, the characters discover portals to 12,000 BC, 1,000 AD, 1,999 AD, and 2,300 AD. After a year of adventure, each portal will kick forward to 12,001 BC, 1,001 AD, 2,000 AD, and 2,301 AD. You would then only be responsible for four realms, each connected by time's bonds, rather than the myriad suggested by unchecked time travel.

That said, rampant time jumps can have a rush like none other. It's exciting to go to different places, especially if they're linked by a little thing like shared history. The Maelstrom connects to every time and place that can be imagined, even if they aren't always the easiest to enter. Maelstrom-side threats, choral synchronization lock-outs, and especially well-hidden portals are three common limits to finding such realms as the Land Where My Hero is Praised as an Eternal Super King. A final difficulty is the opacity of the Veil. Even the gods have a distorted view of what's on the other side. A character might think he was going to ancient Rome and wind up in a Romanesque fantasy world instead.

Of course, this uncertainty is part of what makes time travel so exciting – realm travelers never know where they'll wind up, even with an air-tight promise from the mouths of angels. That confusion helps keep the elite few from taking too many vacations, forcing them to be ready to adapt at a moment's notice. It also makes those rare adrenaline jockeys who flip through realms as if they were infomercials into patron saints for heroes and fools, both.

Elastic History

Adventures being what they are, it's easy to imagine some over-zealous hero killing the wrong butterfly or romancing the wrong grandmother and irrevocably changing the course of the future. This is a time-travel game, after all. Certain shenanigans are to be expected. So what's to stop a gang of dissatisfied historians from appearing in London every week to assassinate Churchill, and then bopping over to America and killing off FDR? What if they prevent the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Won't that allow the Axis powers to win the war?

Nope. Every time anybody has tried that, they return to the Maelstrom to discover it had been a security stand-in for Churchill, Eleanor masqueraded as FDR for the rest of his term, and back-up bombs were already in place to carry out the bombing run. The Japanese surrendered, Hitler disappeared and was presumed dead, and the Allies won.

So what does that mean? Is history unchangeable? Is man's life really without purpose?

Not entirely. The way it works is this: Each timeline is given structure by a number of nexus points. These nexuses are key people, places, items, and events throughout history. Alexander the Great, Hitler, FDR, JFK, Stalin, Lenin, Nelson Mandela – all of these people were nexuses. They were crucial to our history, which means they're crucial to the timeline. The individuals aren't as important as their actions and the repercussions of those actions, but the individuals do gain a degree of universal significance as a result. The timeline fiercely protects its nexuses, rolling and shifting lesser figures to ensure that the basic shape of time remains stable. God-level intellects who are able to compute billions of independent variables at a time are able to maneuver around nexus points if necessary, but even then there are many risks requiring countless teams of agents. Demigods are able to affect more temporary nexus changes, but more on that back on page 10.

When a realm traveler steps through a portal he carries traces of both Veil and Maelstrom with him. Those clearly mark him as an intruder, an out-of-place element, and the timeline senses that the newcomer does not belong. The realm tolerates his presence –

the gods and their Telesmae have too much power for him to be thrown out on his ear – but it relaxes the timeline to accommodate any potential interference.

Once the intruder disappears back into the Maelstrom, the timeline tightens back up, shifting everything back into place like an expert butler after a surprise house party. Minor changes are overlooked and are left alone; treasures can be plundered, Extras can be slaughtered, and the potential for change exists. If a nexus has been altered or removed, the timeline notices and flies into overdrive to repair the damage. Coincidence and happenstance conspire to draw bystanders into the nexus's place and carry out the actions it should have performed. If the nexus was forced into acting out-of-type, the realm minimizes that damage as well; Ghandi's not getting a 12-step lesson in knife-fighting in our game. In the long run, history continues as it always has.

Killing Hitler when he's a young man doesn't prevent World War II, it just means some other young man steps up and assumes Hitler's name and identity and continues his plans. Funny thing – turns out it was never Hitler at all, but some stand-in working for a secret organization of dubiously defined power. Your players may have revealed a greater conspiracy, and they should feel proud. If that's not enough, and they travel back to defeat that organization, they find that World War II still happens because of another set of factors that they hadn't even considered. Pinpointing all of the elements that support nexus points requires so much hacking through seemingly unconnected eras and events that most attempts end in failure and divine reprisal. Each interconnected network leads to others, and untangling them becomes a task for only the most dedicated. Sydney Bristow from *Alias* was clearly a character from a Suzerain game!

Because of time's elasticity, characters on standard missions can alter the world around them with impunity. Anything too outrageous won't have a lasting effect. Kill a random passerby? Fine. Steal some silverware from the Hindenberg? As much as you like. Leave a radioactive fuel container in a Babylonian well? No such luck. Some other god's troubleshooters will fish it out before it gets out of hand, or a prehistoric sea creature will gulp it down and absorb the worst of it.

But The Future Changed...

Players being as they are, it's pretty likely that at least one per group will become fed up with the elastic nature of time. "What's the point," this hypothetical gamer may ask, "if I can't lord over time and reshape it to my will?" There are options for such players, but be sure to drive home how risky and unlikely the task will be before exploring them. The player is asking for a challenge, so you should take this as an invitation to release some of the limiters on your nasty plots. This is uncharted territory, so the potential for loss should be great. Utter erasure from history is a good place to start for failure, as a great number of gods have vested interest in the stability of their own pet timelines.

If the character still refuses to falter, he will need a guide. Gods are the only intelligences sure to have the necessary processing power for the task, but the Maelstrom is vast and rife with both rebellious great spirits and forgotten god-machines. The hero will also need knowledge of alternative timelines with similar conditions to those he seeks to create. These may be provided by the guide, or experienced directly.

After obtaining a guide, the nexus-cracker will need to actually change the countless number of situations required to unseat the nexus from its original location along the timeline. These should take several fully fleshed adventures, loaded with high octane complications and double-crosses by the fistful. By now you should be able to tell this isn't a process that should be undertaken lightly; it's easily meat enough for an entire campaign!

Traveling Technology

One common feature of time-travel stories is the effect of technology when removed from its original context. The classic example is the "*Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*" – he created gunpowder and firearms back in Arthurian times and made himself the big boss because no one could stand against him. That's dangerous. So what do you do when a pulp-era character goes back to the Stone Age, wielding his twin .45s? Or when a well-meaning futurist starts passing out jetpacks to his favorite samurai? How do you keep that from becoming unbalanced, and from completely shattering the timeline?

Let's talk about balance first. Cavemen are primitive, but not dumb. Every moment of their lives is spent centered on survival. Anyone who has seen *Return of the Jedi* knows where we're going with this one. If that seems too unlikely for your game, consider environmental solutions: ammo gets wet, batteries die, and cavemen are constantly evolving to protect against their key predators. Now we've evened the odds a bit. Likewise, samurai may have little-known cultural biases against the use of jetpacks in all but the most isolated incidents.

The goal here is not to penalize your players by stripping their characters of their equipment and cunning plans. It's all right to do, temporarily, and may force them to come up with some spicy moves to get them back, but what's Johnny Laser without his laser? There are other ways to level the playing field. Let's keep on thinking about those cavemen. Cavemen are far stronger and tougher than people of the twentieth century, and they hit a lot harder – especially if there's no one in the group who cares about anthropology or fossil records. Those stone clubs they wield can really pack a punch; those who weren't so great at clubbing never made it past adolescence. Moreover, they're surprisingly good at flinging those crude, stone-tipped spears while on the run. And that's without unleashing the stampeding mammoths, or the characters worrying about jammed weapons and limited ammo.

Part of the fun of a time travel game is making the characters (and the players) reevaluate a setting. "Oh, the Wild West! What do you mean those guys draw faster than I can, and I was tricked by a rail baron?! I'm their better – their god!" Let the characters and their players see the strengths each setting has to offer, and the dangers. Just because someone has more advanced tech doesn't mean they're more dangerous. Nor does having less tech mean you're going to get crushed – if wily Odysseus were transported to a world of flying cars, he could do an incredible amount of damage despite never having brushed his teeth or shot a gun. That he wouldn't need to rely upon an internal processor for directions means he could stab and trick people out of his way while they're still accessing the mainframe. The human (or dwarf, or gremlin) brain is the best weapon in any setting.

So what sort of impact will inappropriate tech have on a setting? What do the cavemen do when someone shows up with a pistol or a laser? How do the knights react to a man armed with a Tommy gun? Will introducing such devices into a world change its – and our – history?

The short answer is no. Just bringing tech with you won't alter the setting. After all, it's self-contained and will leave again with the character. The cavemen might tell stories and paint pictures of a strange figure who could draw lightning from the sky and strike down those who angered him, and the knights might share tales later of the evil sorcerer who could fling a hail of metal and stone that could pierce armor, but that's all they'll know about it. Even if the objects get left behind, who's going to understand them? You won't find cavemen figuring out how to mix gunpowder and shape bullets, or knights learning how to create a new ammo drum.

Nor will teaching the locals about scientific advances have much effect in the long run. Remember that the timeline protects itself. A character can lecture all he likes about electricity and lightbulbs and the internal combustion engine – once he passes back through the Veil, the Visigoths will only remember him as a strange man with mystic powers and odd notions about lightning and horseless chariots. Detailed drawings will disappear as the years go by or simply become too smudged to read clearly. Journals will get lost or damaged. Stockpiled weapons and machines will rust or be caught in a lava flow. The world will right itself, as it always does.

That's just on the broad scale though. Dry your eyes, tender reader! There's nothing saying that characters can't have fun training a pack of Neanderthals in the use of rifles and leading them against a band of displaced WWI soldiers. Or giving a noble knight a jetpack and a laser gun and setting him loose on a cyberpirate with dreams of creating a new plunderarchy. But the effect will be temporary, and the knowledge will quickly fade back into myths and legends – creating new legends in the process. If used to achieve a goal that would be tougher without it, technology is fine. If used to try and change the way technology will be used once the characters are gone, that just won't work. In short, technology will serve the crazy fun of your game, not break history.



The Gods' Role

The gods are natives of the Maelstrom, as well as its most powerful residents. They've mastered the art of tapping the Maelstrom's power for themselves, and have learned how to ride its timeless wave, seeing from one end to the other at a single glance. With this knowledge, they comprehend how the Maelstrom fits together with each realm, like an enormous trans-dimensional puzzle. The gods are even able to see through the Veil where it's thin... though the picture they get can be somewhat garbled. Their messengers and followers are legion.

Gods are a powerful bunch, but they do have their limits: the other gods for one, and their common agreement to stay out of the mortal realms for another. Despite their subtle cosmic purpose, many gods seek to exert their influence as much as possible. To this end, they engage in politicking and favor-trading on an astronomical scale. If Ochun, She of the Sweet Waters, desires the prayers of a newly sentient race of crystal spheres, she can't just send a few miracles and start reaping the glory. First she makes sure that none of the more powerful gods have interest in the same development. If they do, she builds up a pantheon of smaller gods who will support the move. Some will require later concessions, while others will need a demonstration of the crystal beings' worthiness. This is where the gods' interaction with the heroes of Suzerain begins. Someone needs to defeat the plans of jealous rival gods, gather the gifts from perilous realms, and guide the new race through its travails: heroes!

Many of the gods within the Maelstrom have familiar names: Thor, Hermes, Quetzalcoatl, etc. That's because they've peered into the mortal realms and occasionally stepped on through. Those days are in the past though, consigned to a mythic age of antiquity and maybes. Every realm has its own specific reasons for the gods' eventual withdrawal to the Maelstrom, but it all boils down to the truth that manifesting as showers of gold or horny bulls (that's right Zeus, you're on notice) wasn't doing anyone any favors. In all but the strangest realms, the gods now choose mortals to act as messengers and representatives on the other side of the Veil. In return, the mortals gain a touch of divinity. When a job needs doing in the mortal realms, the gods call upon heroes and demigods to intercede.

Importantly, not every person with a Telesma is beholden to do as the gods ask. There's free will involved, after all. The gods tend to be generous employers though, especially for those who prefer to be paid in glory. Heroes and demigods with more direct divine links have a more traditional god-mortal relationship with the pantheons, but even they are not slaves (unless they happen to worship the God of Tyranny). At Folk Hero rank and higher, characters are rare enough that the gods start to treat them as valued freelancers – as long as they realize that they're still just mortals and keep some semblance of humility.

When needed, a god will call on one or more heroes to travel to particular times and places and perform mighty tasks. Sometimes these tasks don't make a huge amount of sense, but if the Great Fey Spirit needs a prehistoric mountain moved 300m to the right, it's far older, wiser, and more complicated than any mortal. It's perfectly normal to think that the great spirit has gone senile through the eons of its wild revels, but just as common for the eventual truth to seem so natural that it was the only way.

For a GM, it's useful to know that most gods work toward their own goals and don't always do so with other members of their pantheon. For instance, the characters might get visited by Shiva, Loki, Athena and the Archangel Mihel. Though they're part of four different pantheons, together they have a task for the characters – the recovery of a long-lost scroll that's turned up at auction in Madrid in the year 1968. That allows the characters to get friendly with an eclectic mix of divine beings and still find adventures that involve them all. They might well ask why those four gods are so interested in that particular scroll, but figuring out the link is part of the fun that can lead to all sorts of follow-on adventures.

Folk Hero Games

One of our goals with Suzerain is to get you to agree that 'Life begins at 10th level'. While many *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game* campaigns finish around 10th-15th level, Suzerain is just getting started. At 6th level, characters break into the big leagues; they become heroes in the eyes of the Continuum and get a chance to strut their stuff on the universal stage. Here are some thoughts on running games for Folk Hero and Living Legend rank games.

Playing a Folk Hero rank character doesn't have to involve a patron god. Some characters become Folk Hero without ever stepping into the Maelstrom. They simply reach a point in their own development where they grow beyond the role of a normal person, even a normal adventurer. Their abilities and powers increase to levels no regular mortal could hope to attain, powers that appear legendary to those around them. These heroes know nothing of the Maelstrom, the gods, or the Veil – nor do they care. They find their own problems to solve, their own goals to strive toward, and their own enemies to face. And they do all that within their own native setting.

Despite this book's focus on the traveling hero, there's nothing wrong with playing a character who sticks to one realm and timeframe. Not every realm is going to knuckle under the first time a few Folk Hero rank characters get together for a good time, especially expansive ones or regions known for their eye-gouging toughness. A sufficiently advanced sci-fi galaxy will have its fair share of heroes no doubt, able to provide ample challenge to even the most shiny-toothed of star captains.

Sticking to one realm allows characters a chance to focus, cultivate networks of friends and allies, and build far-reaching influence. With that kind of familiarity, the people who the characters meet have time to evolve past their initial, possibly flat, characterizations and into full, complex personalities. As the inner world deepens, its outer counterpart expands similarly. Folk Hero rank characters are skilled enough to influence the fates of nations; even if they stay at home on the dimensional scale, they'll be asked to travel quite a bit by the movers and shakers of their realm.

All Times, All Places

Not everyone wants to be so confined, however. Some players want the excitement of trying different settings and different genres, and doing it without having to change characters or rules systems. For those people, the Maelstrom is the logical next step.

Playing in multiple times and multiple settings can be fascinating. One minute your character is at home in 1930's Chicago, the next he finds himself following a series of esoteric clues back to 13th century France. After discovering the necessary evidence, he's

on a spaceship hurtling toward Alpha Centauri at impossible speeds, and then he's traipsing through fog-shrouded mountains hunting yetis for the final part of the cipher. Playing through different settings keeps everyone on their toes because each realm has its own unique challenges. A character designed for fighting bog mummies isn't going to have an easy time befriending 28th-century socialites, but that's part of the fun. If it's not working out, there's always a new realm through the nearest portal. That way the adventures of Mummysbane Mendoza can continue, even if his career as a futuristic man of mystery is cut short.

Away Missions

One of the realities of a roleplaying game is that it has to fit around everyone's schedule. Often someone can't make a particular session because outside commitments get in the way. We hate that sort of thing, but it's a reality we all face. Although some groups take great joy in watching terrible ill befall characters whose players are absent, we have a different way of handling it.

We tackle this all-too-common problem in Suzerain with... the Maelstrom! Any character with a patron god will have to accept that gods work along different timeframes than mortals. Said god may pluck said hero from the midst of an important mission for a quick check-in. Longer absences are better covered by urgent side missions to nearby realms. These meetings can be played at the leisure of the GM and any absent players, or swept under the rug and left as convenient blanks for filling in later.

Another option is for the gods to call the players who are in attendance to take a sudden side mission, leaving the absent player's character behind to monitor their current task. This is a good time to pursue plot threads the missing character wouldn't necessarily care about. Has a particular NPC been vexing the players who were able to show up for a shortened session? Spin a side mission around her. Are two of the characters money-grubbing hucksters, always at odds with the upstanding-yet-absent character? Give them an excellent adventure where they can indulge in their avarice. What tales survive until the next session will give the returning player added incentive to make it to future games!



If the absent character doesn't have a patron god, it's an opportunity for some new deity to take an interest in him and haul him over to the Maelstrom for a closer look. Dreams and portents work for some, but the real hands-on sort go for full-out kidnapping if the individual in question is anywhere near a portal.

Naturally enough, disappearing characters might need some serious explaining if the group was in the middle of a social encounter when the session starts. Luckily, the timeline has ways of smoothing over the cracks. Perhaps onlookers assume the missing character stepped out to use the restroom, or he's so unmemorable that they barely notice he's gone at all, or any number of other possibilities.

No matter how you handle missing players, the meddling Maelstrom dwellers allow play to continue without a hitch. Better yet, those absences become part of the story itself.

Nature Of The Folk Hero Game

Most Folk Hero games start with a bang. It makes sense – whether the player has been with his character for months or is just introducing him now, the character has suddenly ascended to a new level of power and ability. Something in him has changed – maybe he finally won his mentor's approval and was granted the last secret of his training, maybe he discovered a new aspect of his superpowers, or maybe he suddenly realized he was meant for bigger things than facing down muggers and bank robbers. No matter how it happened, the whole world looks different to the character, and his place in that world has definitely changed. And that requires a big response, a serious dramatic moment.

If the Folk Hero game is an extension of a campaign that progressed through Neophyte, God-touched and Fated then the session after a character advances to Folk Hero rank should begin with a reflection upon this new status. Talk with the player before the session to see if he has any especially cool scenes in mind. Did he finally split the steel bar with his bare hands, swinging his fists through the hammering blows of a mid-summer storm? Does he meet his patron god in a dream and receive a token pushing him toward new horizons? This should be a gratifying moment, even if the rest of the character's life is sodden with bad luck.

It's a great time to introduce the gods and the Maelstrom if they haven't already become a part of the campaign. Most likely, they'll be a big part of the stories to come. If it's not the right time for the big reveal, there should still be something to mark the change. Perhaps a new crime boss has moved in and taken over all the old gangs – and his first heist has the papers running red with his new methods. It could be that the hero slew a dragon – only to learn that it was a mere infant, and now its parent vows vengeance! Maybe the characters' great benefactor died under mysterious circumstances, leaving them on their own for the first time. Whatever happens, it should be apparent very quickly that new threats are out there – ones fit for true heroes, leaving previous challenges in the dust.

This doesn't mean that everything needs to be Capital Letters and Epic Threats to Humanity from here on out. A character who has pledged to protect Boston from unearthly crimes shouldn't give up on the pixies and gremlins just because an 18-wheeler full of hopping vampires has pulled into town. He may need to find a way to delegate those problems, whether to a junior partner or to the local police, but it's still part of his responsibility. So are maintaining his business contacts, going to his day job, meeting with his friends, caring for his aged parents, eating right, and getting enough sleep. It's often these mundane details that help keep heroes grounded even as they're facing massive evils that could blot out the very sun.

Folk Hero Direction

The players all know how to make their characters and they're ready for the big time. You're the GM, and they're looking at you expectantly. Now you have to deliver. There are so many directions to go with a Suzerain game that the number of options can be daunting at first. How do you make the most of them to create a memorable, unique experience that they'll reminisce about for years to come? Your players are waiting, the pressure mounting.

One of the biggest questions with a Folk Hero rank game in Suzerain, and one of the first questions you should ask both yourself and your players, is: multi-setting or single-setting? Obviously you'll all need to agree – don't force your players into a single

setting when they want to explore a bunch of settings and genres, and don't kick them out into the vastness of time and space when they just want to focus on their own neighborhood.

Here are some pointers compiled from seventeen years of development. Relax – it's all going to be just fine.

One World

Single-setting epics offer a more traditional play experience. One setting, one set of genre conventions to internalize and adapt to. If the characters are ongoing ones, both you and the players already know the setting. It's familiar territory, comfortable ground. Of course, that should change... and quickly. Don't let the players or their characters become complacent and lazy. They're playing with the big boys now.

Throw a new threat at them, one they've never encountered before and don't know anything about. That should wake them up. Up the ante, not only with bigger and badder villains, but larger stakes, higher risks, and more potential for collateral damage. Heroes would be nothing without their opposition, so give them something to struggle against!

Don't focus on the new threat right from the start, though. Give it time to build. Throw a few minor but distantly related problems at the characters first, to lull them into a false sense of security. As a case study, consider an invasion of shape-shifting aliens, doppelgangers, or underfolk. The first inklings of the assault shouldn't be the discovery of an entire country of replicants. Perhaps there's a crooked cop who's acting more bloodthirsty than usual. Upon closer study, he's not human! A few weeks later, a disturbed madman gives the standard, "Fools, I will kill you all!" speech, with a few notable changes. He refers to a world of falsehoods and symbolic lives without honest backing.

After a few scenes like this, the players will start to catch on that a storm is brewing. That's when you either confirm their suspicions with the discovery of a small town entirely populated by pod people, or pull the rug out from under them and reveal the true threat to be hallucinogenic spores released by a furious nature spirit. Wham! That's the second punch, but still not the big one. Knock the characters

around, make them realize they're no longer the new kids on the block. They'll need to adapt, develop new strategies to confront their greatest challenge yet. That's when you bring in the alien mothership, the invaders' true forms, or their ultimate goal.

One-setting campaigns are about exploring the same world on a grander scale than was previously possible. If the characters were focused on their hometown, take them up a notch to saving the whole country. We call the life of heroes an 'epic' for a reason, and this is where the players get to feel that.

Quantum Sliders

A multi-setting epic is more difficult to set up, since it can be hard to keep track of all the different backdrops to the action. That's OK; it's all part of the rush. You can literally set your game anywhere, anywhen, and in any genre. Want to run a pulp game with two-tone morality for a while? Put the characters in the 1930s or '40s and set everything four-color. Want to do noir? Turn everything dark, gritty, and melancholy. When the characters get on the wrong side of the corrupt mayor, let them recover with the splendor of a high fantasy realm. That place where dragons fly and wizards cast fireballs and kings wield enchanted swords... it's only a portal away. Because of the way the mortal realms exist in the Suzerain Continuum, any setting you can imagine is part of Earth's timeline somewhere – the idea is that our history is only the latest layer of the world's true history, and places like Atlantis and Lemuria and Camelot existed in previous eras, now forgotten except as confused myths. As for the future, that's not been written, so you can have anything you want happening there.

The trick to a multi-genre game is getting the pieces to fit together. Sure, it's fun to do a high-tech science fiction world one session and a medieval fantasy setting the next, but what's the connection? You can just have gods sending the characters to various times at random, of course, but what's it all leading up to? The players expect you, the GM, to make sense of it all. They expect you to have a plan. Don't disappoint them.

Figure out a larger plot first, something that can tie different eras together. Are the gods concerned about the whereabouts and activities of a certain

immortal? They send the characters to several key points in the timeline to check up on that immortal and foil her plans (or make sure they succeed). Do the gods need the characters to retrieve certain items scattered through time? At their core the items are just an excuse to get the characters into different scrapes, but don't make it so obvious. Maybe the items will be able to fulfill a specific character goal when they are assembled, such as the destruction of a nexus point or the resurrection of a friend.

For a more proactive game, introduce a dark mirror to the characters – another god or a demon – recruiting agents for his own nefarious plans all along the timeline. The characters will then need to identify and defeat those enemy agents, who are backed by patrons as powerful (or more!) than the heroes' own. There are just a few quick examples; your overarching plot doesn't need to be any more laid out in the beginning. Players being what they are, they will no doubt introduce complications to your plot and pursue leads that you never expected. As long as everyone's having a good time, there's nothing wrong with that. If the players aren't scrabbling for a grand narrative right away, the behind-the-scenes explanation could just be that the gods want their champions to experience as much of the mortal realms as possible.

One of the most entertaining things about using different genres and settings is the 'fish out of water' syndrome. Think of any anime series where a normal high school student is sucked into a nostalgic world of magic – it's fun to watch (or play!) a character who's thrust into a time he doesn't know or understand, where he has to do his best to fit in and winds up using his own skills and abilities to get ahead. Players love games like this, because it's a chance to show off their ingenuity and to have some really funny scenes as well. These hijinks can be carried a step further when multiple timelines clash, forming groups of characters from several different times and places.

Take a group that has a dwarfish knight, a cyborg, a hardboiled detective, and Kid Thunder, heir to the Nemean Lion's hide, and wait for them to show up in the cyborg's neon-lit streets. Even if the cyborg has been the group's comic relief up until this point, he'll be the voice of reason when the knight thinks cars are demons and the detective tries fermenting FlavoSoy

Group And Troupe

If you're lucky enough to have a stable gaming group where everyone trusts each other, we suggest everyone has a player character in the story – even the GM. Play that character as a key NPC, never hogging the limelight and just being there to add another opinion and another sword to the characters' resources. He's a henchman or the brother of one of the others who tags along, and they tolerate him because he turns out to be useful every now and again.

What's the benefit? Well, it adds survivability to the group, and gives the GM a voice to point out additional information if the players' creative energy has temporarily flagged. It also allows you to switch GMs every now and again while keeping the same pool of characters. And that's a really useful thing to be able to do. This form of 'troupe play' is already popular in many places; we suggest you keep an open mind and give it a go sometime.

That said, we would like to repeat the 'trust' portion of troupe play. One of the most popular topics for player horror stories is the scene-stealing GM-PC. This character appears to be a character's sidekick, or perhaps a white-bearded messenger from the gods, but he ends up being far more effective than the tale's nominal heroes. He's the one who has the plan for defeating the Oshkosh Ooze, and it's his flashing blade that finally defeats the Invincible Sword Princess. These characters are no fun and it's a low blow from a GM.



to refill his dwindling flask. Toss the same group into a classic fantasy setting and it's the knight's turn to laugh as the cyborg tries wiring himself into a well and Kid Thunder's 'devil music' attracts angry mobs.

Don't be mean-spirited – it's not about putting the characters in settings to make them uncomfortable or cripple their character concepts. It's about the disconnect between their previous experiences and their new environment, and the good-natured humor that results. Put that same group in the Holy Roman Empire and make everyone mistake them for Centurions and you've got a fun game that could still have some very high stakes to it – the characters have to pull off their masquerade well enough to be accepted as part of the Emperor's Honor Guard so they can save him from an assassination attempt by a killer from the late 21st century.

Multi-setting games are a bit like the TV series *Quantum Leap*, but they'll take your characters to every bit of our universe, from forgotten past to far future. Use the different realms to highlight characters goals and differences, or just provide new challenges and interesting set-pieces. You've learned your history, now it's time to put it to good use.

Mix And Match

Keep in mind that you don't need to lock your campaign into a specific mode. You could center the game around the relations between two or three realms, or spend an extended period of time with a particularly important setting after many sessions of realm-trotting. You can also start the characters out in their native setting and then segue into a multi-setting campaign.

Of the Suzerain epics we've seen, the final possibility is actually the most popular and it's easy to see why. We all love our characters, but there's usually a point where we've been playing in one setting and the 'been there, done that' feeling has set in. We're itching for big stompy robots, and a troll in plate armor is no longer cutting it. Thanks to portals, our disenchanters are able to cruise the universe in search of bigger, stompier adventure. The characters keep developing, and soon we have three wizards in color-coordinated mecha. We laugh and play and stomp, and are finally able to answer the age-old question of who would win in a fight between giant robots and short, rural demihumans with a fondness for smokeable plants. Malaise sets in again until we see that cool movie with the invisible sci-fi predator and those great aliens who eat marines for breakfast. Time for the armored re-enchanter corps and their friends to step up to the next challenge!

Make sure your players know what you're doing, however. If they've stated explicitly that they don't want to do multi-setting, don't pull a fast one and suddenly have them yanked out of their world. Nothing's worse than starting a game about zeppelin pirates only to discover three sessions in that it's a computer simulation. By the same measure, if the players have established that they never want their characters to make it back home from their run-in with a timequake, don't force it upon them.

If you're not sure how to proceed, test the waters with a few brief encounters. The characters might encounter someone from their own past while on a mission elsewhere, for example, making them wonder what he's doing out of their native time and what's happening in their home as a result. Or they might see a stranger in their world, one who clearly doesn't belong, or find a thug using a weapon whose

technology is far beyond anything currently available. If they're itching for wider skies, they'll follow the lead. If not, it's business as usual. If done smoothly, the ability to shift gears can keep your game exciting and your players entertained and their characters involved, all without losing your storyline or leaving any one portion of the epic feeling awkward and forced.

Our last bit of advice? Do what's fun, and don't be afraid to change what you're doing as time goes by. Sure, have a plan for a great epic before you start, but if a few months go by (or a few years for that matter) and everyone agrees that a change is what you need – then change! Take the characters through a rollercoaster of a few sessions where each one is a short away mission to a different place (try out the free One Sheet adventures from the Treasure area of our website to see how those work). Why not let different people be guest GMs for each of those while you recharge your imagination? Then, with a fresh plot idea in mind, you can take the same characters to a setting where a new long adventure awaits... the next bit of their rambunctious struggle towards godhood.

Suits You, Sir

Here's a hint to making fun, memorable, and compelling epics for your group, which is even more important in Folk Hero rank games than at lower ranks: suit them to the characters involved.

What does that mean, exactly? Well, you may have come up with an incredible game to run. It's a mystery, with subtle clues, tons of red herrings, devious Extras, lots of twists, and a final diabolical reveal. It's brilliant!

The problem is, the players all have rough-and-tumble characters. They're not detectives. They're a motley assortment of killbots, scions of Ares, and femme fatale snipers. Not even close. The nearest they get to detecting is beating up a street gang and then demanding information from them.

So, not a good game. Why? Because it doesn't suit the characters.

When building your epic, think about the players and their characters. Who are they? What do they like? What sort of game would they enjoy? If no one

in the group likes subtle mysteries, clearly creating a finesse-based story is going to fail on two accounts: the players will ruin your 'dream game', and they won't have fun doing it. Think about their interests and tailor your sessions accordingly.

Keep in mind that the characters are larger than life. While they should have small doses of everyday humanity to ground themselves, this isn't the time for counting copper coins or describing every routine bus ride. Build the central plot around something that only your group of characters can do. It can be as small as rescuing a kidnapped heiress from an Indian snake cult, or as big as saving the entire world from a madman with a freeze ray the size of Rhode Island. You may have some untapped plans for games about public relations or investment banking, but this isn't the greatest setting in which to unleash them... unless the characters are specially trained mediators who run PR/threat evaluation for the giants of industry in a world of corporate espionage and mimetic assassination. It was a minority who thought of archeology professors as sexy Nazi-punchers until Indiana Jones came along, but now the globe-trotting academic has become an accepted (and eminently mimicable) archetype.

You can always stand convention on its head, of course. Go ahead and let the bruisers have their chance at solving the Case of the Battered Blade. The story may develop a more comedic edge as a result, but you could do worse than a session where everyone's laughing so hard that they can't breathe on account of the demolitions expert using the conclusive evidence as a makeshift bomb. Just be sure you leave yourself an out if the tone isn't building as planned, and that the final focus of the story will be properly suited to the characters involved.

Demigod Games

Where do realm travelers go after proving themselves legends in their own time? They are second in skill and knowledge to the very gods who shake the foundations of creation at this point. They are demigods. As with attaining Folk Hero rank, there should be some sort of grand event to celebrate the promotion. More traditional gods prefer to go the thunder, lightning, and chorus of angels route, letting everyone in a realm know that one of their

chosen has lived up to his name. Trickster gods (or patronless heroes) may need to steal their divine rights, infiltrating the inner sanctum of the Maelstrom and outwitting its inhuman guardians. More modern gods err on the side of restraint, informing their favored with a quick phone call and light lunch. No matter what the route this ascension takes, it should be an in-game event that boosts the players' egos and puffs them up for the challenges to come.

What sorts of conflicts remain to challenge a neo-pantheon of demigods? How about a galactic mystery that has the gods themselves flustered and coughing nervously into their sleeves? Whether it turns out to be the grandest conspiracy in creation or simply a fundamental inevitability, getting to the bottom of it will require travel to realms of non-existence. These areas exist on maps, but most frequently in the shared minds of fantasists and doubters. These are unofficial versions of history, the what-ifs, maybes, and nevers. Only within these apocrypha can the truth be dredged forth.

The Power And Glory

Your players' characters are demigods. They have the power of the divine, and they want the glory of becoming gods. Make them work for it. As their epic enters its third act, it's time to make them realize they'll need all that power if they're to survive, let alone earn their transcendence to godhood. Trouble is, that's easier said than done.

Think about the amazing arsenal at the characters' disposal. Stacks of Pulse to fuel plenty of unique abilities. A fistful of Hero Points at each level-up, which they can use to change reality. An array of new super-charged feats. And let's not forget those seriously impressive ability scores they're bound to have amassed.

Oh, and death is just a Hero Point of annoyance, making characters almost immortal.

Put it that way and it's quite a challenge to build a significant challenge for them. Don't fret, though. By this stage you know your players well enough to make life interesting. You're the GM and you have two great tools at your disposal that will help you out:

You control what happens off-stage: That allows you to rob the characters of some of their resources

at the start or as the sessions go by. Demigods who get to heal up and replenish their Pulse every session can handle almost anything. Don't let them get a good night's sleep and keep hurrying them, heaping more and more trouble on their heads until they're struggling to keep up. They should be saving the Continuum at this stage of their career, and the kind of evil god who wants to bring about the End Times isn't likely to wait while they retreat to their pocket realm for some R&R. In fact, finding a way to disable their access to the pocket realm isn't a bad place to start. Say, we should use that in our Demigod campaign some time!

You control the NPCs: Use this to force the characters into making really tough ethical choices. All the supernatural artillery in the world won't help when it's a choice between sacrificing the souls of innocent children to hungry demon spirits and saving mankind from the eternal tyranny of the Great Dragon Spirit (a choice you'll find familiar when you meet poor Gregor in our campaign later on). Or what about saving the life of one character's kid sister, who's been hanging around with the group since they were first put down on paper, weighed up against saving the Archangel Gabel who guards the prison of the Dark One? If a character has a feat or class feature that comes associated with an NPC... use that person to put the characters into an impossible situation. You'll find they try to get the best of both worlds and shock you how close they get to succeeding despite the odds – they're demigods after all. It'll be a great game for it.

Gods And End Times

Even gods have myths, and all residents of the Maelstrom have one myth they share. One we mentioned just a moment ago. The gods tell of a moment when the Veil will be torn apart, merging the mortal and immortal realms. The time stream of the Maelstrom and the time stream of the mortal universe will collide, briefly coexist in the End Times, and then the universe will implode into a single particle, destroying all things, even the gods themselves.

The myth frightens many gods, depresses others, and drives one or two to bouts of drinking. Yet there's one positive crumb within all versions of the story:



the particle that's left when our universe is destroyed will grow to become a new universe, the seed of another set of beings and realms and gods. Few take this as any consolation.

For all their power, none of the gods can prove or disprove the myth of the End Times. In many ways, that makes it even more frightening in their minds. Surely, someone with mastery over time and space would be able to tease out a clue? Instead... nothing. There's no sign of an apocalypse coming, but many residents of the Maelstrom just have a gut feeling that the myth is right, and that one day everything that ever existed will just disappear.

Alternate Reality

As mentioned earlier, demigods are able to bypass the gates of never-was to enter genres and settings that could not exist along the main timeline. These realities are good opportunities to pull out ideas for worlds and cosmologies that wouldn't maintain player interest for extended campaigns, but vibrate with shock-and-awesome when they're first introduced. If Folk Hero multi-setting campaigns are *Quantum Leap*, Demigod multi-setting campaigns might be *Sliders*.

It's in these shadow almost-realms that demigods are able to do the hands-on detective work that full-fledged gods are barred from undertaking. As the bold divinities-in-training trek across humming alien landscapes unlike any they have encountered before, the truth of the End Times will come to light. This isn't something that we're going to hold over your heads, waiting for the right moment to provide a grand reveal. This is the End of All Things. Paradoxes be cursed, something this big should be deeply personal and keyed to each group.

One classic way of personalizing alternate realms is to base them on a character who is important to the story. For example, what if one of your player's characters almost made a deal with a black-hearted alien intelligence during one of the Folk Hero rank highlight reels? Why not explore the episode a little further in the alternate reality where the deal was signed, sealed, and delivered, and said character now rules over it with a fiery fist? Running with this idea

a little further, it's not beyond reason to think the corrupted hero has also heard about the End Times, and is doing everything in her power to bring them to pass in order to erase her moment of weakness from the universe.

As with time travel, the number of available alternate reality portals depends on your comfort level. Players shouldn't have access to an infinite library of portals right away, unless you're willing to give them access to anything their hearts desire. A good compromise is to think about it in terms of resource management. Access to alternate realities should give the characters more and grander ways to solve their problems, but the realities shouldn't be answers in and of themselves.

Or Not

Just because the characters are now Demigod rank doesn't mean our basic advice has changed. All these fancy options for alternate realities are great, but if they don't suit your group then simply ignore the possibility. Aside from letting the characters flex a nexus for five minutes, shut the door on Hitler winning WWII and all other non-realities. Let the characters continue moving from realm to realm, taking on bigger challenges in new bits of the prime reality. Time and space is big enough not to need the extra razzle dazzle if it's not your style.

And let's leave you with a truly revolutionary thought... what if the characters never leave their home realm, not once they hit Folk Hero, and not when they get to Demigod? As Neophytes, they saved their village from evil cultists. At Folk Hero rank, they stopped invaders pillaging their nation. Now that they're demigods, it's time to save the whole world, but is there really a need to save a thousand worlds when one well-told story is enough for the characters to reach godhood with a sense of great satisfaction?

Suzerain doesn't tell you what to do. It doesn't punish you for choosing one epic over another. It was always your choice, from the moment you opened this book. With that thought we humbly present you with our unconventional campaign, spanning everything from Neophyte to Demigod in one set of scenarios.

Plot Point Campaign

The place is the fantasy realm of Relic and the time is the last days of the Second Age. The Trader Imperium is on its last legs, besieged at the walls of their last city, Garris, alongside their Caladonian and Valon allies, bravely holding the line against the armies of the Wild and the dragons. In the midst of this conflict, a small unit of dragon kin has overrun the new Cathedral of Trinity, only to discover the place has enough power to summon the Great Dragon Spirit if they re-consecrate it to their master. Bringing a great spirit into a physical realm is one of those 'Things You Don't Do,' like summoning a god, but these guys are fanatics – fanatics who were just handed a spiritual construct of cataclysmic importance.

Only one thing stands in the way of re-consecrating the cathedral for draconic worship of their great spirit (apart from the characters in Act III). The dragon kin need a divine incantation that's inscribed on a scepter belonging to the Caladonian king, who's safely commanding the troops on his side of the battle lines. Instead of risking a head-on assault, the dragon kin call on the spirits of the Veil using a little-known mystical ritual.

The spirits of the Veil are milky nebulous beings who reside inside the Veil between the mortal realms and the Maelstrom. Although the price is extortionate, they're able to open portals between different realms and times. The dragon kin use their new allies to open a portal to the future, to Yr208 of the Third Age, and send one of their elite demi-ogres to break into the now-crumbling catacombs where the scepter should be resting in the sarcophagus of the long-dead king.

It's not there, having been extracted in the 208 intervening years and is in the museum at the university instead. Curses. The demi-ogre goes to get it, which is where he comes to the attention of the Guardians of Austra, in particular their senior hunter of supernatural evil, a man called Gregor.

Gregor is a rare case, in tune with a protection Avatar of the city who nobody else thinks exists. Gregor's Avatar tells him of the demi-ogre and its plans; he heads the creature off but not before it memorizes the incantation. He knows the beast is too powerful for him, so instead he rushes to the buried cathedral and sets up the most powerful binding magic he can.

Just in time.



The demi-ogre returns, and Gregor shackles him before he can get to the portal. But the shackles won't last long, and the buried catacombs are a long way from any help.

The spirits of the Veil have been watching all this, and spot an opportunity. They emerge from their portal to make Gregor an offer he can't refuse – if he sacrifices a number of children, 'harvested' at astrologically important times in the coming weeks, they'll close the portal for good and trap the demi-ogre, stopping it from returning to its home and stopping the summoning of the Great Dragon Spirit. A few lives to save so many generations who will otherwise be enslaved and murdered at the hands of the dragons....

Gregor snaps, and accepts the terrible bargain. The spirits strengthen the binding magic so the shackles will hold the demi-ogre for forty days – the exact time it'll take to kidnap and bring the children back to the catacombs and sacrifice them in a terrible ritual. Gregor goes completely insane, but in that insanity understands he has no choice. He hires some henchmen and rushes to abduct the children the spirits tell him about, at the exact moment they're needed. Which is where our would-be heroes come along, with about 3 levels to their name and plans to become gods over time.

Celestium

Celestium is a super ceramic created by a well-guarded Pulse infusion process. Several realms have access to it, though very few can actually manufacture it. Celestium is light gray, shiny, and often thought to be a metal by those who don't know better. It's phenomenal for making Pulse-based computers, much better than silicon, but it also makes pretty good weapons. Those who can work with such a tough material are always in demand, and the Trader Imperium of Relic was expert at turning it into... relics. When the Imperium fell apart after the War of the Wild, the knowledge was lost to the world, making Trader items like the arc gun massively valuable. Celestium has the same material qualities as mithril.

Starting The Campaign

This campaign spans an entire career for Suzerain characters, all the way into demigodhood. Laying all that out in every detail... well that would be a whole lot of book.

Instead we've gone ahead and taken the liberty of giving you the focal points of the campaign so you can have as much fun as possible fleshing out the rest. Up to and including running your own campaign intertwined with this one if you wish!

There are two ways to approach the start of the campaign. If you want to jump straight into the action, make up some characters in the middle of God-touched rank and jump straight in.

If you'd rather grow your characters organically, the world of Relic has plenty for them to explore and you can make as much or as little of the capture of Gregor as you (and your players) like. Just remember, the characters and players don't know all that stuff about the Great Dragon Spirit, spirits of the Veil and the fate of millions just yet. Mostly they just know some gibbering madman who saw too much evil in the world is kidnapping children for some dark ritual or other foul purpose. If you choose to start with a total novice character and have thrilling adventures before Act I starts, try not to give the game away in the process!

Once you're into the plot and have run Acts I and II, you have another choice to make. You can keep the campaign running, with other scenarios filling the time up to Folk Hero rank (where Acts III and IV take place), or you can turbo-charge the characters, bumping them up to 6th level artificially to get a feel for Suzerain's Folk Hero play style quickly. Similarly, you can take the characters at the end of Act IV and increase them to level 10+ in an instant, then play Acts V and VI. It's your call.

The Dragon God: Act I

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

The first two acts of our campaign, *Return of the Dragon God*, are intended for characters of 3rd level. They should have seen some action, but not enough that they're sure of their place in the world. These

adventurers are still essentially street-level. Taking down a whacked-out Guardian and rescuing a band of children will be right up their alley. What's more, it'll be enough to springboard them into the thick of Garris society, if that's their style. Up-and-coming merchants will want to make their acquaintance, and formerly tight-lipped guardsmen will be eating their hats.

Before this scenario begins, the adventurers have already tracked Gregor, captured him, and handed him over to the city watch. It's the James Bond beginning where things start half way through the action. If you want to play through some scenarios where the adventurers chase Gregor and his people, trying to stop him abducting children, go right ahead. There are plenty of stats below to help you plan those. Then it's time to get into the thick of the action.

Breakout

At the start of this scenario, the adventurers should know that Gregor is a madman who used to work for the Guardians of Austra, a noble organization of law-keepers. Since he snapped, he's been travelling the countryside with some henchmen, abducting children in pairs, always at astrologically significant times. He needed two more victims and then he'd be ready to carry out some kind of terrible ritual involving the sacrifice of the children. The ritual was scheduled for this night. But the adventurers captured him and he's safe behind bars. So all's well, right? This is just one of those introduction scenes that has nothing to do with the main plot you've got planned. That's what the players should think, at least.

No one has had any luck gleaning the location of the missing children from Gregor in the hours since he was captured. As the adventurers leave the jail and enter the mid-day traffic, explosions rock the building. Several robed figures emerge from the crowd, and fling firebombs at the building for additional chaos.

By the time the smoke clears, a cart is tearing down the bumpy road with Gregor's face leering from the back. Traffic is dense with merchants seeking to fix their smashed trade stands, passers-by who couldn't get out of the way quick enough, and panicked animals. The chase is on. Somewhere

during the grand ruckus, a heavily armored woman – Nova – hops aboard the escaping coach. One young child is slung over each of her broad shoulders. Make it clear that she's carrying the last two kids Gregor needs to carry out the sacrificial ritual.

Your players will miss out on some interesting scenes if they catch Gregor straight away, so don't be afraid to fudge events in aiding the carriage's escape. After the adventurers have made several attempts to wear it down, the carriage will speed across a narrow bridge crossing a deep gully. Otto, a discredited guild wizard is waiting on the other side to cast two spells on the bridge: first, a *fog cloud* spell to raise a bank of mist for the cart to escape into. Next, he uses *stone shape* to raise a barrier to cover his own escape. Four members of Gregor's gang, aid in Otto's escape, but they're only buying Gregor and Nova time to set the traps in their lair. If Otto is captured, he's more than willing to sell out his employers.

Thugs

These miscreants, brigands, and ne'er-do-wells have been assembled from the worst alleys of Garris to slow down the adventurers. When they're not cracking heads for Gregor, they're moving boxes or suffering from sporadic infections. If the adventurers find themselves tussling with them, use the stats below:

Thugs

Skulking brute (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 1,200

hp 19

CR 1

Otto

After his once-in-a-lifetime streak at the card table ended, Otto was no longer welcome on any Wizards Guild premises. Although no one could prove he had cheated, they'd all lost enough money that they didn't care. Otto lived off his 'severance package' for as long as he could before admitting to himself that freelance mischief was the only career that suited his temperament. Although he's in his mid-30s, Otto is prematurely bald, though he sports a slick moustache to make up for it.

Otto

Hedge wizard (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 1,200

hp 22

CR 4

Even without Otto's help, the lair is easy enough to find. It's in a poorer district, where the locals are quite skilled at getting out of the way of oncoming carts. They're able to give directions all the way to where the vehicle has been abandoned in a nearby alley – right across the street from Gregor's lair.

Entering The Lair

The building itself is a simple single-story affair with no access to the roof (though a climb check would do the trick for anyone who wanted to get up there, where they would find a curious box with a tarpaulin thrown over it – more on that later). Inside, the building is pretty barren. There's a rickety old table in one corner and a couple of just-as-rickety-looking old chairs, a small, old chest against one wall, and a threadbare rug on the floor. There is no door, but the entrance does have shutters made of badly warped wood.

Any attempt to search the room reveals a trapdoor beneath the rug. A DC 18 Perception check will reveal that the chest is secured to the floor by metal rails, and has been shifted slightly to the left of its normal position along the rails.

Moving the chest back to its original position results in a muffled but audible 'click'. This disables the trap on the trapdoor.

If the characters don't disarm the trap, opening the trap door will trigger a crushing stone slab. Directly above the trapdoor there's a patch of roof that looks much newer than the ceiling around it. On the roof, above this new ceiling, is a box covered in a tarpaulin that houses the rest of the trap – a heavy slab of rock. When the trap is triggered, it tips a potent bottle of acid into pre-cut grooves in the ceiling to give the trap a slight delay. One round after it's tripped, the acid will have weakened the roof enough to let the slab crush through the roof and slam down directly on top of the trapdoor. Anyone under that section of roof must attempt a Reflex save (DC 16) or take 2d6 bludgeoning damage. The falling slab makes enough noise to serve as a suitable alarm for anyone hiding in the lair below, and then there's the little problem of moving the heavy slab out of the way (DC 25 Strength check) in order to continue the pursuit...

The trapdoor leads to a basement via a stepladder; a person opening the door and descending swiftly might escape the trap. Any companions intending to follow will likely get a stone slab on their head. The basement mirrors the dimensions of the floor above but has a set of stairs in one corner, leading down into the gloom. The room is quite clearly in heavy use, containing basic foodstuffs, water, beer, rope, etc. There are enough crates and barrels in here to feed a decent-sized group of people for a week.

Deeper Into Darkness

After several flights of wooden stairs, the wood gives way to a much older staircase of stone, which descends deeper still. The stone staircase is smooth and lacks any sign of life – no moss, fungus or even insects. Act I ends here, but segues immediately into Act II. Through this first session the players should have been settling in and getting used to the way Suzerain works (and what their characters can do), trying out interesting actions while chasing escaping bad guys, gaining confidence all the time. Next, they get to pit their characters' skills against a small, traditional dungeon crawl. By the end of Act II we'll take the training wheels off and it'll be time for the full experience.



Handwritten text in a South Indian script, likely Grantha or Tamil, covering the entire page. The text is arranged in approximately 25 horizontal lines. The script is finely inscribed and appears to be on a dark, possibly metal or stone, surface. The lighting is somewhat uneven, with a darker vertical shadow on the left side of the page.

The Dragon God: Act II

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

As the second act begins, remind your players of Gregor's insanity, and the great pains that he has taken to secure these children. Give them something to think about as the adventurers descend into the bowels of Garris. There's a bigger picture here, but what?

The last step of the stairs is unstable – it's on a pivot so should a person step on it, it will roll forward under the weight, triggering a spear trap. The trap has an attack roll of +10 and deals 1d8+1 damage.

The Old Fort

Under the city of New Garris lie the ruins of Old Garris, swallowed in the last great siege of the War of the Wild, 208 years before. Gregor has dug into and refitted one small section for his own purposes, including the old catacombs of the former cathedral where he's got the demi-ogre bound and plans to carry out his terrible ritual.

The characters should be able to follow his trail easily until they get to the makeshift barracks inhabited by his hired muscle, who get to use the space for their own purposes as soon as the sacrifices have been made.

Unless the adventurers have been especially stealthy in pursuing Gregor and infiltrating the lair, the thugs are ready for them. The group enters a large area with four small bunk rooms to their left, sectioned off from the main room. On the other side of the main area from the entrance is an exit, in front of which two tables have been overturned to serve as firing screens for two crossbowmen. They're backed up by their boss and two swordsmen.

To cross the area, the adventurers will pass the doors to the small rooms. Four more swordsmen are waiting in the small rooms, watching through spy holes, ready to burst out as soon as the adventurers get into the middle of the main space or when the boss calls for them. Once the fight starts, they go on hold and wait for any close combatants to come charging past them before rushing out to stop the charge from reaching their crossbowmen.

Thugs

This hired muscle is little different from the thugs from earlier. Use the stats referenced below:

Old Fort Thug **CR 3**
Border guard (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 800
hp 30

Boss Thug

The leader looks similar to his men, except he's a little taller and sports a well-trimmed beard.

Boss Thug **CR 4**
Grizzled mercenary (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 1200
hp 51

A Perception check (DC 20) after the encounter reveals each of the thugs wears a pendant around their neck. The pendants grant the wearer a +1 resistance bonus on Reflex saves. They also allow the wearer to use the shackles (coming up shortly). As magic items, they are shoddily-made enchantments and lose their power after one week.

There's an alcove on the far side of the room, with a locked door closing it off – the thug leader has the key. It contains a glowing red Pulse crystal and a crate of pendants similar to the ones worn by the thugs.

Shackles

After plowing through the thugs, the adventurers travel through a door. This might lead to more of the dungeon if you fancy adding more, or just head into the next encounter. Either way, at some point they'll get to the room where the kidnapped children were kept. Straw mattresses litter the floor and the smell is stomach-turning. Jutting from the ground near the straw mattresses are several metal spikes with surprisingly strong Pulse signatures.

If a character who isn't wearing a thug's pendant approaches within 2 inches of a spike, a set of Pulse shackles shoots out and wraps about his wrists and ankles in the Ethereal. Once ensnared, every

square a character moves away from the spike deals 1d6 nonlethal damage. The shackles can be easily removed by anyone wearing a pendant (or by simply dropping a spare pendant over the head of a trapped character).

Searching the straw mattresses reveals a chilling message scrawled in the filth by tiny fingers: *Let us die*. One of the children has come to understand the true nature of what Gregor is trying to do (save the world), and wants to stop any ill-conceived rescue attempt. But since when did roleplaying characters listen to hostages and kidnap victims, or anyone else for that matter, when they're convinced they're doing the right thing?

Nova Attacks

The adventurers move on. It's another opportunity to add rooms and ambushes if you want, or to go straight to the next encounter. The fiery chasm is Gregor's last line of defense, but it's a good one. It's blocked by a large set of double doors marked with many strange glyphs. Anyone passing through this door must succeed at a DC 20 Reflex save or take 2d4 nonlethal damage as the bound watchdog spirit tears at their confidence.

On the other side of the door is a bubbling pit of magma, bridged by a single span of hardened lava. Gregor has called in a favor with a powerful spirit of flame to create this room. Waiting at the far end of the gantry, where it's at its narrowest, is Gregor's accomplice, Nova. She is under the influence of an *endure elements* spell and therefore does not suffer the same discomforting heat as the adventurers, who must attempt Fortitude saves (DC 20) or take 1d6 nonlethal damage each round. Nova believes in Gregor's cause, and refuses to let anyone pass.

Nova

Nova grew up on the mean streets of Garris, and they made her hard. Rock hard. She has been Gregor's partner ever since rescuing him from a surprise barbarian attack in a tavern five years ago. Although they've had their differences since then, she supports Gregor's mad crusade fully: she knows what's at stake in the room behind her. Any sacrifice is acceptable for a clean slate for the future.



Nova's job is to hold the bridge at all costs, and she will only move from that spot when she's dead. If the adventurers engage her in conversation she will attempt to convince them that Gregor is working for the greater good and will rationalize it any way she can – it all buys Gregor the time he needs. Failing that, she begins by antagonizing the party, knowing full well the room's heat can be a powerful ally if she can tough it out long enough. Towards the end, she may simply take a full-defense action in an attempt to buy Gregor as much time as possible.

Nova

CR 5

Expert bodyguard (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 1,600

hp 59

Defensive Abilities *endure elements*

The Final Countdown

After Nova falls, the adventurers are free to enter Gregor's ritual chamber, which should follow straight on from the lava room. It was once the catacombs of the cathedral in Old Garris, as evidenced by its crumbling sarcophagi and decorative stone pillars. Any guarding ghosts of great knights have long departed, leaving the place cold and desecrated.

A portal into the Veil stretches between two of the pillars, appearing as a region of buckling, distorted air. Ten dirty and scared children are chained to plinths located around the room.



As soon as the adventurers enter the room, Gregor finishes his chant of summoning, “Come forth and earn your payment!” he screams. At this, five Veil spirits spill out of the portal, manifest, and make their way to the chained children. Each child’s soul takes one round to harvest, and each spirit returns to the portal after obtaining two souls. Meanwhile, Gregor will fight like a caged tiger to prevent the adventurers interfering with the spirits.

During all of this there is a great, brutish demi-ogre in the corner. He’s unable to die in this era, but is unable to move due to Gregor’s supernatural shackles, supercharged by the spirits’ power. If Gregor dies, the shackles will break and the demi-ogre immediately charges into the portal and back to his own time.

Once the demi-ogre is gone, the spirits have been destroyed, or have finished their task and returned to the portal, it closes. The shackles on the demi-ogre break (if they haven’t already), and it’s not inconceivable that the adventurers will have to fight a very angry bad guy – see Act III for his stats. If he fails to get through the portal he’ll focus on killing Gregor first (if Gregor’s still alive), then the adventurers.

Gregor

After serving Garris’ Guardians for so long, Gregor has seen too much. His deal with the Veil spirits was too much for his mind and now he cares for nothing but the completion of his mission. Only

success will be able to justify his existence and assuage his tormented mind, despite the terrible price he’s paying for the spirit’s help.

In spite of his mental instability, Gregor is in good shape and a dangerous foe to underestimate. Years spent trailing Garris’ elite and observing the depravities of the supernatural world have toughened him up and eroded his compassion at the same time. He is hollow-eyed and ragged. There is little left to suggest Gregor’s once proud bearing, but hints of strength shine through when his speech turns toward justice.

Gregor

CR 7

Sellsword (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 3,200

hp 82

Veil Spirit

Like their cloudy home, Veil spirits are difficult to define around the edges. They resemble nothing more than dark gray humanoids made of coiled fog, lit by flashing neurons of Pulse. Although they look like they’ll drift away at any second, their physical bodies are deceptively solid. Are these residents of the Veil merely spirits like others of their kind, or something more sinister? The nature of the deal they’ve struck with Gregor should hint to something more... demonic in their nature, something that might make an interesting plot hook for a sub-plot later in the adventurers’ epic career. We leave that to your discretion.

The spirits are only interested in collecting their payment. They ignore the adventurers as much as they’re able, knowing that once they have the souls of the children, the destruction of their physical forms will only hasten their return through the portal. However, once attacked they will fight back against any adventurers preventing them from claiming their payment.

Veil Spirit

CR 4

Half-fiend medium air elemental (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 1,200

hp 38

The Dragon God: Act III

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (final year of the Second Age).

Time passes. Relic adventures are adventured (from the ones offered here or others of your devising). The adventurers develop till they hit the magic mark – Folk Hero rank!

After the heroes have gotten a taste of what being Folk Hero and Living Legend is really about (we're assuming they'll be about 6th or 7th level for the next part, but it's up to you as always), the gods will assign them a task: return to their home realm to deal with the fallout from one of their earliest adventures. Isn't time travel great? Despite their best efforts in Act II of the campaign, the demi-ogre with the incantation escaped back to the War of the Wild, 208 years earlier. The armies of the true dragons, working alongside the evil Wild, will use it to bring about a terrible abomination unless someone can stop their ritual. Three guesses on who gets that job.

But what if the demi-ogre didn't get through the portal? That could derail the whole plot and leave you with some free sessions for other adventures, or you could explain that the dragon kin sent another assassin robot to terminate the leader of the... no wait, that's a different story altogether. The dragon kin sent another demi-ogre that even Gregor didn't know about. The first one was just a decoy and the second one got back in time to kick off this part of the story.

Preamble

The gods send the heroes back to fix their mess, but the heroes may not know much about any mess. After all, they might think they foiled a madman's ritual and saved the lives of many children. What could be bad with that? If they didn't learn much of the plot before, this is your chance for the gods to enlighten them. Pick gods the heroes have associations with, patron gods in particular, or just a group of gods you'll enjoy playing.

Bottom line, it was really important to stop the demi-ogre getting through the portal (or the second demi-ogre if they stopped the first one!), and now it seems there's a massive flare-up of the nexus around

Garris that means something big is about to happen. And the prognosticators say it's definitely something bad. Oops.

It doesn't matter how much time has passed for the heroes between the two bits of the story. Time is a strange thing, especially once heroes become Folk Heroes and start hopping through portals. In the mortal realms, everything happens neatly, in chronological order, but on the cosmic scale of things it's taken a while for the nexus flare to pierce the Veil and alert the gods. The heroes can get their gear from their pocket realm, prepare themselves mentally, and then pass through the portal that a friendly representative of the gods is holding open for them like some spiritual doorman.

What the gods failed to notice, because such details are beneath them, is that the nexus in question is in a different time, 208 years before the heroes ever met Gregor in fact. Appearing in the middle of the Siege of Garris, one of the most famous bits of Relic history, should be a bit of a shock. Fortunately, the siege is a crazy chaos of people milling around in the shadow of the huge old city walls, and the heroes don't stand out too much.

The city walls protect the Trader city that's behind them. What they don't protect is the Caladon town that's in front of them. The Caladonians are refugees who were displaced from their own lands by the armies of the Wild and the Traders were good enough to let them create a settlement just outside Garris. It has plenty of medieval style buildings and, a little way off, a cathedral in honor of the Caladonians' Goddess, Trinity. Now though the Wild is knocking at the door and in an attempt to save the Caladonian settlement the Alliance army has set up battle lines to try and repel the Wild.

Within minutes of arrival, a messenger approaches the heroes who relays the message that Commander Jessop, in charge of the Caladonian knights, is waiting for them in the command tent. Upon entering the tent, they are greeted by the distinguished lady Commander who is destined to become a heroic figure in Caladon's history books. After identifying the group as elite mercenaries and going through introductions, she returns to a table displaying the state of the battle lines. She fills them in on the situation:

“Bad news. Reports tell us the Wild are using the cathedral they took from us yesterday as the focal point for something big. Big enough to destroy it. The occupation of the cathedral was a massive blow to morale; its destruction might well be the last straw. We can’t let that happen.”

Jessop turns to a statue of Trinity and offers a short prayer, “Trinity gives us hope, be the Light in the darkness.” It’s an ancient blessing spoken in an old dialect, a bit like Shakespeare talking to a modern audience. Then she continues her briefing:

“The cathedral lies here, behind the new enemy lines. The dragon kin and their elite demi-ogre warriors hold that end of the line for the Wild army, but we have a way in. We’re fairly sure the dragon kin don’t know about the escape tunnel from the cathedral catacombs; the entrance is well concealed at both ends. It surfaces here,” she points to the map just where the front lines are, a few hundred paces from the cathedral, “which is as close to good news as it gets. I plan to launch a dawn offensive tomorrow

against the whole of the line. The engagement will be a smokescreen. My real objective is to push back their front line far enough so we can get a team into that tunnel to stop the dragons desecrating or destroying our holiest site. That’s where you come in. Get into the tunnel and drive the dragon kin from our most sacred house of Trinity.”

The battle line can be as simple or as complex as suits your group, but at bare minimum the section of line they are attacking should contain several large troop tents (3 or more) in a neat military line. Behind the tents, a single Arc Tower looms, providing fire support.

Before the heroes can get to the tents, there are large camp fires, one burning between each pair of tents (and a few yards in front). On the periphery of the light provided by the fires, there’s a line of patrolling ratfolk sentries whose unenviable job it’s to walk back and forth checking in with one another or playing ‘spot the corpse and raise the alarm’ when someone isn’t at a checkpoint.



The heroes can ask as many questions as they like and gather any last-minute resources. Any reasonable request will automatically be granted – this is after all a crucial mission. Bear in mind, however, the Alliance's resources are hugely limited and whatever they take another warrior has to give up. Make them meet the soldiers who are giving up their equipment for the heroes, watch knights taking off their armor and hand it over. That sort of thing.

Here are some of the things the heroes may find out as they ask questions:

The arc towers belonged to the Traders (who built Garris originally and who led the Alliance against the Wild), but were turned around as soon as the dragon kin broke through their perimeter and took control of them. Each one is an elevated stone bunker armed with a fast-firing lightning engine.

The heroes have command over 30 warriors, including a sergeant to lead and hold the breach until the mission is complete. Each player should be given a proportion of these troops to control so that they act on different initiative numbers.

Each tent contains around a dozen enemy troops who may be awake at dawn, but not battle ready. The heroes can expect to meet dragon kin, demi-ogres, ratfolk guards, and possibly 'larger threats'.

The hidden tunnel entrance is 6 squares beyond the arc tower. The exit into the catacombs is a small elevator concealed in the base plinth of a large statue. It's not catastrophically noisy, but anyone in the catacombs would surely hear it.

The meeting with Commander Jessop ends mid-afternoon, and the assault is the following morning. As soon as everyone is ready, plunge headfirst into the fray.

Pushing The Line

The scene as the characters sneak forward in the pre-dawn should be pretty close to the setup shown on the description given, but feel free to spice things up to account for misinformation and battlefield surprises. The one suggested surprise is that overnight some clouds rolled in, and a fine misty rain seems to hang in the atmosphere. It has a rank smell and feels slightly greasy on the skin – a reminder of the

perverting nature of the Wild magic. The specifics of what happens next depends on everyone's plans. Consider the following:

The sentries are alert but not expecting an attack. As soon as they are attacked, or even reasonably suspicious, they will sound the alarm. The guards around the arc tower will then open fire on any visible targets. If none are visible they will either go on hold or use suppressive fire on an area close to where the alarm was sounded.

Each tent contains 10 troops and 1 leader. It will take two whole rounds for the inhabitants to prepare for battle before they start to emerge, at a rate of 2-3 per round.

Two rounds after the soldiers in tents have responded, a squad consisting of one ogre per hero plus their demi-ogre squad leader (the one from Act II, if he made it out alive) will come crashing in from the rear. They head straight for the largest mass of troops or the unluckiest hero.

Remember that the goal is not to wipe the map clear of everything that moves, and that the battle may end as soon as everyone makes a mad dash for the tunnel entrance. That said, 'surrender' is a dirty word to the agents of the Wild and their allies. The dragon kin and their soldiers will pursue unless a diversionary force is available to handle them. Make sure enough reinforcements are available to the enemy so the heroes have to leave the sergeant and his surviving troops to hold that end of the line, buying the heroes time to get to the cathedral.

Wild Soldiers

The heroes are assaulting the part of the Wild army controlled by the dragon kin and their demi-ogre servants. Although they wear no standardized uniforms, regimental markings are common. Many dragon kin dye their facial scales to differentiate between their units. Demi-ogres prefer to drape themselves in the looted garments from their vanquished foes, mixing Trader insignia with jewelry and other, fouler trophies.

These soldiers are asleep in the tents when the action begins, but rouse quickly and efficiently at the first sign of trouble.



Wild Soldiers

CR 4

XP 1,200

Advanced lizardfolk

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +0; Senses Perception +1

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21 (+6 armor, +5 natural)

hp 32 (5d8+10)

Fort +5, **Ref** +1, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft., swim 15 ft.

Melee greatsword +6 (2d6+3), bite +2 (1d4+1), or claw +4 (1d4+2), bite +4 (1d4+2)

Ranged heavy crossbow +3 (1d10)

STATISTICS

Str 14, **Dex** 10, **Con** 13, **Int** 9, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +3; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 15

Feats Multiattack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (greatsword)

Skills Acrobatics +3, Perception +1, Swim +6; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics

Languages Draconic

SQ hold breath

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hold Breath (Ex) A wild soldier can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to 4 times its Constitution score before it risks drowning.

Gear greatsword, breastplate, heavy crossbow, 10 bolts

Wild Sentries

The wiry, twitchy ratfolk don't get the nicest jobs. Sentry duty is a fine example of that. It's what they get for being practically human. If it weren't for their pointed muzzles and their slick, matted body hair, the rat-people would have found themselves enslaved long ago. As it is, they constantly need to prove themselves tough enough to roll with the dragons and ogres. Every intruder that sneaks past them is a new scaly tail adorning the belt of a demi-ogre overseer... which is quite an incentive to be super-vigilant.

Ratfolk Sentries

CR 3

XP 800

Ratfolk warrior 6

NE Small humanoid (ratfolk)

Init +2; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +3

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 14, flat-footed 14 (+3 armor, +3 Dex, +1 size)

hp 33 (6d10)

Fort +5, **Ref** +5, **Will** +1

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.

Melee mwk short sword +11 (1d4/19–20)

Ranged mwk light crossbow +10 (1d6/19–20)

Special Attack swarming

STATISTICS

Str 10, **Dex** 16, **Con** 11, **Int** 10, **Wis** 9, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +5; **CMD** 16

Feats Outflank^{APG}, Precise Strike^{APG}, Weapon Finesse

Skills Bluff +4, Perception +3, Stealth +12;

Racial Modifiers +4 Handle Animal when influencing rodents, +2 Stealth

Languages Common

SQ skulk

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Swarming (Ex) Ratfolk are used to living and fighting communally, and are adept at swarming foes for their own gain and their foes' detriment. Up to two ratfolk can share the same square at the same time. If two ratfolk in the same square attack the same foe, they are considered to be flanking that foe as if they were in two opposite squares.

Skulk (Ex) These ratfolk can blend easily into their environments, and move with surprising grace. They take only a –5 penalty on Stealth checks made to hide from creatures they have distracted with a Bluff check (rather than the normal –10 penalty).

Combat Gear *potion of blur*, smoke pellet; **Other Gear** mwk light crossbow, 20 crossbow bolts, mwk short sword, mwk studded leather armor

Ogres

Big and crazed, these beasts are the larger, less human cousins to the demi-ogre troops who serve the dragon masters. Each one stands tall as a tree, with legs like squat columns. Although their sloping brows and tiny, shining eyes suggest stupidity, most





ogres are simply uneducated. They know what they're built for, and treat each situation accordingly. They're hulking and easily angered, everyone else is easily crushed without resorting to more thought-intensive tactics.

One in ten ogres is completely hairless, a fact that has confounded soldiers on both sides of the battle lines for the duration of the war. This apparently means something within the ogre community, but nobody's quite sure what.

Ogres

CR 4

Ogre stalker (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Monster Codex*)

XP 1,200

hp 52

Demi-Ogre Squad Leader

Although smaller than their brutish cousins, demi-ogres have better muscle tone; they're more than capable of tearing an armored warrior in half with their bare hands. What's more, they possess a mean cunning that allows them to enjoy the mayhem they cause twice as much as your standard ogre. What's even scarier about their leaders is they move fast around the battlefield, delighted to rush in and engage dangerous foes one-to-one.

Demi-ogres stand a few inches taller than most human warriors, and squad leaders stand head and shoulders above the average demi-ogre. They use serious armor and serious weapons. As a result, the sound of an approaching demi-ogre leader is akin to that of a runaway garbage wagon.

Ogres

CR 5

Fighter ogre (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Monster Codex, Pathfinder Bestiary*)

XP 1,600

hp 30

Arc Tower

Each arc tower is an elevated stone bunker manned by two ratfolk sentries. The arc gun inside the bunker is a bulky Celestium emplacement capable of spitting blue lightning with the range and speed

necessary to dominate a skirmish. Although none among the Wild are able to replicate these marvels of Trader technology, some ratfolk show a natural talent for operating them.

A small ladder on one side of each bunker leads up eight feet to a trap door. Attempting to open it may alert the sentries within, depending on the climber's Stealth check.

An arc tower can't be destroyed outright. The arc gun inside the bunker can be fired by any ratfolk occupying the tower out to 100 feet. The arc gun deals 2d8+8 electricity damage and uses the ratfolk's ranged attack roll. This arc tower is occupied by 5 ratfolk sentries. In the event of a frontal assault, the gun-slit can be hit with a ranged attack with an AC of 20. Any time the ranged attack hits, the arc gun discharges and harms the ratfolk operating it for 2d8 electricity damage and imposing a -5 circumstance penalty on the next attack roll from the arc gun.

The Dragon God: Act IV

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (final year of the Second Age).

Having had a session of grand scale melee, it's time to return to normal adventuring fare – the heroes against the big bad, one on one. Feel free to have the heroes join in with further clashes along the line before clearing the cathedral, but when they've satisfied their lust for heroic warfare on the open battlefield they should make their way, single file, along the secret tunnel to the cathedral catacombs. If the heroes aren't running for their lives at this point, it's a good time to reflect upon the closeness of the walls and how far they're removed from aid. They are the cavalry, and no backup is coming after them (at least it's not if you've played your cards right).

Inside The Catacombs

The cathedral catacombs are exactly what you'd expect: walls honeycombed with coffin bays, statues and ornate carvings everywhere, and a central chamber filled with sarcophagi for Trinity's favored. One sarcophagus is open, displaying an ornate silver chalice cupped within mummified hands. An





observant hero might realize this is the same place Gregor was performing his vile ritual, 208 years in the future (Folk Hero rank Suzerain is one of the few places you get to mix past and future tenses in that way!).

Apart from dozens of stony carvings of the pious, there are no signs of life. Anyone who checks with spirit sight will realize that this is not completely true; many of Trinity's honored dead are hanging around in spirit form.

The spirits of these holy men and women became restless the moment the dragon kin laid foot in the cathedral. As the heroes further disturb their place of sanctuary, the spirits begin to rise from their sarcophagi. Give each player a Perception check (DC 20) to spot them before they're fully manifested.

The spirits are a stern-faced lot but they are reasonable. If the heroes demonstrate proper respect for Trinity and her exalted host, they will be allowed to pass in peace. If they simply must have the silver chalice, make jokes at the expense of the architecture, or generally disrespect the religion in any way, the spirits will be far more likely to invoke their curse – everyone in the catacombs (apart from the spirits themselves) attempts a Will save (DC 16), becoming shaken on a failure, while they are in the cathedral and catacombs. Oh, and the heroes can expect to have some explaining to do when they get back to their pocket realm next – an upset Archangel or two are likely to be waiting for them with some particularly dangerous mission for them to perform by means of atonement.

If the encounter with the spirits is a peaceful one, there are many boons they could grant. The upcoming encounter is intended to be difficult though, so consider limiting their aid to a free Hero Point or two, or distracting a major foe at some point. Additionally, if the heroes find themselves in a bind and can't get through the Barrier the spell priests will cast (you'll learn more about them in a second), the spirits can dispel one segment of it – their contribution to getting these desecrating dragon kin off holy soil.

Showdown In The Cathedral

After heading up from the catacombs, the heroes will find themselves by the main doors of the cathedral, at the opposite end of the building from the main altar. There are three spell priests on the raised altar area at the head of the cathedral. Elite demi-ogre bodyguards are spread around a black stone monolith, with as few blind spots as possible. There are two bodyguards plus one for every three heroes. They are led by Hursk, an imposing mass of sinewy muscle and blood red dragon scales. While the priests are concentrating intently on their prayer of desecration, the guards are alert and ready for almost anything.

The monolith is carved with scenes of the Archangels fighting hordes of capering demons. It radiates Pulse strong enough to be visible to the naked eye, tossing off flares of burning light at an irregular tempo. Looking at the monolith with spirit sight is akin to staring at the sun.

Destroying the monolith will be difficult, but necessary. It has 16 Hardness, and is an inanimate object. If the monolith is destroyed, the Pulse it's focusing will feed back into the priests. This will cause the lesser priests to explode in messy chunks and destroy any remaining Barrier segments.

Once a fight starts, the dragon kin spell priests will siphon enough Pulse from the monolith to erect a *wall of stone* spell the height of two men across the room, extending from the monolith to both side walls of the cathedral, cutting off the far end of the cathedral and the priests from the heroes. The elite demi-ogres won't hesitate to sacrifice themselves to buy the priests enough time to finish their incantations, and will call upon all of their (considerable) training to do so. They will focus their attacks on tough targets, dog-pile the wounded, and murder every wizard they see. They're smart and nasty opponents.

When the Barrier is breached, one of the dragon kin spell priests will step back from the desecration prayer and hurl spell after spell upon the intruders. If that doesn't do the trick, the second dragon kin spell priest will try. When they run out of spells, they draw swords and engage in melee – who'd have guessed; it turns out they're pretty good fighters too.

The primary spell priest is a demi-dragon, and a pretty imposing sight. Luckily for the heroes, she will move to defend herself but won't attack - the prayer continues until her dying breath.

When the demi-dragon is finally stopped, all is quiet for a beat. The sickly rain outside trickles to a halt. Has the day been won? A great, booming clap rends the air. An enormous flaming mass tears through the sky and rockets over the cathedral and off over the far horizon leaving a sonic boom in its wake. The heroes may see it as a sign of great victory (certainly the demi-dragon's last breath, as the meteor streaks overhead, is a scream of, "Noooooooooooo!!!"). The day is saved and the gods are pleased. The nexus is no longer flaring, the divine prognosticators are nodding in approval.

As for Garris, it will be destroyed and sink into the ground in the weeks to come, but not before the Alliance army breaks the back of the Wild, sending the surviving Wild troops scattering, with Trader and Caladon and Valon heroes in hot pursuit.

To decide the ultimate fate of the Great Dragon Spirit, tune in for the next act of our campaign. He's a little harder to beat than just interrupting a prayer to him mid-stream. That said, if the heroes did anything to stop the ritual early in the fight, or dispatched the primary spell priest especially quickly, consider giving them a bonus in the final showdown. The Great Dragon Spirit may be weaker than we list him.

Elite Demi-Ogre Bodyguard

These bad boys are similar to standard issue demi-ogres (see the Wild Soldiers in Act III above), only leaner, meaner, bigger, smarter, and covered in more steel. Each one has committed numerous atrocities, and has plans for several more as soon as the current ruckus has ended. They cut intimidating figures in their red and gold plate, always ready to shout abuse and challenges from behind their crude, yet powerfully wrought dragon maw helmets.

Elite Demi-Ogre Bodyguard **CR 6**
Ogre brute (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Monster Codex*)
XP 2,400
hp 88

Hursk, Dragon Kin Champion

The leader of the demi-ogre bodyguards is readily noticed due to the skulls of two Caladonian knights that are hanging off his belt. Each one was defeated in single combat, a matter of which Hursk is inordinately proud. He's not as large as the elite demi-ogres he commands, but that doesn't matter because he knows he's invincible – well, no enemy has been able to kill him yet. His cleaver is hefted and ready. It's time to smash puny heroes!

Hursk, Dragon Kin Champion **CR 6**
XP 2,400

Male lizardfolk barbarian 5
CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)
Init +0; **Senses** Perception +9

DEFENSE

AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+7 armor, +2 Dex, +5 natural, –2 rage)

hp 76 (2d8+5d12+35)

Fort +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4

Defensive Abilities improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +1; **Resist** fire 2

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 15 ft.

Melee masterwork fire-forged falchion +13 (2d4+9/18–20 plus 1 fire), bite +10 (1d4+3 plus 1 fire), or claw +12 (1d4+6 plus 1 fire), bite +12 (1d4+6 plus 1 fire)

Special Attacks rage (14 rounds/day), rage powers (crag linnorm death curse, energy resistance [fire])

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 14, **Con** 19, **Int** 7, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +6; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 24

Feats Cleave, Multiattack, Power Attack, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +7, Perception +9, Swim +12;

Racial Modifiers +4 Acrobatics

Languages Draconic

SQ hold breath

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hold Breath (Ex) Hursk can hold his breath for a number of rounds equal to 4 times his Constitution score before he risks drowning.

Combat Gear *potion of shield of faith* +3; **Other Gear** *belt of tumbling*^{UE}, +1 *breastplate*, masterwork fire-forged^{UE} falchion, gems and coinage worth 275 gp

Base Statistics When not raging, Hursk's statistics are **AC** 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22; **hp** 62; **Fort** +9, **Will** +2; **Melee** mwk fire-forged falchion +11 (2d4+6/18–20), bite +8 (1d4+2), or claw +10 (1d4+4), bite +10 (1d4+4); **Str** 18, **Con** 15; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 22; **Skills** Swim +10.

Dragon Kin Spell Priests

The Great Dragon Spirit's chosen people resemble him in many particulars, from their scaled bodies to their impassive, draconic faces. As they age, their bodies crack and warp under the unnatural strain. Walking upright becomes uncomfortable, their claws lengthen, and their thoughts sink ever deeper into the preternatural impulses of the reptile brain. At the end of their transformation, they are both magnificent and terrible.

The dragon kin priests have not yet gone too far down the path of transformation. They resemble tall dragon kin with more of a draconic head perhaps, and have yet to grow wings. These guys are fanatics, and each has a lot to gain from summoning the Great Dragon Spirit. Despite their personal rivalries and egg-oaths, they've all banded together to protect their leader and defeat the heroes.

Dragon Kin Spell Priests **CR 5**
XP 1,600

Male lizardfolk sorcerer 1/oracle 4
CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)
Init +0; **Senses** Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +5 natural)

hp 30 (2d8+1d6+4d8)

Fort +4, **Ref** +1, **Will** +7

Resist cold 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 15 ft.

Melee mwk bastard sword +10 (1d10+4/19–20), bite +6 (1d4+2), or claw +8 (1d4+4), bite +8 (1d4+4)

Special Attacks

Oracle Spells Known (CL 4th; concentration +6)

2nd (4/day)—*death candle*^{ARG} (DC 14), *summon swarm*

1st (7/day)—*command* (DC 13), *doom* (DC 13), *deathwatch*, *shield of faith*

0th—*detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *resistance*, *virtue*

Mystery apocalypseMC

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 1st; concentration +3)

1st (4/day)—*magic missile*, *touch of combustion*^{ARG} (DC 13)

0th—*bleed* (DC 12), *detect magic*, *read magic*, *spark* (DC 12)

Bloodline draconic

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 10, **Con** 11, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +4; **CMB** +8; **CMD** 18

Feats Arcane Armor Training, Eschew Materials, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Multiattack, Weapon Focus (bastard sword)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Bluff +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Perception +5, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +5, Swim +10, Use Magic Device +6; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics

Languages Draconic

SQ bloodline arcana (+1 damage to fire spells cast), hold breath, oracle's curse (cold-blooded lizardfolkMC), revelations (defy elements [cold], dust to dust [1/day, CMB +6, 2d4 damage])

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hold Breath (Ex) A lizardfolk can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to 4 times its Constitution score before it risks drowning.

Combat Gear *scroll of fireball*, *wand of fire breath* (3 charges); **Other Gear** masterwork bastard sword, +1 studded leather armor, 80 gp



Aara, Demi-Dragon (Primary Spell Priest)

While still bipedal, the primary priest is further along the transformation to full dragonhood. Human emotions no longer register on her armored face and she has recently grown draconic wings (though they aren't yet strong enough yet for flight). When she moves, it's with a slithering grace that tracks the eye; nothing so large should move so effortlessly.

Aara, Demi-Dragon **CR 7**
XP 3,200

Female lizardfolk sorcerer 1/oracle 4/dragon disciple 2

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +7

DEFENSE

AC 21, touch 10, flat-footed 21 (+4 armor, +7 natural)

hp 61 (2d8+1d6+4d8+2d12+18)

Fort +5, **Ref** +2, **Will** +8

Resist cold 5, fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 15 ft.

Melee 2 celestium claw blades +12 (1d4+5), bite +10 (1d4+5)

Special Attacks dragon bite (5 rounds/day, 1d6+7)

Oracle Spells Known (CL 4th; concentration +6)
2nd (4/day)—*death candle*^{ARG} (DC 14), *summon swarm*

1st (7/day)—*command* (DC 13), *doom* (DC 13), *deathwatch*, *shield of faith*

0th—*detect poison*, *guidance*, *light*, *mending*, *resistance*, *virtue*

Celestium Claw Blades

These masterwork bioceramic weapons are magically conductive. They drain and store 1 Pulse from a target on a critical hit. As an immediate action, a point of stored Pulse can be expended to deliver an additional 3d6 electricity damage to the next attack made with the claw blades.

Mystery apocalypse^{MC}

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 2nd; concentration +4)

1st (5/day)—*burning hands* (DC 13), *touch of combustion*^{ARG} (DC 13)

0th—*bleed* (DC 12), *daze* (DC 12), *detect magic*, *read magic*, *spark* (DC 12)

Bloodline draconic (red)

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 10, **Con** 12, **Int** 11, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 20

Feats Arcane Armor Training, Arcane Strike, Eschew Materials, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (claw blades), Multiattack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (claw blades)

Skills Acrobatics +4, Bluff +7, Knowledge (arcana) +8, Knowledge (religion) +8, Perception +7, Sense Motive +6, Spellcraft +7, Swim +10, Use Magic Device +6; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics

Languages Common, Draconic

SQ blood of dragons (red), bloodline arcana (+1 damage to fire spells cast), bloodline powers (claws 5 rounds/day, dragon resistances), hold breath, oracle's curse (cold-blooded lizardfolk^{MC}), revelations (defy elements [cold], dust to dust [1/day, CMB +6, 2d4 damage])

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Hold Breath (Ex) A lizardfolk can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to 4 times its Constitution score before it risks drowning.

Combat Gear *wand of cure light wounds* (25 charges), *wand of magic missiles* (25 charges); **Other Gear** celestium claw blades^{ARG} (2), +1 studded leather armor

The Dragon God: Act V

Realm: Mortal realms, Wilderlands, long after the Pulse War.

Once again, time passes. The characters travel from realm to realm, battling evil and being every inch the heroes of the universe. Day after day they save the day, and sleep at night content in the knowledge that they're getting the job done. They probably forget about that little incident with the cathedral – it's just one hurrah among many.

By the time they're well into Demigod rank, they'll be thinking they're pretty hot stuff. That's when you tell them a bit more about what's going

on. As before, it's up to you whether you roleplay the intervening adventures or advance the demigods artificially.

The gods gather the demigods and actually look worried. They explain what they've just been told by one of their intelligence gatherers; they finally know what that whole dragon kin cathedral thing was all about. The dragons of Relic were trying to summon the Great Dragon Spirit to the mortal realms, breaking the rule about god-power entities crossing the Veil but massively unbalancing the future of mankind... in favor of the dragons taking over and enslaving all non-draconic races for all time. With a great spirit in the mortal realms they could easily make permanent changes to the necessary nexus points.

"So what?" the demigods might say. They stopped the ritual after all. Except they didn't stop the Great Dragon Spirit landing on Earth, just threw him off target. That's what the meteor was, the physical body of a divine entity coming crashing down.

Oops.

It gets worse. The gods and their representatives overlooked the whole thing because the Great Dragon Spirit landed in a part of time and space that was barely inhabitable – the Wilderlands, a post-apocalyptic nightmare landscape with very few people left in it. Because of the gods' oversight, he's had time to build an army of dragon kin and true dragons, all working away at regenerating their master.

The demigods are considered very competent demigods, and because they're so competent it's their job to finish what they started... to infiltrate the draconic army and slay the mortal body of the Great Dragon Spirit, spending him back to the Maelstrom where the gods will be waiting to capture him and imprison him.

One more thing: the dragons are besieging a base run by survivors of the war that created the Wilderlands. It's a new nexus that has appeared, a place where history could be remade. The dragons need fresh blood to regenerate the Great Dragon Spirit, and the base might just contain enough people to complete the process. Luckily, as often happens with nexuses, a portal has appeared in the base as well. Which gives the demigods a chance to turn up and save the day!

Hangin' On

The action starts in a futuristic base manned by the Pure – genetically perfect humans who are hanging on against hordes of dragon kin out for their blood. It's only a matter of time until the defenders are captured.

The demigods' welcome to the Wilderlands takes place in a fortified sci-fi hangar with the Maelstrom portal in one corner. Reinforced barricade blocks give the Pure some cover; a gutted hover tank is flipped on its side in the middle of the hangar. The Pure control two sentry guns, aimed at the main entrance to the hangar, and the defenders are protecting a single corridor leading out behind them. This, however, is where they're making their stand for now.

The demigods appear in the hangar through an experimental portal device that has long been scavenged for useful parts, and is assumed not to work. They probably scare the heck out of the Pure, who are understandably paranoid about strangers since being attacked. Oh, and we should mention that they're massive xenophobes and human supremacists... if any of the demigods is clearly not human, give the group -2 to all Charisma based checks with the people they're supposed to save.

To make the situation more dangerous, the demigods appear in the middle of one of the assaults by the dragons – wave one died in the corridor but wave two has just established a foothold in the hangar having dealt with the hover tank. Deal initiative straight away and expect a few shots to be fired at the demigods from both factions while everyone figures out who's on whose side. All the time there will be plenty of gunfire and other unpleasantness between the defenders and assaulting force. The demigods are demigods, and it's time to prove their demigod diplomacy skills. They'll need to communicate quickly and efficiently to save the situation.

Once the demigods convince the Pure whose side they're on, things should get significantly easier. Dr. Aman Scilene, nominal leader of the cell of survivors, doesn't much care who the heroes are as long as they have weapons and they're pointing them in the right direction.

The dragon kin have stolen a few matter destabilizers, which burn holes through the Pure defenses as if they weren't there. As soon as the initial barrage is over, slaver teams with concussion grenades, and energy rifles set to stun rush in and grab as many defenders as they can.

A wave consists of one dragon (use an adult dragon from the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, pick the color that would make for the most interesting battle), 4 dragon kin raiders + 1 per character, and a demi-dragon sergeant. Gruul is the sergeant of the second wave. The third wave will be along 5 rounds after the demigods arrive on the scene; further waves can be sent if you feel the need to keep the action going longer. There are 6 Pure survivors and Dr. Scilene holding the line.

This is your chance to run a claustrophobic sci-fi ruckus, with unending swarms of dragon kin, some over-the-top technology, and a few demi-dragon champions/leaders thrown in for good measure.

Pulse Gear

Ghost Suits: These items function as if they possessed the *ethereality* magic armor special ability, but confer no other benefit when worn. To enter the Ethereal Plane (known as the Spirit World in the Suzerain Continuum), the wearer must expend 4 Pulse. The jaunt lasts for 1 hour before the character is pulled back into the Material Plane, but the wearer can extend the jaunt for another hour without leaving the Spirit World by simply paying an additional Pulse point.

Pulse Port: Treat these as slotless items which let the Pure tap into their shared Pulse pool, which contains 50 points and is separate from their individual Pulse points noted in their stat blocks. A creature wearing a Pulse port can expend points from the shared pool to power ghost suits and nanobots, or to recharge a technological item, restoring 1d4 charges per Pulse point to any item which requires them for use.

Once the initial assault has been repulsed, Scilene will take the demigods into the corridor, down to the maze of rooms that make up the basement level where the remaining Pure are sheltering. It's a scared group of a dozen or so children, elderly folk, and wounded fighters. The rest of their base has already been over-run, with a hundred people killed or taken by the dragons.

In addition to the two sentry guns, the Pure have access to six ghost suits, a collection of Pulse ports, and a colony of Celestium nanobots. Each ghost suit allows its wearer to travel into the Ethereal for one hour for 4 Pulse. The Pulse ports are easily installed cyberwear that allow the use of Pulse rifles and pistols, as well as access to the sentry gun controls and powering the ghost suits. The nanobots are composed of Suzerain's rarest of rare Pulse-conductive materials – Celestium. The Pure have 100 Pulse stored in total. Every Pulse point of nanobots can dismantle a 15-foot cube of inorganic material or five opponents (CR 4 or lower), atom by atom. This stash of nanobots is the greatest treasure of the Pure, once used for mining operations but now irreplaceable. Given the circumstances, though, they're willing to use it all if necessary.

Celestium Nanobot Colony* **CR 12**
XP 19,200

Caster Level 12th

Notice Perception DC 30 (to notice a creeping swarm of tiny, nigh-undetected ant-like robots bustling with activity)

hp 54; Trigger a creature wearing a Pulse port spends 1 Pulse point within 60 feet of the colony;
Reset 1 minute

Effect A creature wearing a Pulse port can command the colony to move to any point within 60 feet of that creature's position. By spending 1 Pulse, the creature can direct the colony to target a single creature or 10-foot cube of nonliving matter with a *disintegrate* effect, as per the spell, on its Initiative count.

Weaknesses slow (manifests on Initiative count 0)

Destruction The nanobots are only susceptible to electricity damage from an area effect or splash weapon; if reduced to 0 hp, they are permanently destroyed.

*Treat the nanobot colony as a persistent haunt (see the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*).



Breaking Out

Staying in the base would be suicide. The demigods will need to do something bold, and fast! A popular rumor among the survivors suggests that everyone who's captured by the outsiders is brought somewhere far off for an apocalyptic purpose. Could this ragtag group of Pure be inspired to rescue their companions? Possibly – all they need are leaders and transport.

The hover tank's no longer operational, but there's a fully-stocked motor pool in the next cluster of buildings, less than 500 yards from the hangar entrance. There are a good 10,000 dragon kin encamped in this bit of the Wilderlands, but this is hardly a time for quibbling about numbers.

Diversions are the way to make it across No Man's Land and to snag a VTOL Pterodactyl or a couple of fortified ATVs. The dragon kin have numbers, control the guard towers, and may have mines at their disposal. But they're not expecting a counter attack. The hangar entrance is the center of the dragons' attention, but those nanobots could chomp the earth up from the basement and create a new tunnel out – the nearest they could get is 250 yards from the motor pool, but that's half the distance covered and the group will appear somewhere the dragons aren't expecting them.

Make them the longest 250 yards the demigods have ever travelled. Remind them that they have children and wounded people with them. Remind them that they can't let the dragons capture any more people alive. Make them make hard choices and use every Power at their disposal as you count down the distance and more dragons of various sizes appear.

And then, as soon as the demigods hotwire their new rides, the dragon kin will release a brace of hydras to give pursuit.



Road Trip

The demigods are in the middle of a dragon army. Many of the larger dragons have wings, so being airborne isn't any guarantee of safety. The demigods will want to get the heck out of there, and fast. Except that their target is the epicenter of draconic activity, an enormous crater that's easily visible from the base. That's the landing spot of the Great Dragon Spirit, and that's where the demigods need to go if they're to stop all of mankind's future suffering the fate of these Pure.

Everywhere they go is marked by scorched rubble and hints at the realm's past. Flaming crevasses in the ground are not uncommon. Some days their glow is the only light not swallowed up by the frosted brown cloud cover. More dangerous than the flame pits are the localized gravity wells. These invisible killers are fallout from before the Wilderlands went by that name. The first sign that one's nearby is the sudden, crushing pressure and crippling pain. Next comes the inexorable pull toward the center of gravity. Anything not rescued before reaching the center is utterly destroyed by the process. On top of all that, everywhere they go there are dragons and dragon kin, some armed with technology scavenged from the rest of the Pure base, others with nothing but their formidable natural weaponry.

Unless the demigods are planning some post-apocalyptic tourism, they'll be heading straight for the crater, which is where we move on to Act VI for the thrilling conclusion to the campaign!

Dragon Kin Raider

Dragon kin look pretty much the same, no matter where you find them. These raiders are about the same size as Hursk, the champion in Act IV of the campaign, but not as developed as the casters, and their claws are sharp enough to use as weapons. They're still capable of displaying human emotion, but there's something off about it. They're perfectly still most of the time, seemingly moving at the last second in pursuit of their inscrutable goals.

Although well-armed (using stolen tech scavenged from the Pure base!), the raiders wear a motley assortment of human uniforms from several eras, animal skins, and spiked leather biker gear. Because, well, it's a post-apocalyptic setting after all.

Dragon Kin Raider**CR 6****XP 2,400**

Advanced Pulse-touched lizardfolk

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +1**DEFENSE****AC** 19, touch 10, flat-footed 19 (+4 armor, +5 natural)**hp** 37 (5d8+15)**Fort** +8, **Ref** +4, **Will** +3**OFFENSE****Speed** 20 ft., swim 15 ft.**Melee** claw +4 (1d4+1), bite +4 (1d4+1)**Ranged** laser rifle +6 (2d6 fire, automatic, touch), or rocket launcher +5 (6d6 bludgeoning and 6d6 fire, 30-ft. radius, Ref DC 15 half, slow-firing), or concussion grenade +5 (5d6 bludgeoning, splash)**STATISTICS****Str** 12, **Dex** 16, **Con** 15, **Int** 9, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +3; **CMB** +4; **CMD** 17**Feats** Deadly Aim, Improved Pulse Armor, Multiattack, Opportunistic Push, Pulse Armor, Toughness, Weapon Focus (laser rifle), Point-Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Perception +1, Swim +6; **Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics**Languages** Draconic**SQ** demigod-like, hero points (5), hold breath, pulse pool (3)**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Hold Breath (Ex)** A wild soldier can hold its breath for a number of rounds equal to 4 times its Constitution score before it risks drowning.**Gear** laser rifle (1d10+10 charges), rocket launcher, concussion grenades (2), rockets (2), hide armor**Gruul, Demi-Dragon Sergeant**

Gruul's midnight blue scales contrast with red and black of her troops. She modifies her coloration further with bright yellow war paint. Although impractical, it has an inspirational effect on the raiders. Even broken and bloodied they will follow her over the next shattered wall; that is how it has been and nothing can change their fanatical willingness to serve her.

Gruul, Demi-Dragon Sergeant**CR 6****XP 2,400**

Female lizardfolk barbarian 5

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +0; **Senses** Perception +9**DEFENSE****AC** 22, touch 10, flat-footed 20 (+7 armor, +2 Dex, +5 natural, -2 rage)**hp** 76 (2d8+5d12+35)**Fort** +11, **Ref** +3, **Will** +4**Defensive Abilities** improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +1; **Resist** electricity 2**OFFENSE****Speed** 30 ft., swim 15 ft.**Melee** stun baton +13 (1d6+9 plus 1d8+1 electricity), bite +10 (1d4+3 plus 1 electricity), or claw +12 (1d4+6 plus 1 electricity), bite +12 (1d4+6 plus 1 electricity)**Ranged** arc rifle +8/+3 (2d6 electricity, automatic, touch) or concussion grenade +8 (5d6 bludgeoning, splash)**Special Attacks** rage (14 rounds/day), rage powers (taiga linnorm death curse^{ACG}, energy resistance [electricity]^{APG})**STATISTICS****Str** 22, **Dex** 14, **Con** 19, **Int** 7, **Wis** 12, **Cha** 10**Base Atk** +6; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 24**Feats** Multiattack, Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Toughness**Skills** Acrobatics +7, Perception +9, Swim +12;**Racial Modifiers** +4 Acrobatics**Languages** Draconic**SQ** hold breath**SPECIAL ABILITIES****Hold Breath (Ex)** Gruul can hold her breath for a number of rounds equal to 4 times her Constitution score before she risks drowning.**Combat Gear** *potion of shield of faith* +3; **Other Gear** *belt of tumbling*^{UE}, +1 *breastplate*, stun baton (10 charges), arc rifle (1d10+10 charges), concussion grenades (2), gems and coinage worth 275 gp**Base Statistics** When not raging, Gruul's statistics are **AC** 24, touch 12, flat-footed 22; **hp** 62; **Fort** +9, **Will** +2; **Melee** stun baton +11 (1d6+6 plus 1d8 electricity), bite +8 (1d4+2), or claw +10 (1d4+4), bite +10 (1d4+4); **Str** 18, **Con** 15; **CMB** +10; **CMD** 22; **Skills** Swim +10.



Hydra

Somewhere along the line, some bright dragon kin decided that normal fire-breathing dragons didn't have enough oomph and demanded more. The Great Dragon Spirit provided. More heads. More attitude. More muscle. Just more.

Hydra **CR 6**
Pyrohydra (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)
XP 2,400
hp 47

Pure Survivors

The few Pure tough or lucky enough to have survived the initial onslaught are a rare breed. Even in times of peace their people were known for being skilled and resourceful technologists. Those who remain are a particularly hardy bunch. Due to their extensive genetic therapy, the Pure are disconcerting to those from other realms. Even in the middle of a sustained firefight, they don't appear overly disheveled; every move they make flows as if it was rehearsed several times before execution.

Pure Survivor **CR 4**
Variant shopkeeper (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 1,200
AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +1 Dex)
hp 21
Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +3
Melee dagger +2 (1d4–1/19–20)
Ranged laser rifle +3 (2d6 fire, automatic, touch)
Str 9, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 12, Cha 13
Altered Feat swap Iron Will for Pure Strain (these creatures ignore the usual prerequisites for this feat).
SQ pulse pool (4)
Altered Gear Each Pure survivor has a laser rifle (1d10+10 charges), dagger, and mwk studded leather armor; remove all other gear listed.

Dr. Aman Scilene

By virtue of a cool head and a quick mind, Dr. Scilene has become the impromptu leader of the band of survivors. Although combat and tactics are not his core strengths, the last several weeks have revealed talents he never expected. Still very much the

brainy scientist, Dr. Scilene is prone to giving overly technical explanations and verbose suggestions when out of immediate danger.

Dr. Aman Scilene **CR 6**
Variant wise sage (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 2,400
AC 14, touch 11, flat-footed 13 (+3 armor, +1 Dex)
Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +8
Melee dagger +5 (1d4–1/19–20)
Ranged laser pistol +7/+2 (1d8 fire, semi-automatic, touch)
Str 9, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 11
Altered Feat swap Magical Aptitude for Pure Strain (these creatures ignore the usual prerequisites for this feat).
SQ pulse pool (5)
Altered Skills Spellcraft +14, Use Magic Device +14
Altered Gear Dr. Scilene has a laser pistol (2d4+2 charges), dagger, and mwk studded leather armor; remove all other gear listed.

Vehicles

VTOL Pterodactyl

It moves like a helicopter, but there the similarities end. Vaguely egg-shaped and heavily armored all around, the Pterodactyl is completely sealed when buttoned up. Internal view screens take the place of windows, though no external cameras (or weapons, or anything else for that matter) can be seen. The hideously complex multi-layered interface, which is only accessible through a Pulse port, is enough to confuse the best pilot. Non-Pure attempting to pilot the craft do so at –2, and there is a further –2 penalty for any pilot whose Int is under 16.

VTOL Pterodactyl

Huge air vehicle
Squares 12 (15 ft. by 20 ft.; 15 ft. high); **Cost 75,000 gp**

DEFENSE

AC 8; Hardness 10
hp 240 (119)
Base Save +4

OFFENSE

Maximum Speed 360 ft.; **Acceleration** 45 ft.

CMB +2; **CMD** 12

Ramming Damage 2d8

DESCRIPTION

This heavily-armored helicopter is completely sealed when in operation and piloted via Pulse nanocams and internal viewscreens. A rocket launcher and rail gun are installed just beneath the 2 5-foot forward squares of the VTOL on 360-degree roto-turrets, and can be fired on any target within the weapons' range by either the pilot or a passenger.

Propulsion fossil fuel combustion and blade rotors

Driving Check Knowledge (engineering) or Profession (driver); all DCs are 10 higher for non-Pure pilots

Forward Facing VTOL's forward

Driving Device cyclic stick yoke, collective/anti-torque pedals, and throttle

Driving Space forward left 5-foot square of the VTOL

Crew 1

Passengers 7

Decks 1

Railgun Deals 5d8 bludgeoning and piercing damage (with a x4 critical multiplier) as a ranged touch attack to all creatures in a 200-foot line (up to the first object or target it fails to damage) as a full-round action.

Rocket Launcher Deals 6d6 fire and 6d6 bludgeoning damage to all creatures within a 30-foot radius as a full-round action. It can target a creature as a ranged touch attack or a grid. Anything within its 30-foot radius must make a Reflex save (DC 15) to halve the damage (struck creatures don't get a save).

Sentry Guns

The Pure's sentry guns are ball-mounted armored turrets capable of a full spectrum of rotation. For those with a fondness for ordnance, the sight of twin rail cannons tracking and leading targets must be the most inspirational sight in the world. The world can't be in that much trouble, with all these fireworks in the air! For the rest of us though, it's downright terrifying.

Sentry Guns: **AC** 9, **hardness** 10, **hp** 80, **Base Save** +2; **Dmg** 3d10 bludgeoning and piercing; **Critical** ×4; **Range** 200 ft.; **Usage** 1 Pulse; **Special** slow-firing, touch; Any adjacent creature with a Pulse

pool or who is wearing a Pulse port can expend Pulse to fire the sentry guns (a full-round action).

Fortified ATV

It's a good thing the Wilderlands are so empty because otherwise you'd never be able to find a parking spot in this thing. The standard-issue fortified ATV is tough enough to survive the worst of the post-apocalyptic terrain with only minor scratches in the paint and an oil change every 5 years.

This pretty little piece of hardware features multiple axles, massive, acid-resistant tires, and armor plating like nobody's business. It's perfect for military support, picnics on the beach, or even salt-flat death racing. The typical Pure ATV is unarmed, but dragon kin flout this generalization all the time.

Fortified ATV

Large land vehicle

Squares 6 (10 ft. by 15 ft.; 8 ft. high); **Cost** 10,000 gp

DEFENSE

AC 9; **Hardness** 10

hp 120 (59)

Base Save +2

OFFENSE

Maximum Speed 240 ft.; **Acceleration** 120 ft.

CMB +1; **CMD** 11

Ramming Damage 1d8

DESCRIPTION

The very essence of a war pig, these ATVs can take serious punishment before breaking down.

Propulsion fossil fuel combustion and drivetrain

Driving Check Knowledge (engineering) or Profession (driver)

Forward Facing ATV's forward

Driving Device wheel yoke and brake/acceleration foot pedals

Driving Space forward left 5-foot square of the ATV

Crew 1

Passengers 19

Decks 1

The Dragon God: Act VI

Realm: Mortal realms, Wilderlands (long after the Pulse War).

No build-up is necessary here. You should know what to expect by this point: the demigods are going to take down the Great Dragon Spirit's physical form, so the gods can chain him somewhere in an unfathomable backwater of the Maelstrom.

The rim of the crater is lined with dragon kin warriors and larger dragons, waiting in barely contained ecstasy for their master's return. Blood pools around the physical form of the Great Dragon Spirit, allowing Pulse to sink into his regenerating flesh. We should point out that the crater is simply huge and the half-fleshy, half-skeletal dragon fills it all. Let's put it this way - his mouth alone could swallow a football field. This task isn't going to be as simple as walking up to him and socking him on the jaw.

As the demigods close in, their Telesmae start getting talky. The gods want to make sure that the demigods get it right, so they're opening up all the lines of communication. The gods are aware of the four steps necessary to banish the Great Dragon Spirit from the mortal realms, and will explain them as the demigods approach the crater and get their first glimpse of the opponent.

For the purposes of this scenario, the Great Dragon Spirit's immensely huge, half-living, Pulse-drinking corporeal form doesn't have statistics. (If you *really* want to extrapolate those, you could start by reading Encounter 27, "The Dragon And The Wolf", in Savage Mojo's *Palace of the Lich Queen* mega-adventure and adding the undead creature template of your fancy to what you see there.) Remember, the Great Dragon Spirit's a *god*—and its body, though wretched and malformed in its present state, can't be destroyed through mundane physical means. A specific set of ritual requirements is needed to do that, and the demigods must fight pieces of its essence in order to prevent its return.

The Great Dragon Spirit

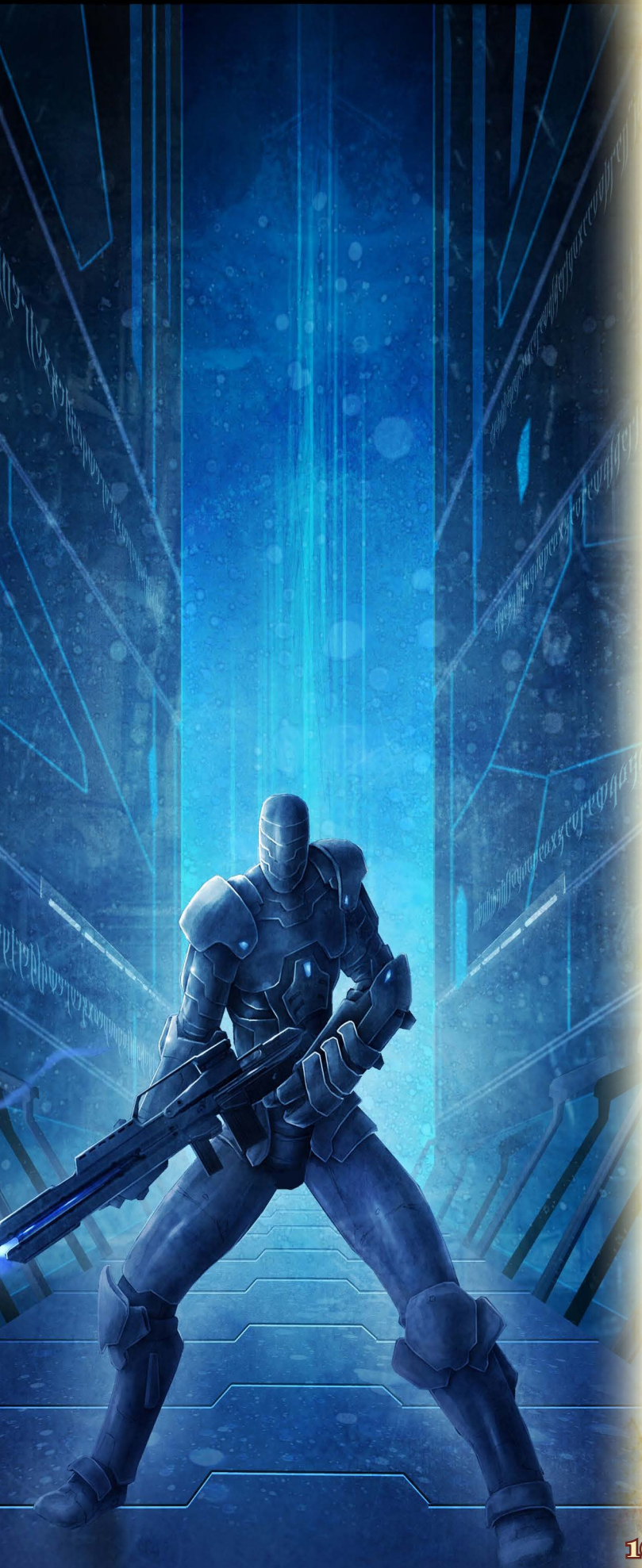
The Great Dragon Spirit's the lord and master of all dragonkind. He hates mankind for the violence men have inflicted on dragons in dozens of realms. His current physical form is a titanic slab of regenerating flesh studded with twisting bones and surging viscera. When fully healed, the Great Dragon Spirit's girded in impenetrable scales, not all of which have grown in yet. This is the chance for the demigods to strike decisively!

To Kill The King Of Dragons

1. Raising The Scale: His physical form can only be destroyed at the heart, yet that's also the place where he already has immeasurably hard scales. However, several of the Great Dragon Spirit's scales have not yet hardened into their final position. One of these can be pried up to reach the new, tender flesh below. It requires a DC 25 Strength check as a full-round action to either lift the scale or keep it held aloft. As soon as a scale is hoisted, Stage 2 can begin.

2. Exhausting The Dragon: Hammering at the Great Dragon Spirit's flesh brings the brave demigod into direct conflict with the spirit's personified endurance. The demigod making the attempt must pay 1 Pulse and attempt a sunder CMB check against the spirit-flesh's CMD of 50. Every success reduces the spirit-flesh's CMD by 5. After three successful CMB checks, it's exhausted. The PC who wrestled it into submission may pay 4 Hero Points or 2 Pulse to seal the damage done. Otherwise, the flesh will fully regenerate in 1d4 rounds, and the demigods are all pushed back to the surface and need to start the whole process again.

Exhausting the flesh is only one part of the process. The demigods need to exhaust the opponent completely—flesh, mind, and soul. Exhausting the spirit-mind works similarly as exhausting the spirit-flesh, requiring three successful Concentration checks by a spellcasting demigod against DC 50 (and again, each success reduces the DC by 5) and an expenditure of 4 Hero Points or 2 Pulse to seal the effect. Exhausting the spirit-soul also works similarly, requiring three successful DC 50 Intimidate checks



(yet again, each success reduces the DC by 5) and an expenditure of 4 Hero Points or 2 Pulse to seal the effect. (Remember, the scales must be held at bay as described in Stage 1 above during each such check attempt!)

After the flesh, mind, and soul have been exhausted and sealed (in any order) the demigods

have torn a deep enough hole in the great spirit to reach his pulsating viscera. As they descend, gore is everywhere.

3. Shredding The Heart: The great spirit's beating heart is the final obstacle before reaching the very core of his being. After the demigods have fought their way into the center of the great spirit's heart, all that's left is to wrestle his spiritual signature—time to head to the Spirit World!

Heart of the Great Dragon **CR 18**
XP 153,600

NE Gargantuan aberration

Init -2; **Senses** tremorsense 120 ft.; **Perception** +12
Aura pulsebeat 120 ft.

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 4, flat-footed 33 (-2 Dex, +39 natural, -4 size)

hp 322 (28d8+196); **regeneration** 10 (good and magic)

Fort +15; **Ref** +7; **Will** +11

DR 15/good and magic; **SR** 29

Weaknesses dragon's heart

OFFENSE

Speed fly 15 ft. (poor)

Melee slam +28 (2d6+11)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attacks bioelectric conduction (DC 32)

TACTICS

Before Combat The heart of the Great Dragon knows no stimulus but the rushing blood and pulse of its master, and makes no preparations before combat.

During Combat The heart is mindless but vicious in its onslaught, targeting any creature that wounds it with **Awesome Blow**, **Bull Rush Strike**, **Power Attack**, or **Stunning Assault** to propel the offending germ

away from itself. It uses Greater Vital Strike with its slam attack whenever possible.

Morale The heart beats until it can do so no more, a mindless horror incapable of parley.

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 6, **Con** 22, **Int** 1, **Wis** 1, **Cha** 1

Base Atk +21; **CMB** +37 (+41 bull rush); **CMD** 45 (+47 vs. bull rush); can't be tripped

Feats Ability Focus (bioelectric conduction), Awesome Blow, Bloody Assault, Bull Rush Strike, Dazing Assault, Furious Focus, Greater Bull Rush, Greater Vital Strike, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack (–6/+12), Stunning Assault, Toughness, Vital Strike

Skills Fly +5, Perception +12

Languages Draconic (can't speak)

SQ bound by the flesh

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Bioelectric Conduction (Ex) Each round, the heart of the Great Dragon beats like a massive drum, shedding residual bioelectric energy and deafening waves of sound. All creatures within 60 feet of the heart take 10d6 electricity damage and 10d6 sonic damage at the start of its turn; a DC 32 Fortitude save halves this damage. The save is Constitution-based.

Bound By The Flesh (Ex) The heart of the Great Dragon is tethered within the corporeal essence of its body by veins and arteries. It can't move more than 120 feet in any direction from its starting location within the Great Dragon's massive, heaving chest. As the heart moves, secondary veins and arteries spring up from the dragon's flesh to connect with it, and all terrain that it occupies at any point during its turn is treated as difficult terrain for 1 round, even for flying creatures.

Dragon's Heart (Su) Although the heart of the Great Dragon is an aberration, it counts as a dragon for the purpose of resolving effects that specifically target dragons, such as *bane* weapons.

Pulsebeat Aura (Su) When a creature fails its save against the heart's bioelectric conduction attack, it loses 1 Pulse, and the heart gains 1 Pulse. The heart can expend 1 Pulse as a swift action on its turn to gain a +4 bonus to any attack roll or CMB check, after the result of the roll is determined.

4. Scattering The Pulse: The vital essence of the furious enemy lies exposed and vulnerable before the demigods. On the Ethereal Plane, it looks like a man-sized diamond with a dragon of pure light coiled

around it. Once defeated, the Great Dragon Spirit will be forced up into the heavens and in a blaze of blinding light his spirit will be ripped through the Veil. Looking up, the demigods will be able to see the hands of gods reaching through to wrestle him and pull him to the Maelstrom. In the physical world, his body will collapse on the ground, lifeless.

Essence of the Great Dragon Spirit **CR 20**
XP 307,200

NE Huge dragon

Init +2; **Senses** blindsense 60 ft., darkvision 120 ft.; Perception +37

Aura frightful presence (360 ft., DC 29)

DEFENSE

AC 36, touch 6, flat-footed 36 (–2 Dex, +40 natural, –2 size)

hp 350 (28d12+180)

Fort +22, **Ref** +14, **Will** +22; +5 vs. poison

DR 20/magic; **Immune** paralysis, sleep; **Resist** acid 20, cold 20, fire 20, electricity 20, sonic 20; **SR** 31

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 200 ft. (poor)

Melee bite +39 (2d8+19), 2 claws +39 (2d6+13), 2 wings +37 (1d8+6), tail slap +37 (2d6+19)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft. (15 ft. with bite)

Special Attacks breath weapon (50-ft. cone, DC 30, 24d10, half-fire, half-untyped), crush (Medium creatures, DC 30, 4d6+19)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 28th; concentration +33)

At will—*darkness*, *plant growth*, *veil* (DC 21), *wall of fire*, *wall of ice*

Spells Known (CL 20th; concentration +25)

9th (6/day)—*time stop*, *weird*, *wish*

8th (6/day)—*iron body*, *prismatic wall* (DC 23), *power word stun*

7th (6/day)—*forcecage* (DC 22), *prismatic spray* (DC 22), *spell turning*

6th (7/day)—*acid fog*, *disintegrate* (DC 21), *greater dispel magic*

5th (7/day)—*cone of cold* (DC 20), *feeblemind* (DC 20), *teleport*, *wall of force*

4th (7/day)—*dimension door*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, *stoneskin*

3rd (7/day)—*displacement*, *haste*, *lightning bolt* (DC 18), *slow* (DC 18)

2nd (7/day)—*detect thoughts* (DC 17), *glitterdust* (DC 17), *shatter* (DC 17), *sound burst* (DC 17), *see invisibility*

1st (8/day)—*mage armor*, *magic missile*, *shield*, *true strike*, *ventriloquism*

0 (at will)—*arcane mark*, *bleed* (DC 15), *detect magic*, *mage hand*, *mending*, *message*, *open/close*, *read magic*, *resistance*

TACTICS

Before Combat The essence of the Great Dragon Spirit's inextricably linked to its regenerating material form, and is all too aware of the demigods' assault on its spirit form. It casts *greater invisibility*, *mage armor*, *shield*, and *spell turning* on itself once its heart has been reduced to less than 100 hp.

During Combat The Great Dragon Spirit's essence begins by casting *time stop*, targeting the space around the most well-equipped demigods with *forcecage* or *wall of force*, and then buffing itself with additional spells (such as *displacement* or *haste*). It continues to use this strategy with impunity throughout the fight. It targets arcane casters with *feblemind* and divine casters with *power word stun*, then relentlessly targets any unrestrained opponents with its breath weapon, crush attack, or damage-dealing spells, burning Pulse to use its Improved Exemplar feat. It saves its last 9th-level spell slot for an *iron body* spell once the majority of its high-level spell slots are exhausted.

Morale The Great Dragon's essence knows that this is the endgame—either it wins this conflict, or it dies... permanently. Surrender is not an option for the King of Dragons.

STATISTICS

Str 36, Dex 6, Con 22, Int 20, Wis 22, Cha 20

Base Atk +28; CMB +43; CMD 51 (55 vs. trip)

Feats Cleave, Critical Focus, Empower Spell, Exemplar (Strength), Greater Vital Strike, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Exemplar (Strength), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Multiattack, Power Attack (–8/+16), Quicken Spell, Stunning Critical, Vital Strike

Skills Appraise +36, Bluff +36, Fly +21, Intimidate +36, Knowledge (arcana) +36, Knowledge (planes) +36, Knowledge (religion) +36, Perception +37, Sense Motive +37, Spellcraft +36, Use Magic Device +36

Languages Common, Abyssal, Aklo, Celestial, Draconic, Infernal

SQ no victory without sacrifice, overwhelming might, pulse pool (20 points)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

No Victory Without Sacrifice (Su) The only way to affect the Great Dragon's essence with a critical hit is to sacrifice one point of Pulse permanently (yes, *permanently*—this process is bound to leave some scars).

Overwhelming Might (Ex) The Great Dragon Spirit's essence counts as a Gargantuan creature for the purpose of determining his crush attack's damage dice and maximum target size.

And... Fight!

The four stage process doesn't sound too tough for hardened demigods like your characters. Bear in mind, though, they'll have just been fighting their way through an army of dragons and might well be bloodied. Also, the Great Dragon Spirit has no intention of letting them act unopposed.

The first obstacle for the demigods is the sheer scale (if you pardon the pun) of the task. When the demigods get on to the semi-regenerated body of the Great Dragon Spirit, each of the demigods must make a DC 35 Will save or become shaken for so long as they remain atop (or within) the dragon's form. No matter what they've seen in their long and epic career, this is worse.

On initiative count 20 of each round of actions in this realm, roll D% and consult the following table.

01-25%	Nothing
26-40%	Shake
41-50%	Rattle
51-75%	Breath Weapon
76-100%	Roll

Shake: The Great Dragon's form shudders in torment. All demigods must make DC 25 Reflex saves or fall prone.

Rattle: Seeking to dislodge the impertinent insects on its hide, the Great Dragon scrapes against the side of the crater. All demigods must succeed at a DC 30 Acrobatics or Climb check, or slide 1d10 x 5 feet in a random direction and fall prone. If they fall over the edge and into the crater below, this could be bad news indeed.



Breath Weapon: A long, snaking neck topped with an array of misshapen mouths sprouts from the punctured flesh of the great spirit and spits fiery doom over the demigods (40-foot cone, Reflex DC 21, 8d10 fire).

Roll: The Dragon God pitches from side to side, shrieking in rage. All terrain is treated as difficult for 1 round, and the demigods must each attempt a DC 35 Will save or become shaken for 1d6+1 rounds.

As if all this wasn't enough, 2d6 bloodlings seep from between the great spirit's scales every round.

Bloodlings

Blood weird (*Tome Of Horrors Complete*)

XP 4,800

hp 75

CR 8



Adventurer Tales and Encounters

The following eight tales take place in the city of New Garris in the Relic setting. Feel free to rip, tear, and otherwise alter the parts that don't fit your idea of a rollicking good time, changing names and faces as necessary to fit your stories. You can also use them as encounters to spice up your own long-term epic. Someone important to the central plot didn't show up one day? Run everyone who's left through a Tale. Problem solved.

Ultimately, the aim of these tales is to give the characters some new angles on fantasy roleplay in Suzerain's Relic realm. While those characters are still Neophyte, God-touched and Fated ranked their time will be spent in that realm exclusively, and it's good to have a variety of scenarios to take them through. Use them as a wrapper for the main campaign, developing a rich sense of the world where the dragon kin plan to unleash their great spirit.

Skulls And Crossbows

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

Not all of those who live beneath Relic's seas are content to stay there. The Aquassar race of water elemental merfolk is normally reluctant to mix with the cultures of the mainland, preferring to stick to their distant island home. Occasionally, though, one of their number is enticed by the lure of riches.

An Aquassar trader named Kesi is looking to set up shop in the city of Garris, but her first shipment of weaponry and alchemical supplies has gone missing. She promises the characters generous discounts and assistance in dealing with Garris' upper crust if they help her.

The barge that was supposed to transport her goods from the uppermost reef of the sunken city of Ulm never made it up the Lehr River where Garris sits. Kesi's family has enough enemies that she suspects sabotage – and what self-respecting Aquassar would destroy the goods instead of trying to resell them?

The missing weapons are pretty high-tech... repeating crossbows. This batch is identifiable by a

small starfish marking on each one.

The obvious thing would be to retrace the barge's potential path downstream. If the characters take this route, they'll find the nomadic Yando tribe first, a day out from the city. A few hundred yards beyond their camp, the missing barge is smashed upon a sandy stretch of river bank.

Meeting The Nomads

The Yando tribe is an ancient one, with history covering most of the Great Expanse. They're known for their particularly sturdy breed of horse, as well as their ancient grudge with the Bourna tribe.

Anyone looking for signs of the missing weapons will notice that a few Yando warriors are practicing with crossbows (Knowledge [local] DC 14 to know that they are several technological advances beyond their typical short bows). Each weapon is stamped with a starfish insignia. If no one thinks to ask, a random Perception check (DC 12) will provide the same information.

The Yando are quick to say the barge drifted ashore on its own. There were several Aquassar bodies on board, which the tribe's shaman purified and cremated. They had died unhappily, and he helped their souls escape the anger.

Scavenge has been a long-standing tradition among the Yando, and they won't return Kesi's goods. If the characters press the point, they will attract the attention of Ruce-of-Many, the tribe shaman. Ruce explains that even if the characters could prove anything, his people need the weapons more. A band of ogres has taken up residence in the area, and they've been stealing horses. To turn away any advantage would be the height of foolishness.

Careful examination of the barge will reveal signs of violence, including bloodstains and smashed crates. These should be used to confuse the characters; if they believe the Yando, why was there such a struggle? If they're willing to write the tribe off as murderers, how was the boat smashed?

A truly wicked GM would leave the matter undermined until the last possible moment, calling in the runner from the next scene before the characters find definitive information (if ever). The official answer, however, is that the Yando had nothing to do

with attacking the barge. It was an inside job, sparked by a bag of coins from Kesi's family's enemies in Ulm. The mutineers made their move while the barge was traversing treacherous shallows, causing the barge to lose control.

Surrounded By Ogres

At a suitably dramatic moment, a nomad runner bursts into the camp. Ogres have attacked the camp of the unmarried men! They're holding out for as long as they can, but without the aid of the tribe's more experienced warriors they'll fall soon.

This is a good chance for the adventurers to show their goodwill to the Yando. Without aid, the nomads will only be able to drive back the invaders with heavy casualties. If the characters are intent on recovering the weapons for Kesi, defeating the ogres would go a long way – and possibly win some more customers for their employer.

The unmarried men keep their tents on the other side of a low rock-studded hill. As soon as they're able to support a wife, they marry and move into the main camp. At least three of them will never have the chance though, laid low by ogre clubs. The fight is desperate when the characters arrive, untested warriors dodging and fighting a holding action against their hulking opponents.

The battle includes two ogres per Hero, ten warriors (use the "Guard" statblock from the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*), and ten to twelve unmarried men (who are "guards" as well, but incur a -2 penalty on attack rolls). The warriors will move first to secure the safety of their tribe members, and secondly to drive off the ogres. The characters' safety isn't high on their list of priorities unless there was some serious diplomacy involved in the previous scene. Five of the warriors both use and are proficient in heavy repeating crossbows, which functions the same as a standard crossbow but can fire 5 times before requiring a reload.

What happens at the end is really up to the characters. They may not fight the ogres at all – they may even resort to force against the Yando. The dilemma at the core of this tale is trickier than it appears to be at first, but the potential rewards – both material and personal – could be great.

Wild Ogres

Although wild ogres have gotten less tough since their hey-day in the Second Age, it's not by much. Wielding tree branches for clubs, they aren't the smartest tacticians in the world. They don't really need to be.

Ogres

Ogre (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 800

hp 30

CR 3

Ruce-of-Many

Two years ago, Ruce-of-Many watched as the Yando's shaman was devoured by a starving spirit-ogre. Since then, he has been his people's sole line of defense against spiritual threats, as well as their moral compass. Although younger than the shamans of the nearby tribes, Ruce is afforded great respect by his people. They recognize his many sacrifices for the tribe, readily excusing his occasional periods of quiet introspection.

Ruce-of-Many

Pulse-touched noble crusader (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 1,200

hp 41

CR 6

My Generation

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

This scenario runs best after Act II of our campaign, but it can be any time after. Children are disappearing from Garris again, and the city leaders are concerned that Gregor's group of fanatics have resurfaced, with or without their master. The characters are called in because they have the most practical experience with Gregor and his methods.

A quick trip to the city's criminal underworld reveals that slavers from the Imperial Ministry are to blame. Their totalitarian theocracy festers far from Garris' borders, but its corrupting influence is inescapable.

Searching For Clues

Through careful observation or dumb luck, the characters will eventually catch wind of a story that has been circulating among Garris' urchins about Ol' Sawguts. They say he's the spirit of a miner killed in a cave-in. He's back, with saws for teeth! Adults are too big to fit in his pinched, jagged mouth, but kids are just the right size. No one knows where the story started, but everybody knows that Ol' Sawguts prefers street kids from the Rookery, Garris' bustling guild plaza.

Careful observation of the Rookery will reveal that children aren't the only ones talking about Ol' Sawguts. He's also a part of the stage patter of a scarecrow-styled illusionist named Veran, who operates outside of the Garris public baths. At the climax of his show, he calls eleven children onto his makeshift stage and makes them disappear. Only ten return, while the unfortunate eleventh is hustled off to a nearby warehouse belonging to the brewer's guild. Veran is no more than a lazy criminal who happens to put on an okay stage show - he readily runs rather than fights, and quickly surrenders if his pathetic tricks don't work (use the "Cautious Mage" statblock from the *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex* if any statistics are needed). The children are kept in an empty brewery vat until there are enough of them to fill a large cart. When the characters track this operation down, be sure to use the warehouse's many of barrels in the battle.

The chief slaver reveals that several of the barbarian clans who live around the Jorna Peak are offering a premium on young children. He was heading to meet some Jorna barbarian representatives, far in the Great Expanse, before being so rudely interrupted. He can be persuaded to draw a map to the Jorna foothills, but vows bitter revenge.

The Jorna Guard

Even if the children in the brewery vat are safe, there are still the ones who've already been shipped away - and slavers will continue to steal for the clans of Jorna until they can be stopped. It looks like a trip to the mountains is in order!

The slaver's map leads to a Jorna outpost in the low foothills. It's a ride of several weeks, with all manner of adventure possibilities along the way, so

don't rush things. Throw in a couple of other tales before the characters get to the destination and the end of this one.

Thick timber walls protect three no-nonsense longhouses, each housing a dozen Jorna clansmen. A watchtower rises above the base, allowing a view of the paths leading into the mountains, as well as the worn road back across the Great Expanse towards "civilization."

A tiny, pitiful marketplace runs twice monthly, bringing a woeful assortment of merchants to trade their wares. This is when the children are typically transferred and dispersed among the various clans. Getting in touch with the right people will require a convincing cover story and an impressive Bluff check (DC 20). If the characters offer to buy the children, they'll be met with stern faces and told the clans need them more than the money.

Outsiders unfamiliar to the outpost's regular inhabitants are treated with suspicion, and are monitored wherever they go. Mentioning the stolen children is a good way to be invited behind a longhouse and ambushed.

No Time For Talk!

Eventually the characters will discover the head of the outpost, or she will find them. Bulla ek-Jorne likes to think that she runs a tight ship; she's always accompanied by a pair of messengers who're prepared to dash off and confirm rumors. Her favored tactics for dealing with intruders are threats and intimidation. Surely, it would be better for the clans to focus on internal matters rather than resume the dreadful raids of the old days?

If pushed to say more, Bulla explains how her peoples' blood has grown thin from their seclusion. Ever since the Jorna clans backed the forces of the Wild two-hundred years ago, they became outcasts from civilization. Battered from their defeat, they eked out what living the treacherous mountains allowed. Many died from hunger and exposure. Fresh blood would make the clans strong again, not to mention appease the old clan gods. Jorna altars have lain bare since the War of the Wild, their priests unable to get any kind of regular communication with their deities.

What kind of heroes are in your story? The sort to try for a diplomatic solution, attracting new settlers to the Jorna lands while working to erase generations of hatred? Brave leaders who won't bow to the demands of fear-mongers? This is the moment where their mettle is tested once more... can they live with the consequences?

Chief Slaver

The chief slaver is a well-fed bully with enough knowledge of numbers to appreciate the margins of the slave trade. He was a handsome man at one point, but the replacement of hygiene with strong drink has started to show its toll on his rugged looks. He's always looking for future business opportunities, and despises "peasants" – anyone who bothers him on a particular day.

Chief Slaver

CR 5

Raider (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 1,600

hp 67

He may or may not have several poorly paid, poorly equipped thugs to handle rough customers. Use the "Vats Thugs" below if you want to make the warehouse with its brewery vats more of a memorable fight.

Vats Thug

CR 3

Border guard (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 800

hp 20



Jorna Clansmen

Although barbarians, they're hardly barbaric. Jorna warriors are ferocious in battle, but more interested in bringing in new blood than spilling it needlessly. Although Jorna traditions are proud and boastful, their hard lives have tempered the glorious excesses of former times.

Jorna Clansmen

CR 4

Grizzled mercenary (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 1,200

hp 51

Bulla ek-Jorne

Bulla's a large, fearsome warrior with hands like hams and a sneer that could wither fruit. She enjoys playing the part of the big bruiser, keeping her more reasoned observations hidden until the last moment. The stakes of her current mission are too high for weakness, so she allows none in herself or those under her command. Any attempt to compromise with her will be met with suspicion and strong countermeasures to prevent being scammed.

Bulla ek-Jorne

CR 7

Viking (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 3,200

hp 64



Ouroboros Emergent, Part I

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

The treasure-digging world is in an uproar! A prime dig site has been located underneath the shrine to Hezekiah the Elder, a minor Caladonian prophet. When his skeletal remains were moved to Garris, they were interred in a makeshift tomb fashioned from the remains of several Old Garris residences located at the far end of Godspeakers Street, the two-tiered avenue of temples. Hezekiah's sole disciple planted a garden on top of the tomb, which later expanded into a park. Anonymous donations soon provided for a modest wall decorated with icons and a small chapel. The elevated halls of the Valon gods cast long shadows over the shabby park, but also protect it from the bustle of the rest of the city. The shrine is a popular location for laborers to rest and swap gossip.

Cale Poplin, penniless scholar-rogue, spent many a lunch-hour sitting outside of the shrine, engaged in Garris' most noble profession: treasure hunting. He badgered the groundskeeper and became a nuisance to passers-by with constant questions about the prophet's connection to the Trader Imperium. Every image of the prophet depicted him in fragmented Trader garb, cut in a fashion that was unsuited to his humble origins. Clearly, there was more to the story.

One night not too long ago, Poplin took a shovel to the park and unearthed the prophet's tomb. Before he could get more than an eyeful of what lay within, the city watch arrived. He would not be allowed to dig any further without approval from Maltho, the shrine's groundskeeper. Knowing that other treasure hunters would poach his claim, the enterprising Poplin tracked down the characters to speak on his behalf.

Behind The Veil

A Knowledge (religion) roll, DC 15, will reveal Hezekiah the Elder's claim to fame was the so-called Ouroboros Chronicle. These poems describe Hezekiah's journey to a world of wonders where sleek towers kissed the sky and their perfectly proportioned inhabitants wanted for nothing. Modern scholars agree that this is an allegory for Trinity's home, the Realm of the Archangels. Unfortunately, little study

has been done on the matter since the sole copy of the chronicle disappeared from the Three-Point Cathedral over twenty years ago.

Maltho the groundskeeper knows what happened to it; he's the one who took it. He suspects that the story of a distant world is true, and attainable under the proper circumstances. No one could spend as much time polishing the iconic carvings of Hezekiah without noticing how strangely he was garbed; fie on allegory!

In his haste to decode the manuscript, Maltho opened a small portal to the Ethereal to find a tutor. Unfortunately, all he was able to manage was a swarm of emotion wisps, primarily of the rage and greed varieties. These spiritual nuisances enjoy the shrine as much as its mundane visitors, and refuse to leave – even after poisoning Poplin with blinding greed and Maltho with magnified spite.

Breaking And Entering

If the characters need an altruistic reason to engage in a little shrine exploring, all they have to consider is the collateral damage caused by the wisps. As they become more content with their new home, the nearby temples become infected with unnatural mood swings. Without aid, the situation is not going to get better; there's enough ambient Pulse surrounding Hezekiah's treasure that the wisps have already started forming a nest around it.

The tomb is an empty affair consisting of five crumbling rooms connected by rough tunnels. Maltho's emotion wisps have claimed the entire tomb as their home, and will attack with the intensity of wild dogs.

The final room is the prophet's burial chamber. His consciousness has passed into the Maelstrom, leaving naught behind but some bones. One skeletal hand clutches a wooden staff. Rolled up within the staff is a magically preserved map, which changes at the touch. It's hyper-advanced Trader-tech from an alternate timeline; the characters won't even begin to unravel its mysteries until they are Folk Hero rank. For now, it's enough to know that it's burning with Pulse, and both man and spirit want it.

Several minutes after Poplin gets the characters into the tomb, his rivals will arrive. They've been

watching the site for their chance to bust in, and there's no way they're letting a group of newbies walk off with their loot. The emotion wisps have clouded their minds, and reasoned debate will prove difficult. If they don't leave with Hezekiah's map, there will be blood.

If Maltho is made aware of the map, he won't allow it to leave the shrine. Moreover, he won't allow anyone resembling a no-good, dirty bandit to examine it; that rules out Poplin and his ilk. Have the characters treated the old man courteously? Are they knowledgeable enough to help him with the map or political enough to win control of it?

Cale Poplin, Treasure Hunter

Formal education never agreed with Poplin. It was far too abstract, stuffy, and above-ground. Getting to the good stuff took months of slogging through disintegrating texts, licking the dusty boots of his seniors, and above all, not getting paid. When he was in his mid-20s, he left academia to pursue the active life of a professional scavenger. Despite the occasional rolling boulder or poisonous dart, the perks are worlds better. For a shot at the mother lode, most anything's worth it.

Although Poplin doesn't know what he's looking for in the grand scheme of things, he knows he'll know it when he sees it. As a result, no lead is too small to investigate; there's a grand mystery out there and it won't solve itself.

Cale Poplin, Treasure Hunter

CR 2

Wanderer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 600 hp 16

Maltho The Groundskeeper

Maltho could have been somebody. If his parents hadn't sold him to wandering monks when he was a youth, he could have been an actor of some acclaim. If he hadn't slept in that once, he wouldn't have missed the meeting with the investors from Elenium who were looking to donate to some of Garris' little-known temples. Maltho's not bitter though. The pious are awarded good fortune in their own time. He's getting old though, and opportunities have been getting fewer and farther between.

Maltho, The Groundskeeper **CR 1**
Beggars (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)
XP 400
hp 13

Greedy/Enraged Treasure Hunters

As is to be expected from a city built on top of the gem of a lost civilization, Garris is filled with treasure hunters of all stripes. This group is an inexperienced band of diggers with only a few minor finds between them. All of their finds have gone into paying for living expenses and street medications. They're angry, they have picks, and they're not going to take it any more.

Greedy/Enraged Treasure Hunter **CR 2**
Advanced street thug (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary, Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)
XP 600
hp 16

Emotion Wisps

These little guys rest at the bottom of the spiritual totem pole. They're the cats and dogs of the Ethereal, and are often trained as pets or guards by the Spirit World's more intelligent residents. Like cats and dogs, emotion wisps range in danger from the kittenish spirit of playfulness to the saber-toothed rage specter.

Among solid-side shamans, even the most benevolent seeming wisps are seen as pests, albeit potentially useful ones. This is because of the unique makeup of the spirits' diets. Even the most ravenous of schadenfreude hounds doesn't deal any damage in grazing, sucking up the ambient thoughts and dead-end tangents of sentient beings. It's the byproducts of consumption that cause problems.

Emotion Wisps **CR 2**
Aeon, paracletus (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*)
XP 600
hp 13

Ghosts Under The Earth

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

We mentioned earlier that spirits aren't ghosts; they're beings like us, but without a physical body. That's mostly true, but occasionally the soul of the departed lingers in the Ethereal instead of going to its final rest. In a city like Garris, swallowed whole during a mighty battle, a lot of them stayed behind rather than accepting their demise.

These ghostly inhabitants of Old Garris are rebuilding their city beneath the earth. Throughout the city, ghostly spires thrust out of the earth, causing all sorts of unsightly Pulse fluxes. In order to expend Pulse near one of these ghost towers, the character must first pass a Spirit check. Failure results in the Pulse being drawn to the tower like a lightning rod, aiding its manifestation into the solid world.

The spires are only visible in moonlight or when sucking up nearby Pulse. They appear as half-completed examples of Old Garris architecture, inhabited by flicker-flame inhabitants. It's a bit creepy, for sure, but what's it got to do with the characters? The wizards in their guilds are pretty annoyed about the Pulse fluxes messing up their experiments and might be willing to hire the characters to investigate. That, or your characters are just curious to know more.

In-Spire-Ation

Travelling to the Ethereal Plane allows the characters access to the top levels of the ghost towers. Any deeper would require digging through several dozen yards of solid rock. For more information on the lower levels, see "Down in the Mine." Most of the ghosts are soldiers, shoulders steeled in determination to drive back long-dead foes. Any character with a Telesma will be able to speak with them.

The soldiers don't realize they are dead, believing the rare flashes of New Garris they see to be distracting illusions conjured by the Wild. Their situation is too desperate to give the matter much thought, however. Dark forces have taken the guardhouse below!

Any attempts to convince the soldiers that they are dead, spirits, or creatures out of time will activate their passive defenses. All signs of life will drop away from their faces, revealing terrible networks of lethal blows. Characters must succeed at a DC 20 Fortitude save or take 4d6 nonlethal damage from the sudden shock.

Down In The Mine

Despite their clouded perceptions, the ghostly soldiers are correct. Dozens of yards below the surface, dark forces have roiled with anger since shedding their mortal bodies. Every thirteen years they make a sally against the soldier spirits, corrupting a few more every time. The recent spate of buildings were designed to hold back the spirit-Wild, no matter the cost.

If the characters want to put a stop to the inconvenient towers and the dark spirits, they'll need to navigate the mazes of Garris' subterranean artifact mines. Local scavengers will be able to relate numerous tales about the weird happenings down below. These stories don't stop at flashing lights or eerie sounds; many diggers will swear that they saw the ghosts of buildings, visible in the physical world. One of their braver pals got too close, and was recruited into an army of spirits.

The rumors are pretty spot-on. Ghostly battlements jut from the walls of the most common dig sites, and each intersection is guarded by a spiritual guardhouse, existing half inside piles of tightly packed debris. As they progress deeper, the Garris spirits manifest more completely. Not recognizing the characters, they'll challenge their presence in such a contested zone.

Anyone with a strong back or personality (Str or Cha 16+) will eventually encounter the recruiting sergeant. This career soldier was crushed by falling masonry more than twenty decades ago, but refuses to miss a quota. Anyone who refuses to share their Pulse under his draconic rationing measures will be accused of stockpiling and forcibly detained. Mad as he is, the spirit's not unreasonable. The characters will receive a service exemption if they help drive back the Wild spirits in a more direct fashion.

Cleaning House

Every time the spirits of Old Garris drive the Wild spirits back, the dark forces recuperate within the remains of an arc tower. That's where they keep their most potent relic: the desiccated body of one of Old Garris' most distinguished defenders: Commander Jessop. Micro-runes carved into her flesh transform her bound spirit's eternal struggle into a vile beacon. Worse, the spirits can command her ancient body as a puppet, defending them from any physical intrusions. Using their battery as a defense system has its downside though: if Jessop's body is defeated in the solid realm, her spirit's able to break free. Cut off from their power, the Wild spirits will no longer have a battery to sustain their terrible raids.

Jessop's arc tower has decayed over the years, but still crackles with ambient energy. As the characters approach it from the broad access tunnel, it opens fire. The possessed tower has enough of a charge to fire on the characters for three Rounds before running out of juice. After that it lies dormant until a nearby Wild spirit sacrifices itself to provide energy for three more shots. While they're pinned, Jessop's body strides from within and attack the intruders.

Once the Wild spirits no longer have their Pulse generator, the spirits of Old Garris consider their duty complete. The construction of new spiritual towers grinds to a halt, and the old ones fade in a matter of weeks.

Commander Jessop

When Old Garris was consumed by the earth, Commander Jessop was there. She gave her life so that one last knot of priests could escape, saving their sacred treasures from the charging Wild. Although her spirit has not yet given up the fight, her body has become a necrotic prison. Despite the indignities visited upon her, Jessop remains a staunch soldier. She has had generations to consider every aspect of her situation and is ready to pass on. All that she needs is a little help.

Commander Jessop

CR 7

Dullahan (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*)

XP 3,200

hp 85

Note: There is a 50% chance Jessop is in control of her body for the round. Otherwise, dark forces are in control. Her first action will be to identify herself and ask for release. Identifying herself is important, it'll make it all the more poignant when the characters meet her in the campaign scenarios after hitting Folk Hero rank.

Spirit Soldiers

These soldiers are the ethereal Pulse signatures of soldiers the characters may meet in Act III of the main campaign. Still believing themselves to be Garris' last hope, they aren't in the mood to take any guff from interceding hero-types. Grab a sword and join ranks, if you want to help.



Spirit Soldiers

CR 3

Ghost guard (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 800

hp 22

Recruiting Sergeant

The recruiting sergeant always had a way with words. Even in the final days, he was able to lure the able-bodied from their families and parched dirt farms to strike against the dark heart of evil. After his death, his honeyed words soured. No one was good enough; they were maggots, weak-willed, and probably just waiting to betray their allies. Good ol' discipline would fix 'em though. It's all that he had left.

Recruiting Sergeant

CR 5

Ghost guard officer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 1,200

hp 34

Wild Spirits

When Old Garris was consumed by the earth at the end of the War of the Wild, plenty of Wild troops were dragged down as well as defenders. These are ghosts of wicked humans, slippery ratfolk, and the occasional small dragon kin, the very definition of mooks.

Wild Spirits

CR 3

Shadow (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 800

hp 19

Possessed Arc Tower

Possessed Arc Tower

CR 2

XP 600

(See *Return of the Dragon God: Act III*)

Can only fire three shots before losing power - Wild Spirits can sacrifice themselves to power it for 3 more shots, and no one needs to operate it.

Festival Of Blood

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

The Festival of Saphron is coming, and Garris is ready for it. The young and hardy have been building makeshift wooden forts, cleaning their wooden swords and shields, and discussing battle plans with their friends. Soon, mock combat will sweep the streets as everyone attempts to steal the flag from the neighboring districts.

This lusty celebration of the Valon god of battle never ends well, but the citizens of Garris love it. It gives them a chance to settle old feuds without the trouble of arranging formal duels, shows the merchant down the street who's boss, and provides an excellent chance to blow off steam.

As if that weren't enough excitement, Grillax Par, the greatest gladiator in Valon, is in town. So far he has received offers from the temple of Saphron, the blacksmith's guild, and two wealthy families to fight for their teams. Instead of committing, he's stringing them along while enjoying free wine and easy company. This is one way to show the characters what to look forward to as their fame spreads. Moreover, it gives them someone who they can look back upon someday and say, "We were scared of him?!"

Despite being one of Saphron's chosen, Grillax never really paid much attention to the side of his patron's teachings that involved tactics or restraint. He's a glory-hound through and through, preferring to showboat rather than engage in measly little fights. His martial prowess and raw physicality have been enough to get him through everything so far, so why change?

Par's popularity extends farther than even he knows. Everywhere he travels, he is in the perpetual center of a spiritual coliseum. The stands are packed with his vocal following, egging him on toward greater displays of skill. If that's not enough, they hurl metaphysical debris and emotional wisps at his surroundings until an interesting situation develops.

The audience is primarily composed of voyeur spirits: enormous, goggle-eyed heads on top of shriveled bodies. Many of them keep spirits of feral rage as pets, which they whip into violence whenever

ennui strikes. The voyeurs live for spectacle, especially the loud and bloody variety. To them, Par has been a godsend... though nobody can agree which god to thank.

Day One: Pumped Up

The first day of the festival, Grillax Par works hard to drive up demand for his services. He declares himself his own district, attaching a flag to his back. Then he goes on the warpath, taking on whole groups of merchants and young nobles. Perhaps our PCs have to defend their civic pride against this foreign juggernaut, or one of their allies needs advice in defending their fort from the one-man army. Alternatively, the characters could be agents of Kesi (see the Skulls and Crossbows Savage Tale above) looking to convince Par that her district has the best offer.

During this phase, the voyeur spirits are relatively well-behaved. If anyone tries surrendering to Par, they'll loose an emotion wisp or two in the area. Their hero's causing a scene though, so all is good.

Day Two: The Letting

By the second day of the Festival of Saphron, Par has decided to lend his considerable strength to the most interested buyer. Whether it's the temple of Saphron or Kesi, one district has just received a substantial boost. This displeases the voyeur spirits. Where's the challenge if their favored one fades into an organization like everyone else? The contest is hardly worthy of him... unless they make things more interesting.

The voyeurs begin the day of culturally-approved street fighting by scanning the surface thoughts of the most enthusiastic revelers. The ones who're looking to settle old grudges get a face full of emotion wisps to further enrage them. In no time, good-natured stick fighting turns to something altogether more dangerous. If that's not enough, the voyeurs release their spirits of feral rage on the city. The beasts manifest and add to the confusion, giving Par a truly chaotic scene to wade through – unless the characters can restore order.

The manifested spirits should clue the characters in that there's some sort of shamanistic tomfoolery going on. A quick peek onto the Ethereal will confirm

this, coupled with the ethereal roar of Par's fans. Can they convince the showman to leave town before his followers cause irreparable damage?

Grillax Par

Hair of darkest raven waves, flesh of burnished bronze, there is no doubt that Grillax Par is a hero. He knows it, and is quick to demonstrate it in word and deed. That's all right when an alderman needs rescuing or a wizard's cave is on fire, but less pleasant when he's staring you down and demanding your seat at the bar. His many victories were not small, a fact that he won't let anyone forget.

Although it's possible to win Par's respect, it requires a casual disregard for injury and firm martial prowess. After all, any sturdy warrior would be glad to drink with the man who defeated the Eastlands Wyrms, with naught but a bucket of tar!

Grillax Par **CR 5**
Gladiator (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)
XP 1,600
hp 57

Spirits Of Feral Rage

Spirits of feral rage have sleek and wiry, hairless bodies. Badger-like in shape, they are red skinned, marked with flashes of black from their rippling spiritual muscles. They are rarely seen alone, preferring others of their kind, but in-fighting prevents the packs from getting too large. Although their intelligence stops at animal cunning, spirits of feral rage are mean and will always finish off their opponents if given the option.

Spirits Of Feral Rage **CR 3**
Variant allip (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*)
XP 800
hp 30
Melee incorporeal touch +4 (frenzied touch)
Altered Special Attacks replace Babble and Touch of Insanity with the following:
Wrathful Rantings (Su) A spirit of feral rage constantly rants and rages for anything and everything. Anyone who hears the rantings must succeed at a DC 15 Will save or gain the benefits of

the *rage* spell for so long as they remain within 50 feet of the spirit of feral rage.

Frenzied Touch (Su) The touch of a spirit of feral rage doesn't deal any damage, but drives the touched creature to violence. This functions as the *confusion* spell (CL 4th, DC 15), but the % 26-50 entry is changed to "attacks most threatening creature within their speed."

Emotion Wisps

(See *Ouroboros Emergent, Part I* on page 108)

Stones And Bones

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

The characters won't be able to solve all of the problems caused by nature, but that's all right. They're only being paid to chase down a single dwarven assassin – and they already know where he'll be. How hard can it be?

To The Gallows

The morning of this tale, Garris' animals are skittish. They can tell that something is wrong, and need to get away. Confirming their fears, a mid-morning rumbling in the earth causes jars to fall from shelves. Just a minor earthquake, nothing to be worried about.

Soon afterward, the city watch informs the characters that Grey Hesse, the famed dwarven assassin, is in town. They want to ask him a few questions about a missing knight, but everyone who's able to take him down is on assignment. He moves fast, so they could use a little help.

Hesse was last seen at a local pub for poets called the Gallows (where dreams go to die.) He was drinking half an hour ago, but they'll have to hurry to catch him. The watch captain provides the characters with a sketch and wishes them good luck.

Hesse knows that he's not wanted in town, but his situation made it necessary. He recently discovered a cache of dragon bones that would pay off his debt to a cadre of mercenary anatomists who make Garris their home. He hasn't met his contact yet, and is right surly when the characters arrive.

As soon as the characters are about to come crashing down on Hesse, that's when the real earthquake hits. He throws his sample dragon bone in the characters' faces and melds through the Gallows' wall into the street and all the panicking people there.

Rock And Roll

The chase is on! For the first five minutes after the quake begins, all Dexterity-based rolls are subject to a -2 penalty due to the shifting earth and falling rocks. Dwarves are immune to this effect, however.

Hesse can pass through solid stone by using his *wand of earth glide*. If hard-pressed, he will duck underground momentarily. However, due to the shifting nature of the earth, he sees it as a great risk under present circumstances.

Obstacles include runaway carts pulled by spooked horses, burst cisterns, and entire buildings sliding down the city's hillsides.

The chase should have a wild, busy feel. Hesse is running for his life, sliding down terraces and slipping around rubble like a ball of hot wax. If he manages to get a slight lead on the characters, he'll drink his *potion of spider climbing* and attempt to hide somewhere high-up and out of the way, doubling back to lose his pursuers.

Elevator Action

At some point during the pursuit, make sure the characters pass close to a terrace edge and can see down the cliffs to the city's docks far below. The workers responsible for operating an elevator to the river have run off in the confusion, leaving the elevator dangling several stories above the stony dockside. Aftershocks still rumble through the area from time to time. One good jolt could snap the elevator's rope, sending its four occupants to their death. They shout out for help, unaware that the only people who can hear them are closing in on a dangerous criminal.

Turning the giant elevator winch requires a combination of four successful Strength checks (DC 10). For each person less than four working the clumsy winch, the DC increases by 2. Making this check requires a minute of concentrated labor, giving Hesse time to disappear for good. For best effect, spring this encounter when it looks like the guy has no way out.

Back To The Wall

Eventually, Hesse's going to run out of Pulse and dirty tricks. At that point he turns to bribery. He offers to share his stash of dragon bones with whoever will look the other way and allow him to escape. He contends that he doesn't know anything about the missing knight, but the guys who're after him probably did it. He'll even provide a name and an address: Dr. Slate of the Grim Surgery, Street of Mechanical Birds.

If Hesse is brought into custody, he relays much of the same information. He offers the opinion that the missing knight was hired to investigate the Anatomists Guild secrets, but will say no more without the promise of an escort out of the city. The next day, he's struck with a sudden, debilitating disease that drives him mute. The characters have learned something new, but have they also made new enemies?

Grey Hesse

Even the best assassins get cut once in a while. It was after a particularly tricky job involving an art critic, a glass fountain, and five tons of limestone that Hesse found himself in need of some serious medical attention. Dr. Slate was willing to help based on Hesse's reputation, as well as his own plans for the quick-footed killer. Hesse now lives in fear of what the grim doctor has planned; his life hasn't been a happy one, but he knows that it could get much worse.

Grey Hesse's name comes from the slate-grey color of his skin, lightly speckled with white quartz around his face, making him look like he has a dappled white, short-cropped beard.

Grey Hesse

CR 7

Pulse-touched cave stalker (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 3,200

hp 54

Additional Gear *wand of earth glide* (20 charges)

Landscraping

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

The Valon town of Elenium overlooks Garris from across the Lehr River. It's an orderly center of art and learning, blessed with wide avenues and bustling markets. Erasmus the wool merchant, patrician of the marble-lined Hela Way, is one of the many Elenians who can't stand the sight of Garris. It's a sore upon the earth, splattering its stink in every direction. What's worse, its ramshackle buildings are visible from his newly dedicated theater.

How, Erasmus muses, can his peers pay tribute to the stream of magnificent performance flowing from his open-air stage when they're so distracted by stinking peasants across the river? It's a wide river and you could barely see the other side, but that doesn't stop you feeling the grime and deprivation, and that's enough.

The only recourse is to clean the city up. If anyone gets in the way, well... he has already moved on to other projects. Wool is good this year, and he is a busy man.

Fumigation

Erasmus's agents have decided their primary target is Tanner's Row, a side street leading from the Fumes. The tanners have long been moved out to outlying parts of the city, but they've been replaced by tradesmen specializing in all manner of unsavory wares for the anatomist and alchemists. Through weeks of careful questioning, Erasmus has discovered Sigurd Hermokretes is storing a potent cache of highly explosive fertilizer. One spark while there's a good wind to fan the flames, and the resulting fire could solve all their problems.

The characters are in the Fumes on routine business with an alchemist when a loud chain of explosions tears through the everyday hustle and bustle. To a trained professional, these are not neighborhood-leveling explosions; still, they are not welcome.

"Goodness!" exclaims their host. "I warned Sigurd not to store so much fertilizer in those old tanks. No sense, that hack!"

Although apologetic, he asks the characters if they'll check on his friend. If they resist, he offers a discount on their current order.

Miracle Growth

Sigurd's shop is only three streets away, but it appears to be in a different world. When his experimental fertilizer vats blew, they inundated several blocks with his newest discovery. Alien greenery sprouts from each pony-sized lump of jellified compound. Hungry roots burrow into nearby stone, while grasping vines go for higher structures. A jungle has sprouted in the middle of Garris, and it's fighting for its survival. Moving through the area counts as difficult terrain.

The shouts of trapped residents reach the characters over the unfamiliar humming of tropical insects that infest the undergrowth. It smells worse than usual, adding a tang of rotting meat and wet mulch to the ubiquitous stench of excrement and humanity.

The most immediate threats in this strange new land are the tzikas, crawler bugs that hide in the leaves. They won't strike immediately, waiting for the characters to make strong, decisive movements. The scent of sweat attracts them like nothing else, and they prefer weakened targets over all others.

Approaching a glob of fertilizer will trigger another of the jungle's inhabitants. Anyone passing within two yards must attempt a Reflex save (DC 18) or take 2d8 acid damage from dripping sap, and anyone who takes damage from it must succeed on a Will save (DC 15) or be shaken. Anyone who is shaken is a valid target for the drill-tipped roots, as described below.

As the characters cut deeper, give them a few clues about what's going on: some well-dressed, desiccated Elenians, sewn to the ground by networks of roots, perhaps. A Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) is enough to reveal that their presence in Tanner's Row is just as odd as the jungle's.

Slash And Burn

Eventually, the characters will reach the shop of Sigurd Hermokretes. Knots of bulging greenery pour from its openings, the upper windows choked by gaudy shocks of magenta flowers. Getting through the tangle will be difficult, as the fertilizer chunks are tightly packed this close to the source.

Sigurd is barricaded in the root cellar underneath his shop. It's defoliated when the characters arrive, sharply contrasting with the outside. He's hard at work brewing a way out of there, but is lacking a few key ingredients. If he could get out of the jungle and to a decently stocked alchemist lab, brewing an acid to disrupt the goopy fertilizer would be the work of hours. Without their foci, the plants and the tzikas will wither and die.

Sigurd's strangled herb garden is behind his shop. The fertilizer storage vats are back there as well, crumpled from strong internal force. An Investigation check will reveal a pair of skeletonized legs peeking out from under a collapsed shed. Digging them up will reveal the relatively unharmed upper body of Erasmus's top agent. He's holding a scroll case in one hand with the seal of his employer on it. Inside is a map of the Fumes, with a big old X on Sigurd's shop. If the characters want to pursue the matter any further, they have all of the information they need.

Tzikas

In the legendary island jungles of Yul, far off the coast where only the Aquasaar go, the sky is streaked with yellow clouds that smell of sweetness and death. Multi-fanged predators that walk with the shattered gait of a hanged man live in huts carved from the shattered skulls of their soft-footed prey. In the night, the tzikas come, insects as large as jungle cats. They coat the skulls like electrified puzzle pieces, buzzing and squirming until they find sightless entrance. There is no light to shine off their segmented bodies, no armor that can long protect against their seeking mandibles. They feed and are gone.

Tzikas

Advanced giant mantis (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 1,200

hp 38

CR 4



Drill-Tipped Roots

Although the wooden-shoed freemen of Yul trust the jungle floor over its verdant canopies, the danger of the drill-tipped roots is never far from their minds. It's well known that even the sturdiest of lacquered shoes is nothing to the plant's hungry bore. Those who fall prey to the bite lose more than just their footwear. The freemen have a phrase that is relevant: "to lose one's soul through one's feet."

Drill-Tipped Roots

CR 3

Assassin vine (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 800

hp 30

Sigurd Hermokretes

Sigurd is a credit to his community. He's knowledgeable, kind-hearted, and apart from an interest in exotic fertilizers, is completely harmless. Whatever trouble he gets into is the result of raw scientific drive overruling common sense. The cheerful, bustling little man will gladly sell dangerous alchemical compounds to young punks, questionable drugs to criminals, and explosives to adventurers in the hopes of learning more about the forces that he studies. Every sale he makes is backed by a full disclaimer and several reliable scholarly sources, but they never listen. Oh my, they never listen...

Sigurd Hermokretes

CR 3

Savage plant sage (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 800

hp 32

Air To The Empire

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

A youthful group of djinn separatists known as the Nistral Storm find records 'proving' that members of the djinn race were the original inhabitants of the Garris region. The Trader Imperium took it from them, then later settlers built on the ruins to create the current city. They've been kidnapping influential historians and trying to convert them using the Ritual of the Emergent Squall, a risky way of changing

people into djinn which involves changing race while falling.

The ritual requires a willing subject though, so mostly they've just been throwing historians from a cliff. The characters could be introduced to the problem several ways, including finding the philosophical musings of a Nistral Storm member or being asked to track down a missing academic.

The Nistral Storm has about a dozen members but there are two groups within that number. The hardliners want the official Garris records changed as the first step of setting up an ancestral governing body and taking control of the city. The moderate faction is less influential; they don't care about political power and would be happy to sell 'their land' to the citizens of Garris for a hefty fee.

Although both groups are working together for now, there will be a turbulent split if they accomplish their shared goal of legitimizing their cause. The hardliners see the moderates as wishy-washy and pampered, while the moderates consider the hardliners dangerous and greedy.

Paying The Toll

At first, the Storm just appears to be one set of wackos among many who proselytize from the perches outside the temple of Etaro. The plaza outside of the Valon trickster god's home is protected by holy law, allowing anybody to speak their mind within its boundaries. Wooden beams extend from both the earth and the cliff face, giving the speakers spiny perches from which to preach.

A group of young nobles visiting from Elenium has made mocking the square's speakers their favored pastime. Their combination of academy-trained rhetoric and smug assuredness often provokes the speakers into physical altercations, at which time the temple guards step in and pummel the one who threw the first blow. This is great fun for the Elenians, who tend to pick on withered hermits and zealous-yet-unimposing cultists.

When the characters arrive, six Nistral Storm speakers have already laid out the temple guards and are advancing on the Elenians. Djinn are genies and tough to defeat in combat, especially these enraged members of the race, doubly so since these

are members of a terrorist organization and travel well-armed. They plan to engage the students in 'ancestral duels of honor' (beat them to within an inch of their life, and maybe not stop there). Since the students are armed with daggers at best, the fight is hardly fair. If the battle starts to go against the djinn, they'll transmute themselves into clouds of vapor and escape, perhaps pausing on the temple rooftop to shower everyone below with throwing knives and insults before they finally depart.

While the students are pretty obnoxious people, their central claims are true: there is no evidence that a djinn nation ever existed, and the Nistral Storm refuse to share their 'definitive proof' (a silver cloak of prophecy) with anyone who would be able to validate it.

The nearest Valon legionary unit's a few minutes away, by which time it'll all be over. The characters are the only help the Elenian students can get. How the characters act will define the rest of this scenario.

A Fit Of Peak

As the Nistral Storm ramps up its campaign, more historians disappear. The agitators who are caught slip through their prison bars and pop up on the streets the next day. Like all elemental races there are few djinn, and they keep a tight community. Those who aren't involved with the organization still help to hide the active members and contribute funds to 'the cause'. Still, there's some hope of infiltrating the community and finding out more – perhaps by picking up on the split in philosophy between the moderates and the hardliners and using that to gain sympathy with a reasonable member of the djinn community.

Whether through careful tailing, interrogation, or convincing a trusted Nistral Storm sympathizer to go turncoat, the characters should eventually learn about the site of the Emergent Squall ritual. The most dedicated members of the group keep a training camp in the mountains, a week upriver from the city. Reaching the camp by foot is a dangerous process, vexed by crumbling paths and rock falls. Three shattered towers rest beyond these challenges, leaning like drunken sightseers over the mountain's ridge.

Two historians are imprisoned in one of the towers, being forcibly purified for the ritual. Tarin Muj, the leader of the movement, stays in the camp at all times to keep an eye on the converts. With him are 4-6 of his most dedicated followers. Only this inner circle is allowed to view the silver cloak of prophecy which started this entire mess. If any of them suspect that Tarin created the cloak and the prophecy out of scraps, they don't care. Each has their own reason to see the movement succeed, and will defend it forcibly.

Nistral Storm Member

Humans have never done these rabble-rousers and counter-culturists any favors. They're out to stir up trouble and look good while doing so. These are true believers in the goals of the Nistral Storm.

Nistral Storm Member

CR 5

Variant djinni

XP 1,600

hp 60

AC 24, touch 14, flat-footed 20 (+4 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, –1 size)

Other Gear add mithril breastplate.

Tarin Muj, Nistral Storm Leader

Tarin's plan was so simple that he was surprised no one had ever tried it before: gain unsurpassed political power in New Garris by creating a false prophecy and stirring racial tensions. He doesn't want too much power – just enough to live comfortably and have strangers tip their hats to him as he gusts past. With power of that caliber, he could court a fine wife, raise some healthy children, and get started on a legacy to last the ages.

Tarin Muj.

Leader Of The Nistral Storm

CR 7

This eccentric humanoid is well-built and possesses an almost otherworldly grace. His gigantic blade glows with a malicious energy and the bow on his back seems to cry with the weight of the draw.

XP 3,200

Djinni magus 2

LN Large outsider (air, extraplanar)

Init +10; Senses darkvision 60 ft., Perception +11

DEFENSES

AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 18 (+4 armor, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural, -1 size)

hp 62 (2d8+7d10+45)

Fort +9, **Ref** +11, **Will** +9

Immune acid

OFFENSE

Speed 20 ft.; fly 60 ft. (perfect)

Melee +1 *human bane greatsword* +14/+9 (3d6+10/19–20 plus 2d6 vs. Humans) or 2 slams +13 (1d8+6)

Ranged composite longbow +13/+8 (2d6+3/x3)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Special Attack air mastery, arcane pool (+1, 4 points), spell combat, spellstrike, whirlwind

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +12)

At will—*invisibility* (self only), *plane shift* (willing target to Plane of Air, Astral Plane, or Material Plane only) (DC 18), *create wine* (as create water, but wine instead)

1/day—*create food and water, gaseous form* (for up to 1 hour), *major creation* (created vegetable matter is permanent), *persistent image* (DC 18), *wind walk*.

Magus Spells Prepared (CL 2nd; concentration +5)

1st—*mirror strike* (2), *true strike*;

0 (at will)—*acid splash, arcane mark, dancing lights, daze* (DC 13).

STATISTICS

Str 22, **Dex** 22, **Con** 19, **Int** 16, **Wis** 13, **Cha** 17

Base Atk +8; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 32

Feats Combat Casting, Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Toughness, Wind Stance

Skills Acrobatics +6 (+2 to jump), Appraise +13, Craft (weaving) +11, Fly +22, Handle Animal +8, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (planes) +13, Linguistics +12, Perception +11, Sense Motive +11, Spellcraft +13, Stealth +12.

Languages Aquan, Auran, Common, Ignan, Terran; telepathy 100 ft.

Gear composite longbow (+3 Str), mithral shirt, +1 *human bane greatsword, headband of vast intelligence* +2

Elenian Students

Poseurs and jerks, in another time these folks would be wearing tweed and calling each other “Chet” and “Bunny”. Still, they have a right by law to make their opinions known (that is to say, their daddies have enough money to bail them out of most any mess). They may be jerks, but they’re right, which makes them doubly annoying. Do they deserve to die for that?

Elenian Students (5)

CR 1

Variant squire (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 400

hp 19

Melee remove mwk longsword

Folk Hero Tales and Encounters

These tales take the characters far from the realm of Relic, into situations both strange and exciting. All of them depend on having some form of realm travel, whether via Telesmae or seemingly random portals throwing them into a new set of surroundings every week. The tales are listed in date order, from realms in ancient history to far future realms, and a couple of Maelstrom tales are included at the end.

Land Of The Rising Surf

Realm: Mortal realms, Japan (1609).

The Great Spirit of Order has noticed a decline in recruits from what was once a bustling portal to medieval Japan. Many of the gods have treaties with the great spirit, so they ask the heroes to check it out. Upon arrival, they learn history is in danger of being changed: the monks and samurai who would normally join the Great Spirit of Order’s crusade against universal chaos have more immediate problems to worry about!

Fight Them On The Beaches

Feral sea spirits have snuck into the Sea of Japan in 1609, halting the Lord of Satsuma from invading

the Ryuku Islands. In the history the characters are familiar with, his invasion fleet was so large the islanders were ordered not to throw their lives away. With feral spirits and unearthly weather on the islanders' side, the story may end quite differently. Now, barefoot Ryuku samurai skim the wild waves, storm cloud hair whipping around them. Their weather shamans scribe octopus-ink spells on eelskin before offering them to the Great Spirit of Storms with sparks of Pulse lightning. Every day, the winds separating Japan from the rest of the world grow fiercer, the waves less navigable. If the samurai are allowed to reap their whirlwind, the resultant tides will be too fierce for even the finest ship.

The heroes arrive in the realm in a cloud of mist near the Lord of Satsuma's military camp. His war against the Ryuku rebels is at a stalemate despite the vast number of well-trained soldiers under his banner. The edge they need rests not in strength of arms alone, but in driving a wedge between the interloping spirits and their island allies.

Each Ryuku raiding party consists of one samurai commander, one weather shaman, and eight hulking crab oni. Their approach is heralded with rain, heavy winds, and thunder, but always too quickly for organized bodies of troops to respond. The samurai and the shaman explode onto the shore in sprays of surf and strike at targets of tactical significance while their crab soldiers run interference.

Observant heroes may notice that although many of the locations targeted by raiding parties contain great wealth, all that's ever stolen are pearls. The raiders will spoil food and slash at fine tapestries, but it's the strings of pearls that go into the swag-bags at the end of the day. This is because of an agreement between the feral sea spirits and the Lord of the Ryuku Kingdom. Every week they receive 54 pearls, that's a week the kingdom will remain free. To any hero who doesn't want to take on an entire army of spirit-bolstered warriors, this should suggest a plan: robbery!

The Sting

A Ryuku informant tells the characters that the feral sea spirits receive their payment in the middle of a bay protected by a curtain of unending rain. The bay itself is well hidden and unlikely to be located without



his aid (and he might demand payment that leads to further adventures), but once there it's unmistakable. Nestled within the circle of rain is a patch of pure calm where the undulating sea spirits circle. Every payday, a ship sails from a nearby fort and tips the fee into the ocean at sunset. As the pearls sink, they shift to the Ethereal Plane and are consumed by the spirits who love these crunchy morsels. If even a single payment is missed, the spirits will depart forever, denied their favorite delicacies. The crab oni will shrivel soon after, and the shamans will no longer be able to count on the help of the spirits when performing rituals. History will proceed as planned.

The fort where the pearls are stored is well guarded and will require careful planning to infiltrate. It's built into the cliff overlooking the bay, and protected by thick forests and dangerously slick rocks. The main gate can only be reached by foot during low tide; the rest of the time it's only accessible by small boat. Furthermore, crab oni dot the beach, disguised as large smooth stones. A small garrison resides inside, as do three weather shamans. Pearl shipments come in every month under heavy guard, and are collected personally by the garrison commander. After locking the pearls in a carved wooden chest, he returns the key to a chain on his neck. This is an excellent opportunity for the characters to show off their breaking and entering skills. It should be possible to sabotage the deal without being the target of a single attack... but make them work for it. Alternatively, there's always piracy.

Sea Spirits Denied

If the sea spirits don't get fed they pack up and go home. Simple, right? Well, it would be if they weren't *feral* sea spirits. Before leaving, the put-upon spirits will let their more bestial behavior slip – smashing nearby boats, controlling the crab oni to devour the innocent, and sending a tsunami heading toward whatever landmarks the characters and their patron gods hold dear. They had a good thing going, and now everyone is going to pay for ruining it. Time for the characters to save the day again.

This time the characters will need magic to help quell the sea, combat skills to fight back the oni and save the innocent, and generally accept that it's an action adventure after all, not just a stealthy-sneaky mission.

Crab Oni

Demon crabs who walk like men have long been a problem in polite society. They slash up whomever they please with their jagged pincers, and are known to mumble blasphemies in their garbled tongue. It's best not to invite a crab oni to tea, for they will never reciprocate.

Crab Oni **CR 8**
Fiendish chuul (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)
XP 4,800
hp 69

Weather Shaman

The weather shamans are the key to the Ryuku islanders' resistance, and as such are accorded the rights and respect due to victorious samurai warriors. Most of them are unused to this grand treatment, and prefer to spend their time communing with wind and wave spirits. This often leaves their ceremonial garb salt-stained and disheveled.

Weather Shaman **CR 6**
This human hefts a shortspear over his head, shouting incoherently while he pulls at his ceremonial garb which is disheveled and salt-stained.
XP 2,400
Human storm druid 7
CN Medium humanoid (human)
Init +3; Senses eyes of the storm; Perception +11

DEFENSES

AC 21, touch 14, flat-footed 18 (+5 armor, +1 deflection, +2 Dex, +1 dodge, +2 shield)
hp 56 (7d8+21)
Fort +7, Ref +4, Will +8; +2 vs. electricity
Defensive Abilities windwalker

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft. (20 ft. in armor)
Melee mwk shortspear +6 (1d6)
Ranged dart +7 (1d4)
Special Attack wild shape (2/day)
Domain Spell-like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +10; +6 vs. casting defensively/during grapple)
6/day—storm burst (1d6+3 nonlethal)

Druid Spells Prepared (CL 7th; concentration +10; +6 vs. casting defensively/during grapple)

4th—*sleet storm, summon nature's ally IV*;

3rd—*call lightning* (DC 16), *stone shape, summon nature's ally III, water breathing*;

2nd—*barkskin, flame blade, fog cloud, frigid touch, spider climb*;

1st—*cure light wounds, faerie fire, hydraulic push, obscuring mist, shillelagh* (DC 14), *touch of the sea* (DC 14);

0—*detect magic, flare* (DC 13), *purify food and drink* (DC 13), *resistance*

STATISTICS

Str 10, Dex 15, Con 14, Int 12, Wis 16, Cha 8

Base Atk +5; CMB +5; CMD 19

Feats Combat Casting, Dodge, Endurance, Storm-Lashed, Warrior Priest

Skills Acrobatics -1 (-5 jump), Climb +4, Handle Animal +8, Heal +10, Knowledge (geography) +10, Knowledge (nature) +10, Perception +11, Spellcraft +6, Survival +9, Swim +10

Languages Aquan, Common, Druidic

SQ nature bond (Weather domain), nature sense, stormvoice, wild empathy +6

Combat Gear *potion of bull's strength, potion of cure moderate wounds (2)*; **Other Gear** mwk lamellar (horn) armor, +1 *light wooden shield*, dart (10), mwk shortspear, *ring of protection +1*, 41 gp.

Samurai

Most legends told about samurai are true. They are the elite warriors of medieval Japan, each honed into a powerful weapon at the command of his lord.

Samurai

CR 4

Cautious archer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 1,200

hp 47

Feral Sea Spirit

The largest tsunami begins with the smallest wave. These waves ebb and flow around the serpentine loops of the feral sea spirits, held in check by the spirits' whims. With the sinuous unfurling of their pale white coils, the spirits allow waves to slip loose and expand like ripples on a pane of glass. The resulting destruction is monumental.

Sea spirits can be benevolent or malicious, minor or mighty. Without exception, feral sea spirits are petty, lazy, and greedy. Who let these ones have so much power?

Feral Sea Spirit

CR 5

Large water elemental (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 1,600

hp 68

The Heart Of All Saints

Realm: Mortal realms, USA (1935).

This Savage Tale crosses over into the realm of American Grit, our look at magic, spiritualism, and the weird things riding the rails during the Great Depression... and beyond! The American Grit realm is the subject of a whole setting book called *Noir Knights (1930s)*, and *Millennium Knights (1999)* books.

Kalfu, the big, bad loa spirit who's literally the devil at the crossroads, wants the characters to do him a favor. There's a rare artifact that would look splendid in his collection, but it was last referenced in 1935. The treasure in question, the Heart of All Saints, is actually the shellacked brain of Adrien Toussaint, the first taximancer, who disappeared from history in 1732 - taximancy is a specialized form of necromancy, dealing solely with the manipulation of dead bodies. The Heart must be returned to Kalfu's agent, Sid Harker, who will pay the characters the agreed-upon price. The price should be a good one - if anyone knows how to make tempting deals, it's Kalfu.

What Kalfu doesn't tell the characters, but they can probably guess, is that the Heart is best used for malicious acts. It contains Toussaint's considerable knowledge in reanimating human remains. Zana, a goddess of justice from the Relic realm, isn't pleased with the proliferation of such foul magic - especially since Harker has caused trouble in her realm before. She has tasked Jason Yancy, one of her chosen ones, with giving the characters an offer counter to Kalfu's: bring Yancy the Heart instead and they'll receive a favor. Ally with Kalfu and they will have a new enemy.

The Heart Of Mold

The characters have to do some investigating to track down the Heart. The most immediate route of investigation involves making friends with the Filial Order of Saint James, the heirs to Toussaint's studies who are still active in 1935.

The Filial Order operates as a public church, although all mention of taximancy is relegated to trusted friends. From there the characters will learn that Toussaint disappeared with Captain Cesar Raleigh, a pirate descendant of Sir Walter Raleigh, on his final voyage. Raleigh settled down to live the life of a gentleman in New Orleans soon after, and the map to his greatest treasure still rests hidden in his ancestral library in the Garden District. If the characters are spirit-friendly, the restless ghosts of the men Raleigh killed to keep his past hidden could help; otherwise, there's always honest archival work.

The map shows Raleigh buried his treasure in the Florida Keys. Renting a boat to travel to the Keys will be easier than the characters may suspect. Though it's not common knowledge, Adrien Toussaint had a family and one of his descendents is an unassuming man called Thaddeus. Unless the characters have been especially sneaky in obtaining the map from Raleigh's library, Thaddeus will notice. He's been after the map for years, and isn't about to let some johnnies-come-lately take it away from him. He will offer his service as their boatman at the most convenient moment, neglecting to mention his family name when he introduces himself.

A Gentle Reminder

The immortal realms of the gods and Great Spirits are places where spirits don't need to manifest to engage with the characters and they don't need The Sight to see them. Spirits get rules for manifesting so you can use those stats in other adventures, where the spirits might find their way to the mortal realms. It's something to bear in mind for the next couple of tales and for several of the Demigod tales that follow.

One day from land, the map will lead the characters into a supernatural hurricane – the first line of defense arranged for the Heart of All Saints. The spirit of Cesar Raleigh's ship, the *Royal Blue*, will manifest into the physical world and attack at the storm's peak. Even while the waves course over the characters' deck, pirate ghosts will surge forward and manifest with rusty cleavers and ill intent. Two spirits direct their action from the *Royal Blue's* wheel.

Raleigh's Rest

The island where Captain Raleigh buried his final treasure is a squat, ugly place. Treasure Island it ain't. The beach is a broken, rocky affair. A battered wooden stockade sits at the highest point, serving as a way station between the beach and the swampy interior. Several huts sit inside of the stockade; they're in better repair than the exterior, but not by much. The island's keepers sleep here on occasion.

Twelve Escoltadoros live on the island, gnarled and twisted plant men grown from the mangroves as supernatural guardians of the island. They are tasked with protecting the Heart of All Saints until the end of time. Although they have never been off the island, they are content with their role in life. The sun and earth keep them fed, the Heart gives them purpose. Upon death, they are buried in the swamp and are born again from their sacred trees.

An old cannon pokes out of the east face of the stockade. Despite its broken-down appearance, it's still operational. The Escoltadoros will fire upon the characters' ship given the chance. Other tactics they may resort to in protecting the treasure include hit-and-run attacks, disguising themselves among the swamp trees, and unearthing the island's final store of Toussaint's black-powder packed zombies. The last measure is far from subtle, but there's a certain impressive show of arms involved in deploying shambling bodies studded with hissing fuses.

Battle Royale

When the characters arrive back in New Orleans, Harker is waiting for them at the docks. Yancy and six G-men are observing the transaction from nearby buildings, ready to step in if the transfer is made. Of course, if the characters refuse the transfer, Harker will get right mad. It'll take some fast talking or a faster

draw to get out of this one, especially once Toussaint joins the fray (and he will, if he hasn't tipped his hand already). Seeing his ancestor's remains about to get away from him, he'll join the tussle and make off while the attention is on the big players.

Thaddeus Toussaint, Taximancer

Thaddeus is a quiet man in his mid-30s who keeps to himself. He doesn't want the trouble of being the sole heir to Adrien's taximancy abilities, but he doesn't want anyone else messing with his family's remains either. He's a good, Christian man who knows that the dead deserve their rest. He'll stop animating corpses as soon as he's able to obtain his ancestor's remains and remove all traces of weirdness from his family history.

You know the old adage about power and absolutes, though. If Thaddeus gets the Heart of All Saints, who knows what he'll really do with it? And really, when you have a horde of shambling zombies at your command, everything starts to look like a stick of jerky.

Thaddeus Toussaint, Taximancer **CR 10**

Undead creator (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 9,600

hp 100

Taximaciated Zombies

Unlike many zombies with which you may be familiar, these fellers don't eat brains. Mostly, they shamble around being nuisances. They are able to perform simple commands, such as guarding locations, carrying objects, and exploding violently.

Taximaciated Zombies **CR 1**

Advanced zombies (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 400

hp 16

Pirate Spirits

A ghost ship deserves ghost sailors. When the *Royal Blue* manifests, so does its crew. For these spirits, simply use the stats below:

Pirate Spirits **CR 4**
Advanced shadow (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)
XP 1,200
hp 25

Pirate Captain Spirit **CR 8**
Greater shadow (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)
XP 4,800
hp 58

Escoltadoros

Describe them as covered in bark and smeared with mud, possessing of choking hands and rough, ancient knives. They offer the ultimate in jungle warfare guerrilla combat.

Escoltadoros **CR 4**
Advanced quickling (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*)
XP 1,200
hp 26

Sid Harker, Kalfu's Chosen

That Sid Harker's bad news. He's a spirit wrangler who's made a career travelling the Deep South, making people deals they can't refuse. A young couple wants to get married, but the stern family patriarch won't allow it? The old man can hardly protest when he starts speaking in tongues, unable to operate the family business. A grisly landlord's giving his tenants a hard time? He'll end up dead of fear the next day, fingers clutched around a melted rosary. No matter what sorts of intentions people have going into a deal with Harker, the results are always bad.

Harker delights in causing mischief, but hides it behind a snake oil salesman's grin and a list of guarantees and testimonies so long it will make a prospective client's head spin. As he tells it, there was only one time when he got the bad end of a deal – and that was with Kalfu himself.

Sid Harker, Kalfu's Chosen **CR 11**
Trickster priest (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 12,800
hp 105

Jason Yancy, Zanua's G-Man

In an era of straight-laced government operatives, Yancy is one of the most direct. In his search for the Truth, he trailed a band of extra-dimensional bootleggers to the realm of Relic. After apprehending them, he found himself accosted by an elderly lady with the piercing eyes of divinity. She spoke to him about justice, and how his realm needed it more than ever. Yancy agreed, despite his desire to see more of the mysterious world that was like the pulp magazines he read.

"Someday, my champion," promised Zanua. "When your task is finished, you may return and claim that which was taken from you so long ago."

Yancy didn't know what that last part meant, but he sure intends to find out. And who knows, maybe you can turn that plot hook into an adventure of its own at some point.

Jason Yancy, Zanua's G-Man **CR 11**
Bounty hunter (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 12,800
hp 94

Ranged pistol +17/+12/+7 (1d8/x4)
Altered Gear replace mwk composite longbow with pistol

Yancy's G-men

They trust Yancy unconditionally; if he falls, they will try to recover his body and withdraw.

Yancy's G-men **CR 4**
Cautious archer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 1,200
hp 47
Ranged rifle +10/+10 (1d10/x4)
Altered Gear replace mwk composite longbow with rifle

The Crescent

Realm: Mortal realms, USA (1939).

The streets of Los Angeles don't care that there's a war going on; they've got their own things to think about. Half a world away, a madman has invaded Poland, but back home, industry has never been better. There's more than one way to make money from human suffering though, and Sam Davies knows it. He runs the *Los Angeles Crescent*, circa 1939. It's a dreary social issues newspaper, wet with the blood of the city's unfortunates. It carries the stories of dirty crime more respectable papers wouldn't touch. That's one reason it has sold so well since Davies launched it twenty years ago. The second reason is because Mr. Davies can see spirits.

With his spirit eyes he can see the spirits of rage and jealousy that feed in the tenements and flophouses, and their greasy cousins that stalk the corridors of high society. Ever a realist, he writes about the physical effects of the spirits while investigating their more ethereal qualities in his free time.

Davies' most hard-hitting interviews have been with spirits of feral dread. Although it was simple information gathering in his mind, Davies' most recent project has turned out to be much tougher - a gilded invitation to talk with the spirit of malice known as the Gravedigger. The Gravedigger's attention has caused a dark cloud of negative emotion to descend upon the city. Now, Davies is imprisoned within his own home by a labyrinth of wailing spirits... but the *Los Angeles Crescent* is doing better than ever.

How much of this adventure gets set in the Material Plane and how much is in the Ethereal Plane depends on the characters' abilities. You can play it either way, with physical storm clouds on the horizon, or have the characters moving to the Ethereal Plane to see the storm of dark energy circling L.A.'s finest areas.

M.M. P.I.

The characters are alerted to the ominous storm clouds and lurking doom by Mick Mercury, a nonsense private eye who shares headspace with the Greek god of travelers (among other things.) He's the realm's divine representative for Mount Olympus, much to his chagrin. Greek gods in fedoras? Togas and Tommy guns? It doesn't add up.

Through hook or by crook Mick calls the characters into his office and lays the facts bare: he's at the end of his rope and had to call in the specialists. He'll fight a mob enforcer with scales from time to time, but the whole clouds-of-doom gig is beyond him.

The investigation should take as long as everyone's having fun following leads. This could be a multi-step process that starts with interviewing witnesses, noting how the *Los Angeles Crescent* always has the scoop on storm-influenced crimes, and infiltrating the central offices to learn that the owner hasn't been in for several days. Alternatively, someone could just demonstrate with a color-coded map that the number of crimes reported increases rapidly in the vicinity of Sam Davies' home.

The house is a fine one, a small mansion in fact, indicative of the popularity of the *Crescent*. It's this very wealth that now has its owner imprisoned. The wrought iron fence that stretches around the grounds is rusted shut under the weight of supernatural decay. The once-trim garden has exploded into a skeletal hedge maze that blocks access to the mansion. Despite the lack of healthy greenery, brightly colored flowers burst from the walls of the maze, decorating it like offerings on a grave. Feral spirits patrol the maze under magically enforced obedience to the Gravedigger. No one is to enter or leave until his reign has been cemented.

Sam Davies is hiding in his study, the one room in the house that is still lit. He knows what he has done and regrets it, but refuses to leave his room. If the characters can guarantee his house's safety, he'll share the means of banishing the Gravedigger's influence in the city: a mystic sigil that must be replicated 10,000 times and spread around the area under the dark cloud. Good thing they have a newspaper to work with!

Stop The Presses!

At some point in the investigation, the characters will encounter Sam's daughter, Lola. She'll be dressed in red, smoking a cigarette from an ebony holder, drawn from an embossed silver cigarette box. Despite looking like trouble to anyone with an inkling of genre awareness, she'll prove herself a real sweetheart. According to her story, she heard from Mick that the



characters were out to help her father. She'll tag along with them, staying out of danger but helping with directions and quirks of the realm.

What the characters don't know is that she didn't get the information about them from Mick, but Hades. The femme fatale is in the employ of the god of the underworld, who gets generous kickbacks as long as the Gravedigger's hanging around. She wants her father rescued, but would prefer to keep her patron happy at the same time. She'll sabotage any efforts to get the sigil into the *Crescent's* printing office. If that doesn't work, she'll resort to hired muscle.

Lola knows a lot of dangerous men, as you'd expect from a beautiful woman in a hard boiled story, but the ones she has in mind for the hit are some of Hades favorites. Don Calamari's boys (or informally, the Fish Mafia) are a band of toughs that heard the sea's siren song and... changed. Their skin is pale and clammy to the touch, and delicate webbing grows between their fingers and toes.

Sam Davies

All those other schmucks can chase the cops, chase the ambulances, chase the moon red, for all Sam Davies cares. He has leads like no one else, and he's going to use them. He's a newspaperman's newspaperman, all cheap whiskey, strong cigars, and long nights. Despite his wealth, he takes pains to depict himself as a good ol' working class kinda guy. When he's not held captive within his own home by feral spirits he enjoys dirty jokes, baseball, and showing off his collection of ancient Greek pottery.

Sam Davies

CR 6

Variant highwayman (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 2,400

hp 53

Melee remove +1 *spiked chain* entry.

Ranged revolver +11/+6 (1d8)

Altered Gear replace +1 *spiked chain* and mwk composite longbow with a revolver in a concealed holster.

Lola Davies

Lola isn't a bad girl; she just happens to be working for the god of the underworld. She knows that her father's a small fry compared to the keeper of souls, but she can't help having a fondness for the poor old fool. He was the first man to try and buy her love after all, and she learned a lot from him.

The times are changing though, and she's learning to look out for herself these days. When Lola wants something – and she has expensive tastes – she'll find a way to get it.

Lola Davies

CR 7

Pulse-touched con artist (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 3,200

hp 30

Don Calamari's Boys

These wise guys are pale, clammy, goggle-eyed gangsters. The Don controls the whole waterfront, from the fishermen's docks to the Santa Monica Pier. Nothing gets through his net of informants and heavies, which is where his 'boys' come into the picture. He dines at El Crusto, the finest seafood restaurant on the west coast, which is also a place for people like Lola Davies, and explains how the Don's boys are doing a job for her.

Don Calamari's Boys

CR 5

These wise guys are pale, clammy, goggle-eyed gangsters.

XP 1,600

Sahuagin fighter 3

LE Medium monstrous humanoid (aquatic)

Init +5; **Senses** blindsense 30 ft., darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +10

DEFENSE

AC 17, touch 12, flat-footed 15 (+1 Dex, +1 dodge, +5 natural)

hp 45 (5d10+18)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +5; +1 vs. fear

Weaknesses light blindness

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., swim 60 ft.

Melee bite +9 (1d4+4), 2 claws +9 (1d4+4)

Ranged +1 revolver +10 (1d8+1/x4)

Special Attack blood frenzy

STATISTICS

Str 18, **Dex** 18, **Con** 17, **Int** 14, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 7

Base Atk +5; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 24

Feats Catch Off-Guard, Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Toughness

Skills Bluff -1, Handle Anima +3, Intimidate +6, Perception +10, Ride +9, Stealth +12, Survival +7, Swim +17

Languages Aquan, Common; speak with sharks

SQ armor training I

Gear +1 revolver

Rico "Tentacles" Vasquez, Mob Enforcer

The largest of Don Calamari's boys is a right mean son-of-a-gun, always ready to bust a head that needs cracking. When he gets angry, his skin takes on a bruised purplish color. Rico doesn't think it's polite to mention it; anyone who does gets to witness Rico removing his huge overcoat. From there, it's just a zip and a slap and he's giving the poor guy the tentacles.

Rico "Tentacles" Vasquez, Mob Enforcer

CR 7

Advanced giant cecaelia (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*)

XP 3,200

hp 69

Code: Grimm Woodsman

Realm: Mortal realms, Germany (1943)

Bunker 13. Officially, it doesn't exist—and never did. Unofficially, it was a top secret German facility where the Nazis first made contact with spirits from another realm. The Great Spirit of Hope needs a few strapping heroes to infiltrate the bunker in July of 1943, and end the spiritual warfare program before the 1944 development of the Leaden Rift. The quickest way to accomplish this is to assassinate the Nazi's sole shaman: Frau Totenkreuz.

Berlin And Onwards

The most convenient portal to 1943 deposits the characters in a run-down hotel in the heart of Berlin. Travel in and out of the city requires papers, and the only people who're getting them for the time being are soldiers. The characters' Telesmae will take care of any language issues, but they'll still need disguises to move around freely.

Any inquiries about Bunker 13 will be initially met with laughter; it's an old military prank to tell new recruits to report there because it doesn't exist; the number's unlucky, so they skipped it, see? Continued inquiries will be met with a private invitation from Sturmscharführer Jaeger to discuss the matters at Ernst's, an underground cabaret.

This is, of course, a trap. Jaeger will find out what the characters know before calling in his goons to execute them. Ernst's is a frequent SS hangout, so he can get away with pretty much anything there. In the process of the interrogation, Jaeger demonstrates minor arcane abilities – reading the characters' Pulse, perhaps. This should demonstrate that Totenkreuz is not the only threat. Conveniently, he also possesses the proper clearance to get the characters on the train to Bunker 13.

Bunker 13 is a squat, concrete affair surrounded by barbed wire and chain-link fence. Ancient, gnarled trees stretch upward outside of the perimeter, leaving artificial lights to provide illumination. In the Ethereal Plane, the entire area surrounding the bunker is a blasted wasteland: no trees, no spirits, no ghost trains.

Once inside, security is tight. Guards make regular patrols, and are familiar enough with the bunker's inhabitants that any new faces will be met with heavy suspicion. Any number of nasty experiments can be going on in here, but the primary one that the characters should be concerned with are the thirteen (there's that number again) imprisoned spirits of feral dread.

The spirits are contained in the bunker's second basement, where Frau Totenkreuz has bound them within ritual circles of Pulse-infused runes. If the base is on high alert, she will cancel the runes and send them shrieking out at any intruders. Otherwise, they spend most of Totenkreuz's waking hours sharing dark secrets of their master's immortal realm. A special chamber has been constructed for these sessions, consisting of a comfortable wheeled chair and rows of blackboards covered with perilous spirit data.

Before her death, Totenkreuz will try to poison the characters with despair. "I may fall, but others know the truth," she laughs. "We are the Gravedigger's favored race; his armies are promised to us!" This is not an idle threat; as long as the Gravedigger, the Great Spirit of Despair, supports the Nazi war machine, it will be able to train shamans with impunity. To reverse that, a trip to the Immortal Realm of Despair is required.

Grilling The Gravedigger

As can be surmised from the name, the immortal Realm of Despair is not the most cheerful of places to spend one's time. The prevailing legend is that it used to be a crystalline metropolis created by a race of supermen until its citizens summoned the Gravedigger without knowing his true nature, and he brought ruin upon them all. On the other hand, it's entirely possible that's just propaganda put out by the great spirit to make the realm's inhabitants responsible for their own slavery.

The Realm of Despair follows a five-hundred year cycle of destruction and rebirth. Structures rise, new science uplifts the lives of its inhabitants, and it always seems like the predestined destruction will miss the next time. It never does. Logic turns to barbarism, monuments are torn down, and dreams give way to dust. The Gravedigger laughs, a new plot already unearthed.

When the characters enter the Realm of Despair, it's in its Cold War paranoia phase. Looming buildings tower over narrow streets, choking the thoroughfares like a barbed wire noose. Cloaked figures rush frantically from building to building all day, only to return home to an empty mirror and metallic soup. It doesn't rain, but it's never sunny either.

The Gravedigger can be found outside the city limits, hard at work on a new graveyard. If the characters want his undivided attention, they'll have to offer something in exchange for withdrawing his blessing from his 'chosen people of the 20th century'. One way to do this is to convince him that another party – say the Allies – would serve his purpose just as well. There are thorny moral issues involved with that choice, so be ready to accept other options as well. The Gravedigger isn't a charity though, and will put the bargaining screws to the characters if they give him a chance.

Sturmscharführer Jaeger

You know the type – a Grade-A, by-the-book Nazi officer. Highly trained, cruel, and precise.

Strumscharführer Jaeger

CR 9

Advanced variant swampwalker (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary, Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 6,400

hp 99

Ranged Luger pistol +11/+6 (1d8/x4)

Altered Gear replace +1 composite longbow with Luger pistol

Feats change Weapon Focus (composite longbow) to Weapon Focus (Luger pistol)

Frau Totenkreuz

Frau Totenkreuz isn't much for politics, but spirits enthrall her. When soldiers first discovered her cottage in the depths of the Black Forest, she wasn't even aware that there was a war going on. Totenkreuz is smart though, and quickly learned the proper jingoistic Nazi phrases to parrot if she was to continue receiving funding.

Life without access to the Spirit World is a slow, foggy nightmare to her. It's a barren land where all her dark imaginations are invisible, forgotten. The

immortal Realm of Despair is so much better though, with its shadow-blasted halls and endless litanies of the occult. To put it another way, Totenkreuz is only happy when she's truly miserable.

Frau Totenkreuz

CR 11

Advanced undead creator (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 12,800

hp 100

Nazi Troops

Use all the Wilhelm screams and sound clips from your favorite WW II-era action movies you want here. We won't judge.

Nazi Mook

CR 4

Cautious archer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 1,200

hp 47

Ranged Luger pistol +6 (1d8/x4)

Altered Gear replace +1 composite longbow with Luger pistol

Feats change Weapon Focus (composite longbow) to Weapon Focus (Luger pistol)

Nazi Squad Leader

CR 5

Advanced cautious archer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 1,600

hp 57

Ranged Luger pistol +10/+5 (1d8/x4)

Altered Gear replace +1 composite longbow with Luger pistol

Feats change Weapon Focus (composite longbow) to Weapon Focus (Luger pistol)

Spirits Of Feral Dread

Spirits of feral dread are the sole survivors of realms that have fallen to a being of divine power known only as the Gravedigger, their great spirit and master. They appear in the Ethereal Plane as large, leaden shadows, each erupting with dozens of eyes with which to see threats. They avoid contact with others whenever possible. If forced to fight, they will

share the tales of their demise (Intimidation) until their opponents collapse from the terrifying woe, or the spirit can find an escape route.

Despite their fearful nature, spirits of feral dread can be convinced to share their ancestral memories if given that rarest of commodities - hope. Many were originally from realms rich in secrets of the dark arts, which could be shared with the proper bribe. Depending on how amicable the deal is, the spirit may even reveal how its dark magic first lured the Gravedigger to its realm.

Spirits Of Feral Dread

CR 4

Variant advanced allip (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*)

XP 1,200

hp 38

Melee incorporeal touch +4 (1d6 cold plus chill up your spine)

Altered Special Attacks replace Babble and Touch of Insanity with the following:

Whispering Terror (Su) A spirit of feral dread whispers horrific visions of the deepest and darkest nightmares. Everyone within 5 feet of them must succeed at a DC 17 Will save or be shaken for 1 minute.

Chill Up Your Spine (Su) The touch of a spirit of feral dread causes a creature to see their greatest nightmares flash in their mind. In addition to damage, the target must succeed on a Will save (DC 17) or cower for 1 round.



Escape From Zhiming Dao

Realm: Mortal realms, China (2019).

In 2019, Zhiming Dao, a small island in the South China Sea, disappeared. The island officially only had one inhabitant, so Shanghai officials covered the matter up and quickly forgot about it. The gods were not willing to let it go so easily. In addition to being the private sanctuary of Tian Long, the power behind the XiCorp electronics giant, the island was home to a useful portal to the Maelstrom. With the island's destruction (let's not mince words), the portal and its ancestral keepers were likewise destroyed. The characters are sent to this time and place to set things right, or stumble upon it while portal surfing.

All signs point to Tian Long being the culprit. As of 2019, she was 97 years old and pouring great chunks of her vast fortune into prolonging her life. Her most eccentric plan was her final one: hosting an underground martial arts tournament to determine the world's best warriors. The winners would have the dubious (and unmentioned) honor of providing her with the organs that she needed to stay alive.

Unfortunately for Tian Long and the gods, Dioxippus Jones, the contest's eventual winner, was too powerful to be defeated by Tian Long's post-championship ambush squad. Instead, the experience of taking down the island's forces bare-handed drove him over the edge of heroism into demigodhood. The resultant Pulse surge, coupled with Jones's rage, shook the island to its core, destroying all traces of its existence. If the characters wish to avoid that fate, then they'd best discover Jones's role in the destruction and either pacify him or beat him fairly.

Entering The Ring

The characters appear at the island's portal just before the fateful tournament begins. They can either infiltrate Tian Long's base by their own means or earn an official invitation by defeating one of the hopefuls who are fighting for the last wild card slots on the main beach. The former method will test their infiltration and evasion skills, as Tian Long has made many enemies over the years. Her island defense systems consist of the standard-issue guard towers manned with searchlights and machine guns as well as armed patrols of XiCorp security that ensure that

all visitors to Zhiming Dao stay in the authorized zones. Bordering the perimeter fence, the island's motor pool could be one way in. It holds several jeeps and enough black market helicopters to make the characters worry. Once inside the perimeter, though, they should be able to make it to Tian Long's private mansion relatively easily.

Facing the other hopefuls is as simple as filling out the necessary paperwork. They're aware of the rules of engagement, and are prepared for the consequences. Note that not all of the characters have to win a qualifying match to be allowed on Zhiming Dao; every successful martial artist has access to a support staff, merchandisers, managers, etc. Some of the contenders, such as stuntman Yang Chi, will fight with honor. Others, including ex-KGB Yelena Konev, will resort to trickery and deceit.

Zhiming Dao

The visitors' quarters of Zhiming Dao are the equivalent to a four-star hotel, complete with extensive gym facilities, tennis courts, and trail rides. The rooms are small, but well furnished by one with an eye for quality. This is a tropical vacation on top of an underground martial arts tournament! Despite the luxury, it's difficult not to feel constrained. Chain-link fences overlaid by more photogenic bamboo keep visitors from walking off the beaten path and onto Tian Long's private preserve. The only time that armed guards won't turn visitors away is when the battles are in progress; Tian Long's arena is reserved for the purpose.

Tian Long's mansion is architecturally simple, but large and built of expensive materials. Above ground, it's built around a central courtyard where the coliseum-style fighting arena has been set up. A warren of secret labs undercuts the mansion, each staffed by a staggering array of doctors. Thanks to their patron's desperation and deep pockets, they have been able to rig up a chemical bath that will make any harvested organ suitable to her body's particulars, as long as it's administered quickly and under controlled conditions.

Anyone who takes the trail rides or makes an effort to get away from the restrictive visitors' quarters will notice an old-fashioned windmill and wisps of campfire smoke in the distance... these

belong to the portal keepers who oversee Zhiming Dao's portal to the Maelstrom, where the characters first arrive (and their way out too, hopefully). Although they don't understand the full extent of the portal's power, several of them are able to see and converse with spirits. They don't know much about the island, but they do send information back to the Maelstrom whenever they learn something new from any passing spirits, making them useful information gatherers for the gods.

Tian Long's Ritual

The tournament's closing ceremonies take place on the Amber Balcony, which overlooks a heavily forested valley. Several long tables are set for dinner. All of the surviving participants are in attendance, along with their staff.

Without any intervening action by the characters, this is how the next several minutes unfold: first, Tian Long praises the top three contestants and places ceremonial talismans around their necks. The talismans contain powerful drugs, which make the already weary fighters confused and complacent. She invites the winners to eat on the Emerald Balcony, apart from the courageous losers. There is no Emerald Balcony, but there is a secret, underground lab just waiting for three drugged organ donors! If Dioxippus won the tournament, he will resist the drug long enough to take down Tian Long's guards. At this point, his ascension has begun: the island's portal flares to life and begins releasing Feral Spirits of Rage into the peaceful hermitage. Dioxippus, flush with his taste of divinity, tears through Zhiming Dao, slaughtering everything in his path until he reaches the portal. It begins to twist and tear; the island begins to shake, sinking within ten minutes.

Somewhere along the way, the characters will hopefully intervene to stop that happening!

Dioxippus Jones

Jones is a master of the Greek martial art pankration, and a chosen of Ares. He was born on the battlefield, the smell of blood and smoke his first companions. When he closes his eyes, he sees himself on a throne made of skulls, the banners of every nation crumpled at his feet. He never tries explaining any of this to his buddies when they're out rock-climbing

or shooting promotional spots for the newest line of muscle-boosting powder. They'd tell him to lay off the drugs. Jones doesn't do drugs, though; he's a winner. Winners don't do drugs. Life is a natural high, and fighting is the pinnacle of life.

Jones is a bluff, cheerful man of Greek/English ancestry. He hides his doubts beneath a thick layer of machismo, knowing that if he keeps on fighting he'll get past his demons. There hasn't been a foe yet that he couldn't drive into submission. He carries a long spear which he has learned to use as well as his martial arts skills. Since this isn't the sort of tournament where melee weapons are banned, he has his spear with him at all times. Jones doesn't recall where he got the spear, but he thinks it really makes him look cool. In fact, it was a gift from Ares who looks forward to seeing it used in a real full-scale battle.

Dioxippus Jones

CR 13

Pulse-touched swift brawler (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 25,600

hp 75

Ouroboros Emergent (II)

Realm: Mortal realms, Garden of Athena (far future).

Now that the heroes are recognized as such, they finally have enough resources to decode the treasure map that they found in Ouroboros Emergent: Episode I. The stained map explains how to open a portal to the starship *Sagittarius*, where a great jewel, the Ouroboros, will be forever buried. The jewel is, in fact, the physical manifestation of a pocket realm that the characters will be able to visit once they are demigods. For now, it's enough to know that possessing it allows the bearer to regenerate Pulse at triple the standard rate. That should get their treasure-hunting juices flowing.

When the characters beam aboard the starship, it's one month out from the Garden of Athena, a futuristic realm settled by the best of the Greek gene pool with sci-fi technology and the blessings of the Olympian gods on their side. The *Sagittarius* is a pleasure liner peopled by squabbling philosophers,

grey-bearded statesmen, and purveyors of all sorts of amusements. In six hours, barbarian terrorists will blow up the ship, killing everyone aboard.

If you like this tale, you'll be delighted to know there's a whole setting book about the Garden of Athena realm called *Dogs of Hades*. It has a campaign, plenty of options for characters, and stacks more besides.

Waltz For Sagittarius

The Ouroboros is currently being used as the lucky charm of Anakletos, a Folk Hero rank veteran of many Athenian campaigns. The characters will spot a great jewel around his neck when they see him first, and any glimpse into the Ethereal Plane will confirm that it's spiritually active. Very active. Anakletos is vacationing on the *Sagittarius*, dividing his time between displays of arms, engaging in philosophical duels, and gambling. This last pastime is what will eventually get him into trouble. If he doesn't lose at dice or a wrestling contest with one of the characters, he'll lose it to one of the barbarian terrorists. Of course, nobody onboard knows that the characters are as great as they say they are, and obtaining an introduction to the glorious soldier may require navigating a foreign social web.

The barbarian terrorists will attack whenever it's most convenient for the story. This could be as the characters are about to win a bet against Anakletos, or soon after they see a laughing barbarian terrorist walking away with the Ouroboros. At this point, explosions will rock the ship as terrorists detonate the bombs hidden in the cargo hold.

The ship's captain will be quick to alert the passengers to the trouble, calming them with the knowledge that the hull had not been breached. He is interrupted by Caspian Harloch, leader of the barbarians (despite his cultured voice and dress, Harloch is still considered a barbarian, as is everyone who isn't from the Garden – that's just the Athenian way). His demands are simple, but untenable: return sovereignty to his people and grant remunerations for their ongoing war. Since peace can't be brokered, he settles for taking all of the valuables aboard the ship and crashing it into an asteroid.

Harloch commands the operation from the ship's flight deck, where he stands with a gun to the captain's head at all times. Five of his most trusted

revolutionaries share the room, keeping an eye on ten of the most high-profile prisoners. The rest of the ship is divided into sections, which are looted by rank-and-file terrorists. As soon as the escape pods are filled with valuables, they'll jam the controls and depart.

Portal Rescue

If any of the characters get the idea to try saving the ship, it will be more difficult than simply packing their favorite passengers into their pocket realm. The destruction of the *Sagittarius* is integral enough to its realm that history will conspire to ruin any large-scale rescue programs. The only way around this is a devious loophole that will banish the passengers from their home realm forever.

Close attention to the ship's navigational equipment will indicate that there's a black hole not too far off course. If the characters contact the gods, they'll learn that the black hole is Hephaestus' Forge, a star that the god of the forge fired so hot when creating a new alloy that it collapsed upon itself. The gods will tell them that if they can navigate the ship through it, they should be able to activate the portal to Olympus that's still there, in the middle of the black hole.

Normally, any characters less than Folk Hero rank are unable to handle the chaotic pressures of the Maelstrom. In order to protect the passengers of the ship, the characters must arrange a deal with the portal's spirits of the Veil, the twin spirits known as the Palici. Spirits of the Veil are known for driving a hard bargain, often involving unpleasant terms. Just ask Gregor at the start of the campaign on page 71. To convince the Palici, the PCs must succeed on a DC 30 Bluff or Diplomacy check. For every good motivation the PCs can provide to the Palici, they gain a +2 bonus on the check.

If the characters can convince them of the universal importance of saving the starship, the Palici can craft a reality bubble that surrounds it as it goes through the Veil and into the Maelstrom. It should last the ship until it reaches Olympus. The bubble is quite an oddity in the Maelstrom though, and will attract all sorts of unpleasant spiritual turbulence. Between navigating a black hole and the rigors of the Maelstrom, there's no way that autopilot's going to do the trick.

Anakletos

Anakletos is an iconic Athenian, trained in all of the noble arts of his people. He knows a little bit of everything, which has served him well in his dozens of military campaigns. The last one was a hairy one even for the brave champion though, so he's taking some time off. Freed from the authoritarian rule of his homeland, Anakletos is letting his hair down and engaging in all of the pleasures that he has fought so long to protect. Although he has little practical experience with many of the more refined activities aboard the *Sagittarius*, he's willing to try them out with gusto. After that, there's always gambling!

Anakletos

CR 12

Advanced variant scheming fencer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game RPG Codex*)

XP 19,200

hp 98

Ranged laser pistol +19/+14/+9 (1d8)

Altered Gear replace "mwk composite longbow" with "laser pistol"

Caspian Harloch, Barbarian Terrorist

He's the blond-haired barbarian who is taking the space lanes by storm. Nobody knows where he's from, but he is as cultured as he is passionate about the freedom of his people. Although deeply apologetic about his demands, he has so little in common with the crew of the *Sagittarius* that finding compromise is extremely difficult.

Caspian can be temporarily distracted by a spirited debate. Just once in his life, he would like to prove that he has the chops to take on a trained rhetorician.

Caspian Harloch, Barbarian Terrorist

CR 12

Advanced variant bandit lord (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 19,200

hp 98

Ranged laser pistol +19/+14/+9 (1d8)

Altered Gear replace mwk composite longbow with laser pistol





Barbarian Terrorists

Take a battle-hardened seaman with a penchant for blood. Now give him a laser.

Barbarian Terrorists

CR 8

Variant raging swimmer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 4,800

hp 109

Ranged laser pistol +19/+14/+9 (1d8)

Altered Gear replace +1 composite longbow with laser pistol

The Ill-Tempered Cauldron

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Yggdrasil.

With the characters becoming heroes in the eyes of the Continuum, it's time to start networking with other like-minded troubleshooters. The Suzerain Continuum is a big place, and having bold allies is a career move encouraged by everyone who hopes to keep the current system of divinity in place. To this end, Bors the Daring has invited the characters to train in the Maelstrom realm of Yggdrasil. It's a domain of great deeds and hardy challenges – not to mention sumptuous feasts.

The First Challenge

This is a good opportunity to introduce story threads of your own, as the characters could encounter important people from a number of realms at Bors' revel. Together, they can face mythological creatures and form rivalries that are the heart of legend. These events should by no means be easy, but the stakes for failure are low; it's just training, after all. Other important figures who will be training are Nils Squaretooth and Bjorn Snorrason; these leaders of rival mercenary bands are using the occasion to cement their new alliance. The first great event is flushing out a nest of lindwurms. They're not quite dragons, but they're big enough and twice as mean.

The lindwurm nest is located in the shallows of a deep, black lake in the foothills surrounding a spine of snow-capped mountains. Standard procedure is to lure the amphibious beasts out of the lake before engaging in battle, but it's a sign of great skill to defeat

them on their home terrain. Other complications could include under-trained youngsters and landslides from the shifting tides of battle.

The Second Challenge

Following the destruction of the lindwurms, it's traditional to roast their bodies and feast upon the remains. Mighty warriors have mighty appetites to match! The pre-emptive entertainments begin as the central dish is cooked. Hours pass. The lindwurm still refuses to retain heat. If anything, it has cooled down after several hours in the pot. Bors is outraged – the cauldron was a special gift from a senior hero at the gathering, and it refuses to cook?

Consulting the spirit that lurks within the pot (or researching its legend with a knowledgeable tale-teller) reveals that the pot won't cook meat for cowards. If this becomes widely known, the banquet's cordial mood soon sours. Who among them is a coward? Who would dare?

Tensions flare and memories leading back for years are examined. No one wants to admit cowardice among so many heroes, but everyone wants this rare meat; it's a delicacy, and they are hungry. Soon talk turns to throwing out the least brave of the revelers so that the rest can eat. It doesn't take long for Nils and Bjorn to go at each other with weapons, renewing their bloody feud. If only there were some test to prove that everyone at the meal was truly brave...

The Final Challenge

One way to go here is to have someone suggest a one-week break for everyone to go out and perform a brave deed. Upon reconvening, they will share the tales, eat the meat, and be comrades once more. This will give your adventure the air of a fairy tale; after all, how easy is it to go out and intend to be heroic? Is it something that just happens, or can it be forced? Give your players' suggestions lots of weight here. If they want to investigate the cauldron further, that's an interesting way to go (it was made by Loki, after all.) Alternatively, if they want to spend the next week wrestling electric sting-sharks, that could work.

If no such ideas are forthcoming, the same tale-teller who explained the cauldron could be convinced to share some tales of a nearby camp of trolls. Surely, defeating this filthy knot of brutes would be a heroic



action. On the way to the troll camp, test them once or twice. Is it brave to attack a sleeping troll? How about one who is feeding his two young children from a bag of stolen chickens? After the warm-ups, hit them with the full-fledged camp.

The troll camp consists of twelve warriors in varying states of battle readiness. They have been clashing with the war bands that crisscross the region, occasionally allying with one long enough to legitimize their brutality. They keep two human

slaves, and aren't particularly concerned with the value of human rights. Not when they're hungry, at least.

In the course of events, one of the characters may feel the blame for the meat's failure to cook. Perhaps he had a notably cowardly moment, or is waiting to reveal a dark secret to the rest of the gang. There's no set answer for who actually triggered the cauldron's power: it may have been a young warrior who turns to the characters to teach him strength, it may have been Bjorn for behavior on the battlefield, or it may have been nobody at all. The god of misdirection loves his jokes, especially when they can get a group of proud, warrior-types bickering like children.

Like many delicacies, lindwurm does not taste particularly good. At least it makes a memorable story!

Bors The Daring

Bors is old school - a bold Norseman with a beard as fiery as his temperament. Although his friendships are not deep, they are many. Has he ever told you about the time he had to sneak out of a camp of giants while disguised as the King of the Trolls? Share a barrel of mead with him and you'll soon be best friends, at least until the hangover hits.

Bors the Daring

CR 12

Advanced double axe fury (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary, Pathfinder NPC Codex*)

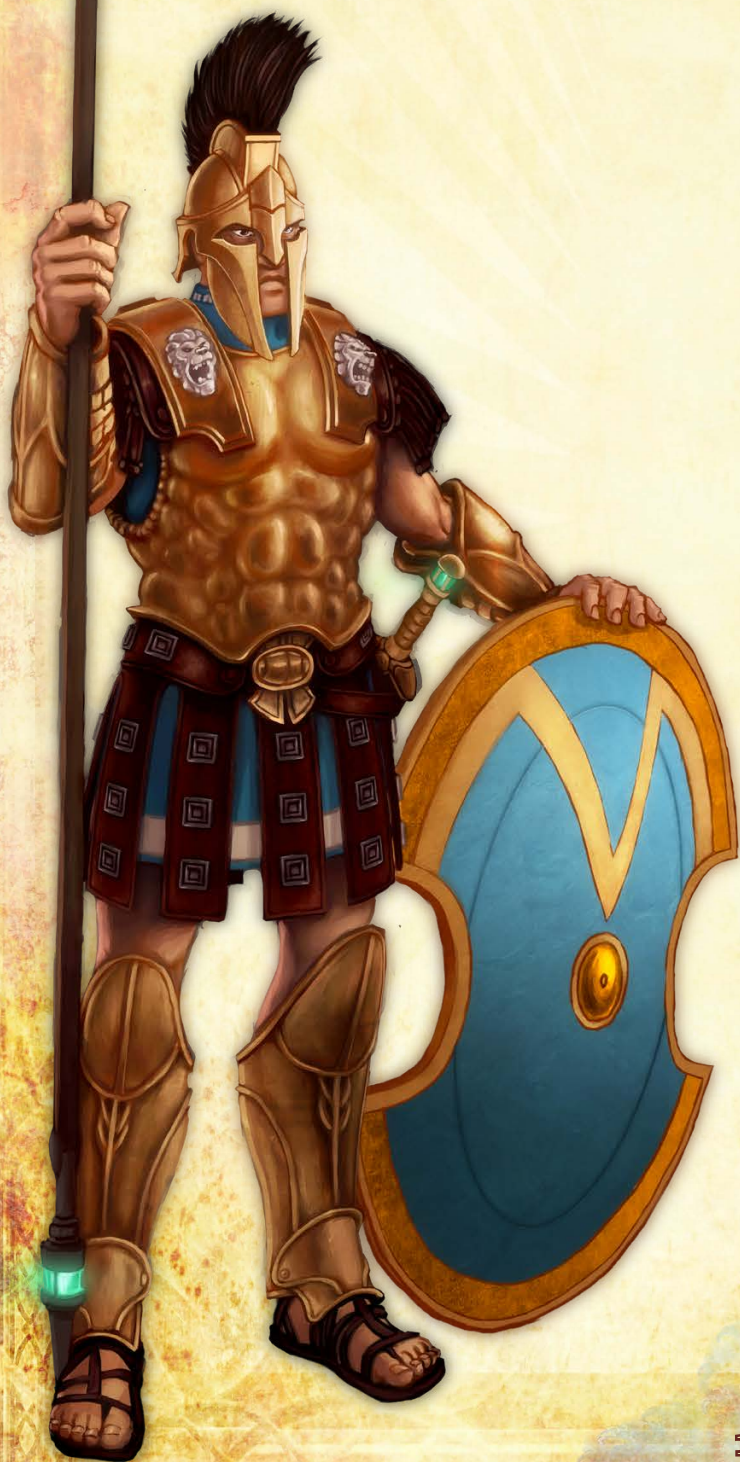
XP 19,200

hp 142

Nils Squaretooth

A loud-mouthed Norseman with oddly square teeth, Nils leads the Frosthammer mercenary band with honor and distinction. Although others will tell different variations of the story, Nils prefers to boast about the time when he tore the burning blade from a dark álfr's hand and used it to slay a score of spearmen.

Nils is the gourmand of the group, and would much rather discuss food than brave deeds. He knows what is expected of him, however.



Nils Squaretooth

CR 13

Advanced general (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 25,600

hp 85

Bjorn Snorrason

Although not as large as the other assembled heroes, Bjorn has no shortage of heroic deeds about which to boast. There was the time that he won his Concussion Maul from Thor in a game of dice, for one. Even more amazing was the time he outran Thor after winning his Concussion Maul in a game of dice.

When Bjorn's not demonstrating his prowess with his amazing Concussion Maul, he's poking holes in Nils' tale of the burning blade.

Bjorn Snorrason

CR 11

Pulse-touched champion (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 12,800

hp 105

Melee +1 adamantine thundering warhammer +19/+14 (1d8+13/19–20/x3 plus 2d8 thundering) or spiked gauntlet +16/+11 (1d3+6)

Feats and Class Features change to benefit warhammers

Altered Gear replace +1 adamantine vicious greatsword with +1 adamantine thundering warhammer

Lindwurms & Trolls

Lindwurm

CR 8

Variant behir (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 4,800

hp 105

Altered Speed 40 ft., swim 20 ft.

Troll

CR 5

Troll (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 1,600

hp 63

Dreaming Of Crossed Gears

Realm: Maelstrom, Fey Realm Of Dreams.

It's inevitable: the characters will need a piece of obscure technology to complete a task, and the only one who can help them is a brilliant scientist. Stanford McKenna is just the man they need, no matter what realm or device they're looking for. He's just the "hook", as we like to say in the business. McKenna is easy to find, but difficult to work with. He seems absent-minded and uncoordinated, and is unable to help with the characters' question.

This is because the man they meet is not Stanford McKenna at all, but a lifelike android/clockwork golem/wax figure animated by a tribe of gremians. The real McKenna set off to the Realm of the Pure Mages months ago; the gremians tried to continue his work, but found it beyond them. Traveling through the Realm of the Pure Mages after him isn't going to work. McKenna prepared for his trip for 18 years, and had a substantial collection of notes to guide him. No, the only way to access his figures and plans is by directly appealing to the Duke of Crossed Gears, lord of the gremian spirits. He monitors the dreams of scientists from his mound in the Fey Realm of Dreams, mining them for grand inventions and prospective subjects.

Crossing The Realm

During the day, the Fey Realm of Dreams is a thick, fairytale forest dotted with lush pastures and flowing streams. Animal life is plentiful, but there are still a few dangers (so don't let it get too much like a theme park). Upon nightfall, the fey spirits emerge from their homes on missions both dreadful and frivolous. Dream logic takes control over standard, logical flow. Don't be afraid to describe strange, symbolic background elements like maidens harvesting skulls from red-barked trees studded with thorns, or packs of hounds tearing across the sky in pursuit of silver-lined clouds. It's also the time the howlers are at their worst, caged within the night terrors of mortal sleepers.

The first sign that the characters are approaching the domain of the Duke of Crossed Gears is that the rivers turn to oil. Cog-blossomed vegetation sprouts along their banks, providing ample perches for



miniature mechanical fliers plucked from mechanics' fancies. Grass becomes stiff and metallic enough to puncture shoes.

A gang of sprites have elected themselves the Duke's welcoming committee, and take it upon themselves to introduce newcomers to the duchy's finer points. Their methods are crude, but ensure that nobody gets too familiar with the wild, industrial beauty. More than anything else, it keeps the sprites entertained.

As the characters make their way past a garden of rusted metal war-machines, one of them will roll from its resting place and block their way. A second one will clamber up behind them. They won't attack except to defend themselves, but won't let anybody pass either. If the characters are deadlocked, the sprites will get bored and reveal themselves. In exchange for calling off their machines, they'll demand a toll. In spring, this will merely be a fresh idea or a few seconds of embarrassment. Come winter, they'll be out for blood – or Pulse.

Impressing The Duke

The Duke of Crossed Gears has been picking through some of the most creative minds of the universe since before the characters' ancestors were born. It's going to take something special to pull him away from his dream decompiling. Luckily, he frequently hosts symposiums under the sprawling boughs of his titanic steelwillow. He invites the most brilliant performers into his inner circle until he is next distracted.

Fey spirits, primarily gremians and sprites, attend these boisterous events for the wine, gossip, and shining ideas. Each gathering has a specific theme, such as light sources or howler deterrents. Anyone with a contribution is invited to speak. Jeers and tangential arguments are quick to develop, however, unless the speaker is presenting an idea that is both new and in line with what is currently popular – a tough mix to achieve! Contradictions are the current fad in the Duke's court; a hero who could invent reproducible cold fire or that which is dead, yet also alive would be guaranteed time with the Duke.

To those he favors, the Duke is all compliments and probing questions. He is appreciative of their

smallest insight, but is endlessly curious about the reasoning that led to it. Any contradictions are seized upon at once and dissected and reassembled until they are completely understood. He has McKenna's collected dreams, and will share them in return for stimulating conversation, inserting the characters into the collected dreamscape.

The dreamscape before the characters will vary greatly depending on what kind of scientist he is. If they required the plans for a submarine, the realm will be one of undersea domes and bio-synthesoid sharks. If they needed a hacking protocol, they'll instead be confronted with a 3D datafield constructed from pulsing nodes and cables. No matter what the external trappings, the realm is inhabited by two sets of sentient creatures: doppelgangers of McKenna, each representing one facet of his personality, and fanged, multi-tentacled night terrors. These psychic parasites feed on the creative aspects of McKenna's personality, injecting them with doubt and contempt. The characters are shining beacons of personality, and will no doubt attract swarms of parasites themselves. Better find the right scientist and run!

This is largely an abstract adventure in an ever-shifting setting (both the Fey Realm of Dreams and McKenna's dreamscape are subject to change without a moment's notice). It's a session's interlude between more 'regular' action and it should feel magical and enchanting to the players while also keeping them off balance. The duchy is a place where rhetoric, rhyme, and logic are the only real weapons and armor a person can hope for, and the denizens of the realm are voracious Pulse-sucking predators. It's a realm where being able to calculate pi to seven places is enough to destroy a dozen predators, a dirty rhyming couplet has more effect than a submachine gun, and a good riddle offers nigh-impenetrable armor. All damage dealt by dreamscape creatures and hazards is nonlethal, hammering the heroes down until their minds temporarily break down. A good use of imagination by a player could even spontaneously cause a character to heal a small amount of nonlethal damage under some circumstances. This isn't a session of many rules, and may not suit everybody, but it'll be a lot of fun for some of you who want to explore the strangest extremes of the Maelstrom and the immortal realms therein.

Sprites

Sprites resemble beautiful human specimens with butterfly or dragonfly-like wings. They're tiny, measuring six inches at the shoulder, and fond of pranks that few mortals are able to comprehend. Their laugh is as magically contagious as it's grating. Sprites change their natures with the seasons: spring pranks are the lightest, only causing embarrassment to the chosen victim. Summer jests raise the stakes, and may cause the target's friends to begin to worry – and woe betide any mortal who encounters a Sprite come winter! While not physically very powerful, their laugh and Pulse Leech ability make them a danger when they appear in groups.

When in the mortal realms, sprites prefer remaining manifested in the physical world, coasting on their powers of misdirection to live life to its fullest. If local dangers get to be too hot to handle, they hightail it back to the Ethereal Plane as quickly as possible. If they've angered anybody enough to be pursued there, they'll make a beeline for the nearest dream, the more vivid the better, disappearing into it and fleeing to the safety of the Fey Realm of Dreams, where they inevitably have friends and relatives who serve as messengers for the greater fey spirits.

Sprites

CR 5

Lurker in light (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*)

XP 1,600

hp 44

Spritemechs

Spritemech One: Alpha

CR 7

Advanced clockwork soldier (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*)

XP 3,200

hp 80

Spritemech Two: Double Dribble

CR 9

Clockwork mage (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 4*)

XP 6,400

hp 102

Gremians

The gremians are curious about technology first and foremost, throwing their lives into the ever-spinning gears of experimentation. Every time a dream of an unbuilt invention makes its way into the Fey Realm of Dreams, a gremian grows from the kernel. She (for gremians are predominantly female) then makes the solution to the dream-contraption her life's work. Solving this riddle may require tracking down the original dreamer and observing him secretly as he works. Other times it may require taking the dreamer's other inventions apart, examining them for the key component that could lead back to the dream-contraption. The gremian then toils to try and smooth the way to the invention being constructed. If the inventor is working on other things, for instance, she'll manifest at night and pull out the plans for the unbuilt invention and leave them in his workshop. If his girlfriend is taking up too much of his spare time... well, the gremian might see that as a threat to the invention being built, and that would be bad for the poor girlfriend.

Gremians tend to be associated with mechanical contraptions, but some are born to electronic inventions and bio-tech creations. It's even whispered that a few are born purely in software, no more than a collection of binary code.

Although the vast majority of gremians respect their progenitors and aren't maliciously-minded, a few outright loathe their origins. These hexagon-knuckled miscreants see their dream-contraption as a waste of time and their creator as an addlebrained simpleton. In order to make their cursed lives bearable, they content themselves with causing trouble among the more well-behaved gremians and plotting to maim or kill their creator.

Gremians

CR 3

Advanced clockwork servant (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*)

XP 800

hp 35

Howlers

Unlike most fey spirits, which display whimsical mixtures of light and darkness, howlers are bad news all around. These spectral forms were incubated in the darkest nightmares and fed by their loathing for the freedom that they will never have. Each howler is bound to the location where several dreamers – human or spirit – are unable to escape persistent night terrors. When the howler can no longer bear the slow burn of freedom denied, it gives in to its malicious nature and willingly shares its soul-withering grief with all in its domain.

Howlers

Advanced sceeduinar (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*)

XP 4,800

hp 103

CR 8



Demigod Tales and Encounters

This is it. The big time. The characters are probably legends in several realms by now, and have access to large support networks. There's no such thing as a quick trip to the store to buy milk; every action they take is infused with higher purpose.

Each of these tales takes place in either a distant, alternate reality or one of the Pulse-inundated domains within the Maelstrom. Stand tall, for these are the tales that will form a new pantheon.

Scarbone

Realm: Mortal realms, Alternate Earth (65 Million B.C.).

An alternate prehistoric Earth is threatening to invade the real one. This is a world where dark, psionic saurians (dinosaur men) became the dominant species rather than ape-descended humans. From their mobile cities of basalt and steel they scheme endlessly for new allies against their roach-like enemies. Recently, their neural explorer program paid off. For the price of lobotomizing their most brilliant minds, they were able to construct a realm-spanning portal. It leads to a world much like theirs, but where the Titanosaurs aren't the size of skyscrapers and don't carry entire military bases on their backs.

The Green Earth Coalition, as the saurians are known, have entered our reality and constructed a gigantic Pulse reflector in the year 65 million B.C. Anything that endangers Earth's dinosaurs (say, a meteor) will be blasted to paste. Dinosaurs will rule the Earth, and in time, the universe. Then they'll go back to their reality and save their brothers from the roachocalypse.

If the characters were hoping to smash a machine and be home in time for cocktails, they'll be sorely mistaken; the Pulse reflector is considerably more complex than that. Initial reports suggest it's actually a lake of glowing magma, kept warm by thermal fissures and saurian tenders. Any time Pulse is injected into the lake, it's reflected back with ten times the power. Aiming this blast requires esoteric

knowledge and several simultaneous vantage points. Saurian Pulse-engineers can do this as a function of their job. All other Pulse-users will need to make an Int check (DC 20).

Observant characters will figure out that thermal vents and a few dozen saurians in robes aren't enough to blast meteors out of the sky. The body of a dead god, on the other hand, will do the trick. Deep at the bottom of the lake, a forgotten deity bleeds rich streams of raw creation into the churning magma. None of the Maelstrom gods know his name, but his power is unmistakable. This is because he's all that remains of the prior End Times. When all of creation was destroyed uncounted eons ago, it was at his bidding and he survived when our creation came into existence. Well, his corpse did at least.



When the Pulse reflector focuses at least 1,000 Pulse in a single Round, a semblance of life flows through the god once again. His pitted, crumbling arm of the blackest stone thrusts from the lake's surface, gathering all ambient Pulse into its palm. One cyclopean finger points at the chosen target, and releases the Pulse in a screaming torrent of heat and pressure. That's how you blast meteors out of the sky.

Green Earth Expeditionary Force

A trio of Titanosaurs has been sent to watch over the site of the Coalition's greatest triumph. They've been ample defense so far: time machines from a staggering number of eras litter the broken earth surrounding the magma lake. Each one is wrecked beyond repair, stripped by a wing of saurian engineers after their inhabitants were defeated. It's obvious the gods have already tried more than once to neutralize this threat. Could the characters be the last hope of stopping our universe suffering its End Times?

Each Titanosaur is covered with slabs of reinforced basalt from the Coalition's alternate reality home. Tunnels run through the mammoth battle armor, allowing the monsters' crew access to the dozens of machine gun ports that stud the outer shell. Each Titanosaur is topped with a squat fortress boasting eight Pulse cannons. There are 50 battle-ready saurian commandos in each fort, as well as a floating squadron of twelve Pulse engineers. There are 3 Titanosaurs here. Each is different from the standard titanosaur in some way:

Mirrorhide: Field Command. Grillisk meets with his 15 commanders here, otherwise treat as a standard Titanosaur.

Obelisk: Spined hide: creatures attacking with non-reach melee weapons take 6d6 damage. Bite deals 6d8+34 damage. Has 333 hp.

Salamander: Contains controls for Green Earth reality displacement ray aboard and due to the reality displacement effect, all creatures gain a +4 circumstance bonus to their AC as reality flexes and shifts. Otherwise, treat as a standard Titanosaur.

Destroying the Titanosaurs and draining the Pulse reflector is a good first step, but it doesn't stop the Green Earth Coalition from cramming more forces into the breach. They have an entire alternate Earth at their command; the characters only have themselves. There's only one thing to do: travel to the Coalition's alternate reality realm and hit it so hard it will never recover.

The Coalition's weakest point is its power base. While the saurian overlords are busy with upper-level tasks like penning wicked philosophy and engaging in shadow wars, as well as holding back the roaches as well as possible, a thriving slave class takes care of all the real work. The slaves are predominantly human, taken from two other Earth-like realms the saurians have conquered.

Inviting the slaves to riot is easy; they have the will and the numbers. What they don't have are charismatic leaders or military-type support. After the characters help them liberate a Titanosaur city or two, they should have all the resources they need to keep Coalition forces occupied. If that's all the characters need, they're free to return home... there's always the saurians' initial problem to worry about, though. Will the characters help lead the slaves against the roaches, or leave them to suffer whatever fate befalls them?

Green Earth Coalition Soldier

What if dinosaurs evolved into bipedal humanoids? They'd end up a lot like the Green Earth Coalition soldiers. The soldiers' unique brain structures allow them to communicate anger on a narrow-band psionic frequency.

Green Earth Coalition Soldier **CR 9**

This feral, reptilian humanoid wears a green bodysuit with a well-constructed breastplate while toting a rectangular object in its hands.

XP 6,400

Saurian (variant troglodyte) fighter 8 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +9; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft.; Perception +8

Aura stench (30 ft., DC 15, 10 rounds)

DEFENSE

AC 32, touch 18, flat-footed 18 (23 vs. rays/beams) (+8 armor [+5 touch vs. rays/beams], +2 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +6 natural)

hp 83 (2d10+8d10+30)

Fort +15, **Ref** +5, **Will** +4; +2 vs. fear

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +11 (1d4+2), 2 claws +11 (1d4+2)

Ranged laser rifle +10/+10/+10 (2d6+3 fire, automatic, touch)

Special Attack weapon training (firearms +1)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 7th; concentration +7)

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 11), *telekinesis* (DC 14)

TACTICS

Before Combat If the GEC Soldiers see trouble coming, they immediately activate their scatterlight suits.

During Combat GEC Soldiers prefer to keep their enemies at range, hiding behind cover and opening fire en masse. If an enemy closes, they'll use *telekinesis* to attempt to bull rush them away.

Morale GEC Soldiers aren't foolish. If outmatched they flee and regroup with a larger group.

Base Statistics When not using rapid shot, their ranged attack is **Ranged** laser rifle +14/+14 (2d6+3 fire, automatic, touch)

STATISTICS

Str 15, **Dex** 16, **Con** 16, **Int** 10, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 9

Base Atk +7; **CMB** +9; **CMD** 22

Feats Dodge, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Point-blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot, Target of Opportunity, Weapon Focus (firearms), Weapon Specialization (firearms)

Skills Acrobatics +11, Climb +12, Perception +8, Stealth +14 (+18 in rocky areas); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth, +4 Stealth in rocky areas

Languages Draconic; *telepathy* 20 ft. (other Saurians only)

SQ armor training 2

Gear +2 *agile breastplate*, green scatterlight suit, laser rifle, *belt of incredible dexterity* +4, *ring of protection* +2, assorted jewelry worth 100 gp.



Green Earth Coalition Pulse Engineer

The Green Earth Coalition engineers are responsible for maintaining the Coalition's Pulse reflector as well as the numerous strikelight weapons used by the soldiers. Each beam weapon is a powerful display of saurian technology, but something in Earth's atmosphere doesn't agree with them. Every week of operation in our version of Earth, the strikelights need to undergo minor maintenance by a trained Pulse engineer or stop functioning altogether.

Green Earth Coalition Pulse Engineer

CR 5

This feral, reptilian humanoid wears a green body suit and has a small oblong object in its one hand. Its body is otherwise surrounded with arcane defenses and there are a number of dangerous-looking canisters on its belt.

XP 1,600

Saurian (variant troglodyte) wizard (arcane bomber) 5 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Ultimate Magic*)

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +1; Senses darkvision 90 ft.; Perception +9

Aura stench (30 ft., DC 14, 10 rounds)

DEFENSE

AC 29, touch 13, flat-footed 28 (+4 Armor (+5 touch vs. rays/beams), +1 Dex, +2 deflection, +8 natural, +4 shield)

hp 48 (5d6+2d8+21)

Fort +9, Ref +2, Will +6

Resist fire 20

OFFENSE

Speed 35 ft.

Melee bite +4 (1d4+1), 2 claws +4 (1d4+1)

Ranged laser pistol +4 touch (1d8 fire, semi-auto)

Special Attack bomb 9/day (3d6+4 fire, DC 16)

Wizard Spells Prepared (CL 5th; concentration +9)

3rd—*dispel magic* (2)

2nd—*resist energy**, *scorching ray*, *shatter* (DC 16)

1st—*mage armor**, *shield**, *true strike* (2)

Opposition schools Enchantment, Illusion, Necromancy, Transmutation

*already cast and factored into statistics

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 5th; concentration +4)

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 11), *telekinesis* (DC 14)

TACTICS

Before Combat GEC Engineers take 7-hour shifts, casting *mage armor* at the beginning of it. However, they activate their green scatterlight suits and cast *shield* and *resist energy (fire)* at the slightest hint of danger (already factored in above).

During Combat GEC engineers stand back, covering each other as they try withdraw to a soldier group. They'll make as much noise as possible and use their bombs away from any important machines. Otherwise they use *shatter* and *dispel magic* to reduce the defenses of the enemy or to counterspell if the enemy has dangerous spellcasters.

Morale GEC Engineers are extremely cowardly. If they think enemies are near they use *detect thoughts* to look over the area, alerting their fellows and finding cover as they ready bombs and *scorching ray*.

Base Statistics If caught unaware, the GEC Engineer's statistics are: AC 21, touch 13, flat-footed 15.

STATISTICS

Str 12, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 14, Cha 9

Base Atk +3; CMB +4; CMD 15

Feats Arcane Builder, Fleet, Great Fortitude, Gunsmithing, Scribe Scroll, Toughness

Skills Acrobatics +8, Appraise +8, Climb +5, Craft (firearms) +10, Craft (mechanical) +10, Intimidate +2, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Knowledge (engineering) +11, Perception +9, Spellcraft +12, Stealth +7 (+11 in rocky areas); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth, +4 Stealth in rocky areas

Languages Draconic; telepathy 20 ft. (other Saurians only)

SQ spellblast bombs

Combat Gear *pearl of power* (2nd level, 3rd level); Other Gear *amulet of natural armor* +2, *headband of vast intelligence* +4, green scatterlight suit, laser pistol



Grillisk Slythe

Slythe is the field commander of the Coalition's expeditionary force to our Earth. Competent and experienced, he'll use every resource available to him when fighting the characters... and he has a lot of resources!

Grillisk Slythe

CR 15

If the other creatures you've encountered thus far are minions, then surely this is their king, if not their god. Standing head and shoulders above the others, this powerful reptilian humanoid is clad in a red bodysuit with a sleek breastplate strapped with a harness attached to the most threatening oblong object you've never seen.

XP 25,600

Pulse-touched advanced saurian (variant troglodyte) fighter 8/sorcerer 5 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

CE Medium humanoid (reptilian)

Init +10; **Senses** darkvision 90 ft., low-light vision; Perception +17

Aura stench (30 ft., DC 19, 10 rounds)

DEFENSE

AC 34, touch 23, flat-footed 28 (+8 armor +5 touch vs. rays/beams), +2 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 dodge, +8 natural)

hp 205 (5d6+2d8+8d10+135)

Fort +25, **Ref** +14, **Will** +13; +2 vs. fear

Resist cold 5, fire 5

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee bite +17 (1d4+6), 2 claws +17 (1d4+6) or bite +12 (1d4+3), claw +12 (1d4+3), monowhip +13 touch (1d10/18–20x3)

Ranged plasma thrower +19 (12d6+9 electricity and fire, automatic or slow-firing, scatter, touch/19–20)

Special Attack minute meteors, weapon training (heavy weaponry +1)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 13th; concentration +18)

At will—*detect thoughts* (DC 11), *telekinesis* (DC 14)

Sorcerer Spells Known (CL 5th; concentration +10)

2nd (5/day)—*flaming sphere* (DC 18), *glitterdust* (DC 18), *mirror image*

1st (8/day)—*ear-piercing scream* (DC 16), *magic missile*, *shield*, *unseen servant*, *vanish*

0th (at will)—*acid splash*, *bleed* (DC 15), *dancing lights*, *detect magic*, *ghost sound* (DC 15), *mending*

Bloodline Starsoul

TACTICS

Before Combat Grillisk activates his scatterlight suit at the beginning of each day and casts *mirror image* and *shield* if given the time before combat. He will then wait around a corner and use *ear-piercing scream* to alert everyone in the titanosaur to the presence of enemies before readying his plasmathrower to open up on the first enemy he sees.

During Combat Grillisk will use *flaming sphere* in a corridor, forcing enemies to maneuver around it or keeping the enemies in a line so he can make proper use of his plasmathrower. He prefers to continue using his plasmathrower even in melee but will use his natural weaponry and/or his monowhip if the plasmathrower is destroyed or he's disarmed. He also makes use of *glitterdust* and *ear-piercing scream* to blind and deafen enemies.

Morale Grillisk will only withdraw if he is suffering too great of a loss. If he suffers serious injury (at less than 100 hp) he will use *vanish* and fall back to his soldier's line of defense.

Base Statistics When not using Improved Vital Strike, his ranged attack is: **Ranged** Plasmathrower +13/+13/+13 (4d6+3 electricity and fire, automatic or slow-firing, scatter, touch/19–20).

STATISTICS

Str 23, **Dex** 22, **Con** 26, **Int** 18, **Wis** 15, **Cha** 20

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +17; **CMD** 36

Feats Arcane Armor Training, Devastating Strike, Dodge, Elemental Focus (fire), Eschew Materials, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (heavy weaponry), Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Point Blank Master, Point-Blank Shot, Rapid Shot, Spell Focus (conjuration), Toughness, Vital Strike, Weapon Focus (plasma thrower), Weapon Specialization (plasma thrower)

Skills Acrobatics +20, Bluff +20, Climb +21, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (arcana) +15, Knowledge (engineering) +15, Perception +17, Spellcraft +15, Stealth +19 (+23 in rocky areas); **Racial Modifiers** +4 Stealth, +4 Stealth in rocky areas

Languages Draconic; *telepathy* 20 ft. (other Saurians only)

SQ armor training 2

Gear +2 *agile breastplate*, plasma thrower, monowhip, *belt of physical perfection* +2, *cloak of resistance* +3, *headband of mental prowess* +4 (*Int*, *Cha*), *ring of protection* +2, heavy weapon harness (w/ plasma thrower), red scatterlight suit

Pulse Maggots

Ambient Pulse is a delicacy to many creatures in the Ethereal Plane. The least of these are the ghostly grubs known as Pulse maggots. Individually, they aren't a threat – but where there's one, more will quickly follow. Within minutes of the arrival of the first maggot, a roiling swarm of bloated Pulse suckers will be ready for its next meal. Wounded spirits, unguarded Pulse springs, and the corpses of dead gods are all popular locations to find these parasites.

Pulse Maggot Swarm CR 11

This seething mass of pulsing, inch-long worms seems to do more than just nibble on your flesh. They seem to draw in the very essence of your existence.

XP 12,800

N Fine magical beast (swarm)

Init +4; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +0

Aura pulse-eater (0 ft., DC 24)

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 22, flat-footed 21 (+4 Dex, +3 natural, +8 SIZE)

hp 127 (15d10+45)

Fort +12, **Ref** +13, **Will** +5

Defensive Abilities swarm traits; **Immune** weapon damage

Weaknesses swarm traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee swarm (3d6)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 0 ft.

Special Attack distraction (DC 20)

STATISTICS

Str 1, **Dex** 18, **Con** 16, **Int** –, **Wis** 10, **Cha**

Base Atk +15; **CMB** —; **CMD** —

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Pulse-eater (Su) Pulse Maggots feed on the life-energy of destiny that is Pulse. They can detect pulse within the immediate area and head for it. Whenever they feed on a creature, that creature must succeed at a Will save (DC 24) or lose 1d4 Pulse. This includes a +4 racial bonus to the DC. The power they draw in makes their swarm attack deal damage as though it were a magic weapon for the purposes of overcoming damage reduction.

Titanosaur

Really? Okay. The characters are demigods now!

Titanosaur CR 16

This monstrous mutated reptile stand above the surrounding terrain. Its maw looks capable of crushing small buildings with ease, if it didn't step on them accidentally first.

XP 76,800

N Colossal animal

Init +8; **Senses** low-light vision, scent, Perception +39

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 6, flat-footed 21 (+4 Dex, +19 natural, -8 size)

hp 261 (18d8+180)

Fort +21, **Ref** +15, **Will** +12

DR 10/—; **Resist** fire 20, electricity 20

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft.

Melee bite +22 (6d6+34/19–20 plus grab)

Space 30 ft.; **Reach** 30 ft.

Special Attack swallow whole (2d8+11, AC 19, 26 hp)

STATISTICS

Str 45, **Dex** 18, **Con** 31, **Int** 2, **Wis** 19, **Cha** 14

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +38 (+42 grapple); **CMD** 52

Feats Bleeding Critical, Critical Focus, Diehard, Endurance, Improved Critical (bite), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Run, Skill Focus (Perception)

Skills Acrobatics +4 (+8 to jump), Perception +39;

Racial Modifiers +8 Perception



Ouroboros Emergent, Part III

Realm: Mortal realms, Alternate Relic (Year 208 of the Third Age).

With the power of demigods on their side, the characters are finally able to unravel the outer defenses of the Ouroboros. This Pulse-infused gemstone they found with Cale Poplin's treasure map back when they were novices, is more than a handy relic. Something great is inside: an alternate version of the Relic realm where the War of the Wild never happened. Instead, the Trader Imperium flourished, creating a peaceful world based on consumer capitalism and non-intrusive religious benevolence.

So, what's the problem?

The realm has been used like a mobile battery for too long. Pulse levels in all of the citizens have dropped to dangerous levels. Pulse is what the human soul is made from. Despite their fantastic tech, they're listless and weak – and now their realm has been unsealed.

The second the characters open the realm, it's like loosing the door between a cage of sharks and a wounded seal sanctuary. Rippling masses of Pulse-sucking astral remoras flow into the newly opened portal and begin their feast. The only way to defeat them all is to re-arm the realm and give its inhabitants the strength to fight. To do this, the characters must travel to the alternate Relic's spiritual core and reignite it.

Looking Around

Garris+ looks much like Garris during Acts III and IV of our campaign, but larger and cleaner. Its mega-ziggurats reach into the clouds, each terrace marked with parks full of dying plants and still fishless ponds. There are few people about, all of whom are dressed impeccably but have a haunted look in their eyes.

They know their world is dying. Some have barricaded themselves in the ziggurats, immersing themselves in weeks of final, squalid parties. Others went to the plains, hoping to ride out the death of the world in cabins stocked with value packs of tinned beans. The ones the characters will be most interested in are the Pulse users. Most of them set off toward the

metropolis of Atelco. There, between the three Holy Hills, the realm's spiritual core has revealed itself in a silent shriek for aid. That's where the characters will want to go.

As the characters enter Atelco, they should realize that something is amiss. The utopian ziggurats they saw from far away are smeared with smoke and marked with deep red banners. Rubble fills the streets. Any pilgrims they may have encountered on their journey reveal themselves as being less balanced than they initially appeared; doom cults from across the realm have converged upon Relic+'s spiritual centre to prepare for the end.

The most influential of the cults sprang from the lifeless church of Atelco Tecuhtli - the god of cold, death, and stasis. Its guiding belief states that not only is the realm doomed, but that its destruction will be the first in a chain reaction that will herald the End Times for all men and gods equally. This may or may not be true, but gives the characters a good reason to fix what they can.

Although the outlying districts of Atelco are still fiercely contested, the three hills of Trinity are solidly under control of the Atelco Tecuhtli cultists. They've seized the city's garrison and are using it to defend the sacred nexus from all challengers until the astral remoras arrive and drain it dry.

Remember the arc towers from Act III of the campaign? Those have been outdated tech in Relic+ for more than a hundred years. Reaching the Great Temple will require penetrating a jagged battle line studded with arc busters, hover platforms, and void spirits. The defenders give no quarter, as they're fighting for total oblivion.

The Great Temple

The spiritual heart of the realm is a sun-like sphere of Pulse that orbits the Great Temple, bounded by three imposing hills. Even as it's guttering and fading through all the shades of blue to a sickly purple, it's an impressive sight. The purity of the Pulse is unmatched by anything the characters have experienced, short of the unmasked might of a god.

Depending on your pacing, the astral remoras may already be gorging themselves on the core by the time the characters arrive. In that case, a second big

battle is the most likely option. If the characters arrive ahead of the wave, they may have time to prepare for the remoras before they arrive.

Preparing may involve anything from convincing the high priest there's a chance for the realm to survive, building a positive wave of energy from the population (hence strengthening the realm's Pulse core for the coming assault), all the way up to the ultimate sacrifice. Nothing tells a realm "I love you" like offering to be the living Pulse battery inside its spiritual sun for untold generations.

Spending time in Relic+ after it has been saved will give the characters the chance to ask all sorts of questions about its history. If anyone's after a more material reward, it will only take a Streetwise or Knowledge check to compare the location of treasure in Relic+ with those in the more familiar realm. Time to get digging!

Astral Remora

Long, lashing, and foul, astral remoras are suspected by Pulse scholars to be members of the same genus as Pulse maggots. Both are parasitic spirit creatures that leech pure Pulse, and the two creatures inhabit the same role in ecosystems in the distant reaches of the Maelstrom.

Remoras possess segmented, shimmering bodies that ooze through the air like raw meat on glass. Large Pulse sources draw them in, they feed, lay eggs, and move on. The fact that they stay in the Ethereal Plane but their attack can affect the physical world is a rarity, and a nasty shock for those who encounter these spirits.

Astral Remora **CR 8**
Variant young advanced remorhaz (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)
XP 4,800
hp 112

Special Attacks syphon pulse, swallow whole (2d6+11 plus 8d6 fire, AC 15, hp 9)

Special Abilities replace "heat" with "syphon pulse"

Syphon Pulse (Su) An astral remora siphons off the Pulse and life force of anything it touches. Creatures striking an astral remora with natural attacks of unarmed strikes are subject to this

effect but creatures striking with melee weapons are not. Those subject to this effect must make a Will save (DC 23) or lose 1d4 Pulse. The save is Constitution-based.

Void Spirits

Void spirits are defined by lack. Nature abhors a vacuum, but it despises void spirits even more.

Void Spirit **CR 13**
Dread wraith (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)
XP 25,600
hp 184

Assorted Cultists

Each cult will have its own clothing and customs, but they're mechanically identical.

Assorted Cultists **CR 9**
Mother of beasts (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 6,400
hp 78

Arc Buster

A battery of Pulse-generators that shoot focused electricity. These function as the Arc Towers in *Return of the Dragon God: Act II*. These bunkers fire focused electricity that deals 5d8+30 damage as a ranged touch attack out to 200 feet, using the ranged attack roll of whoever is firing the gun.

Hover Platforms

These hover platforms are crafted from reinforced steel. They grant up to 16 Medium-sized passengers a fly speed of 50 feet with perfect maneuverability. They have 150 hp with 15 hardness.

The Desolation Engine

Realm: Maelstrom, The Red Realm.

Long ago, the Great Spirit of Red fled the realm he created, leaving it to the Great Spirit of Hate, who rather liked the color scheme. Since then, the Red Realm has been one of the most contested pieces of real estate in the Maelstrom (see page 50) Ask any god-watcher what's going on in the stinking badlands

that day, and it's going to be some variation on a new spirit being in town, trying to claim the burnt-out shell of the Desolation Engine.

One of the 'lesser' spirits caught up in the struggle is getting dangerously close to ending the deadlock, which can't be a good thing for anyone. What's worse, it has the nightmare-creating Desolation Engine up and running. The only ones who're cheering this news are unsavory sorts who want what it's peddling: nightmares. Not just the kind that slip into a dreamer's mind and come out trailing secrets all over the floor, but the sort that stand twelve feet tall and have razor wire intertwined with their muscle fibers.

No doubt the characters know someone who would employ nightmares like that. This enemy is being supplied with additional forces thanks to the Desolation Engine. Cutting them off at their source is the best option, so it's off to the Red Realm.

Doing Time

The only way to reliably get into the Red Realm is through the oubliette portals used by gods of dubious morality to dispose of their special captives. Mortals who can't be killed for various reasons are thrown into the Red Realm, making it a prison of sorts. It's a rough place for those incarcerated in it, but it beats being turned into a tree, a pillar of salt, or a pile of smoking ash.

The portal drops the characters in a toxic swamp of oily puddles and a scratchy, thick red moss. It was home to a penitentiary building sometime in the past, back when the gods cared about providing such luxury for prisoners, but only the prison's columns and half-walls remain. Rusted shackles trap unwary feet under the muck, and hang from blood bark trees like crusted iron nooses.

Everybody who escapes is soon scouted by the mortal gangs who inhabit the realm. Most of them are of the post-apocalyptic warlord variety, sporting fashions from a boggling spread of worlds. The most influential of these call themselves the Gorgons. They tear across the treacherous wastes in their rusted tanks, causing as much mayhem as the native spirits on most days. They're led by Boss Dio, a hawk-headed son of Horus who blasphemes as well as he fights.

Rusted tanks aren't the only way to survive the

realm. The Free Thought League, which is formed primarily of militant atheists, instead trusts their usefulness to the other gangs. The League has learned to communicate with the realm's native spirits (which they do from behind the walls of their solid stone fort), and they barter information gleaned from the natives for their safety.

On the other side of the coin, the Longshots work at eradicating all signs of the spiritual taint from the realm. They hate the color red after being marooned here for eternity. Hate it, hate it, hate it. All the remaining spirits of red should be destroyed utterly, as far as they're concerned.

These gangs are important because they know the land. The characters will have a substantially more unpleasant time tracking down the Desolation Engine if they don't find themselves some form of aid... for example, someone who has a swamp-runner to get them across the Scarlet Hollows. And don't forget, the closer the characters get, the more of the Desolation Engine's creations they have to deal with.

Desolation Drive

The most immediate path to the Desolation Engine runs right through the Hollows. The last great monsterwork from the Great Spirit of Hate is said to reside at the bottom of this flooded valley.

Rubbery tree trunks stretch above the oily swamp water, giving the impression of rowing into a solid shadow. The feeling of dread and insignificance is so strong here that a DC 28 Will save must be attempted every four hours. Failure means the Demigod takes 8d6 nonlethal damage from the mental duress. If this causes a character to become Incapacitated he instead becomes supernaturally confrontational. No issue is too small to fight about, and friendship is but a momentary shield.

The revolutionary force driving the realm is the Desolation Engine itself! It has been soaking up tempestuous emotions since the day it pumped out its first warty bog goblin, and now it's getting the hang of things. Production and consumption are all it knows – specifically the bloody kind.

The Engine is a solid, angular factory complex surrounded by blocks of uninhabited buildings.

Nightmares dash across their eaves and hunt between the shadows, but they never go in. Those buildings are reserved for something. Or somethings.

The active parts of the factory are all conveyor belts and crushing presses. Through force and opposition, the bad dreams of the realm are minted, drawing upon such ingredients as insanity ore and sulfurous bile. Anyone who tries to shut down the Engine is likely to receive a hopper of corrosive shadows for his trouble, or at least a spinning web of hooked chains.

After razing the factory and ending the Desolation Engine's existence, getting home is the ready matter of waiting until the Engine's next customer arrives. Instead of receiving a new crop of made-to-order monsters, they'll receive the characters. Payback has its moments.

Nightmare Ogre

Does exactly what you imagine it'd do after midnight. Nightmarish spirits of ogres roam the Red Realm in search of easy victims to crush into a red paste.

Nightmare Ogre **CR 9**
Nightmare oni, ogre mage (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 4*)
XP 6,400
hp 92

Nightmare Breath-Stealer

A simple pile of rags rests in the corner, or perhaps a scum of unidentifiable flotsam floats across the surface of a still pool. Ignore it at your own peril; there are breath-stealers about. They're made of the discarded threads from the Loom of Fate, or perhaps the cloaks of murderers mixed with the final breaths of a miser. No matter what the story, they are one of the unnatural predators designed by the Desolation Engine. Their only purpose is to cause conflict and suffering, which they do without complaint.

Nightmare Breath-Stealer **CR 8**
Advanced nightmare belker (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 4*)
XP 4,800
hp 84

Spirit Of Conflict

Upon first glance, spirits of conflict are often mistaken for macabre decorations. Each one resembles a fleshy sack the size of a human head, marred by a scowling face. A sharp, hooked nose disguises a lipless opening lined with thousands of softly waving cilia.

As the spirit's power takes effect, the spirit balloons larger and tighter. If the feeding is good, its scowl will turn into a cheerful O-shape and cheerful gurgle will trickle through the air.

Spirit Of Conflict **CR 11**

Upon first glance, you mistaken this creature for macabre decorations. Resembling a fleshy sack the size of a human head, marred by a scowling face, a sharp, hooked nose disguises the lipless opening lined with thousands of softly waving cilia.

XP 12,800
CE Small undead (incorporeal)
Init +5; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +5

DEFENSE

AC 26, touch 26, flat-footed 21 (+10 deflection, +5 Dex, +1 size)
hp 217 (15d8+150)
Fort +15, Ref +10, Will +14
Defensive Abilities incorporeal; **Immune** undead traits

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft., fly 50 ft. (perfect)
Melee incorporeal touch +16 (avarice)
Spell-Like Abilities (CL 15th; concentration +25)
At will—*confusion* (DC 26)
3/day—*moonstruck* (DC 26)
1/day—*insanity* (DC 28)

TACTICS

Before Combat Spirits are mindless; they exhibit no prior planning.

During Combat The spirits inflict *insanity* on the first target within range, then use *moonstruck* on others until they run out of uses and then use their touch attacks to disrupt enemies, feeding off the negative emotions they inspire.

Morale Being mindless, spirits of conflict never withdraw.



STATISTICS

Str —, **Dex** 20, **Con** —, **Int** —, **Wis** 20, **Cha** 30
Base Atk +11; **CMB** +15; **CMD** 35

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Avarice (Su) Whenever a spirit of conflict touches a living creature, that creature must attempt a Will save (DC 27) or become violently avaricious of a treasure kept by the nearest living creature (imagined or otherwise). If the touched creature actually does desire the treasures of a nearby living creature, they suffer a –4 penalty on the save and move to attack that being using the most direct route possible. This effect only lasts 1 round.

Prison Ganger

A hodgepodge of survivors, Chosen Ones, and those unlucky enough to anger the gods. After a couple of years in the Red Realm, they all start to blur together. Unique goods get traded for essentials or buried beneath churning muck, and the true heroes fall battling the nightmare creatures.

Prison Ganger**CR 11**

Bandit lord (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game GameMastery Guide*)

XP 12,800**hp 74****Boss Dio**

After crashing Anubis' millennial party with his favorite band of rowdies, not even his father's influence could save Dio. The son of Horus was banished to the Red Realm, where he's been having the time of his life. Never before has he been able to engage in the carnage that was his birthright, playing all the war games he wants with the cast-offs from countless realms. Dio's a bully and a megalomaniac, playing up his god's blood far more than it actually affects him. If the characters want to go anywhere without bowing and scraping to The Man, they'll have to deal with him at some point.

Dio will get bored of the Red Realm some day, at which point his true situation will dawn upon him. At that point, the realm's power structure is due for a definite upheaval.

Boss Dio**CR 17**

This golden-skinned man has a malicious glint in his eyes as he readies a wicked, curved blade, stabs it into the ground, readies a sleek, bone-white bow with an arrow, and smiles.

XP 102,400

Aasimar barbarian 7/oracle 9 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Player's Guide*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Race Guide*)

CN Medium outsider (native)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; **Perception** +26

DEFENSE**AC** 21, touch 12, flat-footed 19 (+9 armor, +2 Dex)
hp 201 (9d8+7d12+112)**Fort** +14, **Ref** +7, **Will** +9; +2 resistance vs. confusion, insanity, polymorph, [lawful] effects**Defensive Abilities** improved uncanny dodge, trap sense +2; **DR** 1/—; **Immune** disease, sickened; **Resist** acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5

OFFENSE**Speed** 60 ft.**Melee** +3 igniting mighty cleaving cold iron falchion +23/+18/+13 (2d4+13/15–20 plus 1d6 fire)**Ranged** +2 seeking composite longbow +17/+12/+7 (1d8+7/x3)**Special Attack** rage (22 rounds/day), rage powers (chaos totem, lesser chaos totem, moment of clarity)**Spell-Like Abilities** (CL 16th; concentration +22)

1/day—daylight

Oracle Spells Known (CL 9th; concentration +15)

4th (5/day)—chaos hammer (DC 20), divine power, inflict critical wounds (DC 20), versatile weapon (DC 20)

3rd (7/day)—blindness/deafness (DC 19), cure serious wounds, inflict serious wounds (DC 19), keen edge, meld into stone,

2nd (8/day)—grace, heat metal (DC 18), hold person (DC 18), inflict moderate wounds (DC 18), returning weapon, sentry skull

1st (8/day)—bane (DC 17), command (DC 17), divine favor, inflict light wounds (DC 17), lead blades, shield of faith, stone shield

0 (at will)—bleed (DC 16), create water, detect magic, detect poison, light, mending, purify food and water (DC 16), read magic



TACTICS

Before Combat Dio is rarely caught unaware. He regularly uses *sentry skull* to keep his “stomping grounds” under observation. Once he notices someone coming that might be a bother, he begins casting *shield of faith*, *lead blades*, and *keen edge* (on his bow) before putting himself in a prominent position from which to fire upon attackers.

During Combat He supplements his personal might with *divine power* and rages once the melee begins (+4 Str, +6 Con). He then uses moment of clarity only to cast a spell if that spell would tip the scales dramatically in some way.

Morale Dio is a bully, but not an idiot. If he feels he can negotiate his way out, he'll make an honest attempt. Whether or not he keeps his word later is another matter. He'll try surrendering when reduced to around 50 hp.

STATISTICS

Str 24, Dex 14, Con 22, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 22

Base Atk +13; CMB +20; CMD 32

Feats Antagonize, Combat Reflexes, Critical Focus, Devastating Strike, Fearsome Presence, Improved Critical (falchion), Improved Initiative, Improved Vital Strike, Intimidating Prowess, Power Attack, Raging Vitality, Titanic Blow, Toughness, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +6 (+18 to jump), Bluff +2, Climb +13, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +32, Perception +26, Ride +8, Spellcraft +19, Survival +8; **Racial Modifiers** +2 Diplomacy, +2 Perception

Languages Celestial, Common

SQ fast movement, oracle's curse (wasting), revelations (armor mastery, dance of the blades, rusting grasp)

Combat Gear crown of swords; **Other Gear** +3 *agile breastplate*, +2 *seeking composite longbow* (+5 Str), +3 *igniting mighty cleaving cold iron falchion*, *belt of physical might* +6 (Str, Con), *boots of striding and springing*, *eyes of the eagle*, *headband of alluring charisma* +4

The Desolation Engine Core

The factory from your nightmares, where you're always running but never able to get away. It ends not in a bang or a whimper, but leisurely series of crunches followed by a drawn-out slurp. The very core of the engine is a sentient machine of pure malice, delighting in the hopelessness it generates.

The Desolation Engine Core

CR 16

The factory from your nightmares where you're always running but never able to get away. The core is a malevolent mind bent on bringing every last bump in the night into a screaming, living, monstrosity.

XP 76,800

CE Gargantuan construct

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +17

Aura fear (30 ft., DC 31)

DEFENSE

AC 34, touch 9, flat-footed 31 (+3 Dex, +25 natural, -4 size)

hp 203 (22d10+82)

Fort +7, **Ref** +5, **Will** +6

Immune construct traits, cold, fire

OFFENSE

Speed 0 ft.

Melee slam +30 (3d8+18)

Space 20 ft.; **Reach** 20 ft. (50 ft. with slam)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 22nd; concentration +32)

At will—*summon* (nightmare creatures from this chapter only)

TACTICS

Before Combat The mindless engine core doesn't prepare. It does its job - fashioning horrors.

During Combat It uses Combat Reflexes to attack anyone that closes with it, then it uses its reach with Great Cleave to hit everyone attacking it every round. If it can't reach a creature within the area, it summons nightmare creatures to neutralize those targets.

Morale Since the core can't move, it can't flee.

STATISTICS

Str 34, Dex 16, Con —, Int 20, Wis 8, Cha 30

Base Atk +22; **CMB** +38 (+42 drag and sunder); **CMD** 51 (43 vs. drag and sunder, can't be tripped)

Feats Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Furious Focus, Great Cleave, Greater Drag, Greater Sunder, Improved Drag, Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Toughness

Skills Craft (nightmares) +22, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (arcana) +20, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +20, Knowledge (engineering) +20, Knowledge (geography) +20, Knowledge (nature) +20, Knowledge (planes) +20, Knowledge (religion) +20, Spellcraft +20

Scarlet Sharks

Something swims in the oily waters of the Scarlet Hollows.

Scarlet Sharks

CR 9

Fiendish advanced aboleth (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 6,400

hp 100

Mechanoverminous Parasite

Each of these metallic beetles the size of an iron filing was crafted to polish a specific aspect of the Desolation Engine. As components fell into disuse or were stolen by greedy spirits, many of the parasites found themselves without purpose. Gathering in formless swarms, they now travel across the Red Realm in search of objects to buff, polish, and maintain.

The maintenance protocols of the mechanoverminous parasites are infused with such dark energy that any object “upgraded” by it that isn’t part of the Desolation Engine will instead begin to warp and decay.

Mechanoverminous Parasite

CR 8

Advanced rot grub swarm (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*)

XP 4,800

hp 105

The Heat Is On

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Fire.

In the realm of Relic, King Freder of Caladon has been struck with a terrible madness. When he is awake, he’s listless and unresponsive; at night he screams blasphemous prophecies about the death of the gods and the End Times. Normally the gods wouldn’t be concerned with the afflictions of a mortal, even a hero of such an important realm as Relic. On the plus side, Freder has the benefit of being owed a favor from an especially zealous Archangel. On the minus side, the king’s personal squad of Blade Evangelist inquisitors are over-stepping the bounds of religious tolerance, taking advantage of his malaise to run a-mock while he’s stricken and unable to rein them in.

The Archangel in question tasks the characters with being the mad king’s guide on a transformative journey to the Realm of Fire. Only the Crucible of the Great Spirit of Fire will be able to burn the impurities of the Dark One from the king’s mind. Getting there’s not going to be easy though.

Kingnapped

The court of King Freder is currently stocked with a rogue’s gallery of heretics and secret servants of the Dark One. They’ve used the king’s inquisition as cover for some pretty twisted excesses, and they’re not looking forward to letting their figurehead escape. Life in the court is muted, consisting of hushed whispers and back room conversations about the future of the Caladon Kingdom.

The king’s personal physician is secretly a filth-eater demon. Every night it mixes two drops of its boiling blood with the king’s medicine to ensure that the king’s illness remains spiritual as well as mental. He never lets the king out of his sight, going so far as to cling to the ceiling above the sleeping man’s bed.

Official protocol holds that King Freder is not to leave the palace under any circumstances. It’s a familiar, safe location. Those who speak with the voice of the Goddess Trinity may be able to get him out of the castle legitimately, but it’s only a matter of hours until the journey is repainted as a kidnapping attempt. The most depraved of the king’s inquisitors know that they won’t be able to get away with their heinous excesses if his sanity is restored (although lesser excesses would still be A-OK.)

As the characters make their escape, they’ll be harried by corrupted Blade Evangelists, duped knights, and disguised filth-eaters. The Realm of Fire isn’t an easy place to get to these days, either. The great spirit who made it has sealed it off from the rest of the Maelstrom while dealing with some great, unspoken issue. The only way in requires a huge, blazing source of heat – a forest fire, or a volcano. The rest of the process is relatively simple: make an offering of 2 Pulse and Hero Points then jump in. If it works, the characters appear in the Maelstrom city of Pyre. If not... but the Archangel is fairly certain her information is correct and it’ll work. It should do. It seems feasible at least. Right?

More or less crispy, the characters and Freder will arrive in Pyre. Once freed from the demonic aspect of his disease, King Freder shows a turn toward the better. He's still undeniably mad, but moments of surprising clarity will shine through from time to time. His prophecies about the End Times will become more coherent, providing names and places – albeit cloaked in metaphor.

Unfortunately for the characters, they've come into Pyre at a terrible time for prophets. The city's inhabitants are gearing up for war with the realm's other dominant civilization, the efreet (and that's why the great spirit sealed off the realm, to keep his civil war quiet). The king's raving resonates strongly with them. As the characters get their bearing in the new realm, they will have to fend off several efreet attempts to steal the king, as well as ploys to intensify his madness.

Crossing The Realm Of Fire

The trail to the Great Spirit of Fire is daunting, even without a war in the works. Traveling from Pyre to his divine mountain home crosses burning deserts of black sand, volcanic ridges, and lava-seas. These can be individual challenges or window dressing, as you desire.

Upon reaching the great spirit, the characters learn that he won't share the Crucible unless they first do him a favor. Three thousand years ago, the Great Spirit of Introspection posed a philosophical quandary. So far, it has stumped the Great Spirit of Fire. This is because the riddle ("Is the fundamental nature of fire to create or destroy?") does not have an answer. The Great Spirit of Thought posed it as a thought exercise, meant to guide the Great Spirit of Fire toward a more complete understanding of its own being.

If nobody can aid the Great Spirit of Fire, taking control of the Crucible by force is always an option. The characters don't need to keep Freder near it for long: it takes five rounds to cleans him of his insanity. Every round, the coruscating flames deal 3d6 fire damage. At the end of the process, the insanity is wiped away as if it never existed. If the characters took the combat route, that's a pretty good cue to start running away, devising some cunning escape

plan as they go. They'll have succeeded, but as far as the Great Spirit of Fire is concerned they'll have burned their bridges, so to speak.

King Freder of Caladon and his Court

King Freder is hardly a just king, but he is a great one, and a stellar politician. If anyone can maintain order in Caladon's coming dark days, he will be the one to do it. When in the grip of his cursed madness, he alternates between self-destructive despair, wild rages, and bouts of blasphemous prophecy. His doctors are unable to discover any triggers for those conditions, but that may say more about them than his madness.

Once freed from the shackles of his curse, King Freder is grateful, but wary. After saving him, the great warriors no doubt want a grand boon of him? Why, that could ruin his kingdom! Politely, but firmly he will try to head off any requests with a gift of his own choosing and the request to go save somebody else for a while.

King Freder Of Caladon **CR 8**
King (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 4,800
hp 50

Blade Evangelist Heretic **CR 9**
Dancing dervish (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 6,400
hp 68

Caladonian Knight **CR 9**
Griffon rider (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)
XP 6,400
hp 94

Filth-Eater Demon

In the hierarchy of demons, those on the lowest rungs aren't always the least powerful. The filth-eaters are a prime example; although they live among the scraps and refuse of the Dark One's minions, they do so out of choice. The juiciest morsels always sink to the bottom: betrayed hope, forgotten sacrifice, well-

intentioned blasphemy... the very poisons that ruin men's souls nurse the filth-eaters like a vigorous meat-broth. They revel in the garbage and grow robust.

When filth-eaters are out in the field, they take the form of their poisoned victims. This allows them to infiltrate key targets and tease out the specific morsels they so desire.

Filth-Eater Demon

CR 8

Advanced variant shadow demon (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 4,800

hp 73

Defensive Abilities Add "Filth-Blood"

Filth-Blood (Su) A Filth-Eater demon's blood is a special chemical that can become any poison it chooses. Anything that deals damage to the filth-eater demon must succeed on a Reflex save (DC 19) or become affected by any contact-type poison its blood is currently mimicking. In addition, the DC of poisons its blood mimics increases by 4.

Pyre Militia

Pyre Militia

CR 8

This burnished-skinned man, armed with a flaming spear with a flaming club strapped to his belt, is an intimidating sight indeed.

XP 4,800

Male ifrit fighter 9 (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Advanced Race Guide*)

LN Medium outsider (native)

Init +7; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +6

DEFENSE

AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 16 (+6 armor, +3 Dex, +1 dodge)

hp 81 (9d10+27)

Fort +7, **Ref** +6, **Will** +3; +2 vs. fear; +4 vs. fire attacks and fire- or light-descriptor spells

Resist fire 5



OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.

Melee mwk heavy mace +14/+9 (1d8+4) or mwk spear +15/+10 (1d8+6/19–20/x3)

Special Attack weapon trainings (spears +2, hammers +1)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 9th; concentration +9)

1/day—*enlarge person*

TACTICS

Before Combat Pyre militia regard the enemy before attempting to surround them to make use of Power Attack without reservation.

During Combat Every round they are able to do so, they use Scorching Weapons. Otherwise, they just attack as much as possible.

Morale Pyre militia flee when they realize the enemy outclasses them.

STATISTICS

Str 17, **Dex** 16, **Con** 13, **Int** 10, **Wis** 10, **Cha** 10

Base Atk +9; **CMB** +12; **CMD** 26

Feats Death or Glory, Dodge, Improved Critical (spear), Improved Initiative, Inner Flame, Lunge, Mobility, Power Attack, Scorching Weapons, Toughness

Skills Climb +11, Intimidate +9, Perception +6

Languages Common, Ignan

SQ Common, Ignan

Gear mwk breastplate, mwk heavy mace, mwk spear

Efreets

Efreets are creatures of smokeless fire, valuing pain, nobility, and conquest. When they speak, their booming voices sound as though they could be heard for miles. The eternal flames of their home realm, the Realm of Fire, have hardened their hearts, and trail behind every gesture that these hard-faced humanoids make. Each stands taller than a man and is covered with scars from a lifetime of hard-won campaigns. Efreets often hire themselves out as elite mercenaries, but their services come at a price steeper than most. If their employer can't pay, refuses, or simply looks at the wrong efreet in the wrong way, he may find his realm a barren plain of ash and cinders.

Efreets arm themselves with a wide variety of curved, obsidian weaponry – although they hardly need it to win most fights.

Efreets**CR 8**

Genie, efreeti (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 4,800

hp 95

The Great Spirit Of Fire

Probably unkillable. The PCs' goal should be to last ten rounds against it, its bodyguards, any flame spirits it chooses to summon, and all other hordes you choose. More appropriately, the characters should be trying to help the great spirit with his riddle and making a new ally, but it's up to them of course.

The Great Spirit Of Fire**CR 14**

Advanced (x2) giant variant elder fire elemental (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 19,200

hp 248

SQ Immortality

Immortality (Su) Whenever the Great Spirit of Fire is reduced to 0 hp, it fizzles for a year. During that time, all the realms are darker and colder as fire burns less fiercely.

The Apollonian Gambit

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Mount Olympus.

Reports abound throughout the Maelstrom that the Olympian gods continue to have undue influence on the lives of mortals, despite their formal hands-off policy. The Egyptian gods cite modern-day secret societies, shady mystery cults, and even the prevalence of Olympian gods in corporate branding. Each repetition is a sigil or invocation of the gods, and an eyehole into the world they were supposed to leave behind.

If confronted, the gods on Mount Olympus consider the intrusions so minor that it annoys them to even talk about it. Some will present it as an issue of free will; it's hardly their fault if mortals decide to worship them. If they want to act as divine conduits, that's their problem. Over all, the Olympians reckon it's a lot of fuss about nothing.

The truth of the matter is that free will isn't the only factor at work. Olympus' priesthood of Apollo is running its propaganda engine at full tilt behind the scenes in accordance with a prophecy delivered by a dire oracle.

Phoenix And The Deep Blue Sea

In the early days of Olympus, high priests learned a dark secret. According to their interpretation of a particularly thorny prophecy, there is enough ambient Pulse in the universe to allow a select group to survive anything – even the End Times. Sucking up all of this power will make the End Times come so much sooner for everybody else. It's inevitable, the priests reason, so they may as well guide their patron into a new age. They formed a secret pact known as the Phoenix Plan dedicated to collecting the universe's ambient Pulse and channeling it toward the Greek gods.

None of the gods know about this plan, and the priesthood doesn't plan on sharing until after it's too late. But just because the gods don't know about something doesn't mean that the information is safe from the characters! They could stumble across an increasingly unlikely string of monuments to Papa Zeus across the universe. Alternatively, if the campaign has already had a strong focus on aiding the Greek gods, the Plan's priests could approach the characters directly with an offer of membership.

Whatever happens, if the Phoenix Plan isn't stopped, the universe will end a lot sooner than everyone would like.

The movers and shakers behind the universe's largest PR campaign rarely leave the realm of Olympus. Any attempt to undermine their organization will eventually take the characters there. The bulk of this segment should be spent finding out which members of the priesthood are involved and wresting the location of Charybdis from them. Out of the 400 priests and temple staff, 100 of them know something about the conspiracy. A quarter of those are full-fledged members of the Plan.

Lazy heroes may wonder why they can't just present their suspicions to someone higher up on the totem pole. It's Apollo's priesthood, shouldn't he be cleaning it? The short answer is that it would be a matter of great embarrassment for everyone involved. Not only would the Olympian gods appear weak to outsiders, Apollo would be blamed for not keeping a better eye on his worshippers. That ill will would

transfer to the characters. If they solved the problem on the down-low, they'd be assured of some staunch allies later on.

If the characters are lax in their infiltration, they'll attract the attention of one of Apollo's chosen who has decided to back the conspiracy. Golden-Haired Orpheus is more a poet than a warrior, but his schemes are many. He will play to the characters' vanities before luring them on a side-quest against a great monster. At the key moment, he will betray them to their deaths.

All of the ambient Pulse drained by the Phoenix Plan's sigils needs to be processed before being packaged out to the gods. This happens at the centre of the ur-sigil, a four-dimensional construct that is only wholly comprehensible from the farthest heights of the Maelstrom. Because of its similarities to a coursing whirlpool of sparkling life energy, the central sigil is known as Charybdis, the devouring mouth.

If the Plan members can't be convinced to halt their scheme peaceably, the only way to stop their Pulse-siphon is to scatter Charybdis to the corners of the Maelstrom. Any ambient Pulse will then disperse back into the Continuum as soon as it's gathered. There's a problem with that, though. Charybdis has attained rudimentary sentience, and will fight to stay in operation. Charybdis is aided by a squad of Scyllians, elite soldiers trained in Maelstrom combat.

Destroying Charybdis will weaken the Olympian pantheon considerably, but allow the universe to exist for as long as is natural before the End Times make their inevitable return – at least if the Apollonian oracle can be believed. Maybe it's time to pay her a visit and see what else she knows...

Charybdis

Charybdis is a four-dimensional sigil that serves as the linchpin to the Phoenix Plan scheme. It sucks Pulse from around the universe at a constant rate, causing it to throb and flash with light as it careens around the Maelstrom, gathering it and concentrating it in the hands of the Phoenix Plan priesthood, who secretly release it to the Olympian gods, making them stronger. Think of Charybdis as a huge whirlpool among billowing clouds of Pulse.

Charybdis

CR 11

Pulse-touched greater lightning elemental (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*)

XP 12,800

N Huge outsider (air, elemental, extraplanar)

Init +14; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +16

DEFENSE

AC 23, touch 19, flat-footed 12 (+10 Dex, +1 dodge, +4 natural, -2 size)

hp 123 (13d10+52)

Fort +14, **Ref** +20, **Will** +8

DR 10/—; **Immune** electricity, elemental traits

OFFENSE

Speed fly 100 ft. (perfect)

Melee 2 slams +21 (2d8+7/19–20 plus 2d6 electricity)

Space 15 ft.; **Reach** 15 ft.

Special Attacks metal mastery, spark leap

STATISTICS

Str 24, **Dex** 31, **Con** 18, **Int** 8, **Wis** 11, **Cha** 11

Base Atk +13; **CMB** +22; **CMD** 42

Feats Blind-Fight, Critical Focus, Dodge, Exemplar (Dexterity), Flyby Attack, Improved Critical (slam), Improved Exemplar (Dexterity), Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack, Staggering Critical, Weapon Finesse

Skills Acrobatics +26, Escape Artist +26, Fly +14, Intimidate +16, Knowledge (planes) +15, Perception +16

Language Auran

SQ demigod-like, hero points (5), pulse pool (13)

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Metal Mastery (Ex) A lightning elemental gains a +3 bonus on attack rolls if its opponent is wearing metal armor, is wielding a metal weapon, or is made of metal (such as an iron golem).

Spark Leap (Ex) A lightning elemental gains a +10 bonus on bull rush, disarm, overrun, and trip attacks when it charges a creature against whom its metal mastery ability applies.

Scyllian

Scyllians are snake-bodied warriors from a realm that worships the Greek gods. Their culture is one of rigid castes, where the only way to advance

is through highly ritualized combat. At some point, their finest warriors were blessed by Apollo and brought to the Maelstrom to act as temple guards on Mount Olympus. More recently, the Phoenix Plan members have given the Scyllians the solemn duty of protecting Charybdis, a duty they will carry out to the last snake-man.

Scyllians (5)

CR 6

Variant serpentfolk hunter (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Monster Codex*)

XP 2,400

AC 25, touch 13, flat-footed 22 (+5 armor, +3 Dex, +7 natural)

hp 47

Speed 20 ft.

Altered Skills Climb +6, Escape Artist +10, Stealth +8, Swim +6

Additional Gear scale mail

Altered Gear These hunters carry only 45 gp.

Golden-Haired Orpheus

The deeds of Golden-Haired Orpheus are the subject of legend across a hundred realms. He is a poet, a warrior, a doctor, and the bringer of light to civilization. He's also a charmer, a rake, and a sneak. Beware of Golden-Haired Orpheus, for he has already written the song of your doom. If you ask nicely, he'll even sing it to you with a laugh.

Golden-Haired Orpheus

CR 11

Advanced bard bralani azata (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Monster Codex*)

XP 12,800

CG Medium outsider (azata, chaotic, extraplanar, good, shapechanger)

Init +8; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +18

DEFENSE

AC 25, touch 19, flat-footed 21 (+5 deflection, +4 Dex, +6 natural)

hp 110 (11d10+55)

Fort +11, **Ref** +11, **Will** +7

DR 10/cold iron or evil; **Immune** electricity, petrification; **Resist** cold 10, fire 10; **SR** 22

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 100 ft. (perfect)

Melee +1 scimitar +17/+12/+7 (1d6+8/18–20) or slam +16 (1d6+7)

Ranged +1 composite longbow +16/+11/+6 (1d8+6/×3)

Special Attacks bardic performance 19 rounds/day (countersong, dirge of doom, distraction, fascinate, inspire competence +4, inspire courage +3, inspire greatness, suggestion), whirlwind blast

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 11th)

At will—*blur*, *charm person* (DC 15), *gust of wind* (DC 16), *mirror image*, *wind wall*

2/day—*lightning bolt* (DC 17), *cure serious wounds*

Bard Spells Known (CL 11th; concentration +15)

3rd (2/day)—*glibness*

2nd (2/day)—*oppressive boredom*^{UM} (DC 16), *path of glory*^{ACG}

1st (2/day)—*beguiling gift*^{APG} (DC 15), *expeditious retreat*

STATISTICS

Str 20, **Dex** 18, **Con** 20, **Int** 13, **Wis** 14, **Cha** 19

Base Atk +11; **CMB** +16; **CMD** 30

Feats Blind-Fight, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Skill Focus (Bluff), Skill Focus (Perception), Skill Focus (Perform [oratory])

Skills Bluff +23, Fly +25, Handle Animal +17, Perception +18, Perform (oratory) +14, Ride +17, Sense Motive +15, Stealth +17

Languages Celestial, Draconic, Infernal; truespeech

SQ wind form

SPECIAL ABILITIES

Whirlwind Blast (Su) When in wind form, a bralani can attack with a scouring blast of wind, dealing 3d6 points of damage in a 20-foot line (Reflex DC 19 half). The save DC is Constitution-based.

Wind Form (Su) A bralani can shift between its humanoid body and a body made of wind and mist as a standard action. In humanoid form, it can't fly or use its whirlwind blast. In wind form, it functions as if under the effects of a wind walk spell. It can make slam attacks and use spell-like abilities in either form. A bralani remains in one form until it chooses to assume its other form. A change in form can't be dispelled, nor does the bralani revert to any particular form when killed (both shapes are its true form). A true seeing spell reveals both forms simultaneously.

Gear *apple of eternal sleep*^{UE}, +1 scimitar, +1 composite longbow (+5 Str), *ring of protection* +5



Priest Of Apollo

They're good guys, mostly. Even the members of the Phoenix Plan just want to serve their gods as best they can.

Priests Of Apollo (5)

CR 6

Variant heretic (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 2,400

hp 36

Fort +3, Ref +2, Will +11

Melee +1 flaming dagger +7 (1d4+3/19–20 plus 1d6 fire)

Altered Gear replace mwk spear with +1 flaming dagger; these heretics have no cloaks of resistance or extra gold.

Norse Elm's Disease

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Yggdrasil.

Yggdrasil, the world tree, is sickening and dying. Its once-sprawling boughs are twisting back on each other and giving off waves of tangible rot. Every village that is struck by a portion of the diseased world tree soon falls prey to a wasting disease. Those who die come back as shambling beasts, equal parts dead flesh, rotting vegetation, and pestilence. Heimdall, guardian of the Norse gods, sees this as a sign of the End Times. Who is mighty enough to end the blight without being brought low by its taint?

This Savage Tale works best if the characters have already proved their valor in Yggdrasil. It's a realm of burly braggarts who will only allow the most worthy bodies to strive for further glory. If the characters have solved the conflict between Bors the Daring and Nils Squaretooth (see page 138), that would be a perfect lead-in. Having already proven themselves without fear, no one would deny the characters their right to walk the boughs of the world tree.

Friends In Low Places

The Norse gods immediately suspect their long-buried foes have poisoned Yggdrasil's roots. Several malicious spirits of great power are trapped down there, they say, entangled in a living prison. As for the gods, within their own ranks it's Loki, god of trickery, who is the most likely culprit.

Yggdrasil's roots are no longer the home of the great god-spirits Odin imprisoned ages ago. Long escaped, they've left the roots to be haunted by hungry spirits of the unworthy dead – those who nearly made it into Valhalla but in the end fell short. Most of them are peaceful, if depressing, but those who've been tainted by the mystery disease are willing to strike en masse to end their agony.

No one in the roots knows what's going on with the sickness, but they know about all sorts of disturbing rumors. Damage to Yggdrasil's extremities has forced roaming tribes of giants to cross into zones populated by peaceful spirits, for instance. The characters may decide that it needs their attention, or choose to continue investigating the disease.

Interviewing Loki isn't much more useful. He won't admit poisoning the world tree, but that proves nothing. In truth, he has little to gain by destruction of Odin's realm. He'd have to set up his own realm, and that's too much like hard work (unless you fancy the idea of Loki setting up a hidden realm where all the morally dubious gods of all the pantheons meet, in which case you should check out our *Set Rising* book for a similar idea made real).

Close investigation of a diseased segment of Yggdrasil is a good chance for science-skilled characters to show their worth. Naturally, the best samples are found smack in the middle of formerly thriving settlements that are now home to hordes of shambling plague Vikings.

Analysis of the rot reveals that the cause is biological in nature: a super-virus that sucks the Pulse out of enhanced plant life and transmits it elsewhere. The rot and plague Vikings are a side effect of the tree's weakened state; as the world tree struggles to stay alive, it sucks up the next closest source of Pulse: its inhabitants.

There are myriad ways of halting the virus, but it always returns unless stopped at its source. The virus seems to proliferate when it senses a particular psychic signal, at which point it drains Pulse from its surroundings and channels it back along the path of the signal. Following the signal will lead the characters through several dangerous areas of the Maelstrom before they finally arrive on the 94th level of the Realm of the Pure Mages.



The Greater Good

Each of the realms of the Pure Mages is built around a central riddle or scientific quandary. The guiding quandary of the 94th level is whether true altruism can exist in sentient life. One cabal of initiates seeking to become full-fledged Pure Mages has pursued the question with such vigor that they've descended into villainy in the name of science.

The Greater Good, as these virologists have styled themselves, argue that the fatal flaw with altruism is that ego gets in the way. Only by eliminating ego and self-interest can pure altruism be isolated and studied. The first step to eliminating ego is to eliminate differences: Q.E.D., all beings must be made level before the theory can be adequately tested.

In most respects, the 94th level resembles a sprawling university campus. Robed students discuss esoteric theories underneath the watchful gaze of somber statues. The primary oddity is that everyone wears a complex breathing apparatus; the region is so inundated with viral experiments that travelling unfiltered is a death sentence – or worse.

Infecting the world tree and sucking the Pulse from everything in Odin's realm guarantees that all beings will eventually become equally weak. At that point The Greater Good will observe to see whether the Norse gods are willing to sacrifice themselves to save the other residents of the realm.

It's time for the characters to teach a little lesson in ethics to these Pure Mage wannabes.

Plague Vikings

There is nothing left of these brave warriors' spirits. They have been absorbed into the world tree as fertilizer, leaving the diseased husks to shamble from conflict to bloody conflict.

Plague Vikings **CR 12**

Skeletal champion giant slayer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 19,200

hp 87

Underworld Spirits

Underworld spirits come in two varieties for the purpose of this Tale: the wry, gloomy observers, and the infected. The infected will attack with the barest provocation, while the former observe. They've seen it all, or at least they like to think so.

Wry, Gloomy, Observing Underworld Spirits **CR 5**

Wraith (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 1,600

hp 47

The Infected Underworld Spirits **CR 13**

Dread wraith (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 25,600

hp 184

Giants

The giants of Odin's realm are similar to ogres, but much larger. The ones detailed here are the tiny ones – named giants in the Norse realm can be as tall as mountains, but fortunately they're all sleeping.

Fire Giants **CR 10**

Fire giant (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 9,600

hp 142

Frost Giants **CR 9**

Frost giant (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)

XP 6,400

hp 133

Greater Good Security Team

The 94th level of the Realm of the Pure Mages takes its campus security seriously. Each member of the force is a campus alum as well as a crack-shot with raw autoimprobability. Some are spirits of science, others mortals who've entered the realm by travelling across the Veil to pursue their scientific study in the ultimate lab.

Greater Good Security Team **CR 13**

Mage sniper (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 25,600

hp 69

Greater Good Masterminds

The masterminds of The Greater Good have reacted poorly to Yggdrasil's energy as it gets channeled back through the Maelstrom to their level of the Realm of the Pure Mages. Their mortal forms have been shredded by its vast power, replacing flesh with vegetable matter seemingly at random. Many have installed cybernetics to regulate the transformation, making each one a patchwork of flesh, glittering metal, and rough, bark-like scales. Despite this setback, they all believe that increasing the siphoning process will provide the proper data and justify the plan.

Greater Good Masterminds **CR 14**
Cruel conjurer (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*)
XP 38,400
hp 125

Thought Is The Mindkiller

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of The Pure Mages.

Here's another reason for the characters to enter the Realm of the Pure Mages, under very different circumstances than in the previous *Savage Tale* though. A Pure Mage mimetic killer is on the loose! The Delilah Protocol (or DL-475P) is a sentient thought-form that infects people's minds, turning them into unwitting agents of its will. Over time, the symptoms become physical, causing new nodes to grow in the targets' brain. The consumed identities are prone to hyper-violent mania, refusal to compromise, and slavish loyalty to the products and technologies of the 34th layer's Yoyodyne Research Corp.

The characters first hear about the problem through a private memo delivered by a grim, innocuous-looking man in a double-breasted gray



suit. This Mr. Johnson is a Pure Mage of some standing, and refuses to change his wardrobe based upon the “backwater customs” of whatever realm he’s visiting. According to an agreement between the old gods and the Pure Mages, if ever a time arrived when the Pure Mages invented something they could not control, it would become the job of a team of duly appointed divine trouble-shooters to intervene. The characters are demigods at this stage of their epic career, and it just became their job to deal with DL-475P.

Don’t Think About It

Mr. Johnson has evidence showing that several pilgrims to the 34th layer of the Realm of the Pure Mages have been infected with the Delilah Protocol. Six of them are about to solve the riddle of the layer and proceed to the next stage of the cosmic puzzle-cube. If this happens, it will be a catastrophe. The 35th layer is a crossroads sub-realm where visitors from across the Maelstrom meet to engage in high-stakes trade. If the Delilah Protocol gets there, 73.152% of Maelstrom residents will be infected in the next five years.

DL-475P wasn’t insane, just more effective than anyone could have guessed. Much like the splinter of a song that gets lodged in the minds of everyone who hears it, conventional protection was useless. Even worse, consciously not thinking about it only hastened its eventual victory. In an effort to protect the characters from the same fate, he refuses to tell them anything more. It’s the sort of Maelstrom logic that the characters will get a lot during their time as heroes and demigods.

The 34th layer of the Realm of the Pure Mages is known as Technotopia to its residents. Its civilization is centered in a region much like the Sol starsystem where Earth is situated. The largest of the planets in the 34th layer is owned and operated by the Yoyodyne Research Corp., a privately funded think-tank that exists to train residents in the esoteric math necessary to solve the scientific conundrum that defines the realm. Along the way, Yoyodyne branched out into space travel and consumer goods, making it the de facto governing body of the 34th layer sub-realm.

Any investigation into the Delilah Protocol will eventually take the characters to Yoyodyne’s central offices in the Tower of Progress. Dark-suited men

and women with tight, anachronistic hair keep the building humming 28 hours a day, 374 days a year. The data on their pocket computers and the insight in their heads are equal parts enlightenment and rational schemata. Whatever problems are occurring in the city below, the corporate suits are cool, collected, and above all, professional.

Keep up the ruse for as long as you can, but eventually someone should figure out that all of the researchers are infected. So is anyone on the planet who has had access to television or the computer networks in the past five days. The only uninfected inhabitants of the realm are in deep-sea research arcologies or in outer space.

The Delilah Protocol is not a physical creation, nor is it a spirit. It can only be defeated by eradicating it from the memory of every infected being. Corporate espionage will tell the characters as much. They can do this one at a time with opposed Diplomacy checks or by programming an alternate thought-form with less dangerous properties and spreading it through the media.

They probably won’t have the skills to do this on their own. Luckily, the pilgrims who they had been sent to stop have just learned the sum of Technotopia’s knowledge and are itching for a chance to show it off.

Assuming the characters treat Ranjet and Swetter with the respect due to prize-winning academics who have willed themselves a third of the way to godhood, this does not have to turn into a battle. They will help the characters storm the Sentient Thought-Form Labs on the 253rd floor and develop a counter to DL-475P. Given that they’re vain and already infected, any disagreement will cut their aid short.

Chances are good that the characters will have to complete the thought-form and broadcast it on their own. This will require travel to the most isolated reaches of the realm to confer with scientists and programmers who’ve kept themselves off the grid.

As the characters get closer to their goal, the Delilah Protocol will begin to notice them. Any attempt to erase it will be met with heavily armed squads of Technotopian soldiers and attempts to infiltrate key resistance points. Without a decisive plan, this could quickly turn into a war of attrition. God speed!



Infected Soldier

These are regular soldiers from the near-endless pool of Technotopia soldiers. Have as many dozens as you like. They're all infected, which is bad news for the characters.

Infected Soldiers

CR 13

Infected variant Shieldbreaker (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 25,600

hp 134

Ranged plasma thrower +13/+13 (4d6 electricity and fire, automatic or slow-firing, scatter, touch/19–20)

Other Gear replace javelin with plasma thrower

Zax Ranjet and Phil Swetter

Ranjet and Swetter deserve some kind of science prize for being the biggest geniuses in a realm of geniuses. Sadly, they're infected by the Delilah Protocol and as soon as they help the characters (and maybe before then), their life expectancy is shockingly short.



Zax Ranjet

CR 10

Infected variant celestial theurge (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 9,600

hp 69

Ranged laser pistol +6 (1d8 fire, semi-automatic, touch)

Other Gear replace mwk heavy crossbow with laser pistol

Phil Swetter

CR 10

Infected variant divine loremaster (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 9,600

hp 42

Ranged laser pistol +8 (1d8 fire, semi-automatic, touch)

Other Gear Add laser pistol

Delilah Protocol Researcher

“Welcome to Yoyodyne! Can I help you today? Splendid, please ho—RRRRARGH!”

Delilah Protocol Researcher

CR 10

Infected variant cruel instructor (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 9,600

hp 44

Ranged laser pistol +7 (1d8 fire, semi-automatic, touch)

Other Gear Add laser pistol

The Delilah Protocol

The Delilah Protocol lack spiritual or physical form and can only be destroyed completely; anything less and the Protocol will remain. This task can be completed in one of two ways: Confer with a multitude of scientists and programmers who don't want to be found all across the realm in order to figure out a flaw in the system that can be exploited enough to rewrite the near-godlike sentience of the Protocol into something much more harmless; or wipe it from the minds of everyone in the realm (kindly or otherwise). If the players succeed, they earn XP for a CR 16 encounter (76,800).

Angelic Throwdown

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Archangels.

We know you've been itching for it, that big scene where the players' demigod characters get to use every trick they've learned, that huge battle scene that gives them the ultimate challenge. Alright. Brace yourselves. It's time for the Lords of Order Angelic Throwdown....

The endless battle between Trinity's angels and the forces of the Dark One have swung in an unexpected direction. Fiendish beasts reach higher on the Archangels' alabaster spires daily. If the reports can be believed, they've even occupied the lower levels of Grace Pinnacle. Unwilling to risk losing their landmark, the Pinnacle's attendants have called upon the Lords of Order to aid them.

The Archangels have fought on the side of the Lords of Order in the past, but every alliance has ended with disagreements and the vow that it will never happen again. Both pantheons fight for order and justice, but of vastly different stripes. The Lords of Order flourish under a strict command structure, valuing hierarchy and protocol; the Archangels are more egalitarian, able to approach most situations from multiple angles. In order to prevent the squabbles of campaigns past, one of the forces has asked the characters to act as go-betweens.

Unless the characters have visited the Realm of Ascendant Order before, take some time to introduce them to its rigid precepts of discipline (see page 50). Give everyone the evidence they need to decide for themselves whether the Lords of Order are free-will-smashing fascists or stern, honorable warriors. Better yet, shatter that dichotomy and show how both views have some element of truth in them.

Yagyu Tomoe of the 7th Band of Heavenly Youth is waiting for the characters to arrive. Despite her small stature, she's all arrogance and business. Although protocol demands a feast before proceeding with talk of battle, she enjoys the sumptuous banquet very little. Talk of battle excites her though, especially details about demons; she has never fought any demons.

Grace Pinnacle

As soon as Tomoe's warriors breach the sealed portal into the Realm of Archangels, the Archangel Ramel sends a messenger with his battle plan: the Heavenly Youth charge first, striking the defenses at Grace Pinnacle from all angles. His hosts hang back, striking with their bows at targets of tactical importance. When Ramel gives the signal, his highly mobile troops will sweep in and seize the Pinnacle for the glory of Trinity.

It's a good plan, but treats the Heavenly Youth as cannon fodder. Yagyu Tomoe's counter proposal reverses the roles: the angels, who know more about hand-to-hand with demons strike first, while her own forces gather their chi for a tower-cleansing blast of purity. She relates her plan to the characters, hoping they will approve of it without change. This is their chance to speak up, argue with Yagyu Tomoe, and craft a brilliant battle plan of their own devising. Getting Ramel in on the conference will require crossing contested airspace, but wouldn't trigger an all-out charge.

Once a plan has been negotiated (and keep reminding the characters that time is ticking, with demons crawling all over sacred places while they have their conference of war), it's time to turn the plan into reality. Overall, the forces are evenly matched and it'll take a few demigods to make all the difference – the massed battle is a background for the characters' commando action. The enemy forces have a battery of terrifying grub cannons overlooking the battlefield. If left unmolested, they could tear both sides into meaty chunks. Only the characters see this threat as the forces of Good start their assault on the Dark One's hordes... time to get involved!

Withdraw The Troops

After Grace Pinnacle is retaken with the characters' help, Ramel hopes that Yagyu Tomoe and her force will pack up and go home. No such luck. Flashing the signet of the Great Spirit of Order, she informs the gathered forces that she has the authority to set up a forward staging ground for any and all future actions against the Dark One. In effect, it's authorizing an armed garrison in the heart of Trinity's capital.



Ramel is furious at her gall; his displeasure shatters columns and echoes to the depths of the Pit. She remains unmoved. All of the posturing comes to a head when one of them strikes first. It may be an honest mistake or an over-reaction to a defensive gesture. If the characters don't think fast, a second battle will blossom from the first, leaving the Dark One laughing heartily at the inevitable outcome.

The best way to defuse the situation is one that draws the Great Spirit of Order's attention elsewhere. Starting a crusade against a different, more active evil would do the trick. The evil doesn't even need to be real; an illusory attack on the Realm of Order would result in all foreign outposts being called home to defend the realm.

Of course, there's no rule saying the characters need to back the Archangels. They may feel their time's better spent convincing the followers of Trinity to accept the new outpost. If handled carefully, it needn't be the start to a full-scale colonization – and everyone could use a few more well-armed friends. Both of these options may take several sessions to navigate, but the alternative of doing nothing would be worse.

Ramel, Trinity's Thunder

Marked as the Archangel of hope by Trinity, Ramel is more often these days the Archangel of hope in battle, having been put in charge of the defense of the realm from the Dark One's demons. As the first among the angelic host, he leads from the front, inspiring those around him with his total fearlessness in the face of any evil and any odds.

Ramel, Trinity's Thunder **CR 18**

This four-winged being stands tall among his fellows. His shining blade bestows trust and a sense of comfort against any amount of foes.

XP 76,800

Plane-touched planetar angel

NG Large outsider (angel, extraplanar, good)

Init +6; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +27

Aura protective (20 ft.)

DEFENSE

AC 39, touch 20, flat-footed 32 (+4 deflection, +6 Dex, +1 dodge, +19 natural, –1 size)

hp 263 (17d10+170); **regeneration** 10 (evil weapons and effects)

Fort +23, **Ref** +15, **Will** +20; +4 vs. poison

DR 10/evil; **Immune** acid, cold, petrification; **Resist** electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 29

OFFENSE

Speed 30 ft.; fly 90 ft. (good)

Melee +2 *holy brilliant energy holy reliquary mithral greatsword* +27/+22/+17/+12 (3d6+15/17–20 plus 2d6 vs. evil) or *slam* +20 (2d8+4)

Space 10 ft.; **Reach** 10 ft.

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +23)

Constant—*detect evil, detect snares and pits, discern lies* (DC 20), *true seeing*

At will—*continual flame, dispel magic, holy smite* (DC 21), *invisibility* (self only), *lesser restoration, remove curse, remove disease, remove fear, speak with dead* (DC 20)

3/day—*blade barrier* (DC 23), *flame strike* (DC 22), *power word stun, raise dead, waves of fatigue*

1/day—*earthquake, greater restoration, mass charm monster* (DC 25), *waves of exhaustion*

Cleric Spells Known (CL 16th; concentration +22)

8th—*firestorm* (24), *holy aura*

7th—*mass cure serious wounds, destruction* (2, DC 23), *dictum*

6th—*banishment* (DC 22), *greater dispel magic* (DC 22), *summon monster VI*

5th—*flame strike* (3, DC 21), *insect plague, righteous might*

4th—*death ward, divine power, freedom of movement, holy smite* (2, DC 20)

3rd—*chain of perdition* (2), *dispel magic* (2), *invisibility purge* (2)

2nd—*arrow of law* (2, DC 18), *grace, sacred space, spear of purity* (2, DC 18)

1st—*bane* (DC 17), *bless, command* (DC 17), *divine favor, sanctuary* (DC 17), *shield of faith*

0 (at will)—*create water, detect magic, detect poison, guidance*

TACTICS

Before Combat Ramel uses *holy aura* and *sacred space* when combat is about to be joined, typically throwing down *blade barrier* into the middle-grounds of any real melee, attempting to make a funnel so he can take handfuls of enemies instead of multitudes.

During Combat Ramel hits the biggest concentration of enemies with *fire storm* as quickly as possible. Afterwards he unleashes *insect plague* from above then *holy smite* and other high-level offensive magic (using *flame strikes* on enemy ranged threats first) and using area *dispel magic* (greater and normal) to suppress enemy enhancements, buffing himself with *righteous might* and *freedom of movement* then dropping into the melee with a charge at the most powerful enemy.

Morale Ramel only flees when the battle is obviously completely lost with a crushing defeat (or he discovers he isn't fighting an evil creature). But such has not happened yet.

STATISTICS

Str 29, Dex 22, Con 29, Int 24, Wis 22 Cha 24

Base Atk +17; CMB +27; CMD 48

Feats Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Devastating Strike, Dodge Flyby Attack, Furious Focus, Greater Vital Strike, Hover, Improved Critical (greatsword), Improved Devastating Strike, Improved Vital Strike, Power Attack, Toughness, Vital Strike

Skills Acrobatics +26, Bluff +25, Diplomacy +25, Escape Artist +23, Fly +21, Intimidate +27, Knowledge (history) +17, Knowledge (planes) +25, Knowledge (religion) +25, Perception +26, Sense Motive +26, Spellcraft +24, Stealth +22, Swim +24, Use Magic Device +14

Languages Abyssal, Aquan, Auran, Celestial, Daemonic, Ignan, Terran; truespeech

SQ change shape

Combat Gear +2 *holy brilliant energy holy reliquary mithral greatsword*

Angelic Host

The host of angels may look all peaceful when they're sitting around preening their wings, but they can be mighty tough when it's time to draw swords. Almighty tough, no less.

Angelic Host

CR 10

Angel, movanic deva (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*)

XP 9,600

hp 126

Yagyu Tomoe

Commander of the 7th Band of Heavenly Youth, Yagyu Tomoe was once a normal mortal from the Lord of Satsuma's entourage. In medieval Japan the Great Spirit of Order's recruitment spirits found her. Fast forward a dozen military campaigns and she's one of the finest leaders in her realm, hugely respected by allies and enemies alike.

Yagyu Tomoe

CR 18

This beautiful, lithe young woman stands at the ready, an elegant trumpet at her side as she regards her fellow archons with pure, ocean-blue eyes.

XP 153,600

Pulse-touched trumpet archon cavalier 4

LG Medium outsider (archon, extraplanar, good, lawful)

Init +11; **Senses** darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; Perception +27

Aura aura of menace (20 ft., DC 24)

DEFENSE

AC 37, touch 15, flat-footed 32 (+8 armor, +5 Dex, +14 natural)

hp 265 (18d10+166)

Fort +21, **Ref** +11, **Will** +16; +4 vs. poison

DR 10/evil; **Immune** electricity, petrification; **SR** 29

OFFENSE

Speed 40 ft., fly 90 ft. (good)

Melee *evil outsider-bane keen nodachi* +26/+21/+16/+11 (1d10+12/15–20 plus 2d6 vs. evil outsiders)

Special Attack cavalier's charge, challenge 2/day (+4 damage, +2 to saves when threatening), greater tactician 1/day (5 rounds)

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 14th; concentration +20)

Constant—*magic circle against evil*

At will—*aid, continual flame, detect evil, greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *message*

Cleric Spells Prepared (CL 14th; concentration +20)

7th—*ethereal jaunt, holy word* (DC 23)

6th—*mass cure moderate wounds* (2), *greater dispel magic* (2)

5th—*break enchantment, breath of life* (DC 21), *mass cure light wounds* (2)

4th—*cure critical wounds* (2), *death ward*, *divine power*, *freedom of movement*

3rd—*cure serious wounds* (3), *prayer* (2)

2nd—*bull's strength*, *resist energy*, *shield other*, *spear of purity* (2, DC 18), *spiritual weapon*

1st—*bane* (DC 17), *bless*, *divine favor*, *entropic shield*, *liberating command*, *protection from evil*

0th—*detect magic*, *detect poison*, *resistance*, *stabilize*

STATISTICS

Str 26, Dex 22, Con 26, Int 24, Wis 22, Cha 21

Base Atk +18; CMB +26; CMD 42

Feats Back To Back, Broken Wing Gambit, Coordinated Charge, Coordinated Defense, Escape Route, Flanking Foil, Flyby Attack, Furious Focus, Improved Back To Back, Improved Initiative, Outflank, Power Attack, Precise Strike, Toughness, Vital Strike, Warrior Priest

Skills Acrobatics +5 (+9 jump), Bluff +13, Diplomacy +18, Fly +30, Heal +15, Intimidate +23, Knowledge (planes) +10, Knowledge (religion) +10, Perception +27, Perform (wind instruments) +26, Sense Motive +27, Spellcraft +20

Languages Auran, Celestial; truespeech

SQ calling (ability check, attack roll, saving throw, or skill check), expert trainer +2, mount (none), order of the star, trumpet

Gear +2 mithral agile breastplate, evil outsider-bane keen nodachi

Ishikawa Hideki, The Silent Wave

Yagyū Tomoe puts great faith in her right hand man. The Silent Wave is another Japanese recruit, but from quite a different realm – he faithfully served in the Imperial army in the 1940's, willing to die for the Japanese way of life. He became a hero in those days and joined the Great Spirit of Order on his first visit to the Maelstrom.

Ishikawa Hideki, The Silent Wave **CR 15**

Half-celestial dragon smiter (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary*, *Pathfinder Roleplaying Game NPC Codex*)

XP 51,200

hp 115

Heavenly Youth Defenders

Picture samurai warriors in force armor as tall as two normal men. Wings like dragonfly wings let them fly, but are far less maneuverable than the angels'. The Heavenly Youth Defenders believe in order above all else and are blinded by their youth from any other way of life.

Heavenly Youth Defenders **CR 10**

Advanced giant legion archon (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*)

XP 9,600

hp 108

Irygthon The Foul

For all the mythic names fighting for the good side, there has to be a bad guy worthy of all that glorious ability. Irygthon the Foul is that demon, the perfect foil for any one of the battle leaders lined up against his demonic swarm. He isn't twice the size of normal men. He isn't a multi-tentacled horror. He is pure evil, though, evil so strong that it sustains him and has turned him into the Dark One's most important war knight.

Irygthon's unspectacular appearance should be deeply unsettling to anyone who watches him during the battle, as he walks casually from target to target and destroys their very essence with a single strike of his chained daggers.

Irygthon The Foul **CR 19**

Standing before you is a heavily cloaked, man-sized individual. All that can be seen of the being beneath the cloak are wicked, barbed chains hanging from the arms of its cloak. It's not twice the size of a man, nor is it some otherworldly entity. Still, your skin crawls at it moves at a casual walk that devours the distance between you much too quickly.

XP 204,800

Pulse-touched crucidaemon barbarian 4

NE Medium outsider (daemon, evil, extraplanar)

Init +13; Senses darkvision 60 ft.; Perception +24

DEFENSE

AC 33, touch 20, flat-footed 23 (+9 Dex, +1 dodge, +13 natural)

hp 354 (17d10+4d12+235)

Fort +24, **Ref** +17, **Will** +15

Defensive Abilities trap sense +1, uncanny dodge; **DR** 10/good, 10/silver; **Immune** acid, bleed, death effects, disease, poison; **Resist** cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10; **SR** 30

OFFENSE

Speed 60 ft.

Melee *chained dagger* +35/+30/+25/+20 (1d4+13 plus 2d6 bleed/17–20), *chained dagger* +35/+30/+25 (1d4+13 plus 2d6 bleed/17–20)

Space 5 ft.; **Reach** 5 ft. (10 ft. with chained dagger)

Special Attack chained daggers, rage (20 rounds/day), rage powers (reckless abandon, smasher), trap making

Spell-Like Abilities (CL 16th; concentration +27)

Constant—*air walk*, *deathwatch*, *detect good*, *true seeing*

At will—*fear* (DC 26), *greater teleport* (self plus 50 lbs. of objects only), *invisibility*

3/day—*greater glyph of warding*, *hold monster* (DC 25)

1/day—*insanity* (DC 28), *summon*, *symbol of pain* (DC 26)

TACTICS

Before Combat Irygthon scribed a *symbol of pain* in front of the grubcannons and had his leaper spawn hide out of sight to await his signal before joining the melee. He's also used his *glyph of warding* to set up a series of battlegrounds within the tower that he can lure any champions through to assist him (his trapmaking ability allows him to bestow *any* spell into the glyph so get creative especially if the party has shown off what they can do before heading for him).

During Combat Irygthon uses *teleport* to ambush the party (especially behind casters) when/if they the grubcannons. He'll then hit the toughest demigod with *insanity* (hoping for a strong body/weak mind scenario) and then rages and viciously attacks the most vulnerable character if he can. He'll use smasher to break any significant weaponry among the group and then reckless abandon if he needs it.

Morale Depending on how the battle is going, and the personality of the party, Irygthon will either signal his Leaper Spawn to attack an officer or join him when things are getting rough. At around 250 hp, he'll make his decision, and if he reaches anywhere near 100 hp, he'll try to use *invisibility* or *teleport* away to safety, but he is willing to commit to the bitter end if he feels he's nearing victory.

STATISTICS

Str 32, **Dex** 28, **Con** 30, **Int** 14, **Wis** 18, **Cha** 32

Base Atk +21; **CMB** +32; **CMD** 52

Feats Ability Focus (fear), Combat Reflexes, Desperate Battler, Dodge, Double Slice, Greater Two-Weapon Fighting, Improved Critical (dagger), Improved Initiative, Improved Two-Weapon Fighting, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Stealthy, Step Up, Toughness, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (dagger)

Skills Acrobatics +19 (+31 to jump), Bluff +31, Craft (traps) +28, Disable Device +27, Escape Artist +11, Intimidate +31, Knowledge (arcana) +10, Knowledge (engineering) +10, Perception +24, Sense Motive +17, Spellcraft +17, Stealth +33, Use Magic Device +21; **Racial Modifiers** +8 Craft (traps)

Languages Abyssal, Draconic, Ignan, Infernal, Protean; *telepathy* 100 ft.

SQ fast movement

Gear *chained daggers*

Leaper Spawn

The forces of good aren't the only ones with powerful champions at their beck and call. Irygthon the Foul has a pair of leaper spawn assassins on his side, and unleashes them at the start of battle. They orders: to find and eliminate all the officers fighting on the other side. In case we need to spell it out, that might mean the characters having to save Ramel, Yagyru or Ishakawa (at a really inconvenient time when they already have plenty to deal with, of course). It might also make the characters the primary target!

Leaper Spawn

CR 10

Advanced giant hydrodaemon (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*)

XP 9,600

hp 135

Witching Spheres

Floating globes containing the dregs of witch souls, witching spheres hum with an air of malice. Each witch made an infernal pact to live beyond death, and this is the form the Dark One chose for them.

Witching Spheres**CR 10**Advanced witchfire (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 2*)**XP 9,600****hp 135****Grubcannons**

The Dark One's hidden ace in the battle is a battery of grubcannons he's been obfuscating from that fool of an Archangel, Ramel, and all those Great Spirit of Order lackeys. Grubcannons are huge living siege weapons, bred in the depths of the Pit for this moment – to scythe down the ranks of angels and Heavenly Youth Defenders as they charge forward, oblivious to their imminent doom. Mwahahahaha.

Lucky for the forces of Good, the characters manage to get a glimpse past the Dark One's veiling magic and have a chance to destroy the grubcannons before they spring their trap. The Dark One wouldn't make an assault on the grubcannons easy, and neither should you.

Grubcannons**CR 16**Fiendish cannon golem (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*)**XP 76,800****hp 140****Ranged** cannon +26/+21 (4d6+7 plus grubs/19–20x4)

Additional Special Ability: Grubs (Su) A grubcannon fires balls of demonic parasites. Typically the demonic maggots die, but every time a target is hit, there is a 20% chance enough of the demonic maggots survive. They begin covering the target of the grubcannon's attack, and their statistics are as follows:

Demonic Maggots**CR 5**Fiendish rot grub swarm (*Pathfinder Roleplaying Game Bestiary 3*).**XP 1,600****hp 40**

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