

TORCHBEARER

Sagas

Astral Knights



On the Powers of the Mind and Those Who Wield Them.

by Jared A. Sorensen, illustrated by "Calamity" Jon Morris



There are many tales to be told, too many for even one bard to recount. Sagas are third-party supplementary products and adventures for the Torchbearer RPG that have been reviewed and approved by Burning Wheel Headquarters.



Credit Due

Concept & Design

Jared A. Sorensen

Additional Development

Thor Olavsrud

Art

"Calamity" Jon Morris

Torchbearer Concept

Thor Olavsrud

Thanks

Thor Olavsrud, Luke Crane and Radek Drozdalski

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George Lucas. He knows why.

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The Astral Knight

Astral Knights are humans with psionic abilities; wandering warrior-monks able to tap into the energy of the higher planes.

The Path of Light

Knights who walk the Path of Light are selfless and compassionate. They believe in mercy, justice, the sanctity of life and that all living beings possess inherent goodness. Their Light Path psionic disciplines are used to heal and protect.

Astral Knight Class Overview		Astral Knight Starting Options	
Class	Astral Knight of the Light	Special Skill	Choose one of the following skills and give it a rating of 3: Criminal, Hagglor, Pathfinder, Survivalist
Raw Abilities	Will 5, Health 3	Empathic	You're attuned to the emotions of those around you, able to detect subtle cues other cannot. But this sensitivity can also overwhelm you if you're not careful in volatile situations.
Skills	Psionicist 3, Fighter 2, Healer 2, Mentor 2, Scholar 2, Scout 2	Starting Weapon	Choose one: Astral Saber, Glaive or Bladestaff.
Starting Trait	Empathic	Alignment	Any

New Skill: Psionicist

The Psionicist skill incorporates meditation, posture and breath control to allow the use of psionic disciplines. Anyone can learn the Psionicist skill but only characters with sensing Nature may learn psionic disciplines or initiate a psionic duel.

Psionicists may use incense, herbs and potions from Healers and Alchemists to enhance their abilities.

Suggested Help for Psionicist: Psionicist

Beginner's Luck for Psionicist: Will

Psionicist Factors

By spending a check or Instinct to meditate during camp phase, characters with the Psionicist skill may gain +1D towards a single test during this phase or the next adventure phase. If not used before the next camp phase, this bonus die disappears.

Meditation: a Nature test, a skill test, a Will test, a Health test, a Circles test



The Path of Darkness

Those who walk the Path of Darkness—the ambitious, the proud, the merciless—believe that weakness should be hunted down and destroyed; that only the mighty deserve to rule. Their Dark Path is one of violence, destruction and domination.

<i>Astral Knight Class Overview</i>		<i>Astral Knight Starting Options</i>	
Class	Astral Knight of the Dark	Special Skill	Choose one of the following skills and give it a rating of 3: Criminal, Hagglor, Pathfinder, Survivalist
Raw Abilities	Will 3, Health 5	Focused	You've learned to shut out of the noise of the outside world, deadening you to its distractions. Because of this, you possess an incredible ability concentrate on a task but this focus makes you oblivious to all other concerns.
Skills	Psionist 4, Fighter 3, Armorer 2, Commander 2, Mentor 2	Starting Weapon	Choose one: Astral Saber, Glaive or Bladestaff.
Starting Trait	Focused	Alignment	Any



New Weapon: Astral Blades

Behold the astral blade—an elegant weapon from a bygone age; each one comprised of a beam of psionic energy focused through a pair of gemstones concealed within the hilt. Lacking physical blades, these weapons are incredibly light and agile but require intense training to use safely. Most astral blades are designed to be wielded like a sword but there are two common variations on the standard design: the two-handed glaive and the twin-bladed staff. Other variants exist but are much rarer.

As these blades are passed down from master to student, Astral Knights without a mentor begin the game unarmed and must either locate or fabricate a blade of their own to complete their training and become a true Knight at level 5.

General stats: Astral blades win on ties against mundane weapons and bypass the protection of mundane armor.

- **Saber:** This sword form gives +1D to one action type (Attack, Defend, Feint or Maneuver). The bonus sticks to that action type for the remainder of the conflict.
- **Glaive:** This polearm grants +1D to Feint and +1D to Defend.
- **Bladestaff:** This staff-like weapon emits a blade from either end.

It grants -1D, +1s Attack and -1D, +1s Maneuver. The lethality of this weapon makes it a favorite of those who follow the Path of Darkness.

Untrained: Non-psionic characters—those without sensing Nature—may use astral versions of familiar weapons at -1s.

Inventory: Sabers are belt/weapon, carried 1; glaives and staffs are carried 1 but require two hands to wield.

Crafting: To craft an astral weapon requires an ob 4 Armorer test and two gems per blade (valued 3D each). Repairs require an ob 3 Armorer test. In order to complete the construction or repairs, a character with the Psionist skill must make the test or help on the test. The obstacle for crafting or repairing a bladestaff is +1 due to the double-bladed design.

Psionic Nature

After answering your Nature questions, replace one of your choice with Sensing. For example, a human with psionic ability might have Boasting, Sensing, Running whereas an elf might have Singing, Remembering and Sensing. Sensing Nature is required to learn and wield psionic disciplines.

Paths of Light and Darkness

Although Astral Knights start out on either the Path of Light or the Path of Darkness, they are not destined to remain so. Every two levels (levels 3, 6 and 9), rewrite a Nature descriptor with either a Light Path or Dark Path descriptor based on your character's actions over the previous sessions. Sensing Nature cannot be overwritten. Once overwritten, a lost Nature descriptor cannot be retaken.

Light Path descriptors: Negotiating, Self-Sacrificing

Dark Path descriptors: Dominating, Serving a Master

If you possess one Light Path descriptor but no Dark Path descriptors, you are on the Path of Light.

If you possess one Dark Path descriptor but no Light Path descriptors, you are the Path of Darkness.

If you possess two Light Path descriptors, you are on the Path of Light.

If you possess two Dark Path descriptors, you are on the Path of Darkness.

The Narrow Path

If you possess Sensing and both a Light Path descriptor and a Dark Path descriptor, you walk the Narrow Path—the Path of Void and Balance. You may learn any discipline, regardless of its Path.



Psionic Duels

The psionic duel is an age-old form of mental sparring used for centuries by the Elders to train the psionic abilities of their warriors. The Knights practice their abilities in friendly contests, battles of will that end when their opponent yields from exhaustion. But the Dark Ones know no such mercy and their duels often end with their adversaries crippled or slain.

Make a Psionist test and add your Will to determine starting disposition. Those without sensing Nature may participate in a psionic duel unarmed but may not initiate a duel of their own. Psionic duels may be initiated either as friendly Sparring conflicts, last-one-standing Dueling conflicts or brutal Killing conflicts. Psionic duels do not advance the Grind.

Special condition rules: When entering a psionic duel, duelists with the angry gain +1s to their Attack actions while duelists with the Afraid condition gain +1s to their Maneuver actions.

Skills and Abilities for Disposition Suggested Conflict Compromises

Intent	Roll	Add to Rank	GM Wins	GM Loses: Compromises
Sparring	Psionist	Will	You back off; the victory belongs to your opponent	The duel seems less than friendly—you feel anger welling up from the dark places in your soul. Your fatigue increases by 1.
Dueling	Psionist	Will	You're staggered; you fall to your knees, weak and exhausted—you may be captured by your opponent	You're made hungry and thirsty or exhausted from your efforts. You think you took it too far and become afraid of what you may do in the future. Your opponent injures you during the duel.
Killing	Psionist	Health	See Killing Is My Business (basic rules, p. 74)	

Psionic Duel Skills

Action	Skill
Attack	Psionist
Defend	Health
Feint	Psionist
Maneuver	Will

Psionic Duel Weapons

Weapon	Effect
Psionic Blast	+1D to Attack
Psionic Shield	+2D to Defend
False Thoughts	+1s to Feint or Maneuver

When using disciplines during psionic duels, you must first equip that discipline to use it as a weapon.

Astral Knight Level Benefits

Level 1

Apprentice: You may wield astral blades and all other weapons except for bows and crossbows. You start out on either the Light Path or the Dark Path. You start with a single first circle discipline. Replace one of your starting Nature descriptors with Sensing. You must possess, acquire or build an Astral Blade to progress past level 4.

Additional Level Benefits

You may learn one additional discipline from the “any” category or your chosen Path each time you gain a level. Disciplines aligned with Light or Darkness must be learned from a Mentor—other disciplines may be self-taught. The Scholar obstacle to learn a discipline is equal to its circle. Those on the Narrow Path may learn any discipline.

Level 3

At level 3, you may overwrite one of your Nature descriptors based on your actions during the game. You may choose a new discipline or gain the ability to wear armor.

Armored: You may wear armor and helmets. Shields and heavy armor do not cause fatigue. Astral Knights on the Dark Path favor menacing masks, helms or suits of black plate armor to help them intimidate their foes.

Level 6

At level 6, you may overwrite one of your Nature descriptors based on your actions during the game. You may choose a new discipline or take on a student.

Student: You become the mentor to an apprentice Astral Knight. This student is on the same Path as you and may help with your Path skills. Add +1D to your roll when your apprentice is helping. In a conflict, assign one of your hit points to your student. If there are no extra hit points, then your apprentice can't help. A student never acts on his own.

Level 9

At level 9, you may overwrite one of your Nature descriptors based on your actions during the game. You may choose a new discipline or gain a heroic ability.

Heroic Ability: Choose Psionist, Fighter or Mentor. That skill now succeeds on rolls of 3-6.

Level	Fate	Persona	Astral Knight Level Benefit	Title
1	0	0	+1 C1 Discipline	Apprentice
2	3	3	+1 C1 Discipline	Seeker
3	7	6	+1 C1 Discipline or gain Armored	Squire
4	14	9	+1 C1 Discipline	Wanderer
5	22	12	+1 C2 Discipline	Knight
6	31	16	+1 C2 Discipline or gain Student	Adept
7	41	20	+1 C2 Discipline	Traveler
8	52	24	+1 C3 Discipline	Teacher
9	64	28	+1 C3 Discipline or gain Heroic Ability	Master
10	77	32	+1 C4 Discipline	Elder

Psionic Disciplines

Psionic disciplines are spell-like abilities that use the Psionist skill. Like prayers, psionic disciplines don't advance the Grind. Astral Knights do not have to memorize their disciplines, but each time a discipline is used, add +1 to the character's fatigue—increasing the recovery factor for the exhausted condition. Recovering from exhausted removes all fatigue.

Spell-like Disciplines

Astral Knights and other beings capable of wielding psionic disciplines may learn psionic versions of certain magician spells. Use the Psionist skill in place of the Arcanist skill. Psionists may not use scrolls.

- Supernal Vision—called Astral Vision
- Lightness of Being—called Levitation
- Eye of Omens—called Clairvoyance
- Veil of the Chameleon—called Invisibility
- Puissant Suggestion*—called Mind Trick
- Lightning Step*—called Speed of Thought; this discipline only affects the user
- Hammer of Heaven*—called Lightning Storm; only available to those on the Dark Path

* taken from the Torchbearer spells playtest PDF

First Circle Disciplines

Inner Sight

Path: Any

You are able to sense what cannot be seen and are attuned to your environment, enabling you to perceive hidden dangers. You may reduce light penalties and concealment obstacles for the duration.

Inner Sight Factors

Light penalty reduction: +1 ob per -1s penalty (light penalty not be reduced lower than 0)

Sense danger: opposed Psionist versus Scout to sense an ambush

Duration: one turn, one conflict, one phase

Quietude

Path: Light

Using your powers of concentration, you focus your mind to drive away fear, anger and doubt. Use Psionist instead of Will to recover from angry or afraid. Characters possessing this discipline may meditate to reduce their fatigue factors in camp.

Meditation: each success reduces the fatigue factor by 1; this requires a check or Instinct as per the normal rules.

Psionic Blast

Path: Dark

You focus your Will into a knife-like point, driving it into your opponent's mind like a spearpoint. For the duration of a Kill or Drive Off conflict, the Astral Knight may use the Psionist skill to Attack. This includes rolling or helping with starting disposition. Mundane armor has no effect on Psionic Blast. Only psionic shields, magical armor and spells or prayers provide protection. This discipline may also be armed like a weapon during a psionic Sparring, Dueling or Killing conflict to gain +1D to Attack.

Telekinesis

Path: Any

Within a Kill, Capture or Drive Off conflict, you may use the Psionist skill to Maneuver. Telekinesis may also be used to retrieve a thrown or disarmed weapon after an action but this adds +1 to your fatigue. Outside of a conflict, you may use this discipline to psionically throw, lift, push or pull an object (see size and number factors). Objects may not be carried aloft using this discipline.

Telekinesis Factors

Size: handheld items, two-handed items, people, large items, stone slabs and columns, X-wing fighters

Number: +1 ob for each item past the first

Second Circle Disciplines

Arcing Blade

Path: Any

You gain the ability to hurl your weapon like a hand axe or spear, allowing you to strike a distant opponent. Throwing changes an independent test to a versus test against any weapon but a bow, crossbow or sling. You are disarmed until you equip another weapon or retrieve your thrown weapon. This discipline's effect lasts for the duration of the conflict.

False Thoughts

Path: Any

You shroud your thoughts and feelings, concealing them from opponents with sensing Nature. You may equip this as a weapon during a psionic duel to gain +1s to Feint or Maneuver, or gain +1s during any test to hide your true intentions.

Mind Probe

Path: Dark

You force yourself inside your victim's mind, laying bare their innermost thoughts. Make a Psionicist test versus the target's Nature. The information you may withdraw is based on your Margin of Success. May be opposed by False Thoughts.

Mind Probe Chart

MoS	Effect
1	Discern a Level 3 trait or sense intent (to deceive, for example)
2	Discern a Nature descriptor or an Instinct
3	Discern a level 2 trait or a Belief
4+	Discern a level 1 trait or a Goal

Psionic Shield

Path: Light

You build a rampart inside your mind to protect yourself from psionic attacks. You may equip this like a normal shield to add +2D to your Defend action in a psionic duel or when targeting by a Psionic Blast in a Kill, Capture or Drive Off conflict. You may also use Psionic Shield against Mind Probe or any other form of mental domination or influence, gaining +2D to resist.

Third Circle Disciplines

Combat Awareness

Path: Any

Your mind is open to reality, enabling you to anticipate your opponent's actions during physical combat or psionic duels. Those on the Path of Light gain +1s to the Defend action. Those on the Dark Path gain +1s to Attack. This is in addition to bonuses or penalties from weapons. Combat Awareness must be activated before the conflict begins and lasts until it's resolved.

Deflect Missile

Path: Any

With but a gesture, bolts and arrows are cast harmlessly aside. Weapons with the ability to turn independent tests to versus tests (hand axes, bows, etc.) lose this ability when facing off against you.

Force Choke

Path: Dark

You can psychically grasp your victim and crush the life out of them through force of will. Test your Psionicist against their Health or Nature. If successful, they gain one condition (in order) for each Margin of Success: Afraid, Exhausted, Injured. If they are higher on the Order of Might, you suffer a penalty of -1s for each rank they are above your own. An injured opponent up to +1 higher Might may be killed using this discipline.

Psychic Surgery

Path: Light

You may channel your inner light to knit flesh and bone and drive out illness. It's an ob 3 Psionicist test to remove the sick condition from you or someone else. An ob 4 Psionicist test will remove the subject's injured condition.

Fourth Circle Disciplines

Astral Ghost

Path: Any

You may transport your consciousness to the Astral Plane for short periods of time. While on the Astral Plane, you may move instantly from place to place and appear on the Material Plane as a glowing blue apparition. Your actions on this plane do not take time, though your physical body is affected by the Grind whenever your allies make tests. In this way you're limited to the amount of time you may spend away from your body—eventually it will become hungry and thirsty, exhausted, etc. until its eventual demise.

Astral Ghost Effects

While in astral form, the character appears as they would in the physical world but cannot physically interact with anything. Your astral form is unaffected by the hungry and thirsty, exhausted or injured conditions. You do not suffer from fatigue while in this form. While on the Astral Plane, you may travel freely and instantly to any place not protected by magical wards. You may choose to be seen or remain invisible. You may be banished from the astral plane or engage in psionic duels.

Self-Sacrificing Nature

The long-deceased Elders dwell on the Astral Plane where they guide the living through dreams and visions. A character with self-sacrificing Nature may use this discipline to escape to this higher state of being upon their death. Once this is done, they may not be returned using magical prayers or artifacts. Elders may return to the Material Plane in spirit form to communicate with those with sensing Nature once per adventure.

Precognition

Path: Any

You can see into the future and are able to exert change upon it. You may choose either twist or condition for a failed test when acting alone or at the forefront of the test (i.e. you're the one rolling the dice). During any conflict, you may make a Psionist test against your opponent's Will or Nature. Success means you can change your Defend to a Maneuver or your Feint to an Attack after your opponent's action is revealed.



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Jared A. Sorensen is a game designer living in New York City.

Website: memento-mori.com

“Calamity” Jon Morris is a Washington-based cartoonist, designer, writer, two-fisted king of the hobo jungles and world-famous performing internet ape.

Website: calamityjonsave.us

burningwheel.com | torchbearerRPG.com



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