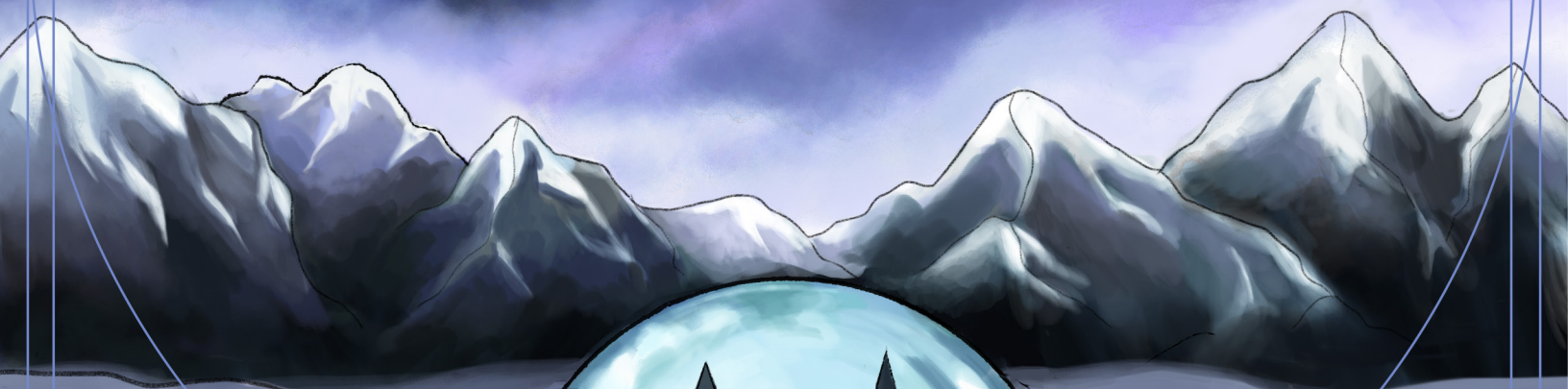
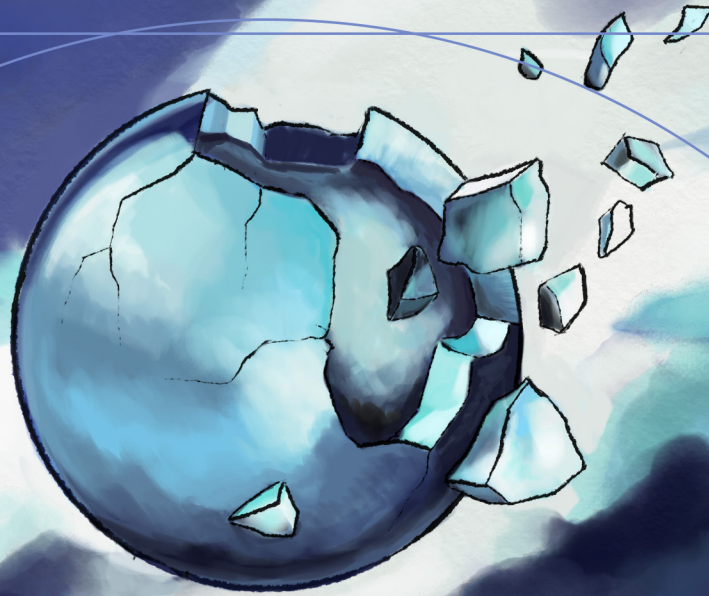


SUNFALL



POST-APOCALYPTIC GOTHIC FANTASY
CAMPAIGN SETTING

CREDITS

DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Anastasia Steele

LAYOUT AND GRAPHICS

J. Scott Zumwalt

ADDITIONAL TALENTS

Guillaume Tardiff and J. Scott Zumwalt

This product was created under license. **GENESYS** and its logo, and **GENESYS FOUNDRY** and its logo, are trademarks of Fantasy Flight Games in the U.S.A. and other countries. All Fantasy Flight Games characters and character names, and the distinctive likenesses thereof, are trademarks of Fantasy Flight Games.
www.FantasyFlightGames.com

This work contains material that is copyright Fantasy Flight Games and/or other authors. Such material is used with permission under the Community Content Agreement for Genesys Foundry. All other original material in this work is copyright 2020 by Anastasia Steele and published under the Community Content Agreement for Genesys Foundry.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4	Chapter 5: Gear	56
A World Without Flame	4	Weapons	56
Themes	4	Craftsmanship	61
Tropes	4	Item Attachments	61
Part 1 Resolve, Ruin, and Renaissance	7	Gear	62
Chapter 1: As Above, So Below	8	Potions, Intoxicants and Other Substances.....	63
The Rise and Fall of the Moristagian Empire	8	Currency	65
Ever-Living Fire.....	10	Trade Goods.....	66
Chapter 2: Life in a Sunless World	11	Part 3 Crown, Sword, and Scepter	67
Chapter 3: The Powers That Be.....	14	Chapter 1: Nuragos and the Republic of Esca	68
The Brimstone Republics	15	Nuragos	68
The Mandate of the Faith	16	The Republic of Esca.....	68
The Peoples of the Wastes	18	Chapter 2 : Istria and Livadi.....	71
Chapter 4: Varieties of Belief.....	19	The Istrian Steppe	71
The Faith.....	19	The Most Serene Republic of Livadi.....	73
Wasteland Beliefs	23	Chapter 3: Other Powers of the Western Byssarian.....	75
Chapter 5: The Mysteries of Magic.....	24	Pelagos & the Kyriades.....	75
Thaumaturgy and the Soul.....	24	Ammunir, Ithobaal and Ter Suoli	77
Pyromancy and Daemonkind	27	Chapter 4: Tur Moresh and Pagamea.....	79
Chapter 6: The Marvels of Technology	30	Tur Moresh.....	79
Technology of the Blessed Age.....	31	Pagamea	80
The Ruins of the Old Empire.....	31	Chapter 5: Other Powers of the Mandate.....	83
Part 2 Number, Weight, and Measure	33	Isbanir.....	83
Chapter 1: Character Creation.....	34	Chapter 6: The World Below	86
Archetypes	34	On the Nature of the Immaterial	86
Careers.....	36	Part 4 Bell, Book, and Candle	88
Secrets.....	40	Chapter 1: General Advice	89
Chapter 2: New Skills and Rules.....	40	On Bad Behavior	89
Skills.....	40	On Party Composition	89
New Rules	42	On the Folly of Armaments and Material Wealth	89
Chapter 3: Magic.....	44	Suggested Reading	89
Thaumaturgy	44	Chapter 2: Plot Threads and Political Tensions.....	90
Compel	44	The Istrian Gold Rush	90
Pyromancy.....	45	The War of Unification.....	90
Exorcise	46	The Faith & the Dissidents.....	91
Magic Implements	46	Dungeons & Delves.....	91
Chapter 4: Talents.....	49	Chapter 3: Allies and Adversaries	92
New Talents.....	49	Beasts	92
Revenant Talents	53	Constructs.....	94
Visitant Talents	55	Humans, Visitants & the Undead	96

INTRODUCTION

A WORLD WITHOUT FLAME

The world of *Sunfall* ended not once, but twice. The first Apocalypse was brought by the death of its sun, and the second — by the destruction of the Sun's artificial replacement. It is a bitter world, a world that has forgotten itself. The vast, crystalline corpse of the Second Sun hangs ponderous overhead, and in the aftermath of its death, fire has vanished from the world. Nothing ignites. The world is quiet, desolate, wreathed in the pall of eternal winter. The ruins of great civilizations dot the landscape, slowly crumbling under the weight of the snow, their most precious treasures untouched for generations, their greatest secrets lost to blind oblivion.

Despite this, life persists. A handful of plant and animal species originally native to the far north have spread far beyond it, and many from warmer climes were altered and adapted for cold, lightless conditions by skilled magicians of ages past. Forests deep as oceans tower over tangled evergreen shrubs and growths of moss and lichen underfoot. Herds of elk, bison, and mammoths walk the plains and the woods; wolves, bears and long-toothed tigers follow, and stranger beasts still dwell close to the ruined towers and laboratories of long-gone sorcerer-kings.

The remnants of human civilization huddle in cities, towns, and villages built over portals to the World Below, a fiery spirit realm that provides heat and trade at the cost of human bodies and souls. The spirits themselves walk the earth or strike pacts with mortals, their terms invariably Faustian — the petitioner's soul in exchange for magic, power, and knowledge. Fire from Below is one of the most valuable commodities on the market, followed closely by human souls and salvaged machinery from ruins of prior ages. Although they cannot hope to recreate or even fully comprehend the past, the people of this world look to the future with hope — the world may be cold and forbidding, but recent years, arriving in the aftermath of a too-long dark age, have brought with them a flourishing of arts, culture and scientific and magical innovation — a Renaissance among the desolation.

THEMES

Sunfall is a post-apocalyptic Gothic fantasy setting for the Genesys Role-Playing Game. Its historical equivalent falls somewhere between the late Renaissance and the 18th century, and its overarching theme is the fragility of human

civilization and social order set against a backdrop of cultural and scientific progress. At the moment, humankind flourishes: a significant portion of the population — those fortunate enough to live in cities and above the poverty line — can forget, at least for a time, that the outside world is a desolate wasteland, frozen and unsuited to human life. This newfound wealth and security makes leaders look outwards, contemplating the idea of political unity in a world that has not known it in centuries — a world that will undoubtedly resist it at every turn. The invention of the printing press, meanwhile, has allowed for a rapid and unprecedented spread of information among the literate, thus causing a proliferation of heretical thought and bringing the part of the world described in this document to the brink of violent schism.

The Gothic aspect of the setting is present in the landscape, majestic in its desolation, and in the presence of the supernatural. Actual practitioners of magic are somewhat uncommon, particularly outside of large cities, but its existence is well-known and beings born of or created through magic — daemons and the undead — walk among mortals, often in the open, both threatening and sublime in their monstrosity. This, of course, only serves to create new divisions in a place already divided, and to tip communities past their breaking points. The arrival of a group of the living dead, a case of daemonic possession, or an accusation of witchcraft — this is all it takes to reduce a formerly thriving community to a frozen desolation.

A *Sunfall* campaign does not have to be set in the midst of mass social upheaval, but rather on the very edge of it. The world is a powder keg of contrasts: rich and poor, city-dwellers and Wasteland holdouts, heretical firebrands and dogmatic counter-reformers, those who celebrate magic and those who condemn it. The breadth of information provided in this document should allow Game Masters and their groups to tell a wide variety of stories and approach a variety of subjects, ranging from exploration and dungeon-delving to religious horror and political intrigue.

TROPES

Sunfall is a heady mixture of Gothic, fantasy, and historical tropes, their selection guided only by whimsy and caprice. Do with them what you will



RUIN

Ruin is a staple of both Gothic literature and fantasy tabletop RPGs: the former is lousy with crumbling estates, the latter — dilapidated temples and dark dungeons. Although often depicted as purely architectural, ruin is not limited to physical structures. Scandal or economic misfortune destroy grand households; mad or incompetent leaders bring low entire governments and religions, nations succumb to infighting and corruption, and natural disasters or outside interference wreak havoc on entire biospheres. Ruin can even be cosmological, presenting the players with a world in which a formerly present deity or deities have abandoned the world, died, or become insane and malevolent. This sense of decay permeates every fiber of *Sunfall*, and its purpose is to create a sense of wonder and mystery, but also of melancholy and desolation: the player characters are drop-lets in an ocean, tiny figures wandering through cyclopean ruins, scavengers picking at the carcass of greatness.

RENAISSANCE

Though far from historical fantasy, *Sunfall* is nevertheless supposed to invoke the image of the Renaissance, particularly as it occurred in Italy and, to a much lesser extent, along the Silk Roads. Great city-states and petty kingdoms, threaded together with trade routes like pearls in a rich tapestry, are a dream world of art and culture. There is a renewed interest in history and the humanities — which means that many nobles and members of the gentry spend obscene amounts of money to sate their appetite for knowledge and for art, commissioning great painters and sculptors to create masterpieces and hiring the foolish and the intrepid to retrieve antiques for their ever-growing collections. Scholars and historians pore over ancient chronicles or classics of literature and philosophy and cherry-pick from the writings of their ancestors, willfully ignoring the ignoble complexity of their thoughts and deeds. Merchants venture further and further in search of riches and exotic goods, and bring back accounts of lands almost too distant for the common man to comprehend. Organized religion, too, flourishes and wields a significant degree of political power — a bishop may not have de facto control of his diocese, but he does have authority over belief (which moves mountains) and access to the coffers of the Church (which moves bigger mountains).

EARLY MODERNITY

Sunfall's second historical influence is the Early Modern period, which begins at the very end of the Renaissance. It is a time of reform and upheaval — the spiritual authority of the Catholic Church, once absolute in Western Europe, suffers a crippling blow from an unruly collection of indignant religious movements armed with and the printing press. War, like religion, experiences significant changes: the bow and crossbow start giving way to the musket, armored knights find their match in squares of pikemen and brigades

of arquebusiers, and professional soldiers replace levied militias. The trappings of feudal society fade into the past, and out emerges a class of people who are neither rich nor poor, who own property, congregate in urban centres, and practice some form of skilled labor.

Early Modern fantasy is not heroic or chivalric. Evil is not cosmic, but human, banal in its mundanity: Early Modern antagonists are individuals like corrupt church officials, amoral mercenary bands, scheming politicians, ruthless inquisitors and fanatical witch-hunters. There is no more glory in war — there never was any to begin with, but the individuals who sustained the illusion have either died out, or merely given up.

ECLITECH & CLOCKPUNK

Even on Earth, technological development is far from the vision of orderly progress that dominates popular culture. It is messy and nonlinear, rife with setbacks and shocking insights that seem far ahead of their time. Add magic to the mix, and it becomes a tangled nightmare: the inhabitants of the world of *Sunfall* are able to construct clockwork automations and arcane engines of fantastic complexity...yet at the same time, the printing press is a relatively recent invention that has taken the world by storm and the steam engine is an unlikely curiosity, rather than the driving force of industry. Overall, this setting falls closer to Leonardo's Venetian workshop than it does to the factories of Victorian Britain: all machinery is intricate clockwork, hand-made by master artisans. Advanced technology, such as it is, has the trappings of magic: while a contemporary reader may think of a weapon that discharges beams of concentrated light as a ray gun or laser rifle, individuals inhabiting a world in which magic is real and firearms are rare might call it an arcane beamcaster.

SPIRITS AND FAUSTIAN BARGAINS

Sunfall's spirits and demons (or daemons) are similar to those one may find in Gothic fiction: immaterial beings, insidious and deceitful, insinuating themselves into mortal minds and bodies, combating shamans and exorcists who would oppose them. Consider the creature possessing Regan in *The Exorcist*, Vanessa's demon from *Penny Dreadful*, or well-spoken Mephistopheles, who came to Doctor Faustus in the guise of a Franciscan friar. Faustian bargains feature prominently in *Sunfall*: a mortal beseeches an older power for magic and knowledge, and pays for it a terrible price. In many stories featuring a Faustian bargain, that power — usually the Devil — gives the mortal petitioner what they wish for a number of years, and then comes to collect their debts. Faustus himself suffers this fate at the hands of Mephistopheles, who drags him to Hell at the end of his twenty-five years. Other, more cunning characters sometimes manage to outwit or outdo their supernatural adversaries: the Devil has no luck in Georgia, slinking back to Hell short one fiddle made of gold.

GRAY MORALITY

Instead of the stark contrast between black and white, good and evil, gray morality provides ambiguity. In any given gray-and-gray conflict, particularly on a large scale, neither side is completely right nor completely wrong — both have justifiable reasons for their behavior and beliefs, as well as goals more complex than “kill everyone” or “save everyone”. There are no easy solutions to any given moral quandary, just as there are no evil sorcerers throwing maidens into volcanoes and no knights in shining armor riding out to stop them. This is not to say that people with strong moral convictions do not exist, but rather that those convictions are constantly tested and subject to change. Characters in gray-and-gray stories are often conflicted about the right or necessary course of action, and they find their assumptions about the world and the nature of good and evil shifting as the story progresses.

MELODRAMA

Emotion runs high in Gothic fiction. Everyone should be soliloquizing, professing love undying, swearing vengeance, and having dramatic standoffs with their hated rivals *all the time*. And how can a Gothic setting stay Gothic without the Gothic villain, that brooding miscreant surrounded by a gaggle of cringing minions as he expounds, with raving gusto, on the dark past that so torments him?



PART 1

RESOLVE, RUIN, AND RENAISSANCE

*“Woe to you, you wicked souls!
Have no hope of ever seeing Heaven.
I come to take you to the other shore,
To endless darkness, to fire and to ice.”*
Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, Canto III (84-87)

IN THIS PART OF THE BOOK, YOU WILL FIND...

- **Chapter 1: As Above, So Below** explains the relationship between the spirit and material worlds and the history of the region covered in this document, and provides a basic understanding of how human life persists in a frozen, sunless world.
- **Chapter 2: Life in a Sunless World** provides a basic understanding of the landscape of the Sunless Age, and insight into the day-to-day life of the inhabitants of city-states and smaller townships.
- **Chapter 3: The Powers That Be** contains general information pertaining to the culture and politics of the major power blocs of the Byssarian — the Mandate of the Faith and the Brimstone Republics — as well as a general overview of holdout peoples who live in the wastelands outside major cities.
- **Chapter 4: Varieties of Belief** describes the spiritual landscape of the Byssarian: the Faith, the major religion of the region, as well as other minor religious traditions and belief systems.
- **Chapter 5: The Mysteries of Magic** concerns itself with the two magical disciplines of the setting — thaumaturgy, the magic of the human soul, and pyromancy, the magic of daemonkind — in addition to specific information about daemons, necromancy, and the undead.
- **Chapter 6: The Marvels of Technology** delineates the extent of technological development in the setting, including brief descriptions of technology of prior ages and the peculiar subculture of scholars, scavengers, and other individuals dedicated to unearthing and selling the secrets of the past.



CHAPTER 1: AS ABOVE, SO BELOW

To understand the history of Arnai — this world — one must first understand its structure and its nature. It consists of two halves: the World Above, a material realm of mortal souls inhabiting physical vessels, and the World Below, a fiery, ethereal realm of disembodied spirits — daemons, as some call them. When a soul perishes in the World Above, it sinks to the World Below, where daemons nourish themselves by stripping the soul of memory and breaking it down into raw spirit essence. Afterwards, new souls form from the scattered remnants of the dead, ready to be born into the World Above. This constant flow of essence between the two realms is integral to their continued survival: without souls to consume, daemons would starve and dissolve, and without daemons to assist it, the reincarnation of souls would grind to a halt, ultimately leaving Arnai devoid of sapient life.

The two Worlds are inseparable. Sometimes, they draw closer to each other, their boundaries becoming less distinct. Daemons find their way to the World Above, possessing the living for a taste of embodied existence, of the pleasures of the flesh. Human oracles kneel over fissures in the earth, inhaling blistering vapors and incanting sacred words to commune with the otherworld. The truly ambitious strike desperate bargains, offering the daemons their very souls in exchange for powerful, fiery magics that cannot be achieved through ordinary arcane study.

Every human culture in existence has a different conception of the World Below and of the places where it comes into contact with the World Above. Some think of it as a divine realm, others — quite the opposite, this due to the fact that the appearance (but not the actions or hazards) of the World Below and its inhabitants changes based on the preconceptions of the mortal observer. A traveler who believes the World Below to be Hell will find themselves trudging through a scorching wasteland populated by all manner of monsters and devils, while another traveler, one with a less harsh view of the other world, journeys through a sacred spirit-realm. Both of these experiences and many more besides are true, because in the end, the World Below is formless and chaotic, and its denizens constantly shift and change in accordance with mortal belief.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MORISTAGIAN EMPIRE

Of all the great empires to have graced the mortal world, there was one whose mastery of the magical arts was beyond compare. Arising east of the Byssarian Seas, the Moristagian Empire was as magnificent as it was cruel, achieving such

a degree of arcane understanding that they could shackle the human soul and bind it to a body of bronze. An empire already fattened with victories against neighboring peoples, the Moristagians had the resources required to turn a curiosity — an executed prisoner transformed into a mechanical servant and presented to the Emperor by an ambitious court magician — into an engine of conquest. Shortly after that fateful day, the Empire commanded scores of voiceless automated workers, toiling in foundries that churned out mechanical legions to further the ambition of their masters.

It was an empire of the living, raised to the height of its glory on the backs of the imprisoned dead. Most of the neighboring powers fought back and met their end on the spears of bronze men, while a few others surrendered willingly. The Moristagian Emperor's tireless metal army, the Ten Thousand Immortals, was far kinder, far more merciful than any invading human force could ever hope to be. The mechanized dead did not rape and pillage, did not desert and band into murderous gangs of looters that would plague the countryside for years to come. Their advance was ceaseless, orderly, preceded by the arrival of well-spoken dignitaries who always offered a choice to the kings and generals who would defy them: surrender peacefully, give to the Empire a gift of earth and water, or be cast in bronze and bound in eternal service to the August Throne.

But not all citizens of the Empire agreed with this flagrant defiance of the natural order. A religion — one whose original name is lost to time, one that is now known only as the Faith — understood reincarnation as a Great Wheel. A sacred mechanism, the Great Wheel combated the decay and corruption that sprung from the World Below, which the Faith knew as Hell. To interfere with the Wheel, argued these early Faithful, was a crime — not only against humanity, for the souls inside Immortal bodies suffered perpetual agony, but against the will of Heaven itself. Though the Empire attempted to stamp out this threat to the wars that so enriched it, the Faith captured the hearts and minds of the people, spread far and wide until it could not be ignored, until its high priests stood behind the August Throne, giving whispered counsel to a ruler they decreed divinely ordained.

But the foundries of the Empire did not stop. Its mechanical legions continued their indefatigable march, because the cost of victory, the cost of what Old Imperial scholars called progress, could never be too high. And, after all, sinful souls, seditious souls, souls who questioned the Throne, had to serve a fitting penance and better the lot of the righteous living before returning to the Wheel. Thus entwined, the Empire and the Faith flourished until the death of the Sun a thousand years ago. As with most information dating to this turbulent epoch, this Age of the Dying Sun, recorded history is scant and what few primary sources remain often



contradict each other. Below is an attempt to reconstruct a cohesive narrative from the few facts that remain consistent between all extant chronicles.

THE AGE OF THE DYING SUN

The end of the Sun was a slow and painful one, lasting roughly a century. It began with a gradual leaching of heat and color, sunrises that would take longer and longer with each passing day. The world grew colder and darker; trees withered and animals wasted away until the day no light crested the horizon. Fire, too, has disappeared — without the Sun, nothing would ignite, and without fire, without a means of staving off the encroaching chill, humanity faced extinction. It was a doom that many foresaw, with the greatest minds of the Empire desperately seeking a means of outlasting it. Some constructed great crystal domes over their cities, to shield them from the worst of the storms. Others gathered and cataloged crop varieties, stored seeds in great underground vaults. Many more labored to alter flora and fauna to suit this new, sunless world. The most skilled of these ancient sorcerers, however, looked for a means to preserve humanity itself — a staggeringly ambitious project, considering the scope and severity of the situation. A rapidly cooling world. An empire sprawling across two seas and the shores of three continents. Mass panic and popular uprisings, galvanized by centuries of resentment towards the nobility and the mages — it was so easy to blame the sorcerers, with their machines and their towers, for bringing forth the Apocalypse in fit of arrogance. Vast northern armies, trailed by vaster armies of refugees, marching south in desperate search of warmth. And an economy devastated by a great war against the spirit world — against Hell and its demons.

THE SAGES AND THE FIRST CHTHONIC MARCH

The royal mages' attempts were desperate. The first, Auxentios, was in favor of leaving Arnai behind altogether and seeking out a new world with a new sun. Having drawn up plans for great black barges that could sail the celestial aether between and beyond the stars, Auxentios led an expedition seeking a new home, never to return. The second, Amestris, dedicated herself to transcending the laws of magic and the immutable nature of the human soul— instead of binding, destroying, or dividing the soul, as her predecessors have done, she would alter it, grant it the ability to shield the body from the cold and conjure flame at will. Her research culminated with an arcane disaster: the inexplicable disappearance of an entire metropolis — the Shining City that still captures the imaginations of many scholars and adventurers from across the known world. The third and last, Oxyathres, proposed that for humanity to survive, it must first perish. (Scholars of later years would credit him as the father of necromancy).

In the end, it was the Faith that held the key to salvation. Armed with millions of devotees, immense wealth, and the backing of the royal family along with some of the greatest mages of their time, the clergy staged a massive and successful invasion of the World Below, the First Chthonic March. The reasoning behind the March was simple: although fire has vanished from the World Above, the Sun's death had no effect on Hell; therefore, the death of the Sun must have been the work of the forces of corruption that dwelled within. At the end of a long and grueling conquest, the Faith's militant arm, spearheaded by the Order of St. Khosrau the Adamant, routed and captured a daemon-king of immense power. They dubbed him the Adversary, and believed him to be an emanation of the Devil who stood in opposition to their god. They bound him with powerful magics, brought him to the World Above, and placed him inside an artificial, crystal Sun to be raised up and set in orbit. This act restored fire to the world and began the Blessed Age, or the Age of the Second Sun.

THE BLESSED AGE AND THE NEW EMPIRE

During the Blessed Age, the Adamant Order tightened its grip on the Adversary's former domain in the World Below, restructuring it to better fit the Faith's vision of the afterlife — one in which the wicked are punished, and the righteous are permitted to pass through unscathed and able to reincarnate more completely than ever before. They captured and converted daemons to Faithful doctrine, punished resistance with starvation, and the few spirits who did not bow down to their new masters fled to the World Above. In the meanwhile, human civilization rebuilt, although much knowledge was irreparably lost during the Age of the Dying Sun. While the Faith waged its wars in the World Below, the Empire suffered so greatly that the end of the March saw the end of the Old Empire, and the rise of a new one from its ashes — though one of its two capitals fell to civil unrest and revolutionary sentiment, the other remained. The surviving members of the royal family and roughly a third of the court managed to flee to the Western Capital, where they could begin anew.

Even at the height of the Blessed Age, the New Empire was but a shadow of its former self, both in terms of territorial possessions and arcane, scientific, and historical knowledge. The Imperial bureaucracy diverted resources it could once use to maintain Imperial holdings in the material world to Hell, which saw frequent rebellions against the iron rule of the Adamant Order. The much-feared Immortals vanished, lost in the chaos of the Dying Sun, and thus were unable to respond to provincial uprisings. But the Empire adapted, taking a softer approach to its subjects and neighbors, turning to mercantilism, political maneuvering, and espionage to stave off their rivals and preserve what territories remained. The Faith, in the meanwhile, made use of the New Empire's trade network and spread far beyond the borders of its home, the clergy flourishing until it superseded the power of the Throne in all but name.

THE SUNFALL AND THE SUNLESS AGE

The Blessed Age lasted for roughly four centuries, and came to an end when the Adversary found a fault in the design of his crystal prison. The consequences were nothing short of apocalyptic: the Sun ruptured, and its furious captive bore down on the world like a comet, laying waste to cities and vast swaths of land. He set the World Above ablaze, and then left it to freeze — a catastrophic series of natural disasters scholars call the Sunfall. Satisfied with his vengeance — the destruction, and the end of fire — the Adversary returned to restore himself to his rightful position as a king in the World Below, rallying three-quarters of subjugated daemons to his side and forcing most Adamants to retreat to the World Above. Despite this, the Order managed to maintain control of a portion of their holdings in the World Below. The Adamantine Province, as it came to be known, now functions as a conquered nation that provides hellfire and support to surviving Faithful remnants of the New Empire while waging an endless war against the Adversary. Because the royal family and all but a few members of these high nobility perished during the Sunfall, the August Throne stands empty until the soul of an emperor is born again into this world. The Pontifex of the Faith oversees the remains of the Empire in the interim — a rule by Mandate of the Faith.

Seeing the Sunfall as proof of the Faith's folly, a number of Imperial provinces, those who had staged unsuccessful rebellions against the Throne during the Dying and Second Suns, renounced their ties to the religion, instead opting to form trade partnerships with Hell — souls, bodies, and other goods in exchange for fire. Not all succeeded in this venture; the remnants became a quarrelsome body of city-states: the Brimstone Republics. Although the Mandate and the Republics despise each other, there has yet to be a great war between the two powers. They seem content to snarl at each other across a cultural and religious divide, impose trade embargoes, and wage the occasional petty war, usually fought by mercenaries and tithed peoples who stubbornly cling to their ancestral homes in the frozen Wastes. The most recent political upheaval of the Sunless Age is the Sulfurite Wars of Unification: Sabine Verdurio, the Prince of the Republic of Esca, has declared his intent to conquer and unify the other Republics into a Brimstone Kingdom, and though the idea still seems ludicrous to many, his success becomes more likely with each passing season. It is enough for Mandate powers to begin gathering their own armies, lest the western invader come knocking on the gates of their cities.

EVER-LIVING FIRE

Though the Sun is gone, the cold is not absolute. The lifeless chill of the Void between the stars does not encroach on Arnai to an extent that would make survival entirely impossible. A well-fed, hale person properly equipped against the cold can endure for up to a day without heat or shelter if they

venture outside, provided the winds stay quiet. Long-distance travel is both possible and frequent among certain subsets of the population: nomads, merchants, mercenaries and vagabonds; the daring, the foolish, the most ambitious and the most desperate. These travelers either hire guides capable of conjuring fire, or carry their flame with them, carefully preserved in mageglass spheres, guarding it with their lives and never, ever allowing it to go out.

The death of the First and Second Suns has done something peculiar to the physics of this world: natural mechanisms of ignition simply do not work. Striking a firesteel produces no spark, and the friction of a bow drill against drywood generates a negligible amount of heat but no ember. An existing flame will burn and spread as normal, consuming fuel and warming the surroundings as long as there's fuel to burn; however, the loss of all natural flame is a commonly accepted fact. The only fire in this world is hellfire from Below, smokeless and oxblood red in color, bargained for or taken by force. Heat is both a vital, shared resource and a precious commodity: something to covet, something to trade, something to hoard whenever possible.

Life in the Sunless Age is characterized by its fragility. All it takes to kill a thriving township is a removal of its heat source, whether it be an open passage to the World Below, a communal flame kept lit at all costs, a store of magically-contained hellfire, or its resident pyromancer. Most small communities have at least two of the above, with additional contingency measures in the event of a disaster — constant vigilance, networks of messengers, and a means to send a distress signal to the next town over. It is not uncommon, however, for small, isolated towns and villages to go dark and quiet, and for travelers to never reach their destinations. Large cities, with populations numbering in the tens or hundreds of thousands, often sprawl under transparent mageglass domes that shield them from the worst of the winds, and always have a massive Gate to the World Below in close vicinity — a trade connection and source of sustainable ambient heat for the city and its immediate countryside. Cities located entirely underground are, sadly, not viable — though modern waste disposal and recycling systems are efficient, they are not efficient enough, and the human soul needs starlight the same way a green plant needs the Sun.



CHAPTER 2: LIFE IN A SUNLESS WORLD

How does life persist after the loss of fire?

THE WILDERNESS

Many people, mostly holdouts, take issue with city-dwellers describing everything outside their walls as a wasteland, because it is anything but. Certainly, the wilderness is dangerous, the climate unforgiving, but the environment is hostile to human life, rather than all life. The last-ditch efforts of Moristagian sages to preserve and fortify flora and fauna netted enough viable organisms to create sustainable ecosystems for a cold and dark world. And though the Blessed Age's range of temperatures was nothing like the brutal chill of the Sunless Age, enough of these organisms persisted until the Sunfall, either in the northern wilds or as parts of menageries and private collections. Mammoths, white tigers, and trees with leaves of black velvet, were shows of status and opulence, gifts given to and received from foreign rulers. When the Sun shattered, these luxuries became necessities, and wildlife that fled the Byssarian heat returned to the place of its birth, to be fruitful and to multiply.

All life, even life made for a sunless world, hungers for heat. Warmer parts of the world — those near geothermal fissures, active volcanoes, and passages to the World Below — are always lush. Plantlife burgeons, growing at unprecedented speeds, and beasts gather to feed on it or each other. Bioluminescence is a common trait of flowering plant life, particularly in forests. The leaves of most plants barring a few deciduous species, are a matte black or dark blue. Most people around the Twin Seas have likely never seen, and will likely never see, a single green leaf in their entire lives.

THE SEAS AND WATERWAYS

As one can see on the map, the name so often applied to the Byssarian — the Twin Seas — is a misnomer, the legacy of ancient sea captains with limited understanding of the geography of the region. The Greater Sea is much bigger than the Lesser, and divided into the Sea of Silk to the north of the Kyriades, the Narrow Sea to the south of the islands, and the Dappled Sea to the east. The Sea of Silk is named for the relative abundance of giant pen shells from whose fibers skilled craftsmen weave fine golden silks. The Narrow Sea is just that: narrow, separating the northern coast of Khera from the islands of the Kyriades and the Sea of Silk. Dappled Sea derives its name from patches of bioluminescent algae common around the eastern shores.

The Lesser Sea, on the other side of the Pearl Strait, is shallower and more prone to freezing than the Greater. Its bounty is scarce compared to that of the Greater Sea — there are no whales in the Lesser Sea, no silk-bearing shells, and fewer large fish — and its main value lies in providing a

quicker route from the Great Western Ocean to the Sullen Ocean to the east, and better trade access to wealthy nations that lie east and south of the Mandate.

Contrary to what one might think, the seas and rivers do not freeze in their entirety. Permanent ice sheets do exist, and are most frequent along coastlines with a lighter human presence. Cities tend to clear away the ice for ease of harbor operation and maritime industry, and natural patches of ice may break due to collisions with free-floating masses of ice, or the opening of large Gates on the seafloor. Just like the lands around them, these waters are far from lifeless: fish are plentiful, as are whales (in the Greater Sea), mollusks, black plants and algae, and stranger creatures lurking in the uncharted depths.

Unlike the Greater and Lesser Byssarian, the Great Western Ocean has very few ice sheets, making the shipping lanes along the western coast some of the most contested and most profitable.

GATES, GEOTHERMAL FISSURES, AND VOLCANOES

Many people on Arnai understand volcanic eruptions and earthquakes to be the physical manifestation of daemonic activity in the World Below. This assessment isn't entirely untrue; conflicts Below do cause eruptions Above, but it isn't entirely correct, either — sometimes, a geyser field is just a geyser field, and not a council of devils squabbling in the otherworld. Still, this doesn't deter particularly desperate individuals from making offerings in these places in hopes that someone would answer from the other side.

The opening of Gates to the World Below often occur during or after bursts of geothermal activity. Most Gates look like caverns in the sides of mountains or yawning fissures in the earth, issuing forth the stench of sulfur and an unbearable heat. If one peers into an open Gate, they will see nothing but a blistering darkness. Natural Gates occur spontaneously, are rarely larger than a man is tall, and usually disappear within a month of their opening. Powerful daemons can open Gates between the Worlds and hold them open — this is the promise at the core of every Brimstone Republic's Charter, a document that is both code of law and binding agreement between a city and its otherworldly patrons. The size of an artificial Gate depends entirely on the daemon who creates it — a great and ancient daemon can make a rift large enough to heat and sustain an entire metropolis, while a lesser one can barely keep a creek from freezing.

The Gates located inside cities look like actual gates — that is, the caverns where they begin have doors and shutters

attached, along with a customs house and a large detachment of soldiers, mages, pyromancers, and other security personnel tasked with monitoring traffic between the two Worlds.

SEASONS & TIMEKEEPING

The modern calendar begins with the Sunfall, and years are recorded as part of the Sunless Age. A year consists of 13 months; each month is 28 days and 4 weeks; each week is 7 days. The Crystal Sun, though damaged beyond repair, still collects and amplifies starlight, casting the land and sea in a ghostly pearlescent light. It moves through the heavens in geocentric orbit, occupying the precise position of the vanished true Sun, rising and setting as it once did and making it possible to distinguish day from night by looking skyward. The movements of Arnai's two moons — great silver Enzu and little blue Ningal — remain just as constant, and are the basis of certain foreign calendars.

One can see quite easily in all directions on a bright and cloudless day, though carrying a lantern is still advisable. To a reader accustomed to sunlight, a bright day in the Sunless Age would look very much like the pale hour before dawn; conversely, dark nights are that much darker. And if there is one good thing to be said about the Sunfall is that it revealed to humanity the true glory and splendor of the heavens. There are few sights as breathtaking as the dance of an aurora — a jewel-toned ripple in the aether — through the velvet darkness around it, refracted and reflected many times in the cloud of glittering shards around the great husk of the Crystal Sun.

As temperatures don't change much anymore, seasons are reckoned by light level and storm intensity — summer and spring are milder and lighter, fall and winter are darker and stormier. As before the Sunfall, nations wage wars during late spring and summer, with fall and winter as times to retreat, resupply, and reconsider one's position. The Mandate's Chthonic Marches against the Adversary are one nota-

CELESTIAL SPHERES

It is a well-known fact that all nearby celestial bodies move around Arnai on paths along the inner surfaces of aetherial spheres while performing their own epicyclic revolutions. The great astronomical dispute of the age is whether Arnai, its moons, and its host of stars follow the same pattern, revolving around a hypothetical center of the universe, or whether Arnai itself is that center. There is a small but disproportionately vocal number of scholars who propose a heliocentric model of the universe as the order of things during the First Sun, but that theory holds as much water as the absurd and antiquated notion of the world as a flat disc balanced between the horns of the Celestial Ox.

ble exception to this rule, as the weather in Hell is not subject to seasonal change.

Months are numbered, not named.

Days of the week are named after stages of an ideal human life as described in the Faithful holy texts. A person begins as a child (a scion), attains mastery of a craft and wisdom of age, then dies and is guided to the afterlife by the Watcher at the Threshold, where their soul is weighed and measured by Heaven's Judges. Soul's Day and Judges' Day are supposed to be days of rest and contemplation, but many choose to rest in taverns and contemplate the bottle instead of, as the priesthood suggests, the ultimate fate of their immortal souls.

Scion's Day, Wright's Day, Master's Day, Sage's Day, Watcher's Day, Soul's Day, Judges' Day.

Sample Dates:

Judges' Day, 28th of the First Month, 477 Sunless.

Soul's Day, 13th of the Third Month, 125 Blessed.

Master's Day, 2nd of the Fourth Month, 25 Dying Sun.

CITIES, TOWNSHIPS, AND VILLAGES

Major cities have populations that number in the tens or hundreds of thousands. Their streets and thoroughfares are cobbled, though once one leaves the city center and wealthier neighborhoods, one is likely to encounter a warren of narrow streets and alleyways paved with nothing but dirt and packed snow. On warmer days or in the immediate vicinity of buildings and structures that pour heat out into the streets, this quickly becomes a freezing slush. Slick, sucking mud is an unfortunate reality of life in the slums of both Mandate cities and the Brimstone Republics. There are trees within the confines of cities, but very few parks — only small plots on some rooftops, and the pleasure gardens of the noble and the wealthy.

Because every extant city has been continuously inhabited for hundreds, if not thousands, of years, many of the structures found therein are ancient or built on top of ancient foundations. Modern Mandate architecture consciously emulates the soaring Old Imperial style with its domed roofs, slender towers and painted archways, while the Republics have a more patchwork appearance — a combination of local style and generations of architects tugging their city in the most fashionable direction of their time.

Townhouses have heated floors and can be heated room by room to conserve fuel, while tenements have central heat, and only during the night and evening hours; landlords love nothing more than to count their money as they raise rents and skimp on fuel. Most buildings, save for the oldest and most decrepit, have hot running water, and each borough has an underworks, a collection of service tunnels and chambers dedicated to maintenance of the sewage system and processing of the city's waste into fuel. This is where one will find some of the largest and most sophisticated arcane mechanisms of the age — waste disposal and sanitation are as

important to the health of the city as heating and clean water.

Some cities and towns in the Byssarian are situated under great crystalline domes that shield them from the worst of the weather and help contain heat. These domes aren't perfectly circular but are rather composed of octagonal segments, some of which can be opened or shuttered to admit visitors or provide ventilation. Overall, domed cities are warmer than their counterparts, but are often overcrowded, have stale air, and require the government to keep a small army of mages, laborers and engineers on hand for dome maintenance and operation.

Smaller townships are in many ways like cities, but they are often newer and built on a far more modest scale. Depending on the size of the town, it may have sophisticated infrastructure, a dome, its own Gate and, depending on its loyalties, a Faithful battalion or an Infernal Charter binding it to a patron from the World Below.

NOMENCLATURE

The Byssarian resembles, if you squint at the map just so, the Earth's Eastern Mediterranean — and so the names of people who live around the Greater and Lesser Seas resemble the names of people who live on the shores of the Mediterranean and Black Seas, with a touch of antiquity. If one moves westward on the map, the names of people and places will resemble Spanish and Italian ones; if one goes east and south, they will be derived from Turkish, Persian, Arabic, and southern Slavic languages. The Kyriades and the peninsula immediately north of the islands veer Ancient Greek, but have a significant share of names that are directly translated to English to create a sense of the local language as a trade tongue that is spoken and understood across much of the region (e.g. Berenike is translated as Victory-in-Her-Hands and Androkles becomes Glory). Ithobaal borrows heavily from Phoenician and Sumerian names despite its location on the western cape — like Carthage, it was once a far-flung colony of a people who originally came from eastern shores, a colony grown richer and mightier than its parent cities.

Finally, many people and places across the region have translated names that say something about their bearers. A village sitting on the junction of two rivers may be called Watersmeet, a steep ravine with a fast babbling brook at its bottom may be called Singing Water Gulch; an elderly bandit chief may simply go by Uncle, and a holdout child whose parents belong to once-feuding clans might be called Makepeace.

AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND DRINK

Despite the lack of light and brutally unforgiving temperatures, agriculture is possible, albeit difficult. Farmers grow a significant proportion of their crops in greenhouses or under domes, but hardier, magically altered varieties can survive on raised and heated platforms close to small gateways between the Worlds. It is not uncommon for isolated

THE PEOPLE OF THE TWIN SEAS

Beyond a shared past as people conquered and ruled by the Old and New Moristagian Empires, the denizens of the lands around the two seas have no single ethnicity or culture. The concept of race explicitly does not exist — while everyone is aware that people from the north are often paler and people from southern lands tend to have darker skin tones, one's physical appearance cannot compare in importance with one's clothing, the language they speak, any overt shows of religious or political affiliation, and their apparent wealth. A wealthy Pagamean merchant might look down on a recent immigrant from the Wastes not because they are darker or lighter or have a different hair texture, but because the quilted coat they wear is heavily patched and three decades out of fashion and because they speak with a strong provincial accent.

In addition, the Byssarian Seas and the lands surrounding them are a small part of a much larger world. There are vast continents to the north, south, and southeast, oceans to the east and the west, and countless roads and trade routes that run far beyond the confines of the map on page 14. The Byssarian is the crossroads of the world — if players wish to create characters from distant lands or characters whose families came from distant lands, they are welcome to do so.

farming communities to have arrangements with their downstairs neighbors. In some places this manifests as outright paganism (the difference between a harvest god and a powerful daemon holding open a gateway that heats the earth around it is rather academic); in Mandate lands, particularly desperate Faithful homesteaders perform astounding feats of logical contortionism to reconcile their beliefs with the bargains that permit their continued existence. In country stories about fire-witches, those witches are most often successful farmers, millers, or landowners, and when poor circumstances or a charismatic leader whip an isolated Faithful commune into a witch-finding frenzy, it is those individuals who find themselves on the receiving end of violent popular zealotry.

The average person eats a lot of tubers, mushrooms, and grains; meat and fish make infrequent appearances at the table of the average city-dweller, but are a staple among nomadic holdouts and the wealthy. Fresh fruit and vegetables are a luxury, but preserves — pickled, sugared, or roasted and marinated in oil — are cheaper, and widely consumed. Imported or difficult to cultivate crops, such as peppers, tomatoes, and citrus fruits, are almost unimaginable

luxuries only present at the tables of the rich. To compensate for the lack of variety, people spice and add handfuls of fresh or dried herbs to their food and drink. Most herbs and certain spices are reasonably cheap — ginger, pepper, aniseed and nutmeg — but others, such as saffron and cloves, are prohibitively expensive. When a highwayman sleeps, they dream about spice merchants traveling without an escort — a few sackfuls of cinnamon or cloves is enough to raise a pauper to sit among the rich.

Tea is an Eastern novelty, brought over by foreign merchants traveling northwest along the Royal Road and sold in the form of bricks or cakes. It is particularly popular in Mandate cities, which have an abundance of tea houses where the local residents converse, exchange news, or attend performances and debates conducted by poets, musicians, and traveling scholars. Coffee is outrageously expensive, unknown to all but the richest of the rich, and imported from the southern kingdom of Sedjai.

HONOR & DUELLING

Personal and familial honor are of immense import — though what precisely constitutes that honor varies by culture; for instance, calling a man a liar is a deathly offense in the Mandate, yet a low-caliber slight in the Republics. Insults to one's family name, however, are not to be tolerated

without some form of retribution. In the Wastes, this means that one of the chief reasons nomadic clans band into coalitions or refuse to cooperate is bad blood, either recent or ancient — some of the older clans go so far as to keep ledgers of ancestral grudges. In cities, honor becomes posturing, pageantry, and a means to undermine one's rivals. The cleverest of nobles and courtiers issue insults and dismissals with surgical precision, knowing that to fail to challenge an insult, or to decline a duel — even if it is a duel one cannot win, or a duel to the death — can be a socially ruinous sign of weakness. There is no worse thing to be than a coward.

In addition to being a means of defending one's honor, duelling is, perhaps, the best-known and most popular form of sport around the Byssarian Seas. Everyone who's anyone knows the rules, from the most effete dandies to the most pious of priests or the most hardened of wasteland outriders. In some cities, the best, most famous fencing masters are more renowned for their victories than generals are for theirs. (This is a source of much consternation for the generals). The current set of duelling rules is an Escan invention, a means of weaning the public off blood sports and stopping the gentry from murdering each other over the slightest insult. Instead of fighting to the death or serious injury, the modern duellist fights to three marks — three successful strikes against the opponent, all under the watchful gaze of an impartial duelist.

CHAPTER 3: THE POWERS THAT BE

During the First and Second Suns, the lands surrounding the Byssarian Seas had a mild, mediterranean climate; now they are as cold and desolate as the rest of the world. The preferred method of traveling across the seas is in sled-ships that glide across the ice or sail across the waters. The last remnants of the New Empire are situated on the eastern coast of the Greater Byssarian and ruled by the Mandate of the Faith, while the Brimstone Republics dominate the west and the south. Neither power is a nation — they are loose coalitions of fortified city-states,

each governing a number of smaller settlements who pay a tax for protection and provide troops and supplies in the event of a war.

Currently, the region is on the brink of turmoil: the Mandate's sphere of influence wanes while the Republic's are on the rise, with the city-state of Esca spearheading a movement to unify them into a single kingdom. This is met with a significant degree of resistance: naturally, the Escan Prince assumes that the mantle of rulership will fall to him, and the rest of the Sulfurite rulers resent that notion, on the grounds of their own ambition and the Republics' history of rebellion and hard-earned freedom from Imperial rule.

Meanwhile, to the east, an alternate translation of the Faithful holy texts has created a Dissident movement within the Faith, which takes issue with the absolute authority of Faithful nobility as advocated by mainstream doctrine. The Mandate is facing pressure from the Adamant Order to conduct a thorough purge of the heretics, a task Mandate authorities cannot accomplish as most Dissidents have gone to ground or sought refuge in the Republics after the first wave of imprisonments, executions, and exiles. The Faith will either suffer a schism or be reformed — and only time will tell which will come to pass.

ON WAYS AND MEASURES

The map of the Byssarian provided on these pages does not provide a scale. This is because exact numbers are often irrelevant to RPG campaigns — very few tabletop scenarios require exact calculations of distance, and most in-game travel happens “at the speed of plot.” For the sake of reference, however, the Greater Byssarian Sea is a little smaller than the Mediterranean, and the distance from Esca to Pagamea is roughly the same as the distance from Barcelona to Istanbul.



THE BRIMSTONE REPUBLICS

The Brimstone Republics are a motley collection of free cities, unified in their opposition to the Mandate in theory, but fiercely independent and preoccupied with trade squabbles and territorial rivalries in practice. Though diverse in terms of culture and language, the Republics share two overarching traits: allegiance to the Adversary and an insistence on electing their leaders. Denizens of the Republics, called Sulfurites, balk at the notion of living under a hereditary ruler who can't be unseated by their people. They have fought too hard and too long for their independence from the Empire, and firmly believe that any leader who does not have the fear of their people keeping them in line is not a leader worth having.

These lofty ideals lose some of their luster when one considers the fact that only citizens can vote and that not every Sulfurite is a citizen, as well as the fact that bribery, blackmail, and misinformation are as effective at accumulating votes for the right candidate as good intentions and a well-run campaign. For all their posturing about equality and democracy, the Sulfurites make no pretense to virtue in the Faithful sense — instead, they embrace the dark reputation of their patron with vim and brio, and scoff in derision at the delicate sensibilities of the Mandate. Why look to the Heavens, to a god that has clearly forsaken its Faithful, when one can look down, towards the future? Why fight an endless, fruitless war against an immortal enemy when one can embrace him instead? Aligning oneself with the Devil is the

surest path towards damnation, but isn't every soul born into this bitter, ruined world already damned by virtue of having to live in it?

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

The political landscape of the Republics shifts rapidly: one year, two cities may be steadfast allies, the next — bitter enemies. Municipal politics are similarly unpredictable and rife with scandal and intrigue: fortunes rise and fall in a single day, and blackmail and assassination are distressingly common occurrences among both land-owning gentry and elected officials. A typical Republic has a Merchants' Council and a Petty Council, the former representing the city's richest denizens and the latter elected from individual boroughs and neighborhoods of the city. Both Councils, in turn, answer to the Prince, an official elected by the Merchants' Council to serve in a supervisory capacity, usually for the rest of their natural lifespan. Considering that daemons aren't uncommon in the Republics and the death of the body does not always constitute the end of one's life, a sufficiently canny and capable Prince could theoretically retain their title indefinitely.

Each Republic has a Charter, which serves as both code of law and a binding agreement between a vassal of the Adversary and a city: the city's Gate to the World Below remains open and provides heat and flame in exchange for continued trade relations and a tithe, which is usually paid with the souls of condemned criminals and citizens

who die of sickness, exposure or old age. A Charter also protects the Republic's human citizens from unsanctioned possession — daemons who have sworn loyalty to the Republic's otherworldly patron cannot violate the Charter, and those who have not risk severe punishment for violating it. Citizenship is hereditary, but can be granted by the Prince or the Merchants' Council, purchased, or obtained in other, more dubious ways. If one wishes to relinquish their citizenship, they can, but few choose to do so — most prefer life in the Republics, as vicious and cut-throat as it can get, to freezing out in the Wastes.

CULTURE & RELATIONS

Bowing to no god and viewing the Adversary as a distant, vaguely benevolent patron rather than an embodiment of primordial evil, the Sulfurites value personal freedom and self-reliance above all. The Republics are, allegedly, a land of opportunity and advancement; the way Sulfurites like to tout it, a holdout nobody can become a famed scholar, a Petty Councillor or the owner of a successful enterprise if they work hard enough at it. There is some truth to that notion — compared to the Mandate, at least, there's a much greater degree of upward mobility. Many Sulfurites are literate, and anyone who can afford higher education may study at a university regardless of their birth. However, the gulf between the rich and the poor is vast, and there are just as many opportunities for failure as there are for success... and the consequences for such failure can be dire. Instead of going to a debtors' prison, the most desperate and destitute often wind up renting or selling their bodies to fleshless daemons, or, in some cases, forfeiting their souls and their lives in order to save their loved ones from a lifetime of debt.

It is unsurprising, then, that the soul trade flourishes in the Republics. With the appropriate permits and enough money, it is entirely possible to legally purchase droves of disembodied human souls. Those are generally kept in engraved quartz lenses the size and thickness of a man's palm, a method of storage that allows merchants to examine and appraise a normally invisible spirit. Most merchants who deal in souls offer their wares to wizards' universities (for scientific study and implementation in machinery), or cater to wealthy daemons with particular tastes and preferences. Human souls are in many ways similar to wine: the very best ones are intoxicating, multilayered and complex, enriched with hardship and aged to perfection.

Though cleverness and unscrupulous ambition are the qualities most valued by the Sulfurites, the residents of the Republics are not without a sense of honor. Personal and familial vendettas are incredibly common and confrontations, particularly those in which pride is stung, family is insulted, or lovers are accused of infidelity are often melodramatic, and often end in duels. Duelling scars, particularly upon one's face, are seen as attractive and worn proudly, as badges of courage — just as they are in Faithful lands.

In the eyes of the Mandate, the Republics are a hotbed of blasphemy and infernal corruption, but the harsh reality of life on Arnai makes for strange bedfellows. It's not uncommon for merchants to trade in goods from both places and for less scrupulous sorts on both sides to forge trade permits and ferry contraband. The holdouts and nomadic clans of the Wastes, meanwhile, view the Republics with a mix of respect, fear and derision — trading with them is profitable, but these great cities are often too close and too hungry for comfort, and their residents too soft to survive outside their domed cities.

THE MANDATE OF THE FAITH

The main governing body of the former Western Provinces of the New Empire, the Mandate of the Faith is comprised of Faithful clergy, monastic orders, and the co-opted remnants of Imperial bureaucracy. It is, without a doubt, the oldest extant institution on Arnai, one whose name has its roots in the idea that in the event that the August Throne ever becomes vacant, the highest echelons of the Faithful clergy are obligated to oversee the Empire in the absent monarch's stead. This has been the case since the end of the Blessed Age, as the royal dynasty perished during the Sunfall and no suitable heir has surfaced since. (There has been a truly staggering quantity of aspiring Imperial pretenders, however.) Lacking a *de jure* ruler and central government, the Mandate is not a unified state, but rather a complex system of obligations and alliances between a number of Faithful city-states, their royalty and nobility, smaller protectorates, the clergy, and Pagamea, the former Imperial capital — and while it is technically possible for two or more Faithful city-states to wage war against one another, such wars are vanishingly rare.

Though its cities are few in number, Mandate territories are vast, and the Mandate itself is byzantine and full of secrets. It is conservative and authoritarian and utterly ruthless when it comes to stamping out heretical thought. Sometimes, it is predatory and corrupt, prone to espionage and dark machinations. Yet at the same time, the Mandate collects tithes and builds roads, upholds the peace between its polities, and provides a social safety net for its poor and destitute. To the Faithful, the Mandate and its component states are a continuation of a proud legacy, the inheritors of thousands of years of history and culture and knowledge, their very existence — a valiant battle against the forces of darkness and a testament to the strength of the human spirit. Where the Sulfurites fall to decadence and temptation, where they forget themselves and their Imperial heritage, the Faithful stand firm, and remember who they are. As Pagamea has endured the most perilous events in human history, from the Dying Sun to countless attempted invasions during the Blessed Age to the Sunfall itself, so will they, for all ages to pass.



GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

The single most powerful individual in the Mandate is the Pontifex, a high priest or priestess who represents the will of the Faith's solitary god on Arnai, bridging the Heavens and the mortal world. The Pontifex's rule is not absolute, however — most monumental decisions, both political and ecclesiastical, are made by the Synod, a council that includes the highest-ranking members of the Faithful clergy, including the cardinals and the archchancellor of the Inquisition. The Pontifex may overturn decisions reached by the majority of the Synod, but this occurs rarely and often costs the Pontifex a significant degree of political support and influence on the council.

Instead of attempting to yoke together its geographically and culturally disparate holdings, the Mandate favors a fairly hands-off style of government, leaving local matters in the hands of local nobility and focusing instead on the collection of taxes and maintenance of infrastructure. When it does feel the need to exercise its power on a local level, the Mandate's approach is subtle: behind the queen or king of every city is a small army of bureaucrats, tax collectors, magistrates and other civil servants, individuals who either grease the wheels of administration or make it grind to a halt. Clerical workers, in other words — and any wise ruler ought to remember that in the Mandate, higher education is often synonymous with ecclesiastical affiliation. And if co-opting the inner workings of a government is not enough to bring a rebellious king to heel, the cardinals and Pontifex possess the power of excommunication, as well as the ability to call upon the Orders Militant, monastic organizations that dedicate themselves to worship and the study of war and magic, in the event of a crisis.

The most powerful of the Orders Militant, the Order of St. Khosrau the Adamant, rules the Adamantine Province — the portion of Hell that remains under human control. The Grandmaster of the Order functions as both general and governor, fighting a war against the Adversary and administering the Mandate's infernal holdings. In recognition of their service to the Mandate and the importance access to the Province plays in the Mandate's continued survival, the Adamant Order is the only Order Militant with its own seat on the Synod. This seat does, however, remain empty for most of the meetings: the Adamantine Province is constantly at war, and the Grandmaster is usually more needed Below than they are Above.

CULTURE & RELATIONS

Faithful societies are a lot more stratified than their Sulfurite counterparts; there is precious little in the way of upward mobility for those of common birth. According to the Faith, one is only born a peasant or laborer as restitution for sins committed in past incarnations, and if the peasant or laborer performs their duties diligently, endures their trials, and lives

a life of righteousness, they will enjoy higher status in their next life. Those of noble birth must have led lives of great virtue to be born into such privilege, and thus ought to be provided for and awarded utmost respect and reverence by their inferiors. The nobility is in turn obligated to care for and protect the common folk. In theory, one of the Mandate's duties is to hold the nobility accountable for its actions; in practice, the Mandate often closes its eyes at abuses of local power in exchange for tithes and continued military support.

Literacy beyond learning hymns and ballads by rote and sounding out street-signs is uncommon among the low-born, and the overwhelming majority of universities will not admit students who cannot furnish proof of noble descent. It is important to note that the Faith does not condemn science or education — quite the contrary — but rather considers scholarship to be a privilege reserved for those of high birth. Faithful nobles are expected to write poetry, speak multiple languages, and have a keen understanding of rhetoric, theology, history and philosophy: law is nothing without either the rhetorical means to express it or the divine and logical underpinnings that inform it. In addition, the Name granted stewardship of Arnai to humankind, so it would stand to reason that a noble Faithful soul should strive to study and understand the world it is tasked to oversee. Academia can be perilous for the careless, however, and not even high birth can protect a careless or dissenting scholar from being branded a diablerist or apostate. Sometimes, heresy trials are made into spectacles for the public, and the guilty are either hanged or cast out into the cold. Most of the time, people simply disappear. But at the very least, the poor aren't forced to lend their bodies to daemons should their fortunes fail them — each parish gives food, shelter and support to its poor and destitute, and the Mandate pours a significant amount of its funds into charitable works, such as the construction and maintenance of hospitals, orphanages, and halfway houses.

The only reliable means of moving upwards in the Mandate is to do a tour of duty in the Adamantine Province, fighting alongside the Order to repel the Adversary's encroaching forces. A typical term of service for an auxiliary is roughly five years, and many troops who journey to the Adamantine Province are volunteers seeking to escape the cycle of poverty. However, most settlements above a certain size have a draft quota to meet when the Pontifex calls for another Chthonic March, which has been happening more and more often in recent decades. Having fought in Hell or having a relative who did so is becoming commonplace. Most foot soldiers who manage to survive and return to their homes are physically and psychologically scarred, but much more respected, given an opportunity for education, and compensated for their service. Many, however, do not find the compensation adequate for the death toll of the Marches and the horrors they witnessed and survived in Hell.

The human cost of the Mandate's Hellish campaigns, the rigid stratification of Faithful society, and the emergence of



a highly literate middle class of Chthonic veterans have laid a foundation for a Dissident movement within the Faith, which adheres to an interpretation of the religion's holy texts that does not treat the class divisions of Faithful society as immutable. The vast majority of prominent Dissident thinkers are educated or well-off, coming from discontent lesser nobility and low-ranking members of the clergy, while their followers are Hellish veterans, or disillusioned smallfolk who suffer under unjust rulers. Due to relentless persecution on behalf of the Mandate's Inquisition, many of these Dissidents flee Faithful lands, although a number of brave (or desperate) souls still remain, living in secret enclaves or hiding in plain sight.

The Faithful, like their Imperial predecessors, consider deception to be among the chiefest of sins, and so most Sulfurites think the average Faithful shockingly tactless and hilariously naive. They view the Mandate as a bloated and tyrannical institution that punishes dissent and ambition and publicly exiles or secretly executes its best and brightest. But the worked brass and copper from the Adamantine Province are too lovely, the trade opportunities too lucrative to miss, and any Sulfurite merchant with half a brain would laugh at the notion of a permanent embargo on ideological grounds.

In the Wasteland, the Mandate's sphere of influence is large but plagued by social unrest. Though there are plenty of holdout clans that follow a version of the Faith, many Wasteland peoples resist conversion, sometimes violently; others tolerate missionaries as a necessary evil. And despite the Inquisition's best efforts, pockets of the heretic Dissidents still survive, their creed continuing to spread and erode the legitimacy of the Mandate's rule.

THE PEOPLES OF THE WASTES

It would be wrong to assume that a region as large and varied as the Byssarian would be neatly and evenly split between two great powers. The Mandate and the Republics are forces to be reckoned with, certainly, but they are not the be-all and end-all of human civilization. The people of the Wastes, termed holdouts for their stubborn refusal to abandon the land for almost 500 years since the Sunfall, are staggeringly diverse in terms of language and custom, sharing little in common aside from a desire for independence and the considerable skill and resilience required for continued Wasteland survival. This section will cover, in very broad strokes, the few other commonalities holdout folk share in terms of tradition, beliefs, ways of life, and attitudes towards their more cosmopolitan neighbors.

GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Holdouts are as diverse in governance as they are in custom, but can be grouped into three loose categories based on the environments they inhabit: sea people, mountain people, and the people of the plains. Most individual clans, regard-

less of the lands they inhabit, are small, with roughly 80 to 200 capable adults, in addition to children, the elderly, and the infirm, as well as any animals that they may keep. Some govern themselves with a council of elders, others elect one or several individuals to lead them, others rely on hereditary rulers or follow their most skilled and accomplished warriors or artisans. A holdout leader may be a king, but his kingdom is small, and he toils in the fields or the mines just as his subjects do.

Alongside secular and political leadership, whatever form it may take, is usually a person of spiritual importance: a mystic, healer, or exorcist who bargains with daemons for the fire and magic that keeps their people alive. The domain of such individuals is sacred, and largely separate from mortal concerns: they are the ones who speak to spirits, offer counsel, and perform rites and rituals. Just as a king would be foolish to try and command his outriders to wage a war against devious and intangible spirits, so would a fire-caller be confounded when made to negotiate an alliance, find new hunting grounds, or rally neighboring clans against a common enemy.

Sometimes, nomadic holdout clans band into confederacies to defend themselves against the encroaching threat of Sulfurite or Mandate expansion, to wage war against one another, or to better harry and harass their sedentary counterparts. These confederacies are most often led by the head of their most powerful and prosperous member clan. The rule of these individuals is rarely absolute, weaker in confederacies that have little shared custom, common ancestry, or few marital ties between the coalition's composite clans, and stronger in alliances bound together by generations of cooperation, fellowship, and intermarriage.

CULTURE & RELATIONS

The sea people are often nomadic, traveling vast distances across the seas in their sled-ships. Unlike their plains counterparts, who often live hundreds of miles from their ancestral lands, the sea tribes' travels are seasonal, and many of them are ultimately tied to a particular part of the coast or an island that they call home. Renowned as daring navigators and worldly polyglots, the sea folk trade in goods from across the region, as well as bounty they take from the sea — fish, amber, dyes, whale oil and ivory, and fine golden sea-silk. When trade is slow, however, many of these merchant-clans turn to coastal raiding; some forego mercantilism altogether in favor of simple piracy, using their superior mobility and knowledge of the seas to confound would-be counterattackers.

Like the sea clans, the people of the plains are nomadic, but their migrations are more ambitious and their ways — more warlike. Some plains coalitions become so fearsome as to extract tribute from weaker Faithful polities and hold their own against Sulfurite mercenaries, but the age of thundering nomad armies bringing empires to their knees has



passed. Cities are too well-defended, the human cost of such invasions is too high, and a wise queen of the plains prefers to trade and defend her territories, rather than risk her status and the fate of her people on a doomed, foolish campaign. But even in this age, an age without glory, the plains people are incomparable archers and riders who control vast amounts of flatlands and the trade routes that come with. Their fortunes are made through animal husbandry — swift, enduring horses, proud rams, shaggy camels and hardy elk — and the byproducts thereof: meat, fleece, leather, glue and bone, dairy and alcohol.

Of all holdouts, the mountain people are the most reclusive and most clannish, living in cliffside dwellings or settlements nestled in the creases and folds of mountain ranges. They are the most linguistically diverse, with nearly every tribe speaking their own language or dialect of the common tongue grown strange with time and isolation. They are also riddled with royalty: nearly every camp or valley has its own monarch, who dresses in slightly finer clothing and lives in a slightly bigger lodge than those who they govern. Unlike the majority of holdout clans in the Byssarian, mountain people tend to be homebodies, and are loath to leave the mountains for any reason other than absolute necessity. Because many of these clans live in close proximity to deposits of various gems and ores, they are among the best metalsmiths and stonemasons of the region. Although they are less prone to warfare than their nomadic counterparts, they are fierce defenders of their homesteads, excelling at guerrilla tactics

— it's hard to contend with a few dozen mountain archers, armed with stout longbows, hiding themselves in the treacherous rocky foothills of their ancestral lands.

Holdout society, by and large, revolves around alliances and kinship groups — an individual is defined by their relationships with others first and foremost, and their personal achievements a distant second. Those who are cast out for being criminal or politically inconvenient, as well as those who leave their people willingly, perhaps to settle in a Mandate town or one of the Republics, are viewed with discomfort and derision. To leave one's people is an act of betrayal — not only of said people, but also of oneself, of one's roots.

As with everything about Wasteland peoples, attitudes towards the Mandate and the Republics vary wildly, though there does seem to be an undercurrent of contempt for city-dwellers. At best, city-folk are soft, naive, unskilled in finding their way through or surviving in the Wastes. At worst, they are treacherous, untrustworthy, greedy, and seeking to expand their spheres of influence at any cost — a bleak assumption that proves itself true too frequently for comfort. It is important to note, however, that no matter how conceited the Sulfurite or how high-born the Faithful courtier, they do not consider holdout folk savage, uncivilized or barbarian. Uneducated, provincial, boorish, clinging to outdated or heretical custom — most certainly, but human civilization takes myriad forms, and any group of people who manage to not only survive, but thrive in the wilderness is worthy of respect.

CHAPTER 4: VARIETIES OF BELIEF

Even at the height of the Faith during the Blessed Age, the Byssarian was home to a multitude of religious traditions, ranging from Faithful mystery cults dedicated to one saint or another, to ancestor worship and furtive veneration of pagan gods and spirits from the World Below. All of the above were persecuted, with a varying degree of intensity (generally, the Inquisition did not drown or cast Faithful cultists in bronze). Despite this, many survived into the Sunless Age, a time in which the Faith no longer wields absolute power and authority in matters spiritual.

THE FAITH

Perhaps the most significant piece of Imperial heritage, the Faith used to be practiced in most of the known world but has waned in popularity since the Sunfall. Nevertheless, it still holds considerable sway in the cities and the Wastes of the Byssarian alike, and its cultural impact cannot be denied: everyone uses the Faithful calendar and Faithful terminology for things concerning the immaterial; even the

daemons sometimes refer to themselves as devils. The head of the Faith is the Pontifex, a high priest or priestess who resides in the old Imperial capital of Pagamea, while each former provincial capital still following the Faith has its own bishops and Cardinal. An adherent of the Faith is called a Faithful; due to the emergence of a splinter denomination roughly a decade ago, those who follow doctrine authorized by the Pontifex call themselves Moristagian Faithful, and the denomination that embraces new and controversial teachings is called Dissident.

COSMOLOGY

The two central texts of the Faith are the *Canticle of the Name and the Word*, which contains the tenets and mythology central to the religion, and the *Litany of the Dead*, which describes in detail the soul's journey through Hell and the punishments it must endure to repent for its sins before its next incarnation. The *Canticle* begins with the Faith's god, the Name and the Word (also called the Immaculate Truth) speaking Itself into existence. Saddened by Its solitude and the stillness of the Void, the Name spoke Creation: the Cos-

mos, comprised of the aether, the stars, the moons and other celestial bodies, and the World, comprised of the Sun, water, earth, and all manner of plants and other living things. Its final, most perfect work is the human soul, to which it gave the divine gifts of speech, magic and the ability to create and take joy in the act of creation.

But just as anything brought into the light casts a shadow, so was the creation of all that is good followed by the advent of all that is wicked. In time, another being came from the Void, a being that was as full of hatred as the Name was of love, a being whose first wish was to destroy, rather than create. Where the Name made a World of sunlight, cool waters and swift winds, the Adversary devised for himself a realm of darkness, fire, and brimstone. Where the Name created the luminous and perfect soul, the Adversary begat lesser devils and let them loose upon the World and the Cosmos. The Adversary's third and most abhorrent corruption was that of language — where the Name spoke the truth, the Adversary's words carried nothing but falsehood. In an act of horrific treachery, the Adversary deceived and struck down the First Man, which brought Death into the World, sullied Creation and causing humankind to follow in the footsteps of their ancestor, their souls now subject to corruption and their bodies weakening and dying in their old age.

Furious, the Name combated the Adversary and spoke the Words that would become the Great Wheel: a divine process that would undo damage to Creation and uplift the soul where the Adversary tries to cast it down. The First Man, now First of the Dead, became the Watcher at the Threshold, who presides over the Wheel and guides the soul from Life to Death and Death to Life. To the remaining mortals, the Name entrusted the sacred task of making the corrupted World just and pleasing to all living beings once again.

To assist in this sacred task, the Faithful must be steadfast, observing the proper rites and rituals and performing virtuous deeds. When a soul dies, the Watcher takes it to the Judges, angels of the Immaculate Truth who weigh and measure it, and decide its fate. Should a soul's evil words, thoughts, and deeds outweigh their good ones, the soul is doomed to be devoured and torn apart in Hell for a duration proportional to the number and severity of its misdeeds in life, but ultimately restored to life as a being of a lower order. If a soul is more righteous than it is wicked, its passage through Hell ennoble it and strengthens it for its next life. And the most virtuous souls who have followed the Name's commandments without error and bore the vagaries of mortal incarnations without complaint escape the Wheel altogether and attain eternal bliss in Heaven. The most exceptional of these pure souls are posthumously canonized as saints by the Pontifex and Cardinals, and are thought to be excellent vehicles for prayer — a mortal soul is too tainted to address the Truth directly, but a saint may pray to It on their behalf.

As for the most wicked of souls, those who fail, again and again, to lead virtuous lives and stray, again and again,

from the Faith, may eventually become so corrupt as to turn into devils themselves, doomed to eternal hunger, falsehood and torment.

VIRTUES & VICES

Regular prayer and attendance of religious services is mandatory. One should, at the very least, make oneself present and visible on the High Holy Days. Cleanliness of the body and the soul is important: one can become spiritually tainted under various circumstances (interacting with the dead and the severely ill; venturing deep into the wilderness; going to Hell; mourning, taking on the mantle of exorcist, recovering from possession, etc), and must undertake the proper purification rites in order to be fit for the company of others.

VIRTUES

- I. Honesty and integrity. The Faith places great importance on always speaking the truth — the Name is the Immaculate Truth, after all, and the Adversary is called the Prince of Lies for a reason.
- II. Moderation in matters of worldly pleasures. Both gluttony and starvation lessen the soul, as do lechery and self-denial.
- III. Toil and industry. The Name made humankind to labor and create, and idle hands are the devils' playthings.
- IV. Forgiveness, charity and mercy. All souls were spoken into being by the Name, and thus carry in them a kernel of the divine and the possibility of redemption.
- V. Unwavering faith. Doubt, like its sibling deception, cheapens the soul.
- VI. Respect for one's elders and superiors. One's birth and place in the world is determined by the Judges in accordance to their actions in a past life; therefore, one should not strive to be above their station.

VICES

- I. Deceit and inconstance. By spreading deception throughout the world, one aids the Adversary in his endless quest to corrupt and destroy all of Creation.
- II. Excess and deprivation. The soul was made to be content, not to starve or glut itself.
- III. Sloth and idleness.
- IV. Pride and arrogance.
- V. Apostasy and devil-worship. The world is rife with false gods and creeds, and it goes without saying that consorting with devils is a mortal sin.
- VI. Malice and vengefulness. The righteous may take offense, and act on that offense, but they may not hold grudges and let them fester.

ICONOGRAPHY

Depictions of the Name and the Adversary Themselves as material beings are forbidden; instead, religious art concerning either of the two makes use of heavily stylized calligraphy which, in turn, uses euphemisms such as “the



Immaculate One” or “the Prince of Lies”. There is no prohibition on graven images of devils, saints, the Judges, or the Watcher; many shrines and temples have lavish frescoes, stained glass panels or mosaics depicting scenes from holy texts. Most Faithful households have an icon or two in addition to the holy books, usually placed on a small shrine in their dwelling’s common area, visible and accessible to all members of the household.

The symbol of the Faith and the Mandate is the serpent, a long-extinct but still sacred animal that is said to have been able to shed its skin and be born anew. The cassocks of priests and exorcists have cuffs and collars embroidered with silver serpents, and all members of the clergy wear ring-shaped medallions fashioned to resemble a serpent biting at its own tail. Faithful layfolk sometimes wear smaller, humbler versions of the symbol, though this is not universal.

THE CLERGY

Like everything else about Faithful society, the clergy is stratified and hierarchical in nature. At the bottom are individuals who labor in service of the Faith but have not attended seminary and are not ordained as priests: monastic acolytes and laypeople. In order to join this liminal stratum of religious society, one must relinquish a significant portion of their worldly possessions and take on the vows of modesty and obedience. Usually, layfolk serve their communities or monasteries for a specific length of time (three to five years is common) and then rejoin their worldly brethren; sometimes, however, those who decide to commit their lives to a monastic order take the required oaths and join the order as novices.

Priests are seminary-educated rank-and-file members of the clergy either appointed to specific parishes or traveling a circuit between hamlets too small or distant to have their own resident preachers. Unlike exorcists, members of the priesthood are encouraged to marry and have families of their own. Unmarried priests above a certain age are odd and not considered for promotion beyond the low ranks — how can a priest or priestess assist their flock in finding the path to righteousness if they cannot even find a suitable spouse for themselves? By and large, priesthood is a family trade, and once a family joins the clergy it is unlikely that their descendants would ever leave it: many clerical and ecclesiastical positions of rank are well-paid, and a family’s prestige within the clergy is bound to grow as generations pass.

Like priests, exorcists are ranking members of the clergy, but occupy a very strange place socially: they are revered for their service to the divine, and reviled for the infernal bargain that grants them their magic. A village without a Gate to the World Below needs an exorcist (and, by extension, a devil) to survive, but the exorcist’s bond with said devil means that they are spiritually and physically tainted. They are sacred pariahs, respected by their communities but forced to the sidelines and closely watched for signs of cor-

ruption. Those who do not tend to a particular place often travel a circuit, like ordinary ministers, tending to the spiritual health of minor or far-flung Faithful communes, and are thus even less trusted than their settled counterparts.

In order to become an exorcist, one must first attend seminary and be chosen for the role by a committee of the seminary’s teachers; the choice must later be ratified by the local bishop or, in the event of the prospective exorcist being exceptionally high-born, the Cardinal. Then, the initiate must swear an oath, perform a series of purification rites, and strike a bargain with a Mandate-approved devil under Adamant and Inquisitorial supervision. Although exorcists aren’t outright prohibited from marrying and having children, it is severely discouraged, and the children of exorcists are shunned and considered to be illegitimate, as they bear the Devil’s mark upon their very souls.

At the very top of the Faithful hierarchy are bishops, elected from among the priesthood and overseeing dioceses comprised of a small number of communities, Cardinals, who manage the ecclesiastical affairs of entire city-states and their outlying holdings, the abbots and abbesses of influential monastic orders, the heads of the Orders Militant, and the Pontifex, who is elected by the cardinals from among their number and whose authority in matters of the Faith is near-absolute.

THE ORDERS MILITANT

The Orders Militant are the closest thing the Mandate — as opposed to each of its component states — has to a standing army. Although steeped in monastic tradition, the Orders live up to their name and are heavily oriented towards warfare, ensuring that their initiates are as pious and learned as they are skilled in the art of war. Though most Faithful knights of ages past were vassals of high nobility, a small portion of these knights came from the Orders and had no loyalty or obligation to any power but the Name and the Word. As the clergy grew in power during the Blessed Age, the institutions of secular vassalage and landed knighthood gradually withered (mostly due to a healthy fear of provincial rebellion on behalf of the ruling dynasty), and the Orders stepped in to fill in the gap.

Members of the Orders run the gamut from armored swordsmen to mages to bare-fisted warrior monks, and each Order has its own martial specialty. For instance, the Order of St. Myron is an order of mages, and the members of the Order of St. Idris take oaths to never cast spells or wield blades in battle, focusing instead on bludgeoning weapons and unarmed combat. The heads of Orders Militant most often hold the title of Grandmaster, acknowledging the martial focus of their organizations; however, some of the Orders began as purely monastic institutions and refer to their heads as Abbot or Abbess instead.



THE INQUISITION

Of the Mandate's many arms, the Inquisition is perhaps the one whose history is both the bloodiest and the best known. Like most large-scale Faithful organizations, it has its roots in an old Imperial institution — namely, the Old Empire's secret police, the same people who used to brutally execute early Faithful for practicing their religion. As with all things Imperial, it was eventually co-opted, absorbed into the Faith and put to use, moving from rooting out Faithful insurgents onto violently persecuting heretics, witches, and the possessed well through the Blessed Age. Accounts of Inquisitorial brutality are so abundant and so egregious that even the Mandate, notoriously proficient in the alteration of history, has given up on concealing them from public view. Instead, the Inquisition was purged and reformed roughly two centuries back, and assigned a new task.

Today's Inquisition is as much of a political institution as it is a religious one, its primary purpose — law enforcement, espionage, and counterintelligence. The average contemporary Inquisitor is more of a spy or detective than a witch-hunter, as Hellish corruption is almost synonymous with Sulfurite machinations. Of course, there is the occasional practitioner of infernal magics who must be brought to justice, and the ideological threat of the Dissidents cannot be ignored, but the methods of modernity are a far cry from those of antiquity. The executions, the exiles, the burning of books and the sentencing of criminals are best left to soldiers and magistrates — the Inquisition's purpose is to point the way and to expose the rot. They are calculating, discreet professionals, preferring to avoid combat and coercion but adept in both should the situation call for it.

THE ADAMANTINE PROVINCE & THE ORDER OF ST. KHOSRAU

The Adamantine Province is the place where Faithful sinners are punished for transgressions committed during their lifetimes, and the source of fire magics practiced by Mandate exorcists. Functionally, it is much like a conquered nation, supplying the Mandate with fire, devils, and certain other Hellish goods, and the Mandate, in turn, sends foot soldiers, beasts of burden, and food. (Agriculture, while possible, is difficult in Hell and the Order gratefully accepts dispensations of untainted Surface grain.)

The contemporary incarnation of the Adamant Order is one of the greatest — if not the greatest — human martial traditions the world has ever seen, and an insular and secretive organization whose primary task is to hold back the Adversary's forces and ensure Surface Faithful have a steady source of heat. Due to centuries of isolation, warfare, and constant exposure to what they believe to be the forces of darkness in a place that is actively shaped by belief, the Order is much more conservative in its interpretation of the Faith than any other branch of the Mandate. They are proud

of it — while the Faith Above is mutable and prone to giving in to social pressure, the Order has managed to preserve an older version of the religion in the face of cosmic evil.

Unlike members of the other Orders Militant, Knights Adamants are either born into or adopted into the Order as young children. Older initiates simply would not do in the Province: Below, faith is paramount. It shapes the enemy and the battlefield, and those indoctrinated to believe certain things from a young age usually believe in those things more firmly, and are a lot more difficult to sway from the path of righteousness than those exposed to alternate doctrines and ways of life.

There's an aristocracy in the Province — direct descendants of the knights and soldiers who had come Below during the First Chthonic March. They are the officers and commanders, educated as rigorously as Faithful noble scions Above. Given the likelihood of an early death, Adamant nobility sometimes practices a form of adoption, naming lower-ranking but capable members of the knighthood as their legal heirs and ensuring that the family name would survive even if their bloodline ends with them. This creates another division among the Order — those who can claim direct descent from one of the original Knights Adamant command greater respect than those descended from a low-born soldier or officer adopted into a noble bloodline.

Other Adamant initiates are, simply put, children who do not belong in Faithful society — the abandoned, the illegitimate and the devil-born, all taken from temples and orphanages across the Mandate's lands, brought Below and raised into the Order's creed. Some children are sent Below out of necessity: sometimes, a hamlet in the borderlands cannot pay its tithes. Due to a ruined harvest, bandit depredations, plague, or similar misfortunes. When that is the case, the Mandate's tax collectors ask for a tithe of children instead. Parents sorrow, as parents do, but fewer hungry mouths to feed can make the difference between life and death, and knowing that their children will be fed, clothed, cared for and educated to live lives of glory in the Faith is a comfort to many.

There are, of course, scabrous rumors in the Republics about child soldiers fighting the Mandate's Hellish wars, but these rumors are false; no one is fully initiated into the knighthood and sent to the frontlines until they achieve the age of majority. These lowborn Adamants form the main fighting body of the Order, elite infantry and artillery corps feared and renowned in both worlds, or do civilian work that supports their more martial brethren. Their children, if they live long enough to have them, will enjoy higher status than they did, and a few generations later, their descendants will find themselves in the ranks of the Province's minor nobility.

Despite its seclusion in the World Below and the Grandmaster's frequent absence from meetings of the Synod, the Order's influence Above cannot be denied. Knights Adamant guard or supervise almost every Gateside fortress in Mandate lands, and the Pontifex chooses their palace guard



from members of the Adamant knighthood. Cardinals and other high-ranking clerics court favor with the Order as ardently as they do with each other, and every new Pontifex treads lightly around high-ranking members of this institution: there have been bloody upheavals in Pagamea, when the Synod elected someone the Adamant Order did not consider fit for the title.

THE DISSIDENT MOVEMENT

The largest nonconformist movement in the Faith, the Dissident creed has its roots in two things: a growing and increasingly dissatisfied population of literate Chthonic veterans, and a recent translation of the *Canticle* from the ecclesiastical High Moresh and into a number of vernacular languages. Although similar to the version sanctioned by the Mandate, the *Yasarevic Canticle*, named for the theologian who brought the translation to the public eye, espouses the idea that the soul may be purified and uplifted during one's mortal life, and not only after the Judges have passed their verdict and the soul has entered Hell. In practice, this means that through just and righteous action, one of low birth could potentially surpass their highborn peers. This idea, called the Doctrine of Immanent Excellence, is a far cry from the radical (and therefore dangerous) notion of equality, but it is enough to have caused great unrest, both social and intellectual, in Mandate lands.

The vast majority of prominent Dissident thinkers come from lesser nobility, the lower ranks of the clergy, and the literate middle classes formed by educated smallfolk and returning Chthonic veterans. It is a reform movement without puritanism, one born of the Mandate's political machinations and the rigidity of its social structure as opposed to its extravagance. Among other things, Dissidents take issue with the fact that Mandate priests are permitted to marry, a practice they believe encourages nepotism and bars the lowborn from entering the clergy. Due to heavy persecution, many Dissidents have fled Mandate cities for secluded mountain enclaves and the Republics. A significant minority of Dissident refugees in the Republics are wealthy or at least fashionably bohemian, enjoying the attention and patronage of the upper layers of Sulfurite society — religious transgression has a certain allure to it, and having the privilege to host a foreign intellectual makes one interesting to one's superiors and enviable in the eyes of one's peers. Dissidents of lesser means are less fortunate. Many remain in hiding in Mandate cities, and the Republics force Dissident refugees to the fringes of society and heavily tax them for the right to practice their religion.

THE FAITH IN THE WASTES

Some holdout communities follow a version of the Faith that has very little to do with the religion in Pagamea. The trappings of the Faith are there — the icons, the hymns, the holidays, a priest in the temple and an exorcist on the outskirts — but should one look closer, one would find centuries-old

pagan tradition beneath a thin Faithful veneer. The intent and basic tenets of the Faith are central to these communities — that is, worship of the Name and fear and derision of the Adversary — but the rituals surrounding these things most certainly do not appear in any sacred literature. Many Faithful villages are unfamiliar with the tales and writings of the saints; some are so far removed from official doctrine that a man may have an icon of a saint hanging above his hearth and be unable to tell another who that saint actually is.

The Mandate sends priests and missionaries to remedy the situation, but a smattering of backwater parishes with strange customs is hardly the most pressing matter on their hands. These near-pagans are usually not persecuted for their beliefs, provided said beliefs don't directly contradict the Faith, carry a taint of Dissident heresy, or condone infernal magics and consorting with devils.

WASTELAND BELIEFS

Away from Pagamea's looming shadow, the Wastes teem with a variety of religious and spiritual traditions. Given the mutable nature of the World Below and the necessity of associating with its denizens, it is not surprising that many Wasteland-dwellers have a worldview that tends towards the animistic. They believe that the world is home to a multitude of intangible spirits — of the land, the sea, the heavens, and their own long-gone ancestors. Among those spirits, the fire-spirits who come from under the earth are most likely to concern themselves with petty mortal affairs, for they are the only ones among the spirits who experience hunger and desire in a way not dissimilar to that of humanity. All other spirits rarely bother showing themselves in ways more direct than the ebb and flow of the tides, the gathering of a storm, and the odd feeling one sometimes experiences when standing over an ancestral barrow.

Because the Faith's influence stretched so far and wide at the apex of its power, most minor religions and cults in the Byssarian acknowledge the existence of a higher power of some sort, and many of these spirit-worshippers are no exception. They do, by and large, consider direct worship of a creator god to have as much effect as a serf entreating a distant emperor for personal assistance with the harvest. It is better, faster, and more convenient to bargain with the spirits directly and to leave the Name and Its servants to their task of managing the inner workings of Creation.

Of the many servants of the Name, it is the Watcher at the Threshold who most often captures the imagination of both the living and the dead. Though a major figure in the Faith's worldview, information regarding the Watcher specifically is scarce and apocryphal, and those who choose to dedicate themselves to worship of the Watcher gather in secretive mystery cults. Some of these cults, made up of the ignorant living, strive for the secret of immortality discovered by Sage Oxyathres during the Dying Sun. Others, with undead



individuals who have mastered those secrets in their ranks, have a more contemplative and spiritual approach, seeking enlightenment and a better understanding of the Wheel through meditation and asceticism. Finally, there are those who believe that the undead are horrific violations of the cosmic order that must be destroyed at all costs, and their books of foul necromantic rites burnt to ash.

In the end, it is as impossible to prove the veracity of any of the above varieties of belief as it is that of the Faith. The only aspects of the metaphysical that can be witnessed are souls, daemons, the World Below, and (to some limited extent) the cycle of reincarnation. Everything beyond that is a matter of faith and speculation — if higher powers of any kind exist, they are not available for comment.

CHAPTER 5: THE MYSTERIES OF MAGIC

Just as the World itself is comprised of two halves, so is magic divided into two disciplines. Thaumaturgy is magic of the soul and can only be practiced by humans, while pyromancy comes from the World Below and is the province of daemons and those who bargain with them. These disciplines cultivate different characteristics in their disciples, and their practice is what sustains human life on Arnai. Pyromancers, human or daemon, are the only ones who can conjure flame in this flameless world, and thaumaturgy is, in many ways, the vehicle of technological and scientific progress. The development of steam power, pyrotechnics, and internal combustion is slow, limited to eccentric scholars with time and resources to spare, while thaumaturgical mechanisms light city streets, shield them from the worst of the storms, and make life in large urban settlements more comfortable in countless other ways.

THAUMATURGY AND THE SOUL

ESSENCE & THE SOUL

Every living creature more complex than a plant, lichen, or a fungus is filled with animating essence, intangible energy that ensures that an animal organism is truly living as opposed to performing baseline biological function. One may think of essence as a sort of instinctual proto-soul: it is the reason deer run, tigers hunt, and moles burrow into the earth instead of lying comatose and slowly rotting in their dens. And among all living things on Arnai, only humankind is blessed with the soul: a combination of animating essence and the capacity for symbolic thought, language, complex long-term memory, and magic.

The human soul is a paradox. It is a powerful, almost inexhaustible font of magical energy, it is cold; it has an impulse to create and to sustain and to be eternal. Yet at the same time it is subject to reincarnation, shackled to a vessel that is warm, mortal, a vessel that hungers, a vessel that begins dying the moment it is born. If this tenuous yet vital connection between the body and the soul breaks, whether through exorcism or

death of the body, the weight of consciousness and memory pulls the soul down to the World Below and the body remains behind, either dead or merely inert and unresponsive.

THAUMATURGY

Thaumaturgy, sometimes called the Elder Science, is human magic; the magic that comes from the soul. Its second name has its roots in the fact that the Byssarian approach to soul-magic is rigorous and mathematical, relying on precise, geometric sigils and arrays to direct and channel spellwork. The effects of thaumaturgical spells are spectacular to behold: bolts of cold lightning, spells that manipulate, compel, and even trap the spirits of others, spells that protect and preserve, and engraved sigils that contain, amplify and transform energy, allowing for the existence of otherwise impossible machinery. This does not mean, however, that all view the Elder Science as strictly beneficial and hold its practitioners in high esteem. Mages, sorcerers and arcane engineers are subject to much fear and superstition in the Wastes, the inhabitants of which are not unfamiliar with hostile Old Imperial constructs or magically engineered beasts, or the mad workings of Incandescent sorcerers.

Although every human being, at least in theory, has the latent ability to cast thaumaturgical spells, the path to unlocking that ability is so arduous that very few individuals follow it through. In order to become a mage, one must undergo a rigorous course of study — geometry, mathematics, magical theory, the nature and anatomy of the human soul — in addition to a set of grueling trials that psychologically break and then rebuild the aspiring magician. These trials, collectively dubbed the Mage's Ordeal, vary, ranging from strenuous fasts to long periods of sensory deprivation and ingestion of potent hallucinogens, but the final trial is always the same: a silent, solitary and sleepless vigil in a cold tower that ends only when the aspirant's soul awakens to its power.

But not all would-be mages can bear the brunt of the trials. Unsuccessful aspirants are met with understanding rather than pity, and see no shame in their failure. Disappointment, devastation, even heartbreak — certainly. But instead of punishing failed magicians for their shortcomings, most centers of arcane learning strive to support them and encourage an alternative course of study: literature,



history, mathematics, mechanics, engineering, or medicine. Some even attempt their trials again, but are not permitted to do so immediately after failure — most universities do not encourage self-destruction, and would prefer their students to at least try to move past their experiences before restarting the Ordeal.

The greatest limitation of thaumaturgy is its inability to produce heat. Lamps, automatons, and other machines powered by souls or augmented with magical sigils run cold instead of hot, absorbing heat where they should be emanating it. Amounts of heat absorbed by such devices are usually negligible, particularly in townships or great cities with access to a sufficiently large portal to the World Below. And of all the mechanical accomplishments of the Elder Science, the most impressive and the most brutal is the Way of Bronze, the art of imbuing a metal construct with a soul to create a mechanical soldier or servitor. As with every other type of magical and scientific knowledge, much information regarding the Way was lost during the chaos of the Dying Sun. The current version of the discipline is reconstructed and heavily bastardized, its products imperfect and laughably inferior to the Immortals of antiquity.

INCANDESCENCE

Incandescence is a rare and peculiar metaphysical ailment that affects only mages. It begins with a dream, usually, but not always, of a cold blue Sun. Apprentices and unskilled journeymen almost never have the dream; it is far more common among master magicians and adepts of remarkable talent. A lucky few who glimpse this dream-Sun's merciless glory manage to turn away, purge themselves of the idea, and forever abandon the study of magic. The rest succumb to an obsession so powerful that it warps and sickens their very souls.

All human souls have at their core an intense desire for creation, and so the Incandescent are compelled to make. The form this takes depends on the individual: one might

etch miles of nonsensical magical sigils into the ice, another might build machines, the third might be compelled to write. Regardless of the form such creations may take, they are always harmful: the magical sigils blast any living thing wandering too close, the machines are rabidly hostile to all life, and reading the writings left behind by an Incandescent either causes the reader to have the Incandescent dream themselves, or drives them to violent, self-destructive madness.

The Incandescent care little for biological function. They don't eat, they don't sleep, and they appear to be impervious to pain and exhaustion. Many in early stages of the condition appear filthy, starved, frostbitten, or wounded, indistinguishable from ordinary people if not for the sickly, feverish light in their eyes. As the condition progresses and the Incandescent soul grows in power, their body begins to wither. Their skin cracks and peels from them in tatters; the flesh sloughs off, and when what little remains of the body can no longer withstand the magnitude of the spirit, it ruptures and caves in on itself, fragile and lifeless as an eggshell. Afterwards, the soul itself is nowhere to be found — it disappears from the World Above and never enters the World Below.

For all their power and all their creations, the Incandescent are not invincible. Most destroy their own bodies within weeks or months, and they don't appear to be intelligent in the way other beings understand the concept of intelligence. They are idea without thought, inspiration without sapience, magic without consciousness, creation without reason. Some scholars posit that just as a pyromancer opens their heart to a daemon from the World Below, so does a thaumaturge open their soul to a hypothetical Higher World and its inhabitants; Incandescence is merely a risk of tapping an unknown realm for power. Certain hardline Faithful thinkers consider this affliction to be divine punishment for sorcerous hubris; holdout elders, meanwhile, just call it the blue madness, tell their children to never trust city wizards, and leave it at that.

NECROMANCY

The art and science of anchoring living souls to magically preserved dead bodies is an obscure, mostly theoretical, and wildly illegal subset of thaumaturgical study. Though it bears several passing similarities to the old Imperial art of shackling a soul to bronze — similar sigils and incantations, the overall aim of binding a living soul to an inert vessel — the two are nothing alike. The former, concerned primarily with the obedience and efficiency of the constructs it creates, does not take into account the well-being of the spirit: the purpose of the Way of Bronze is to create the perfect soldier and the perfect servant. Guided by this intent and little else, practitioners of the Way use spells that are as subtle as blows from a sledgehammer: souls subjected to them become half-mad, fractured things, self-aware and capable of complex thought but lacking autonomy and any capacity for self-expression. Necromantic rites, on the other hand, strive to preserve the soul as it was in life — its intelligence,

UNEXPECTED GIFTS OF MAGIC

Not all thaumaturges study and deliberately prepare to awaken their magical potential. "Accidental" mages who come into their power during a war, famine or similarly harrowing event are rare and a danger to themselves and to others. They have too little knowledge and discipline to use their magic safely, and tend to discharge bolts of magical energy or cast compulsion spells when they feel threatened. Many such mages die before receiving any kind of aid or training, and almost all of those who survive eventually succumb to Incandescence, a sickness of the soul that only plagues the magically gifted.

its character, its emotional stability and control over its vessel — and to shield said vessel from the ravages of time, which it accomplishes through mummification.

As far as Byssarian scholars are aware, there is no necromantic ritual that results in the creation of the kind of mindless, shambling undead one may read about in sensationalist broadsheets.

REVENANTS

Revenants are undead who fully preserve their humanity as they step into eternity. The Rite of Resurrection and other major works of the necromantic sciences are attributed to Sage Oxyathres, who wrote his first treatise on the thaumaturgical properties of human cadavers in the 64th Year of the Dying Sun. He, along with his eight daughters and his many disciples, condensed his findings in what is now called *Tome of the Gentle Death* and committed ritual suicide. What happened after is unclear — according to one chronicle, Oxyathres rose from the dead, attempted to impose his salvation on the general populace, was defeated and subsequently executed by immolation; according to another, Oxyathres succeeded in his resurrection and evangelized undeath to the populace, but went to voluntary exile to the North after the completion of the Crystal Sun and the realization of his own irrelevance; according to a third, his resurrection failed altogether and it fell upon his daughters to complete his work. What is clear is that there is a method, however obscure, of transcending death itself.

In order to join the ranks of the undead, a mage must tattoo, burn, scar, or otherwise permanently mark the containment arrays onto their own skin. In the event that the revenant-to-be lacks magical talent, they must have a mage do it for them. Total consent of the subject soul is a vital part of the process; sigils placed upon unwilling or unconscious bodies never take hold or function as intended. At best, those individuals bear a score of painful but entirely non-magical markings for the rest of their lives; at worst, they risk rising as ravenous ghouls upon death.

Even those who do wish to become undead suffer while they yet live. The containment sigils cause intense discomfort to the aspiring revenant as their soul strains against its bonds, but shortly after they die, they awaken to a second life. Barring extensive damage to the sigils, a revenant's body can endure in perpetuity: it requires no food or drink and feels little in the way of pain (or pleasure, for that matter). The cold concerns a revenant only insofar as they risk freezing solid if they are not careful. Decomposition, too, is a trivial matter: the magics that anchor the soul to the body desiccate the flesh, strengthening and preserving it for ages to come.

This does not, however, prevent the decay of memory. All revenants begin to suffer from long-term memory loss a few decades into undeath. This is not a form of dementia; old revenants are perfectly lucid, and don't suffer from impaired reasoning or any other decline in mental ability. Rather, the past fades away to make room for the present and the future;

THE BLUE PLAGUE OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

A single unnoticed case of Incandescence in a city can very quickly turn into three or more -- the close proximity of other thaumaturges and, in recent years, the possibility of printing and distributing the maddening words of an Incandescent en masse make large institutions of arcane learning into potential breeding grounds for the madness of the soul. No large-scale outbreak has taken place as of yet, but the very possibility of one is incredibly worrying to rulers and mages alike.

just as an old man, weighed down by decades of memory and experience, struggles to recall his childhood, so does an older revenant struggle to remember his time among the living. Many revenants find the prospect of forgetting themselves utterly terrifying and become obsessive archivists and meticulous record-keepers, striving to preserve themselves against the ravages of time; others accept it to be a natural part of undeath.

Because the revenant's soul is in such violation of the cosmic order and so tightly bound to its physical vessel, the undead cannot forge or even maintain daemonic pacts. A pyromancer's inner gateway to the World Below becomes inert upon completion of the sigils, breaking the bond between them and their daemon. Some desperate individuals seek undeath as a means of escaping their eventual doom, and some even succeed in slipping their infernal bonds — but most daemons are canny enough to recognize and harshly punish any attempt to shirk a pact. Daemonic, overall, has little love for the undead — while they can possess them, dead bodies provide little in the way of pleasure and sensory experience, and very few spirits would wish to reside inside a mummified corpse for long.

The Rite of Resurrection is a well-kept secret, and the few extant copies of the *Tome* and subsequent works on the subject are sequestered in restricted sections of university libraries and private collections of wealthy, eccentric sorcerers. Revenants, as far as the broader public is concerned, aren't real; they are Wasteland bogeymen, monsters from grisly fireside tales. Some souls, it is said, are so wicked that even Hell wants nothing to do with them, and so they wander the Wastes, shackled to their wretched, rotting bodies, ever-hungry for the flesh of the living...

GHOULS

Either products of forcing the Rite onto the unwilling or the handiwork of unskilled necromancers, ghouls are among the chiefest reasons why the public meets the undead with murderous hostility. The Rite is notoriously complex; the texts are old, faded, often inaccurate, and the failure rate is high. Most often, an imperfect Rite simply causes the body

to remain inert upon death, a rune-scarred corpse bathed in cold and eerie light hours after the departure of the soul. But sometimes, the body stirs back to a facsimile of life. They no longer feel pain. They shrug off mortal injuries. They have nothing to fear from the cold. If they had undergone the Rite willingly, they are made euphoric by their defiance of death.

And then the hunger starts to set in.

It is agonizing and inescapable. No ghoul is ever fully sated. Their soul leaks from their body, a slow, constant loss of essence and memory that can only be mitigated by consuming the souls of others, which they accomplish through simple cannibalism. In folklore, ghouls have a reputation as corpse-eaters and grave-robbers, but that is false. Dead flesh does nothing for them. The only corpses that interest them are freshly killed ones. When they feed, they do so quickly, with big ragged bites, gobbling up the soul before it has a chance to shuffle off this mortal coil.

The closest a ghoul gets to feeling sated, to feeling complete, is when they feed on the souls of their loved ones, who they pursue with a freakish tenacity. A loving husband who would kill for his wife becomes a ghoul who would die to consume her. An adoring mother who would die for her son would stop at nothing to kill him in death. And after the ghoul makes their way through their friends, family and lovers both current and former, they turn outwards. They're social, cosmopolitan creatures, difficult to distinguish from the living when they're well-fed — unlike revenants, they do not mummify, and the souls they consume keep the rot at bay. A starved ghoul is a shambling, reeking thing; a well-fed one is hale and good-spirited, with a rosy glow in their cheeks and a sparkle in their eye. Many ghouls manage to eke out an existence on the periphery of human civilization, befriending and consuming someone, and moving on before the local authorities begin investigating the murder. Older, less impulsive ghouls cultivate elaborate networks of relationships with all the care and affection a shepherd feels for his sheep, and cull from their flocks as they see fit.

All souls a ghoul consumes remain inside the ghoul, half-conscious and removed from the Wheel until the final death of their host. With time and discipline, a ghoul can learn to access their memories. For the practical ghoul, this means dozens, hundreds of lifetimes' worth of skill and experience within an arm's reach. The sentimental ghoul, meanwhile, does not believe that their predation on the living is at all equivalent to murder; to them, eating their beloved and keeping them from the devils of Hell and the cruelty of the Wheel is the highest, most selfless form of devotion...and if their beloved happened to be a talented scholar, warrior, or mage in life, then so much the better.

And so it is that elder ghouls, the ones who make it past the initial shock of becoming a cannibalistic abomination and prove themselves cruel and cunning enough to endure for decades, are among the most frightening beings one could possibly encounter in the Wastes. They grow stronger and wiser with age. Unlike revenants, they forget nothing if they keep themselves fed. An elder ghoul's store of

knowledge is vast, and their knowledge of the human soul is unparalleled. They are the only beings on Arnai who can reliably detect possession at a glance, and they detest daemons for poaching their livestock and poisoning the metaphorical well — if a ghoul devours a possessed individual, the daemon escapes and the ghoul derives no nourishment or pleasure from the soul-dregs they leave behind. One can sometimes tell the body of a possessed traveler apart from those of their companions — one among a dozen corpses is mutilated but uneaten because the ghoul who ambushed them would not stoop to feeding on spiritual carrion.

However, all ancient ghouls, no matter how powerful and cunning, inevitably lose themselves in the abundance of memory. They drown in it, forget themselves, become erratic and animalistic. Logic gives way to instinct; subtlety — to hunger. True death, usually at the hands of a furious mob or the sword of a soldier, soon follows.

PYROMANCY AND DAEMONKIND

DAEMONS

The daemon is the mirror image of the soul. Both are invisible, intangible spirits capable of warping the world around them to produce magical effects, but one is cold and the other hot, and where one creates and sustains, the other destroys and consumes. Unlike souls, which suffer when expunged from their host, disembodied daemons remain stable, alert, and capable of possessing the bodies of others. And while some facets of daemonic psychology are undoubtedly alien, such as their tendency to think on the scale of centuries and their general incomprehension of the concept of childhood — prolonged contact between the Worlds Above and Below has ensured that the inhabitants of both can communicate with and relate to each other.

One of the most distinct features of daemonic psychology is their peculiar inability to break a formal oath or promise — while they can lie and cheat as well as, if not better, than their human counterparts, a daemon's word can be used to bind them. If they swear an oath of allegiance, they cannot violate it. If they promise to never lie to any one individual, they will not be able to utter a direct falsehood — bending the truth until it breaks, however, is an entirely acceptable course of action. As a daemon grows in age and experience, they become better at the kind of logical and rhetorical gymnastics one is required to perform in order to avoid being trapped by one's own words; younger daemons, however, are far more naive and prone to being taken advantage of by cunning humans and cunning spirits alike.

In order to maintain structural integrity and awareness, a daemon must feed on souls. They do not require much — a carefully rationed, living soul can sustain a daemon for years

DAEMONS, DEVILS AND THE DEVIL

Though many of the World Below's bodiless natives prefer to be called spirits, daemon is a term widely accepted and used in every land around the Seas. Devils are Faithful daemons, who genuinely believe themselves to be expressions of cosmic evil. They're usually very cruel; many are compulsive liars; all are quite miserable and hate themselves with a passion. Technically, one may call a non-Faithful daemon a devil, but many consider the word unpleasant and mildly insulting.

In the Faith, the Devil is the abstract ideal of evil of who the Adversary is but an emanation. The Devil is a like a man sitting before a fire inside a cave, and the Adversary and other creatures like him are shadows dancing on the cave's walls. This distinction matters most to theologians and to individuals discussing matters of the Faith with foreigners; lay worshippers are content with an understanding of the Devil and the Adversary as entirely synonymous.

— but they find the process extremely pleasurable, cannot experience satiety, and are therefore prone to gluttony and excess. To worsen the matter, all daemons are terrified of the prospect of starvation. If a daemon consumes nothing, not even the barest morsel of a soul, for a long enough period of time, they will begin to suffer memory loss and dissolve into lesser beings called imps. Conversely, if a group of imps is sufficiently well-fed on essence and souls, it will coalesce into a new daemon, capable of speaking, acting and reasoning like an emotional adult from the very moment they spring into existence. Generally, newborn daemons lack memory, but some retain vague and indistinct recollections of their past selves. Younger daemons' lack of experience belies naivete, and they often find themselves at a loss in social situations, fumbling their first contracts and swearing allegiance to the wrong people. Lacking parents, they name themselves, either inventing names, taking words from one of the languages of the World Below, or merely assuming the name of the first human they successfully possess. A daemon is just as likely to be called Beleth or Asmoday as, say, Dante or Beatrice, and none of the above names would be considered strange by their peers.

In the end, all spirits from Below are no more intrinsically evil than the natural processes of entropy and decay. They can feel remorse, and love, and pain, and grief, and they are as capable of good deeds as they are of evil ones. But they also consume human souls for sustenance and possess the unwilling, so the assumption that all of them are evil, while technically incorrect, is not unreasonable.

IMPS

Imps are lesser spirits, about as intelligent as apes, parrots, particularly clever dogs or very young human children. Like all spirits, they are invisible and intangible in the World Above, and they suffer from a relentless hunger. Unlike all other spirits, they seem to be functionally immortal — they aren't subject to starvation and dissolution. But neither do they have the faculties to forge pacts with or possess ensouled beings — possessed animals, however, are not uncommon. Many imps have a limited capacity for speech and vague, fragmented recollections of their parent's life. An imp with a noble progenitor might affect an attitude; an imp born of a tippler might possess a monkey, steal a cask of wine, and then look for a new host once their first inevitably dies of overindulgence. Most daemons find imps unpleasant. They think of their own "children" as disgusting, embarrassing and off-putting, and are loath to be around them for any reason. Humans balk at this absence of parental instinct, but then again, no human on Arnai has ever forgotten their spouse's name and then immediately given birth to a monkey.

GREATER DAEMONS

Not all daemons are created equal. Most are roughly on par with one another in terms of magical and spiritual potency, their intelligence equivalent to that of a human being, their presence tame enough to be contained within the bounds of a single human vessel. To greater daemons, these ordinary spirits are what a candle is to a roaring wildfire. Greater daemons are old and immense, most of them so powerful that they cannot possess ordinary mortals without destroying them completely. Their battles in the World Below shake the earth, change the course of rivers, and awaken mountains to volcanic fury; their pacts, when they choose to strike them, are not with individuals but with entire cities. Every Republic's Charter is a pact between one or several of these daemons and a city, even if the vast bulk of the citizenry doesn't remember who, exactly, is their liege lord. In Faithful belief, greater daemons are the grand dukes and generals of Hell. To many other cultures and peoples throughout human history, they have been gods: fire gods and forge gods, gods of the hearth and of harvest, of secret knowledge, war, hunger and the drowning waters.

There are, perhaps, a dozen of these greater daemons remaining in the portion of the World Below that corresponds to the Byssarian. The rest perished during the First Chthonic March, or fled like cowards, never to return. These remaining few are more fearful than they were in their glory days, choosing to lead their armies from the back and collect soul tribute from their Republics, rather than gore themselves on Adamant spears.

To beings like the Adversary, greater daemons are what a firestorm is to a sun.



SPIRIT PACTS

The name of this magical discipline is misleading: the scope of pyromantic magics reaches far beyond the conjuration of fire. A pyromancer (or witch, in Faithful parlance, though the term is considered derogatory) can bestow curses, strengthen the body or spirit, and perform exorcism rites. Pyromancers, save for Faithful exorcists, must remain hidden in Mandate-aligned settlements. They can, however, practice their arts in the open in the Republics and the wide open Wastes, as many holdout folk have a very different conception of the world than that of the Mandate. Where the Faithful see devils, they see fire spirits; where the Faithful see witchcraft and Hellish corruption, they see a sacred, life-giving bond between the mortal realm and the spirit world.

All daemons are innately capable of casting pyromancy spells, but few are skilled enough to do so while inhabiting a living vessel. Human practitioners, having no innate connection to the World Below, must strike a bargain with a daemon in order to gain the ability to use their magic. Regardless of whether a pyromancer is human or an embodied daemon, they draw their magic from the World Below through a miniature gateway inside their body. This gateway is a literal rent in the heart which remains sealed until a pyromancer chooses to cast a spell; casting multiple spells in a short period of time takes an immense physical toll on the caster as the rift in their heart yawns wider and wider. Pyromancy is agonizing. The witch struggles to breathe; their ribs shift and bend under the skin; their heart threatens to rupture, like an overripe fruit... and if they overexert themselves to a fatal extent, they quite literally open, becoming a brief and bloody doorway through which one may pass from one World to another.

In order to forge a pact with a daemon, all a human supplicant requires is their own body and soul, an open pathway to the World Below, and a sacrifice to draw out a daemon. This sacrifice can be of the supplicant's own blood or an animal they consider valuable — a strong white bull, a stallion of fine breeding, or even a beloved dog. Human sacrifice, while undoubtedly effective in getting a daemon to manifest, is unhelpful in pact-making: most daemons don't bother with bargaining, snap up the freshly deceased soul and depart, making both a fool and a murderer of the petitioner. But if everything is conducted correctly — if the sacrifice is accepted and the daemon manifests, if the supplicant knows how to ward themselves against possession and how to negotiate the terms of their bargain, such as how much power is given and how long until the daemon claims the supplicant's soul — then, a pact is struck and the supplicant becomes a pyromancer, a threshold between the two Worlds. These pacts usually have a duration — ten, twenty, sometimes even forty years — and at the end of that term, the pyromancer perishes, and the daemon is free to either devour the soul and depart, or occupy the body completely, taking it as their own.

As with everything, there are exceptions. Some daemons are gracious enough, or attached enough to their bonded humans, to offer pacts that do not kill them in the end. Depending on their precise wording, these bargains can be inherited or passed to others — indeed, some of the wealthiest Sulfurite families are attended by daemons who have served them for generations, and Wasteland fire-callers pass their spirit pacts to their children or apprentices. Many superstitious Faithful refuse to accept gifts from or even touch the gravely ill and the dying, as the motif of a good man accepting a parting gift from someone dying by a crossroads and then finding himself shackled to a devil is a common one in folklore.

POSSESSION

When one hears the word *possession*, the image that comes to mind is that of a visitant, a daemon who has crushed their unwilling host's soul so completely that they have total control of the body. But that is rarely the case. As fragile as it is, the human soul can be a formidable opponent within the confines of its own vessel. Daemons know this, and only the most desperate are ever willing to give the body's rightful owner a fair fight. Unless put under exceptional duress or a time constraint, a daemon works slowly, wearing down the body to exhaust the occupying soul over weeks or even months before attempting to assume direct control. A possession manifests itself as subtle audiovisual hallucinations, paranoia, sleeplessness, odd dreams, fevers, strange aches and muscle twitches — in other words, things that could be symptomatic of an ordinary illness. Because of this, and the lack of a truly reliable means of detecting a daemonic presence, the work of an exorcist begins as equal parts medicine and investigation and they do not attempt an exorcism until they are absolutely certain that it is the right course of action. The spells involved can be deadly for the possessed, and if there is no invading spirit to expel, an exorcist risks injuring themselves and permanently disembodimenting the "possessed" individual's soul.

Though human pyromancers are not possessed, they are bonded to a daemon, and the gateway in their heart allows their ethereal partner to communicate with them whenever they wish. Immaterial and confined to the World Below, these daemons manifest as persistent and frighteningly convincing audiovisual hallucinations to advise, annoy, and otherwise interact with their pyromancer. A pact is also one of the few things that can provide some form of protection against spiritual assault; while a daemon cannot prevent possession, they are watchful keepers of their bonded souls.

VISITANTS

A visitant is an embodied daemon who has completely suppressed the soul of the mortal they are possessing, anchoring themselves to their host. Until their bodies die or they are successfully exorcised, visitants are not drawn to the World Below and do not suffer from starvation, rationing the host



soul to stave off the hunger. Compared to their disembodied or oathbound brethren, daemons who have extensive experience with complete incarnation are, or at least appear to be, a touch more human in their psychology: they form attachments and relationships with humans, develop mortal virtues and mortal vices, and tend to think on the scale of months and years, as opposed to decades or centuries. Like the rest of their kind, they still suffer from a peculiar inability to break a formal oath, but it does not hinder them much — many are quite adept at self-deception and unconventional thinking, such as convincing themselves and others that it is *their host* who swore the oath, and not them.

Dislodging a visitant from their body is both difficult and dangerous — not only is it likely that the spirit has grown attached to the body, and would fight tooth and nail to stay in it, but the state of the captive soul is often so piteous as to make many veteran exorcists believe that death would be a greater mercy. This is not always the case — sometimes a former visitant is just as vibrant and alive as they were before, if more forgetful (this is usually the fate of Sulfurite debtors who manage to survive their possession), but full recovery is an exception, rather than the rule.

CAMBIONS

Since many daemons possess mortals with the express purpose of indulging in the pleasures of the flesh, it is unsurpris-

ing that sometimes this leads to children. Sometimes these children are even wanted: daemons, like mortals, are capable of experiencing love, and some spirits are willing to entertain the possibility of procreation and parenthood, out of curiosity and otherwise. Pyromancers, too, often choose to have families — and the parent's daemoniac pact sometimes affects the souls of their children, for better or for worse.

These children, called *changelings* or *cambions*, are human, save for the fact that their souls are markedly different from those of ordinary mortals. When disembodied and properly examined, they gutter and flicker instead of giving off a steady light, and their owners are capable of reflexively casting a simple pyromantic spell. Many cambions learn the truth about their parentage when someone strikes them or shouts at them — their magic tends to manifest during stressful or traumatic moments. Sulfurites acknowledge cambions as a natural byproduct of life in close proximity to the World Below, holdouts often elevate cambions to positions of authority or choose them to inherit their clan's infernal pact, and the Faithful consider cambions to be cursed and of illegitimate birth.

Children born of or begat by changelings are human unless the changeling becomes possessed or strikes a daemoniac pact. This is not always acknowledged, and individuals of known “devilish” descent are sometimes treated differently, for better or for worse.

CHAPTER 6: THE MARVELS OF TECHNOLOGY

ARMAMENTS

The level of scientific and technological development in the Sunless Age is in some ways equivalent to the Earth's Early Modern period, but simultaneously more and less advanced. For obvious reasons, the proliferation of firearms and black powder did not occur on the same scale as it did on Earth: while such things certainly exist, they are rare, difficult to use without a daemon or pyromancer on hand, and comparatively primitive. An arquebus is a curiosity, a rich man's toy — not a weapon in the hands of a soldier. Instead, individuals inclined to violence make use of arcane weaponry: bows, crossbows, and other devices engraved with arcane sigils that propel ammunition, imbue it with magical energy, or both. Crossbows and other mechanically sophisticated projectile weapons engraved with thaumaturgical propulsion arrays are called *runelocks*, the same way firearms with flint-based ignition mechanisms are called flintlocks. Most runelock weapons, including cannons and thaumaturgical

ballistae — have to be wound up by living, ensouled beings. The effect of the aforementioned cannons and ballistae is devastating and terrifying to behold — bolts of lightning and beams of sharp blue light, annihilating all in their path with a high keening sound louder than thunder.

MACHINERY

On a more peaceful front, the technological landscape is dominated by clockwork, whose inefficiency is remedied with a judicious application of magic. Thaumaturgical sigils and arrays can be used to transmute and amplify kinetic energy (but not heat), and certain materials can serve as magical conduits — silver, copper and tin are quite effective in that regard, while quartz and treated glass are excellent materials for capacitors. When one winds a device outfitted with a crystal capacitor, they power the sigils that keep the machine wound for far longer than one would think possible: days or even months, depending on the quality of the



capacitor. Fuel isn't an issue, but the wear and tear of material components present significant challenges: wires fray, sigils wear out, and replacement parts are often expensive or difficult to come by. Thaumaturgical machines are a vital part of any large urban center — arcane lanterns light the streets, clockwork horses pull carriages of the wealthy, mechanical guardsmen stand vigil near the manors of merchants and nobles, and churning mechanisms in a city's underworks dehydrate and process human and animal waste into fuel.

INDUSTRY

Despite the abundance of machinery, Sunfall is pre-industrial, in part because most technology relies on magic. Not only are sigils complex and difficult to engrave, but they have to be made by mages to function; magical arrays stamped out by a machine or an unskilled worker are little more than fancy patterns on a sheet of metal. Even the sigil-less mundane components are not mass-manufactured; everything is handmade by clockworkers and magicians, and thus expensive and in limited supply. Particularly large and impressive works of magical engineering are almost always owned by city-states or obscenely wealthy private individuals, and the people who build and operate these machines are almost always highly paid and in limited supply. It is for this reason that contemporary wars are fought primarily by mortal soldiers and not automatons: a clockwork army, while not impossible, is far more difficult to build and maintain than a regular one. Hiring ten mercenaries is both cheaper and faster than building and infusing three clockworks with a single bound human soul.

TECHNOLOGY OF THE BLESSED AGE

The Blessed Age saw a surge in mundane, non-magical technology and a significant decline in the study of the Elder Science. Many of the First Sun's scholars of magic perished or permanently departed from the World Above during the Dying Sun, and most of the Byssarian's leading magical institutions fell victim to the mass civil unrest that characterized that troublesome age. In the Old Empire, only the high nobility and the members of secretive monastic orders had the privilege of arcane education, and mages, with their soaring towers and soul-powered constructs, were easy to blame for the weakening of the Sun. If these reclusive scholars, so susceptible to Incandescent madness, had not dabbled with things the mortal mind was not meant to comprehend, if no soul had ever been removed from the Wheel in a fit of mortal arrogance, the frightened public thought, the world would not have come to an end. (Whether this is true or not remains a mystery. In the Sunless Age, most scholarship does not concern itself with eschatology — the world has already ended, twice, and it's very unlikely that a third

sun-related apocalyptic event is forthcoming.)

There are few, if any, magical artifacts or sophisticated arcane machines stowed away in most Blessed Age ruins: the great inventions of this age were steel, vertical windmills and improved water mills, other innovations in mundane (as opposed to arcane) architecture, and modest advances in the alchemical sciences, medicine, and astronomy. In other words, Arnai's Blessed Age roughly corresponds to the Earth's Middle Ages and its greatest treasures are illuminated texts, preserved statuary and tapestries, precision optics, imperishable alchemical reagents, jewels and precious metals — objects that are interesting to historians and art collectors, or things that can be sold or used in day-to-day life. Many scavengers prefer Blessed Age ruins for this precise reason: salvage from that time is more abundant, sells reliably, and the dangers involved in procurement are fewer and a good deal more predictable. But the best in the business, the most eccentric and the most knowledgeable, seek out older, hidden places.

THE RUINS OF THE OLD EMPIRE

The current understanding of the Old Empire, particularly as it was before the adoption of the Faith as state-sanctioned religion, is that it was a decadent magocracy so sophisticated as to be almost incomprehensible. The decadence is evident from the art — all Old Imperial ruins are lavishly decorated with sculpted friezes, mosaics, and frescoes — as is the cruelty so ubiquitous in antiquity: many of the abovementioned lavish frescoes and bright mosaics are disturbing to behold. They often depict scenes of conquest, warfare, and execution, as well as cruel arcane experimentation on living spirits, human and otherwise, all overseen by dispassionate, stiff-backed nobles, scholars, and generals.

What the magi and artisans of the Old Empire built, they built to last: some untouched Old World ruins still hum with active thaumaturgical arrays and echo with the footsteps of their mechanical guardians. Their works are fantastic stuff, both inspiring and discouraging to contemporary scholars and engineers: fields of altered time, non-Euclidean architecture, magical constructs so intelligent and sophisticated that they may have surpassed their creators. Unfortunately, much of the knowledge required to properly operate or recreate such things has been lost during the Blessed Age. What remains is often translated into long-dead tongues and tightly encrypted: Old Imperial archmages were secretive and perpetually locked in vicious power struggles with one another despite their shared allegiance to the August Throne. Contemporary scholars can only try to decipher their works, and the bulk of literature recovered from Old Imperial ruins is often mundane in nature: poetry, courtly romances, and countless ledgers full of thrilling information about crop yields, taxation and textile shipments.

...AND THOSE WHO PLUNDER THEM

Wherever there are ancient structures, there are always those brave or foolish enough to venture inside, and the Byssarian is no exception. Daring scholars, cunning survivalists and ingenious explorers, delvers are those who plumb the ruins of the Old World for wealth and knowledge. There's no great society of delvers, no guild or organization save for a set of shared principles, superstition, and a vague camaraderie that sometimes translates into gestures of goodwill. Delving is dangerous, thankless work, and the world is a cold and cruel place in which doing good often goes unrewarded, but *professionals* have *standards*. Most delvers find themselves attached to crews of five or so individuals, preferring to keep to themselves in their explorations, scouting out ruins and collaborating with other groups only when the situation calls for it. These solitary tendencies are a byproduct of secrecy — there are few untouched Old World ruins in the region, and those who find them guard their maps with utmost jealousy. The makeshift, opportunistic nature of delver alliances ensures at least some degree of honor and civility: in a situation where a rival may become an ally in the span of weeks, one strives to keep a veneer of civilization over one's hatreds.

City-dwellers, Faithful and Sulfurite alike, romanticize this and imagine some kind of formal code, some sort of secret society or adventurers' club, but no such code or organization exists. There are merely unspoken promises to not impede each other's progress, and to share resources and information whenever possible. There are hidden caches in the Wastes, most of them under shrines dedicated to the Watcher at the Threshold, containing charts and supplies and a thick logbook in which any passing delver can note their name, what they took from the cache, and any information pertinent to dig sites in the area that they are willing to share. To take something from a cache without marking the ledger is bad luck; to take something and not repay the implicit debt it creates is a terrible sin. So most delvers note what they take, note their names, swear before the Watcher, and pay their debts at any cost.

Relationships between larger delver crew are another matter altogether. Having a stable, reliable group of more than a dozen allies erodes the necessary camaraderie between smaller enterprises, and though the habit of civility can be difficult to shake, feuds between crews have a heightened chance of bloodshed. But even then, most delvers are loath to kill one another without good reason, and even those operating as part of a larger group realize the relative impermanence of their situation and the danger of ruining possible future alliances. It's not uncommon for many disputes between delvers to be resolved the same way as disputes between rival noblemen or members of the gentry — with a duel. There's honor among thieves, after all, and it's better to concede a claim and live to complain about it than die for some Old World trinket leagues away from home.



PART 2

NUMBER, WEIGHT, AND MEASURE

*“Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting.”
King James Bible, Daniel 5:27*

IN THIS PART OF THE BOOK, YOU WILL FIND...

- **Chapter 1: Character Creation** contains setting-specific character careers and archetypes, as well as guidelines for generating Secrets — an optional alternative to Motivation.
- **Chapter 2: New Skills and Rules** details new skills, as well as rules for possession and formal dueling.
- **Chapter 3: Magic** describes the two magic disciplines specific to the setting, thaumaturgy and pyromancy, as well as magic implements for both.
- **Chapter 4: Talents** provides a list of talents from the Genesys Core Rulebook and Realms of Terrinoth that can be used in this setting, as well as a number of new talents unique to Sunfall.
- **Chapter 5: Gear** lists and describes weapons, armor, and sundry items one may come across in their journey across this frozen and desolate world.



CHAPTER 1: CHARACTER CREATION

ARCHETYPES

Detailed below are 8 Archetypes specific to the *Sunfall* setting.

THE URBANITE

Urbanites are those who have lived in a city or town most of their life, reaping the benefits of civilization under the auspices of the Mandate or the Republics. They are scholars, bureaucrats, members of the clergy, or just well-read laypeople. Regardless of their past, one thing is abundantly clear: they have never had to get their hands dirty in their line of work, and they would prefer to keep it that way.



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10+Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10+Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100
- **Protect Me!** Sometimes, discretion is the better part of valor. Once per session, when your character is the target of a successful combat check, you may spend a Story Point as an incidental to redirect one hit of the attack to an ally within short range.
- **Knowledge is Power:** Urbanites start with 1 rank in Knowledge (Scholarly), Mechanics, or Knowledge (Old World). They obtain this skill rank before spending experience points, and may not increase this skill above rank 2 during character creation.

THE TRAVELER

Silver-tongued, urbane, and familiar with the customs of far-off places, a traveler has a magnetic personality and a riveting tale for every occasion. Peddlers, storytellers, messengers, itinerant preachers, or diplomats, travelers are a motley crowd, ranging far from the place of their birth but rarely straying from trade routes and established paths. Their reasons for living on the road vary; many dream of settling down, and many others dread it.



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10+Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10+Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100

- **Judge of Character:** Once per session, a traveler may spend a Story Point as an incidental to reveal one of an NPC's motivations of the GM's choice.
- **Canny Socialite:** Travelers start with 1 Rank in Charm, Deception or Negotiation. They obtain this skill rank before spending experience points, and may not increase this skill above rank 2 during character creation.

RULE OF DRAMA

The Veteran archetype represents an individual with a storied and complicated past — a staple of Gothic literature. Because it is difficult to mechanically represent renown and notoriety, this author suggests that the players and GM do so narratively, through the expenditure of Story Points. A player with a Veteran character may spend a Story Point to recognize an adversary or NPC as a former comrade in arms, friend, or lover; the GM, meanwhile, can spend Story Points to alter these relationships, or to have the Veteran be recognized in turn by someone they would rather not see. And, of course, this use of Story Points is not limited to one archetype — any character can brood over their tragic backstory if they so desire.

This is best played for drama and suspense, and the GM has final say on which NPCs do and do not know the character, and whether the current circumstances lend themselves well to this kind of revelation.

THE VETERAN

A veteran is no stranger to violence, an individual with a storied past...a past they struggle to leave behind. Some were hired swords for the Brimstone Republics, others did a tour of duty in Hell, fighting alongside the Adamant Order, others still ran with gangs or rode with bands of holdout raiders. Whatever it they did, it changed them — whether that change is for better or for worse remains to be seen.



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10+Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10+Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100

- **Tough as Nails:** Once per session, your character may spend a Story Point as an out-of-turn incidental immediately after suffering a Critical Injury and determining the result. If they do so, they count the result rolled as "01".
- **Hardened:** Veterans start with 1 Rank in Melee (Light), Melee (Heavy) or Ranged (Mechanical). They obtain this skill rank before spending experience points, and may not increase this skill above rank 2 during character creation.

THE HOLDOUT

Holdouts call the Wastes their home, one their ancestors stubbornly refused to leave in the wake of the the Sunfall. Some holdouts are raiders, nomads and freeholders, while others are farmers, trappers, and rangers under the patronage of the Mandate or the Republics. Proud of their resilience, most holdouts scoff at the idea of leaving the Wasteland for the cities, but a few admit in private that they draw no comfort from the wilderness — only fear.



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10+Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10+Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100
- **Weathered:** Because of a lifetime of practice, holdouts can tolerate Arnai's unforgiving temperatures slightly better than city-folk. When making skill checks, a holdout may remove ■ imposed by weather conditions (but not darkness).
- **Survivalist:** Holdouts start with 1 Rank in Survival, Vigilance, or Resilience. They obtain this skill rank before spending experience points, and may not increase this skill above rank 2 during character creation.

THE VISITANT

A visitant is denizen of the World Below, an unusually strong-willed daemon inhabiting a stolen or legally obtained human body. Many visitants are traders, spies, or diplomats, walking the Surface at the behest of their superiors. Just as many are fugitives fleeing the wrath of the Adamants or the yoke of the Adversary, or thrillseekers, reveling in the endless possibilities of embodied existence.



- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 8+Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 11+Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 160
- **The Spirit is Willing:** As an action, a visitant can abandon

their body and attempt to possess a living human Minion in Short range. In order to do so, they must make an **opposed Discipline vs Discipline check**. On a success, the visitant takes control, replacing their Brawn and Agility with those of the host body, but retaining their Wound threshold. They may not use any skills or abilities the Minion had access to before possession. On a failure, the visitant becomes disembodied, and must make an **Average (◆◆) Discipline check**. If they succeed, they may return to their original host body. If they fail, they are drawn to the World Below, which is equivalent to character death.

- **Red Right Hand:** Mandate officials, Faithful folk, and the friends and loved ones of the possessed aren't too keen on visitants and would see them exorcised or killed. Your character must add ■ to any check they make to avoid detection by trained exorcists or individuals who knew the host prior to possession.
- **Self-possessed:** The visitant's dominion over their host's body and soul is absolute. They are immune to possession.
- **Unearthly Wit:** Visitants start with 1 Rank in Charm, Deception, or Knowledge (Chthonic). They obtain this skill rank before spending experience points, and may not increase this skill above rank 2 during character creation.

THE CAMBION

A cambion is an oddity, an ordinary mortal with an extraordinary soul. They may not be aware of it, but one of their biological parents was possessed by a daemon, which left a mark on their child's spirit, making it a frail, volatile thing capable of unexpected bursts of chthonic magics. They are feared by the Faithful and celebrated in some Wasteland communities, and their own attitudes towards their heritage, if they are aware of it, are similarly varied. Some reject it, others embrace it, others still — the children of exorcists and fire-callers — accept it as a fact of life.

Many more Knights Adamants are cambions than the Order likes to admit.

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10+Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10+Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100



- **Spirit Lash:** Once per session, a cambion may use a Story Point upon being hit with a Brawl or Melee attack. After calculating damage, the attacker suffers half the Wounds the cambion does, rounded up.
- **Otherworldly Guile:** Cambions start with 1 Rank in Deception, Stealth or Coercion. You still may not raise this skill above 2 during character creation.

THE HELLBORN

The hellborn are just that: human individuals, born and raised in the World Below. Many of them are part of the Adamant Order; others are the children of Sulfurite merchants, soldiers, or officials who found themselves traveling through or posted in the World Below. Their souls are untainted, wholly human — unlike the souls of cambions — but they are nevertheless easy to pick out in a crowd of people from Above. Some of them have the staccato Hellish accent, others have the rigid posture of trained soldiers, and all of them possess an intensity that many Surfacers find distasteful and off-putting.

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10+Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10+Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100



- **Stranger in a Strange Land:** Hell is no place to learn good manners, and others are sometimes forgiving of social faux pas the hellborn so often make. Once per session, a hellborn character may spend a Story Point to remove ✕ or ⚔ from a Social skill check.
- **Hellish Training:** A hellborn character starts with 1 Rank in Discipline, Melee (Light), or Resilience. They obtain this skill rank before spending experience points, and may not increase this skill above rank 2 during character creation.

THE FOOL

Sometimes, a person leads a perfectly unremarkable life before feeling an almost irresistible, inexplicable urge to strike out on a journey of some sort. Some of these individuals manage to refuse this urge...and are then swept up in events beyond their comprehension and expertise, finding themselves leagues away from home and everything they know. Every night they lie awake, cursing themselves for ever leaving home. What a foolish decision that was.

- **Starting Wound Threshold:** 10+Brawn
- **Starting Strain Threshold:** 10+Willpower
- **Starting Experience:** 100



- **Favored Soul:** Many people throughout history have claimed to have attracted the attention of a power beyond the two known Worlds. Sometimes, these claims are even true. Once per session, a Fool may spend a Story Point before making a skill or combat check. On a success, the Fool adds ♠♠ to the check; on failure, ⚔⚔.

- **A Life, Abandoned:** Fools start with 1 rank in any skill they like, and may not increase this skill above rank 2 during character creation.

CAREERS

Sunfall uses 7 original careers and modified versions of the Soldier, Healer, Leader and Scoundrel careers from the Genesys Core Rulebook.

ARTISAN

Artisans are skilled laborers, plying a trade that has been passed from parent to child, master to apprentice for generations untold. Painters and tailors, woodcarvers and clockworkers, butchers, bakers, and candlestick-makers, Artisans take pride in their craft and their knowledge above all things. Many Artisans are city-dwellers, but holdouts, too, boast many skilled craftsmen and professionals, such as the smiths and masons of the mountain clans, the leather workers of the plains, and the shipwrights and silk-spinners of the sea.

The Artisan counts the following skills as Career skills: **Athletics, Cool, Knowledge (Scholarly), Mechanics, Negotiation, Perception, Resilience, and Streetwise.** Before spending Experience during character creation, the Artisan may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Dagger or Hand Crossbow
- Gambeson or Heavy Robes
- Alchemical Lantern or Adriole
- Backpack
- 200 cash

DELVER

Delvers are tinkers, engineers, salvagers, or explorers, enamored of the Old World and wishing to unbury its buried secrets. The bulk of them don't boast much in terms of formal education, instead relying on experience and patchwork knowledge gleaned from the stories of other Delvers, or the occasional book. Some Delvers dig for riches, some for knowledge, some for fame — but all look at the ruined crypts and towers of the Old Empire with hunger in their eyes, instead of fear.

The Delver counts the following skills as Career skills: **Athletics, Coordination, Mechanics, Knowledge (Old World), Ranged (Mechanical), Riding, Stealth, and Survival.** Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Delver may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Beamcaster or M&V Reprimand

- Gambeson
- Cartographer's Kit or Alchemical Lantern
- Camping Gear
- 125 cash

DOCTOR

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak — and who better to repair said flesh than a trained professional with a steady hand? Granted, not all who call themselves Doctors have had the privilege of an actual education, but you'll be surprised what you can do with a length of suture, a bone needle, and half a flask of bittermoss whiskey.

The Doctor counts the following skills as Career skills: **Alchemy, Charm, Discipline, Knowledge (Scholarly), Medicine, Melee (Light), Resilience, and Survival.** Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Doctor may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Apothecary's Kit with 2 Herbs of Healing or an Alchemist's Kit
- Dagger or Fine Cloak
- Heavy Robes or Gambeson
- 200 cash.

ENTERTAINER

Singers, musicians, courtesans, dancers, and acrobats, Entertainers can be found in all corners of the world, providing a much-needed diversion from the toil and trouble of everyday life. Some of them do what they do for money, others — for art, and others still play roles in darker machinations, serving as spies, saboteurs and assassins to advance a cause, noble or otherwise.

The Entertainer counts the following skills as Career skills: **Charm, Coordination, Deception, Discipline, Leadership, Melee (Light), Skulduggery, and Stealth.** Before spending Experience during Character Creation, an Entertainer may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Sword Cane or Stiletto
- Fine Cloak or Gambeson
- Musical Instrument or Thieves' Tools
- 250 cash

JOCKEY

Jockeys are daredevils and swashbucklers who feel at home on the road, and there's nothing they can't do from the back of their trusty steed. Couriers and messengers, cavalry soldiers and holdout lancers — they are a wild and reckless

crowd, born in the saddle, laughing in the face of death.

The Jockey counts the following skills as Career skills: **Athletics, Cool, Discipline, Medicine, Melee (Light), Resilience, Riding, and Vigilance.** Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Jockey may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Sword or Spear
- Brigandine
- Bottled Courage or Alchemical Lantern
- Riding Horse
- 175 cash

LEADER

When they speak, others listen. A mercenary captain is a leader, but so is a merchant-venturer, a holdout monarch, a Sulfurite politician, a traveling minister, or a particularly influential criminal. Leaders can come from all walks of life, but the one thing they share in common is an iron will and a spark of ambition.

The Leader counts the following skills as Career skills: **Coercion, Cool, Discipline, Leadership, Negotiation, Perception, Ranged (Archaic), and Vigilance.** Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Leader may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Leader characters may optionally switch **Ranged (Archaic)** for **Ranged (Mechanical)**.

Starting Equipment:

- Longbow or Crossbow
- Gambeson or Brigandine
- Fine Cloak or Symbol of Authority
- 255 cash

PYROMANCER

Whether they are a human practitioner with a pact or a particularly gifted visitant, all pyromancers' power comes from the World Below. In the case of human pyromancers, their pact ties them to a specific denizen from the World Below, a daemon who is their closest friend and ally or their bitterest enemy. Wasteland healers, witches and fire-callers are pyromancers, and so are Mandate exorcists and Sulfurite fops who inherit the pact with the family fortune.

The Pyromancer counts the following skills as Career skills: **Deception, Negotiation, Melee (Light), Knowledge (Chthonic), Pyromancy, Perception, Survival, and Resilience.** Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Pyromancer may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- An Exorcist's Censer OR Invigorating Herbs

- Dagger or Quarterstaff
- Heavy Robes
- Two Bitter Tinctures
- 200 cash.

SCHOLAR

Academics, students, private tutors, and all other manner of intellectuals who prefer book learning and parlor conversation to honest work. Particularly erudite graverobbers also consider themselves Scholars, claiming that their inglorious business is called *archaeology* and is, in fact, a *perfectly respectable academic discipline*. The notion that most of their discoveries eventually find their way into the hands of antique merchants is nothing but a vile rumor spread by unsophisticated, lowbrow commoners.

The Scholar counts the following skills as Career skills: **Alchemy, Charm, Knowledge (Scholarly), Knowledge (Old World), Mechanics, Medicine, and Perception**. Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Scholar may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Alchemist's Kit or Cartographer's Kit
- Dagger or Quarterstaff
- Heavy Robes or Gambeson
- 150 cash.

SCOUNDREL

The farmer, upon raising a healthy crop, thanks whoever it is he worships. The shopkeeper savors the click-click of her abacus as she tallies her profits. And the scoundrel? The scoundrel pauses to reflect when they set their eyes on an overconfident gambler testing her luck, a foolish merchant traveling without an escort, or a naive holdout trying to make their way in the big city. Honest work is for fools.

The Scoundrel counts the following skills as Career skills: **Charm, Cool, Coordination, Deception, Melee (Light), Ranged (Archaic), Skullduggery, Stealth, and Streetwise**. Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Scoundrel may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Scoundrel characters may optionally switch **Ranged (Archaic)** for **Ranged (Mechanical)**.

Starting Equipment:

- Two Daggers or Hand Crossbow
- Brigandine or Heavy Robes
- Thieves' Tools or Gaming Set (Crooked) or Fine Cloak
- Bitter Tincture
- 200 cash.

SCOUT

Surveyors and skirmishers, hunters and explorers, outlaws and outriders, Scouts venture further into the wilds than most people in the Byssarian. Many are restless and nomadic, knowledgeable about the natural world but uncomfortable among the dizzying masses of humanity in major cities and large townships. Armies, mercenary companies, and nomadic holdout coalitions use Scouts as vanguard troops, relying on them to strike swiftly and before vanishing into the blank vastness of the Wastes.

The Scout counts the following skills as Career skills: **Knowledge (Scholarly), Melee (Light), Ranged (Archaic), Perception, Stealth, Survival, Riding, and Vigilance**. Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Scout may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Shortbow
- Extra Quiver or Waybread
- Brigandine
- 175 cash.

SOLDIER

The world is a cold, hard place and war is as profitable of a business as it's ever been. Campaign life suits a soldier fine — their camp is their home, their regiment is their family, and their sword and arbalest are their bosom friends. To reason, question, and reply is the lot of officers — a soldier's task is to do and die.

The Soldier counts the following skills as Career skills: **Athletics, Brawl, Coercion, Melee (Heavy) or Melee (Light), Perception, Ranged (Mechanical), Riding, and Vigilance**. Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Soldier may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Crossbow or one two-handed weapon (greatsword, bill, polearm, or pike)
- Gambeson
- Two Bottled Courage
- Alchemical Lantern
- 110 cash.

THAUMATURGE

Students of the Elder Science, Thaumaturges — sometimes called mages or wizards — are iron-willed spellcasters who can debate intricacies of magical theory and hurl cold lightning at distant foes with equal ease. Most, however, prefer peaceful pursuits, such as research and engineering, to the chaos of war — there are ample opportunities out there for highly educated individuals skilled in the magical arts.



Although knowledge is an important part of magic, every Thaumaturge unlocks their magical potential by undergoing the Mage's Ordeal — a grueling series of physical and psychological trials designed to push the aspiring wizard to their limits. The few Thaumaturges who awaken to magic without undergoing the Ordeal usually do so in the aftermath of an experience similar to the Ordeal in intensity — wars, sieges, plagues and famines always leave a handful of “natural” mages in their wake.

Characters using the Visitant archetype cannot choose this Career at character creation.

The Thaumaturge counts the following skills as Career skills: **Alchemy, Coercion, Discipline, Knowledge (Thaumaturgical), Mechanics, Stealth, Thaumaturgy, and Vigilance.** Before spending Experience during Character Creation, an Arcanist may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Magic Gloves or Magic Bracers
- Gambeson or Heavy Robes
- Cartographer's Kit or Alchemist's Kit
- 275 cash.

TRADER

Furs, spices, Adamantine metalwork, fine Sulfurite glass, salvage, hellfire, even souls — a trader can name the price for anything and everything in this world. With a winning smile, a mind for numbers, and eyes much bigger than their belly, traders are never quite sure of the next step of any of their ventures — only that at least one of them is bound to end in profit.

The Trader counts the following skills as Career skills: **Charm, Cool, Negotiation, Deception, Knowledge (Scholarly), Streetwise, Perception, and Riding.** Before spending Experience during Character Creation, a Trader may choose four of their Career skills and gain one rank in each of them.

Starting Equipment:

- Dagger or Hand Crossbow
- Fine Cloak or Backpack.
- Alchemical Lantern or Cartographer's Kit.
- 350 Cash

SAMPLE SECRETS

d10	SECRET
1	Debt. Your character owes a monstrous debt to a member of the nobility, a crime boss, or a powerful daemon. Their debt may be monetary or, in the event that the lender is a daemon, bodily or immaterial.
2	False Identity. Your character is traveling under a false name or using a set of false credentials, and they would do anything to preserve their cover. Perhaps they are a wanted criminal, a fugitive of a Sulfurite state or the Inquisition, or someone who had a sordid affair with a noble and is fleeing their jealous spouse.
3	Bastardry. Your character or your character's host body is an illegitimate child of a king, Sulfurite Prince, nobleman, or similarly powerful individual. Your character's influential parent may or may not be aware of this, but if they ever find out, they are unlikely to be pleased by the fact of your character's continued existence.
4	Clandestine associations. Your character is a member of a secret society or fringe religious movement. They may be a dissident traveling the mandate, a member of one of the many necromantic cults of the byssarian, a daemon-worshipper, a criminal, or a member of a revolutionary cabal.
5	Disgrace. Your character has done something (or been accused of doing something) appalling and is fleeing disgrace and humiliation. Perhaps they were a noble caught in a torrid affair with a commoner, an academic rightfully accused of plagiarism, or an officer responsible for a recent military disaster. Whatever happened, it left your character's good name and reputation in tatters.
6	Affliction. Your character is cursed, suffering from a physical illness, or, if they are a thaumaturge, in the earliest stages of Incandescence. They are desperately searching for a cure, but cannot reveal their condition even to their most trusted confidantes.
7	Contraband. Your character is in possession of something small, stolen, highly illegal, immensely valuable, and — most importantly — incredibly difficult to fence. This item could be anything, from a large and distinctive gemstone, to a slim volume of arcane lore, to an ancient daemon in a bottle or a distinguished human soul. Whatever it is, the authorities will happily put your character to the sword if they ever find out about it — and so will their rivals.
8	Espionage. Your character is a willing informant for the Mandate's Inquisition, a Brimstone Republic, one of the Adversary's generals, or a foreign government — whoever their employer may be, they must be antagonistic to the party.
9	Possession. Your character begins play possessed by an antagonistic daemon (see p. Xx for details), who is using the character to pursue their own obscure agenda. If your character is already a visitant, the soul of their host is actively resisting possession, forcing them to act in accordance to its desires at the worst possible times.
10	Plot Twist. Roll twice on this table and keep both results. Decide which result is true and which is false; if your character has to disclose their secret, have them disclose the false one first. (E.g. if someone rolls 6 and 9, Possession and Affliction, they might be possessed, but claim that their strange actions are the product of a shameful curse.)

SECRETS

Instead of, or in addition to, Motivation, Sunfall characters begin play with a Secret. To generate a Secret, roll on the Secrets table and collaborate with the GM on the specifics. Ideally, a Secret should be relevant to the plot of the adventure and campaign, and terrible, or incriminating enough that a character wouldn't reveal it to their traveling companions unless pressured to do so. For example, in an adventure wherein the characters are a group of delvers searching an Old Imperial ruin for a stockpile of dangerous magical

artifacts, one character could be a spy or informant for a faction that opposes the party and wants the ancient treasure-trove for their own. Alternatively, one character could owe a monstrous debt to a powerful NPC, or have orders to assassinate an otherwise allied NPC — orders that cannot be disobeyed without incurring the wrath of somebody powerful and vengeful.

Secrets are purely optional — they run counter to Genesys' player-facing nature, and not every game benefits from as heavy a dose of intrigue and conflict as secrets can generate.

CHAPTER 2: NEW SKILLS AND RULES

SKILLS

This section introduces new skills specific to the Sunfall setting. The table opposite here includes both new skills and skills from the Genesys Core rulebook that are used in the Sunfall setting.

COMBAT SKILLS

RANGED (ARCHAIC)

Even in this age of increasingly intricate crossbows and runelock weapons, no-one will dispute the power of a bow in the hands of a skilled archer. The Ranged (Archaic) skill defines a character's ability to use bows and thrown weapons, such as hatchets, knives, and javelins.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They are using a bow or another weapon that uses the Ranged (Archaic) skill.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They are trying to fire a crossbow, beamcaster or another weapon with mechanical components. Those weapons use the Ranged (Mechanical) skill.

FEAR RULES

Sunfall uses the Fear rules listed on page 243-244 of the Genesys Core Rulebook. The frozen wilderness beyond city walls is terrifying in its own right, but the most frightening creatures are the ones that lurk in the hearts of men — both literally and figuratively.

RANGED (MECHANICAL)

An inevitable side effect of technological and scientific progress is the invention of more and more elaborate means of killing. The Ranged (Mechanical) skill reflects a character's familiarity with modern and mechanical weaponry, such as crossbows, runelocks, and beamcasters.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They are using a crossbow or runelock weapon.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They are trying to repair a broken crossbow or runelock weapon. This falls under the purview of Mechanics.

WHY NOT RANGED (HEAVY) AND RANGED (LIGHT)?

Although the Genesys Core Rulebook provides a wide variety of skills that could be used in most settings, the Ranged weapon skills presented therein do not account for a distinction between mechanically sophisticated ranged weapons and their earlier counterparts. This distinction is crucial in a setting that is, at least in spirit, Early Modern: there are no guns, but there are gun-equivalents. Separating the skill one uses to wield them from prowess with bows and thrown weapons seems fitting for a world in which progress marches on, but not quite so fast as to make these earlier weapons completely obsolete.

SKILLS FOR THE SUNFALL SETTING

SKILL	CHAR.	TYPE	SOURCE
Alchemy	Intellect	General	Core Rule Book p. 57
Athletics	Brawn	General	Core Rule Book p. 58
Brawl	Brawn	Combat	Core Rule Book p. 67
Charm	Presence	Social	Core Rule Book p. 54
Coercion	Willpower	Social	Core Rule Book p. 55
Cool	Presence	General	Core Rule Book p. 59
Coordination	Agility	General	Core Rule Book p. 59
Deception	Cunning	Social	Core Rule Book p. 56
Discipline	Willpower	General	Core Rule Book p. 60
Knowledge (Arcane)	Intellect	Knowledge	<i>Sunfall</i>
Knowledge (Chthonic)	Intellect	Knowledge	<i>Sunfall</i>
Knowledge (Scholarly)	Intellect	Knowledge	<i>Sunfall</i>
Knowledge (Old World)	Intellect	Knowledge	<i>Sunfall</i>
Leadership	Presence	Social	Core Rule Book p. 56
Mechanics	Intellect	General	Core Rule Book p. 60
Medicine	Intellect	General	Core Rule Book p. 61
Melee (Heavy)	Brawn	Combat	Core Rule Book p. 67
Melee (Light)	Brawn	Combat	Core Rule Book p. 67
Negotiation	Presence	Social	Core Rule Book p. 56
Perception	Cunning	General	Core Rule Book p. 62
Pyromancy	Cunning	Magic	<i>Sunfall</i>
Ranged (Archaic)	Agility	Combat	<i>Sunfall</i>
Ranged (Mechanical)	Agility	Combat	<i>Sunfall</i>
Resilience	Brawn	General	Core Rule Book p. 63
Riding	Agility	General	Core Rule Book p. 63
Skulduggery	Cunning	General	Core Rule Book p. 64
Stealth	Agility	General	Core Rule Book p. 64
Streetwise	Cunning	General	Core Rule Book p. 65
Survival	Cunning	General	Core Rule Book p. 65
Thaumaturgy	Willpower	Magic	<i>Sunfall</i>
Vigilance	Willpower	General	Core Rule Book p. 65

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS

CHTHONIC

Chthonic knowledge of the World Below, relevant to the practice of pyromancy, and it encompasses daemonic psychology, the languages and customs of the World Below, and information pertaining to the regions of Hell that fall outside the Adamantine Province.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They are trying to interpret the remains of pyromantic casting.
- They are trying to communicate with daemons who are not well-versed in human speech.
- They are trying to find a loophole in, or wriggle out of, an infernal pact.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They wish to cast a spell. Use Pyromancy instead.
- They are trying to recall facts about the Brimstone Republics or the Adamantine Province. This falls under the purview of Knowledge (Scholarly).

OLD WORLD

The past is an ocean: vast, dark, impossibly deep, at times inscrutable. This skill allows a character to plumb these depths; it summarizes their understanding of the languages, history, and customs of the ages before the Dying Sun — the time of the Old Empire, and maybe even a time before.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They wish to recall information about the Ages of the First and Dying Suns.
- They wish to decipher an inscription, or read a text in an extinct language.
- They wish to determine the purpose of non-mechanical Old World artefacts: strange tools and vessels, and more.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They wish to recall information about the Sunless or Blessed Ages. They ought to use Knowledge (Scholarly) instead.
- Decipher a chthonic language or recall information about the World Below. They ought to use Knowledge (Chthonic) instead.
- They are trying to repair or operate a piece of ancient machinery. Use Mechanics instead.

SCHOLARLY

Knowledge is power, and one should never underestimate the power of mundane erudition. This skill represents your character's general education and their understanding of geography, recent history, politics, living languages, and other matters concerning life in the World Above.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They are trying to recall information concerning recent history, geography, or politics in an area.
- They wish to identify and recall information about the flora and fauna of a region.
- They are conducting research in a library.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They are trying to recall historical information dating to the Dying Sun and before. This falls under Knowledge (Old World).
- They are trying to repair or maintain a piece of machinery. Use Mechanics instead.
- They are trying to navigate a criminal underworld. This falls under Streetwise.

THAUMATURGICAL

Thaumaturgy is called the Elder Science for a reason, and this skill encompasses the discipline's mundane and theoretical aspects. This includes mathematics, geometry, array composition, the anatomy of the human soul, metallurgy, glassblowing, and the art of cutting and gemstones and crystals.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- Your character wishes to determine the purpose or function of a thaumaturgical sigil or array.
- Your character wishes to interpret the remains of thaumaturgical spellcasting.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They wish to cast a spell. That would require the thaumaturgy skill instead.
- They try to repair or operate a piece of magically-powered machinery. This is handled by Mechanics.
- They try to recall historical information about the Age of the Dying Sun, or prior epochs. Recent history is handled by Knowledge (Scholarly), and ancient history — Knowledge (Old World)

MAGIC SKILLS

THAUMATURGY

The cold magic of the human soul. One must attend university or undergo a similarly rigorous course of academic study to become a mage and unlock the full magical potential of their spirit through the Mage's Ordeal. This skill represents the mage's ability to turn that potential into magic — finesse and efficiency come with knowledge. For more information on thaumaturgical spells and spell effects, please refer to **Chapter 2: Magic**.

If your character has the Thaumaturgy skill, they may not purchase ranks in Pyromancy unless they acquire the Threshold talent. In the event that they do so, they immediately lose access to the Thaumaturgy skill.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They wish to cast an Thaumaturgy spell.
- Your character should not use this skill if...
- They are trying to interpret arcane sigils or the remains of thaumaturgical spellcasting. That would fall under the purview of Knowledge (Thaumaturgical).

PYROMANCY

The searing magic of the spirit world. Pyromancy can only be practiced by visitants or humans who have struck a pact with a daemon. This skill represents a pyromancer's raw strength — finesse and efficiency come with knowledge. For more information on pyromancy spells and spell effects, please refer to Chapter 2: Magic.

If your character has the Pyromancy skill, they may not purchase ranks in thaumaturgy or acquire the Ordeal talent.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They wish to cast a Pyromancy spell.

YOUR CHARACTER SHOULD NOT USE THIS SKILL IF...

- They are trying to recall information about the World Below. Use Knowledge (Chthonic) instead.

NEW RULES

DUELING

The purpose of this optional ruleset is to provide a situational and, in some cases, non-lethal alternative to regular combat encounters. As opposed to ordinary combats, duels are a series of skill checks — two fencers in a salon, rather than two fighters locked in lethal melee.

Everyone duels, or at least knows the rules. A formal duel looks like this: two duelists armed with swords or daggers circle each other within the confines of a small ring. A duel master, ideally impartial, watches over the proceedings and calls out fouls; as opposed to ordinary melee, wherein a fighter must turn anything and everything to their advantage, dueling rules prohibit grappling, tripping, grabbing the opponent's weapon, and the use of heavy armor and magic. What constitutes cheating depends on context — shoving the opponent or throwing snow in their face is a perfectly acceptable tactic among wasteland scavengers and back-alley bravos, but highly frowned upon among professional fencers and members of the upper classes. Most matches consist of 3, 5 or 7 bouts; a duelist wins a bout when they touch the opponent with their weapon or force them out

LETHAL DUELS

A duel to the death is a combat encounter, albeit one in which a character fights alone. Both participants are not permitted to use magic or wear armor that provides any defense and more than +1 soak, and each uncanceled ✨ grants +2 damage, instead of +1, to both expedite the process and impress upon the players the danger of such combats.

of the ring. For the sake of expediency, this author recommends the GM limit the length of most duels to 3 bouts.

In a bout, both duellists must make a competitive **Average (◆◆) Melee (Light) check**, upgraded a number of times equal to the opponent's ranks in the Parry talent. Should a character wish to cheat — shove or distract an opponent, or use a hidden weapon while under the watchful eye of the duel master — they may opt to make an **opposed Skulduggery vs Vigilance check** instead of a competitive Melee check, upgraded once if the duel is public. If they succeed on this check, they win the bout. If they fail, however, the GM may decide whether the duel ends, continues with the aspiring cheater forfeiting the bout, or if the duel becomes an ordinary combat encounter (as is often the case outside of salons and arenas).

POSSESSION

In the event that a human or revenant player character is under threat of possession by a daemon, they must make an **opposed Discipline vs Discipline check**. If the character succeeds on this check, they successfully fend off the invader. If they fail, however, they are now possessed — and most likely, they do not realize it.

A possessed player character behaves as normal, however, once per session, the GM may spend a Story Point for the possessing daemon to influence the character. Upon spending the Story Point, the GM presents the player of the possessed character with two courses of action, each terrible or catastrophically at odds with the goals of the party, such as fleeing, attacking an ally in the midst of a battle, insulting a king to his face, or destroying a valuable object. The player must choose one and have their character carry it out to the best of their ability, spending their action to do so if the possession manifests during a structured encounter. In the aftermath, the player character must make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Discipline check**; if they fail, they wholly and irrevocably believe that whatever terrible thing they did was their own decision and not a result of otherworldly influence.

If they succeed, however, they realize that they are possessed, and may inform (or try to convince) their allies of this fact. Other characters who realize that their ally is possessed may attempt to expel the daemon either by paying an exorcist, or by casting the Exorcise spell on the possessed themselves. If the possessed character is a pyromancer, they cannot exorcise themselves.

PYROMANCERS AND POSSESSION

Because daemons tend to their bonded souls with the dedication and jealousy of sheepdogs watching their flocks, characters with the Pyromancy skill may add ■ to any check they make to resist or recognize that they are possessed.

SPENDING ▲, ⊗, ⊕, AND ⊘ TO RESIST POSSESSION

RESULT	NARRATIVE
▲	The character recovers from 1 Strain.
⊗	<p>On Success: the character learns a piece of crucial information about the possessing daemon or their plans; or they learn a piece of information relevant to their current adventure.</p> <p>On Failure: the possession does not manifest during this session. If the check generates more than 1 Tr., this effect is cumulative (e.g. on 2 Tr., a possession cannot manifest for 2 sessions)</p>
⊕	The character suffers 1 Strain.
⊕ ⊕ ⊕ or ⊘	<p>The daemon catches the character's soul in a moment of weakness, and gains the upper hand.</p> <p>On Success: the daemon learns a secret or piece of crucial information about the character, the party, or the party's plans, which they will use to their advantage in the future.</p> <p>On Failure: the GM can trigger this possession 1 additional time per session until the character is exorcised.</p>

SPENDING ▲, ⊗, ⊕, AND ⊘ TO RECOGNIZE POSSESSION

RESULT	NARRATIVE
▲	The struggle for self-awareness invigorates the character, adding ■ to their next check. If the check generates multiple ▲ the GM may decide to extend the duration of this effect until the end of the encounter.
⊗	<p>On Success: the character's soul lashes out at the daemon, expelling them from the body without an exorcism.</p> <p>On Failure: the character's soul is strong enough to resist possession, at least for a time. The possession cannot manifest for 1 session.</p>
⊕	The character becomes disoriented for the next round. If the check generates multiple ⊕ , the GM may decide to extend the duration of this effect until the end of the encounter.
⊘	<p>On Success: the character's present circumstances inspire a visceral fear of all daemonkind. They gain an additional Fear motivation related to daemons and the World Below.</p> <p>On Failure: the daemon lashes out at the soul, making it recoil in agony. The character must increase the difficulty of all Cunning and Willpower-based checks by 1 until the end of the session. They gain an additional Fear motivation related to daemons and the World Below.</p>

These rules are optional, and oriented towards groups that enjoy roleplaying inter-party conflict, love drama, and do not shy from a more adversarial relationship between play-

ers and GM than Genesys assumes. GMs can use possessed characters to push the story in a certain direction or advance the dastardly plans of secret antagonists.

CHAPTER 3: MAGIC

Sunfall uses the spellcasting penalties detailed in Table III.2-3 on page 210 of the Genesys Core Rulebook, and the options for spending ☉ and ☿ on magic checks detailed in Table III.2-3 on page 211 of the Genesys Core Rule Book for both Thaumaturgy and Pyromancy.

THAUMATURGY

Thaumaturgy, the cold magic of the human soul, is the confluence of a strong will and years of dedicated study. It is a forceful art that can manifest the caster's will into bolts and shields of luminous energy, mesmerize and compel others, and dispel the magic of other casters. It also has mechanical applications — indeed, thaumaturgical energies power many weapons and machines throughout the world. The greatest limitation of thaumaturgy is that it cannot produce heat or cause something to ignite.

Visitants cannot cast thaumaturgical spells at all; human and revenant characters who do not have Thaumaturgy as a Career skill cannot cast Thaumaturgy spells until they acquire it as a Career skill.

THAUMATURGICAL CASTING

To cast a spell, a mage requires the free use of their hands and their voice, as well as a magic implement, such as a set of specifically prepared magic rings or a gauntlet. Casting without a magic implement is possible, but any spells cast under these circumstances are much more likely to be dangerously unstable.

When your character casts a Thaumaturgy spell that requires a check, they suffer 2 strain regardless of whether the check succeeds or not.

MAGICAL REBOUND

The purpose of magic implements is to increase a mage's efficiency when casting spells, and to shield the mage against some of the worst potential effects of their magic. If pressed, a mage can cast without a magic implement, but the difficulty of any Thaumaturgy check made is upgraded once, and the caster must suffer 1 additional Strain after resolving the check.

MAGIC ACTIONS & ADDITIONAL EFFECTS

A mage has access to the magic actions listed in the table below, in addition to a magic action specific to *Sunfall*, *Compel*. All spell effects listed in the Genesys Core Rule Book can be used in thaumaturgical casting, and all Thaumaturgy spells and spell effects that use a Knowledge skill use the Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) skill. All spell effects listed in the Genesys Core Rule Book with the exception of the Holy / Unholy effect of the Attack magic action, and the Sanctuary effect of the Barrier magic action can be used in thaumaturgical casting as long as the character has access to the magic action in question. Characters may use the Fire quality of the Attack magic action, but its narrative effect does not produce flame or heat — the resulting bolt of energy is either corrosive or cold enough to scald living flesh.

THAUMATURGY MAGIC ACTIONS

MAGIC ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Attack	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 212, 215
Barrier	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 212, 216
Compel	<i>Sunfall</i> p. 44
Dispel	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 213, 217
Utility	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 214

COMPEL

Concentration: Yes

Skill: Thaumaturgy

Compel is a magic action specific to *Sunfall*. The caster attempts to enforce their will on another being to distract them, dull their senses, or even force them to obey mental orders. To compel a target in Short range, a character must make an **Average** (◆◆) **Thaumaturgy** check. In combat, the basic form of a compulsion spell dazes the target, forcing them to suffer 2 strain for each maneuver or action they take before the end of the caster's next turn.

Outside of structured time, *Compel* may be used to alter the target's perceptions or emotional state to hide in plain

sight or avoid unwanted conflict. In order to Compel a creature outside of a structured encounter, a character must make an **opposed Thaumaturgy vs Discipline check**. Boosts and setbacks can be added at the Game Master's discretion.

PYROMANCY

Pyromancy is a form of magic innate to daemonkind and available to those mortals who dare to bargain with them. It is the fiery magic of change and transformation whose scope extends past the simple conjuration of flame: pyromancers can bestow otherworldly curses and blessings, summon creatures and objects, and even force a spirit to abandon its body.

Revenants cannot cast Pyromancy spells at all; human characters who do not have Pyromancy as a Career skill cannot cast Pyromancy spells unless they obtain the Threshold talent.

PYROMANTIC CASTING

In order to cast pyromancy spells, a caster must be able to speak, sing or at the very least hum their invocations, and to perform the accompanying gestures. Unlike thaumaturgical magic, pyromancy is taxing on the body and not the soul: possessed berserkers steam in the frigid air, and the majority of experienced fire-callers have extensive burn scars lining their hands and forearms.

When your character casts a Pyromancy spell that requires a check, they suffer 2 wounds regardless of whether the check succeeds or not.

ADDITIONAL EFFECTS (COMPEL)

EFFECT	DIFFICULTY MOD.
Frighten: While the spell is active, the target must always act on the last initiative slot available.	+◆
Befuddle: If the Compelled creature generates ☹️ or ☹️ on a combat check, they attack a randomly determined ally instead of their intended target.	+◆
Range: Increase the range of the spell by 1 band. This effect can be used multiple times, increasing the spell's difficulty by 1 each time.	+◆
Disorient: The target is disoriented for the duration of the spell.	+◆
Additional Target: The spell affects one additional target within range of the spell. In addition, after casting the spell, you may spend ▲ to affect one additional target within range of the spell (and may trigger this multiple times, spending ▲ each time).	+◆◆
Control: The caster can use their action to command a target of Silhouette 1 or smaller to act on the caster's turn for the duration of the spell, starting this turn. At the end of each of the caster's turns for the duration of the spell, the target can make an opposed Discipline vs Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) check as an incidental. On a success, the target is free to act at will. This cannot be combined with another spell effect.	+◆◆
Dominate: The target suffers the Control effect, but must do the caster's bidding for a number of hours equal to the caster's ranks in Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) without the caster maintaining concentration. At the end of every hour, the target can make a contested Discipline vs Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) check to break free of the enchantment. The target is fully conscious for the duration of the spell, but believes that they are acting of their own volition; if the original Thaumaturgy check generated multiple ☹️ or ☹️, the target realizes that they were acting under a compulsion spell as soon as the spell wears off or as soon as they break free.	+◆◆◆

MEMORY ALTERATION

Some unscrupulous mages of ages past have discovered that compulsion spells can also be used to erase or alter the memories of others. This is delicate, widely condemned, and highly illegal work. The difficulty of any Thaumaturgy check to tamper with a target's memory should be opposed by the target's Discipline, and upgraded a number of times equal to the number of hours the character wishes the target to forget.

MAGIC ACTIONS & ADDITIONAL EFFECTS

A pyromancer has access to the magic actions listed in the table below, in addition to a magic action specific to *Sunfall*, Exorcise. All spell effects listed in the Genesys Core Rule Book can be used in pyromantic casting as long as the character has access to the magic action in question.

EXORCISE

Concentration: Yes

Skill: Pyromancy

Exorcise is a magic action specific to *Sunfall*. The caster attempts to violently expunge a soul or daemon from their physical vessel, and cast them into the World Below. Outside

PYROMANCY MAGIC ACTIONS

MAGIC ACTION	DESCRIPTION
Augment	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 212, 215
Conjure	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 212, 216
Curse	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 213, 217
Exorcise	Sunfall p. 45
Utility	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 214

of structured time, a pyromancer may use this spell to initiate a social encounter with the possessed individual. In this encounter, only the pyromancer may attack the possessed's Strain Threshold; however, other characters may assist the pyromancer by restraining the possessed, comforting them, or encouraging them to fight the invading spirit. The exorcism is a success if the pyromancer forces the possessed to capitulate, or if the possessed exceeds their Strain Threshold. The exorcism fails if the pyromancer exceeds their Strain Threshold. In the event of failure the pyromancer may not attempt to exorcise the same individual again for the rest of the session.

In a structured encounter, a rushed exorcism causes the target intense, searing pain as spirit is torn from flesh. The caster must make an **Average (◆◆) Pyromancy check**. Upon success, an ensouled or possessed target in Short range suffers 2 wounds, and an additional 2 wounds if they remain within Short range of the caster by the end of the caster's next turn.

RITES

Given sufficient time and materials to prepare, pyromancers may perform rites, working their magic slowly and carefully as to not incur a physical cost. To perform a rite, a pyromancer must build a ritual pyre, make a sacrifice — animal or mate-

RITE DURATION & EFFECT

DURATION	EFFECT
1 Hour	The spell does not incur the Wound cost.
2 Hours	The spell does not incur the Wound cost. The difficulty of the Pyromancy check is reduced by 1, to a minimum of Easy (◆)
4 Hours	The spell does not incur the Wound cost. The difficulty of the Pyromancy check is reduced by 2, to a minimum of Easy (◆)
8 Hours	The spell does not incur the Wound cost. The difficulty of the Pyromancy check is reduced by 3, to a minimum of Easy (◆)

rial — and speak an extended invocation, bringing the Worlds Below and Above closer together for a brief time. Some rites are reasonably short but others are day- or night-long ordeals, reserved for the most powerful and grievous magics.

Spells performed as rites can be maintained in narrative encounters and brought into combat encounters if a pyromancer imbues an ember talisman (p. 47) with some of the ritual flame beforehand.

All Pyromancy spells can be performed as rites.

MAGIC IMPLEMENTS

Pyromancers and thaumaturgists use different kinds of magic implements and instruments. The former employ censers, herbs, chimes, and similar instruments to create appropriate environments for daemonic magics, and the latter rely on thaumaturgically conductive gauntlets, gloves, and jewelry to channel and direct the energies of their souls. A pyromancer's censer would be as useless in the hands of a mage as a mage's silver amulet in the hands of a pyromancer.

ADDITIONAL EFFECTS (EXORCISE)

EFFECT	DIFFICULTY MOD.
Range: Increase the range of the spell by 1 band. This effect can be used multiple times, increasing the spell's difficulty by 1 each time.	+◆
Forbiddance: The target suffers 1 additional Wound if they move towards or attack the caster. This effect can be used multiple times, increasing the spell's difficulty by 1 each time.	+◆
Potency: The target suffers 1 additional Wound at the end of the caster's turns for the spell's duration. This effect can be used multiple times, increasing the spell's difficulty by 1 each time.	+◆
Additional Target: The spell affects an additional target within range. In addition, after casting the spell, you may spend ▲▲ to affect one additional target within range of the spell (and may trigger this multiple times, spending ▲ each time).	+◆◆
Rend the Spirit: The target is unable to cast spells while they are affected by the exorcism. This does not affect ongoing spells and does not prevent the target from performing the Concentrate maneuver; however, the caster may spend ▲▲ on a Thaumaturgy check they make or ☉ on a check the target makes to break the target's concentration.	+◆◆
Discarnate: Upon success, a Rival or a number of Minions equal to the caster's ranks in Knowledge (Chthonic) are instantly forced from their physical vessels and incapacitated. On ☉☉ or ☉ generated on this Pyromancy roll, the disembodied souls or daemons may use their action to resume possession of their bodies on their turn.	+◆◆◆



FIRE!

The pyromancer's most prized gift is their ability to bring flame into this world. All creatures and objects created through the Conjure magic actions appear to be made of smokeless flame and emanate heat, although they do not set anything they touch ablaze. In order to light a small flame, such as a torch or campfire, outside a combat encounter, a caster may use the Utility magic action; in a combat encounter, the GM may allow a pyromancer character to make an Easy (◇) **Pyromancy check** as an action in order to set an object — but not a creature — of Silhouette 0 in Short range ablaze.

THAUMATURGICAL IMPLEMENTS

BRACERS

Braces of boiled leather inscribed with protective sigils are a popular choice among defensively-minded magicians, and a common gift from a master or professor of thaumaturgical sciences to a talented graduate.

Attack spells cast by your character while using a gauntlet increase their base damage by 3; in addition, when your character casts a Barrier spell, they may add the Empowered effect without increasing the difficulty.

MAGIC GAUNTLET

Favored by a certain kind of muscle-bound war-wizard, a magic gauntlet bears a superficial resemblance to a gauntlet from a suit of old-fashioned plate armor, save for the lace-work of silver inlay arrays that channel thaumaturgical energies. Most magic gauntlets are bulky, ornate and ostentatious, immediately identifying the wearer as a thaumaturge and making it difficult to perform tasks that require a great degree of manual dexterity — which is why war-mages only wear one at a time, rather than two.

Attack spells cast by your character while using a gauntlet increase their base damage by 4; in addition, adding the Close Combat and Impact effects does not increase the difficulty of

the magic check, this due to the fact that mages' gauntlets are made for both spellwork and fisticuffs.

The Magic Gauntlet can be wielded as a Brawl weapon with the following profile: (Engaged range, +1 Damage, Crit. 4, Disorient 2)

MAGIC GLOVES

A pair of magic gloves are luxurious and flexible, if not the most durable as far as magic implements are concerned. Unlike a gauntlet, which marks the caster's belligerent and martial nature, silver-embroidered gloves are subtler and indicative of a gentler, more refined character. In more practical terms, the degree of manual dexterity allowed by a pair of gloves makes it easier to cast spells that affect more than one object or individual.

Attack spells cast by your character while using a gauntlet increase their base damage by 2; in addition, when your character casts a Thaumaturgy spell, adding the Additional Target effect does not increase its difficulty.

MESMERIST'S MEDALLION

The back-and-forth sway of a non-magical medallion on a chain can, under the right circumstances, put a person into a trance state. A silver-inlaid medallion in the hands of a skilled thaumaturgist is vastly more dangerous, dazzling and putting all but the strongest of will under their spell.

When a mage wielding a mesmerist's medallion casts the Compel spell, the spell lasts for the rest of the encounter without having to use the Concentrate maneuver. Adding the Control effect to the spell does not increase the difficulty of the magic check.

RINGS & BRACELETS

Magic jewelry has always been a fixture of lurid tales of sword and sorcery, but in truth, a single engraved silver ring or bangle are simply too small to be of any significant use to a mage. Several engraved silver rings or bangles, however, make for an effective set of tools particularly useful to wizards who use the purest expression of thaumaturgical energy: bolts of cold blue lightning.

Attack spells cast by your character while using a set of magic rings increase their base damage by 4; in addition, they may add the Lightning effect with no increase of difficulty.

THAUMATURGICAL IMPLEMENTS

ITEM	DAMAGE	ENCUM.	PRICE	RARITY
Bracers	+3	1	600	4
Magic Gauntlet	+4	2	850	5
Magic Gloves	+2	1	600	5
Mesmerist's Medallion	+0	0	1300	7
Rings & Bracelets	+4	0	1000	5

PYROMANTIC IMPLEMENTS

ITEM	DAMAGE	ENCUM.	PRICE	RARITY
Ember Talisman (Lesser)		1	50	4
Ember Talisman (Greater)		2	100	6
Exorcist's Censer		1	600	4
Invigorating Salts		1	600	5
Oracle Bones		1	850	6
Palindrome Charm		0	1300	7
Summoner's Chimes		1	1000	5

PYROMANTIC IMPLEMENTS**EMBER TALISMAN (LESSER)**

A fist-sized ivory lantern, packed with salt and slow-burning incense. If a pyromancer lights an ember talisman while casting a spell normally or by performing a rite, the spell lasts for as long as the incense burns.

A lesser ember talisman can hold one Pyromancy spell of **Average** (◆◆) difficulty or less for the duration of one combat or narrative encounter, or for 8 hours. While the ember talisman burns, the caster does not have to perform the Concentrate maneuver in order to sustain an active spell. All Ember Talismans break and become unusable after 1 use.

EMBER TALISMAN (GREATER)

A larger, more ornate ember talisman capable of sustaining more sophisticated enchantments. If a pyromancer lights an ember talisman while casting a spell normally or by performing a rite, the spell lasts for as long as the incense burns.

A greater ember talisman can hold one Pyromancy spell of **Hard** (◆◆◆) difficulty or less for the duration of one combat or narrative encounter, or for 8 hours. While the ember talisman burns, the caster does not have to perform the Concentrate maneuver in order to sustain an active spell. All Ember Talismans break and become unusable after 1 use.

EXORCIST'S CENSER

Many exorcists use small brass or pewter thuribles on long chains in their ceremonies, swinging them back and forth over the possessed to purge the invading spirit from their body. Of course, because hellfire is by nature smokeless, burning incense in an exorcist's censer has no visible result, but the peppery aroma it produces is strong enough for some particularly sensitive individuals to claim that it's the evil stench that drives a devil out, and not the exorcism.

When your character casts a spell while using an exorcist's censer, the first Range effect added to the spell does not increase the spell's difficulty. In addition, when your character casts an Exorcise spell, they may add the first Potency effect without increasing the spell's difficulty.


INVIGORATING SALTS

Snuff boxes or bottles filled with a mixture of Hellish salts, ground spices — powdered ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg and blue pepper from Below — and dried herbs are a staple among pyromancers specializing in blessings and healing. Although there is no magic that can cure sickness or heal a wound as fast as a blade can make one, there are spells that can strengthen the body and help it recover from injury and disease. The presence of "pungent and fiery atmospheres" fills the ill and bedridden with renewed vigor, which usually manifests as desperate attempts to move as far away from the healer and their "atmospheres" as possible.

When your character casts an Augment spell while using invigorating salts, they may add the Divine Health effect without increasing the spell's difficulty. Additionally, when your character successfully casts an Augment, Exorcise or Utility spell, they heal 1 Strain.

ORACLE BONES

Two carved, flat bones on a chain or leather cord, usually worn about the neck. Ancient oracles would inscribe animal or human scapulars with invocations and questions before heating the bones over a gate to the spirit realm and divining the spirits' answers from the pattern of cracks that would spread across the bone. If the events foretold did not come to pass, the bones would be discarded, but those that proved accurate would be kept and passed down to the diviner's children and their descendants. Pairs of oracle bones — one with an ill omen, one with a good one — are a potent magical instrument, bringing luck to the pyromancer and misfortune to their enemies.

When your character casts any Pyromancy spell while using a set of oracle bones, they add  to the check. In addition, adding the Doom effect to a Curse spell does not increase the spell's difficulty.

PALINDROME CHARM

Palindrome charms are wooden, bone, or boiled leather plaques painted or engraved with a sacred word square. Despite their simple appearance, true palindrome charms (as opposed to cheap imitations) are rare and difficult to



manufacture, as they require extensive knowledge of Hellish tongues and a particularly rare confluence of omens and atmospheres. Each row, column and diagonal of the square spells out a word of warding and protection in one of the languages of the World Below; combined, the words form a universal invocation meditating upon which can ease the pain of spellcasting. The writing on these charms is so stylized that it is hard for the uninitiated to distinguish the words from a decorative pattern of vines and leaves. For this reason, palindrome charms are popular among unsanctioned pyromancers in Mandate territories — oracle bones or a censer of exorcist's incense look (or smell) a lot more incriminating than a painted wooden trinket around the neck of a country yokel.

When your character casts an Exorcise spell while using a palindrome charm, they may add the first Forbiddance

effect without increasing the spell's difficulty. In addition, you may spend $\Delta \Delta$ generated on any Pyromancy check to reduce the wound cost of the spell by 1.

SUMMONER'S CHIMES

A set of 5 to 9 brass or copper chimes with bone handles, suspended from a belt or kept in a carrying case. Each chime produces a deep, resonant tone that can pacify a conjured spirit so that it wouldn't lash out against the summoner the moment it enters the material world. And while any combination of these tones cannot possibly be considered music in the human sense, imps and daemons alike often find them beautiful, making it easy for a skilled conjurer to soothe even the most vicious of spirits.

When your character casts a Conjure spell, they may add the Summon Ally effect without increasing the spell's difficulty.

CHAPTER 4: TALENTS

Characters in Sunfall are able to choose from a variety of talents from the Genesys Core Rulebook and Realms of Terrinoth in addition to a number of new talents unique to the setting.

NEW TALENTS

TIER 1

DELVER'S SENSE

Tier: 1

Activation: Passive

Ranked: Yes

After your character makes a **Perception, Vigilance, or Knowledge (Old World) check** to notice, identify, or avoid a threat in a ruin, tomb, or similar ancient structure, your character adds a number of Δ no greater than their ranks in Delver's Sense.

STEADY AIM

Tier: 1

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Your character does not suffer a penalty on Ranged (Archaic) or Ranged (Mechanical) attacks made while mounted.

STREET SMARTS!

Tier: 1

Activation: Active, Incidental

Ranked: No

In an urban environment, your character may use Streetwise instead of Cool or Vigilance to determine initiative.

TENDER MERCIES

Tier: 1

Activation: Active, Incidental

Ranked: Yes

Whenever your character makes a Brawl or Melee attack against a prone or immobilized opponent, that attack gains a Vicious quality of 1, or its Vicious quality increases by 1 per rank of Tender Mercies.

WASTELAND INSTINCTS

Tier: 1

Activation: Active, Incidental

Ranked: No

Your character may use Survival instead of Cool or Vigilance to determine initiative in the wilderness.

TIER 2

ARCANE ABSORPTION

Tier: 2

Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)

Ranked: Yes

Requirement: The character must have Thaumaturgy as a Career skill.

Your character has learned how to divert incoming arcane energies to invigorate their soul. When an opponent makes a Thaumaturgy check against your character, the character may use a number of Δ generated on that check to heal an equal amount of Strain. This number cannot exceed the character's ranks in Arcane Absorption.

DISGUISE ENTHUSIAST

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: Yes

Your character adds ■ to any check they make to disguise themselves or another character per rank of Disguise Enthusiast.

JACK OF ALL TRADES

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Your character gains 2 non-magic skills of your choice as Career skills. Both of these skills cannot be of the same type (e.g. both skills cannot be Social skills).

NO SELL

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Your character removes ▲ from all social checks targeting them per rank of No Sell.

OPEN SOUL

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive.

Ranked: No.

Requirement: The character cannot be a visitant.

Some souls, through a quirk of their nature, are more open to forming connections with invading spirits than others. They grant the spirit a greater degree of control but allow themselves to tap into the spirit's abilities in turn.

Whenever your character becomes possessed, one characteristic of your choice increases by 1 until the character is exorcised. However, the GM may trigger the possession twice per session, as opposed to once.

ORDEAL

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Requirement: The character cannot be a visitant, or have Pyromancy as a Career skill.

Your character's soul has been broken and reforged through hardship, intentionally or not. They gain Thaumaturgy and Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) as Career skills.

This talent can only be taken if it is narratively appropriate and if the Game Master approves.

SAWBONES

Tier: 2

Activation: Active (Action)

Ranked: Yes

Before making a Medicine check to heal another character in a structured encounter, your character may suffer 3 strain to remove ✕ equal to 1+ranks in Sawbones from the check.

STRONG SOUL

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: Yes

Requirement: Your character must be human or a revenant. Your character adds ■ to all attempts to possess or magically compel them per rank of Strong Soul.

STUNNING BLOW

Tier: 2

Activation: Active (Action)

Ranked: Yes

Once per encounter, your character may make a Melee (Light) combat check against a target that has not yet acted in combat. If the check succeeds, this attack has the Stun Damage quality, as well as a Disorient quality equal to 1+Ranks in Stunning Blow.

TEMPERING INVOCATION

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: Yes

Requirement: The character must have Pyromancy as a Career skill.

Your character has learned an invocation that dulls pain and centers the spirit.

When your character makes a Cool or Discipline check to recover strain at the end of an encounter, they may use a number of Adv. up to ranks in Tempering Invocation to heal an equal number of wounds.

THRESHOLD

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Requirement: The character cannot be a visitant or a revenant.

Your character has opened their heart to the World Below, and — perhaps — struck a bargain that will surely doom them in the end

They gain Pyromancy and Knowledge (Chthonic) as Career skills.

If your character has Thaumaturgy as a Career skill, they lose their ability to cast Thaumaturgy spells.

This talent can only be taken if it is narratively appropriate and if the Game Master approves.

TRICK RIDER

Tier: 2

Activation: Active (Incidental)

Ranked: Yes

Before your character makes a Riding check, they may add an equal number of ★ and ♣ to the results. The number may not exceed the character's ranks in Trick Rider.



TIER 3

AWAKENED SOUL

Tier: 3

Activation: Active (Action)

Requirement: Your character must be human or a revenant. On occasion, your character's soul awakens to a trove of memory from its past incarnations, overwhelming your character with knowledge and haunting recollections of its many lives and deaths.

Once per session, you may spend a Story Point as an incidental prior to making a Knowledge check and add a Tr. to the result. If the check is a failure, the GM may spend symbols as if it was a fear check.

POKER FACE

Tier: 3

Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)

Ranked: No

When your character is targeted by a social check, they may spend ☉☉☉ or ☉ to reduce any strain the check inflicts by a number equal to their ranks in Cool. If they do, the character who targeted them suffers an amount of strain equal to the amount of strain reduced.

UNIMPRESSED

Tier: 3

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Your character reduces the difficulty of all fear checks they make by 1, to a minimum of 1.

TIER 4

DRAMATIC FLOURISH

Tier: 4

Activation: Active (Maneuver)

Ranked: No

Once per round, a character may suffer 2 Strain, upgrading the difficulty of the next Melee (Light) or Melee (Heavy) combat check they make once. If the check succeeds, the character adds a ☉ to the results; if it fails, a ☉.

HUNTER'S EYE

Tier: 4

Activation: Active (Incidental)

Ranked: No

Once per encounter, your character may choose a visible target in Long range and suffer 2 Strain, reducing the Critical Rating of all Ranged (Archaic) and Ranged (Mechanical) attacks they make against that target by 2, to a minimum of 1, for the rest of the encounter.

TALENT	RANKED	SOURCE
TIER 1		
Apothecary	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth p. 84
Bought Info	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 72
Bullrush	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 84
Challenge!	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth p. 84
Clever Retort	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Desperate Recovery	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Delver's Sense	Yes	Sunfall p. 48
Duelist	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Durable	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Finesse	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 84
Forager	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Grit	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Hamstring Shot	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Jump Up	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Knack for It	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Know Somebody	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 73
Let's Ride	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 74
One with Nature	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 74
Otherworldly Senses	Yes	Sunfall p. 54
Painful Blow	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 84
Parry	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 74
Proper Upbringing	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 74
Quick Draw	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 74
Quick Strike	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 74
Rapid Reaction	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 74
Resurrection	No	Sunfall p. 52
Revenant	No	Sunfall p. 53
Second Wind	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 74
Shield Slam	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 84
Steady Aim	No	Sunfall p. 48
Street Smarts!	No	Sunfall p. 48
Surgeon	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 74
Swift	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 75
Tavern Brawler	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 87
Tender Mercies	Yes	Sunfall p. 48
Toughened	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 75
Tumble	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 87

PART II: NUMBER, WEIGHT, AND MEASURE

TALENT	RANKED	SOURCE
Undead Vigor	No	Sunfall p. 53
Unremarkable	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 75
Wasteland Instincts	No	Sunfall p. 48
TIER 2		
Arcane Absorption	Yes	Sunfall p. 48
Berserk	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 75
Block	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 87
Bulwark	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 87
Chest	No	Sunfall p. 53
Coordinated Assault	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 75
Counteroffer	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 75
Defensive Stance	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 75
Dirty Tricks	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 88
Disguise Enthusiast	Yes	Sunfall p. 49
Dual Wielder	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 76
Flash of Insight	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 88
Grapple	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 88
Heightened Awareness	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 76
Heroic Recovery	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 88
Impaling Strike	No	Realms of Terrinoth p.
Inspiring Rhetoric	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 76
Inventor	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 76
Jack of All Trades	No	Sunfall p. 49
Lucky Strike	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 76
No Sell	No	Sunfall p. 49
Open Soul	No	Sunfall p. 49
Ordeal	No	Sunfall p. 49
Otherworldly Resilience	Yes	Sunfall p. 54
Phantasmal Form	Yes	Sunfall p. 54
Project Thoughts	Yes	Sunfall p. 54
Puppeteer	Yes	Sunfall p. 54
Reckless Charge	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 89
Runic Enhancement	No	Sunfall p. 53
Sawbones	Yes	Sunfall p. 49
Scathing Tirade	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 77
Side Step	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 77
Signature Spell	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 89
Strong Soul	Yes	Sunfall p. 49

TALENT	RANKED	SOURCE
Stunning Blow	Yes	Sunfall p.49
Tempering Invocation	Yes	Sunfall p. 49
The Flesh is Weak	No	Sunfall p. 54
Threaten	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth p. 89
Trick Rider	Yes	Sunfall p. 49
Undead Vigor (Improved)	No	Sunfall p. 53
TIER 3		
Animal Companion	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 77
Awakened Soul	No	Sunfall p. 50
Backstab	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 89
Battle Casting	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 90
Body Guard	Yes	Realms of Terrinoth p. 90
Cavalier	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 90
Counterattack	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 90
Dodge	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 78
Dual Strike	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 90
Eagle Eyes	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 78
Field Commander	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 78
Forgot to Count?	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 78
Heroic Will	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 79
Inspiring Rhetoric (Improved)	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 78
Monstrous Visage	Yes	Sunfall p. 54
Natural	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 79
Painkiller Specialization	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 79
Parry (Improved)	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 79
Poker Face	No	Sunfall p. 50
Potent Concoctions	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 90
Pressure Point	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 90
Precise Archery	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 90
Pressure Point	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 90
Project Thoughts (Improved)	No	Sunfall p.55
Rapid Archery	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 79
Scathing Tirade (Improved)	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 79
Unimpressed	No	Sunfall p. 50
You Wound Me!	No	Sunfall p. 54



TALENT	RANKED	SOURCE
TIER 4		
Back-to-Back	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 91
Can't We Talk About This?	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 79
Conduit	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 91
Deadeye	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 79
Defensive	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 80
Dramatic Flourish	No	Sunfall p. 50
Enduring	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 80
Field Commander (Improved)	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 80
Hostile Takeover	No	Sunfall p. 55
How Convenient!	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 80
Hunter's Eye	No	Sunfall p. 50
Inspiring Rhetoric (Supreme)	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 80
Mad Inventor	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 80
Marksmanship Satisfaction	No	Sunfall p. 52
Runic Armor	No	Sunfall p. 54
Scathing Tirade (Supreme)	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 81
Signature Spell (Improved)	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 91
Touch of Fate	No	Sunfall p. 52
Unrelenting	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 91
Venom-Soaked Blade	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 91
TIER 5		
Dedication	Yes	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 81
For Honor	No	Sunfall p. 52
Indomitable	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 81
Let's Talk This Over	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 91
Master	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 81
Retribution	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 91
Ruinous Repartee	No	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 81
Whirlwind	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 91
Zealous Fire	No	Realms of Terrinoth p. 91

MARKSMAN'S SATISFACTION

Tier: 4

Activation: Active (Incidental)

Ranked: No


Once per encounter, your character makes a Ranged (Archaic) or Ranged (Mechanical) attack against a target and if the attack hits, they may heal Strain equal to half the damage taken by the opponent, rounded up. The character must activate this talent before making the check.

TOUCH OF FATE

Tier: 4

Activation: Active (Incidental, Out-of-Turn)

Ranked: No

Once per session, when your character is targeted by a check but before dice are rolled, your character may spend a Story Point to add a  to the check.





TIER 5

FOR HONOR

Tier: 5

Activation: Active (Action)

Ranked: No

Once per session, when a social or combat encounter against one or more sentient beings is about to begin, the character may make a **Daunting** () **Charm, Negotiation** or **Leadership** check to challenge the leader of the opposition to a duel. If successful, the combat encounter instead becomes a formal duel between the character and the opponent they challenged. Either party may nominate a champion to fight in their stead if they so desire.

REVENANT TALENTS

TIER 1

RESURRECTION

Tier: 1

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Restriction: Cannot be obtained by visitants.

Your character has, for better or for worse, completed the Rite of Resurrection, ensuring that they will join the ranks of the undead once they perish. The effects of this talent, aside from the character's ability to rise from the dead, are negative, representing the toll the Rite takes on the living body and the living soul. When purchasing this talent, your character gains the following abilities:

Metaphysical Constraint: Your character's Wound and Strain thresholds are lowered by 3, and any attack made against them gains Vicious 2 (or increases its

Vicious rating by 2). In addition, your character cannot heal from Critical Injuries.

Cold Soul: Your character cannot cast Pyromancy spells, gain ranks in the Pyromancy skill, or purchase the Threshold talent.

Watcher's Touch: Once per session, your character may move a Story Point from the GM pool to the player pool as an incidental, but the next combat check targeting them automatically adds a ☉.

Death is Not the End: Upon death, your character rises as one of the living dead, replacing the Resurrection talent with the Revenant talent. Their Wound and Strain thresholds are restored to their previous values, they recover from all of their Critical Injuries and their effects, and they heal half of their Wounds and Strain, rounded down. In a narrative encounter, this occurs immediately after death; in a structured encounter, this constitutes an action and occurs on the last initiative slot available.

This talent can only be taken if it is narratively appropriate and if the Game Master approves.

REVENANT

Tier: 1

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Requirement: Your character must have purchased the Resurrection talent.

O Death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?

When purchasing this talent, your character gains the following abilities:

Undead: Your character does not need to eat, drink, or breathe; they are immune to poisons, and they do not suffer from the adverse effects of exposure. As an ensouled being, they do need to sleep.

Vital Sigils: Your character is animated by an intricate network of arcane sigils and arrays that cannot be dispelled, but do have the unfortunate side effect of amplifying incoming arcane energies. All Thaumaturgy spells targeting your character automatically receive ▲ ▲.

Cold Soul: Your character cannot cast Pyromancy spells, gain ranks in the Pyromancy skill, or purchase the Threshold talent.

Dead Flesh: Your character cannot benefit from healing items, such as healing elixirs and healing herbs, but they do add ■■ to any Medicine checks made to heal them.

Abomination: Your character cannot be seen in public without a disguise of some sort, on penalty of a second, more permanent death. The difficulty of all social skill checks made against individuals not accustomed to the living dead is upgraded twice.

This talent can be taken during Character Creation if the Game Master approves.

UNDEAD VIGOR

Tier: 2

Activation: Active (Incidental)

Ranked: No

Requirement: Your character must have obtained the Revenant talent.

Your character is learning how to push their body beyond mortal limits. Once per encounter, your character may suffer 2 Wounds to increase their Brawn or Agility by 1, to a maximum of 5, for the rest of the encounter.

TIER 2

CHEST

Tier: 2

Activation: Active (Maneuver)

Ranked: No

Requirement: Your character must have obtained the Revenant talent.

Most revenants learn, sooner or later, that many internal organs become superfluous after death. Your character has emptied their ribcage, converting it into a cozy storage space. They may use a maneuver to store or remove an item or creature of Silhouette 0 from their now-empty chest cavity; if your character has the Quick Draw talent, they may do so as an incidental. Because they are no longer carrying around a mass of unnecessary viscera, their encumbrance threshold goes up by 4.

RUNIC ENHANCEMENT

Tier: 2

Activation: Incidental

Ranked: No

Requirement: Your character must have obtained the Revenant talent.

Although the primary purpose of the sigils on the revenant's skin is to contain the soul, they can be used by another mage to direct and amplify their spellwork.

Once per encounter, your character can suffer 2 Strain and activate this talent as an out-of-turn incidental, granting an ally of your choice within Short range of ■ to any Thaumaturgy checks they make until the end of the encounter. If that ally is engaged with your character, they may add ■■ instead.

UNDEAD VIGOR (IMPROVED)

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Requirement: Your character must have obtained the Revenant and Undead Vigor talents.

The Wound cost of Undead Vigor is reduced by 1.



TIER 3

MONSTROUS VISAGE

Tier: 3

Activation: Passive

Ranked: Yes

Requirement: Your character must have obtained the Revenant talent.

Threats of violence are simply not that effective against the undead, who no longer fear pain, and the living cannot help but fear them in turn. Your character automatically adds ✨ and ⚔️ to any Coercion check they make against a human opponent, and 🌀🌀 to any incoming Coercion checks made by human opponents against your character.

YOU WOUND ME!

Tier: 3

Activation: Active (Incidental, Out of Turn)

Ranked: No

Requirement: Your character must have obtained the Revenant talent.

Upon being hit with a Melee attack and after calculating damage, a revenant may suffer 2 additional Wounds to have the attacker's weapon become lodged inside their body. The character may then use a maneuver to pull the weapon out, whereas the attacker must spend an action and make an **opposed Athletics vs Athletics** or an **opposed Athletics vs Coordination** check to retrieve it. The GM may decide that this talent does not affect some melee weapons, such as hammers, clubs, and other blunt objects.

TIER 4

RUNIC ARMOR

Tier: 4

Activation: Active (Incidental)

Ranked: No

Requirement: Your character must have obtained the Revenant talent.

Once per turn, your character may suffer 2 Strain and increase the Critical Rating of all incoming non-magical attacks by 2, to a maximum of 6, until the end of your character's next turn.

VISITANT TALENTS

TIER 1

OTHERWORLDLY SENSES

Tier: 1

Activation: Passive

Ranked: Yes.

Restriction: Visitant

Your character can now see in the dark. They remove up to ■■ imposed by darkness from any skill check they make.

TIER 2

OTHERWORLDLY RESILIENCE

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: Yes.

Restriction: Visitant

All Pyromancy checks made by opponents targeting your character receive ■ per rank of Otherworldly Resilience.

PHANTASMAL FORM

Tier: 2

Activation: Active (Action)

Ranked: Yes

Restriction: Visitant

Your character may temporarily abandon their physical vessel without completely severing their bond to it. While disembodied, they are intangible, invisible, do not need to breathe, and cannot suffer wounds or receive Critical Injuries. They may speak freely, and move anywhere within Short range of their body ignoring walls and similar obstacles, but they may not perform actions that affect other characters or objects, such as attacking, moving something, or casting a spell. While they are disembodied, their body is incapacitated, and suffers wounds and Critical Injuries as normal. Should the body die, they are immediately drawn to the World Below, which is equivalent to character death.

Each Rank in Phantasmal Form increases the distance the visitant may travel while disembodied by 1 range band.

PROJECT THOUGHTS

Tier: 2

Activation: Active (Action)

Ranked: Yes

Restriction: Visitant

Your character may suffer 2 Strain to cause a target they are engaged with to hear one or two sentences in their head. No one but the target can hear what has been said and the target will hear these thoughts in your character's voice.

PUPPETEER

Tier: 2

Activation: Active (Maneuver)

Ranked: Yes

Restriction: Visitant

Some visitants can become so skilled in the art of manipulating flesh that they are able to reach out and possess a small part of an opponent's body without leaving the confines of their own vessel, causing a muscle spasm or making them flinch at a crucial moment.

Once per round, your character may suffer 2 Strain to add 🌀 equal to ranks in Puppeteer to any combat checks made

by an opponent in Engaged range until the end of the character's next turn.


THE FLESH IS WEAK

Tier: 2

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Restriction: Visitant

Your character may add  to all checks made while using The Spirit is Willing Visitant archetype ability to possess another.

TIER 3

PROJECT THOUGHTS (IMPROVED)

Tier: 3

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Restriction: Visitant

Your character may target creatures in Short range when using Project Thoughts, and they may also attempt to mimic another voice by making a Deception check opposed by the target's Vigilance.

TIER 4

HOSTILE TAKEOVER

Tier: 4

Activation: Passive

Ranked: No

Restriction: Visitant


Your character may now attempt possession of a Rival when using The Spirit is Willing.

CHAPTER 5: GEAR

WEAPONS

WEAPON PROPERTIES





CONCEALED

Add  per rank of Concealed to any Perception or Vigilance checks made to spot this weapon.

SUBTLE

This weapon produces little to no light or sound when it is fired.

UNRELIABLE

If a combat check generates    or , the weapon jams and cannot be used for the rest of the encounter.

MELEE WEAPONS

AXE

A logger's tool turned to deadly purpose, or a weapon of war good for cutting wood.



BRASS KNUCKLES

Simple, elegant, affordable. The weapon of choice for a bruiser on a budget.

BILL

A somewhat obsolete Northern polearm, the bill most resembles a halberd or poleaxe with a hooked blade. Like pikes preferred by more modern soldiers, bills are most use-

ful against mounted opponents — the hook can find and latch onto a chink in a cavalryman's armor and drag him off his horse, where a sword or dagger can finish the job.

If the bill's Ensnare quality is triggered, the character may not use the bill as a weapon while the target remains ensnared. A character wielding a bill can spend   generated on a successful Melee (Heavy) check to force a mounted opponent (but not the steed) to fall prone.

DAGGER

A short, utilitarian blade. The distinction between a short sword and a long dagger can be a touch nebulous, but one wouldn't whittle wood or cut ham with a sword.

MACE

A type of short and heavy bludgeon with a weighted and flanged head at the end of the handle. Good for denting plate and bashing heads.

SUBTLETY

When a character fires a weapon that produces any significant amount of light or sound in a populated area, any NPCs present in the vicinity must make a Vigilance check to see or hear the weapon. The difficulty of this check depends on distance and equals 1 per range band between the character and the observer.

MELEE WEAPONS

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	PRICE	RARITY	SPECIAL
Axe	Melee (Light)	+3	3	Engaged	2	1	250	1	Vicious 1
Bill	Melee (Heavy)	+3	3	Engaged	4	2	325	4	Cumbersome 3, Pierce 2, Ensnare 1
Brass Knuckles	Brawl	+1	4	Engaged	1	0	40	1	Concealed 2, Disorient 3
Dagger	Melee (Light)	+2	3	Engaged	1	1	60	1	Accurate 1
Greatsword	Melee (Heavy)	+4	2	Engaged	4	2	300	4	Cumbersome 3,
Mace	Melee (Light)	+3	4	Engaged	2	1	100	1	Defensive 1
Maul	Melee (Heavy)	+5	4	Engaged	4	2	500	4	Cumbersome 4, Inaccurate, Knockdown, Pierce 2
Pike	Melee (Heavy)	+4	4	Short	4	2	125	2	Prepare 1, Cumbersome 3
Polearm	Melee (Heavy)	+3	3	Engaged	5	3	300	4	Defensive 1, Pierce 2
Quarterstaff	Melee (Heavy)	+2	3	Engaged	2	1	60	1	Defensive 1, Disorient 2
Shield	Melee (Light)	+0	6	Engaged	2	1	80	3	Defensive 1, Deflection 1, Inaccurate 1, Knockdown
Shocker	Melee (Light)	6	4	Engaged	1	1	400	8	Concealed 1, Stun Damage, Disorient 3
Spear	Melee (Light)	+3	4	Engaged	2	1	125	3	Accurate 1, Defensive 1
Stiletto	Melee (Light)	+2	3	Engaged	1	1	80	3	Concealed 1, Pierce 2
Sword	Melee (Light)	+3	2	Engaged	1	1	250	4	Defensive 1
Sword, Cane	Melee (Light)	+2	2	Engaged	4	0	350	6	Defensive 1, Concealed 1
Sword, Phantom	Melee (Light)	+3	2	Engaged	3	2	800	10	Defensive 1, Pierce 3, Sunder, Unwieldy 3, Vicious 2

MAUL

The modern version of a war hammer, a maul is a long-handled weapon with a heavy lead or iron head. Customarily, one side of the hammer is blunt, to dent armor, and the other consists of a long, curved spike to tear through helms.

PIKE

Like a spear, but longer. Much longer. Pikes are most useful against cavalry — few warhorses survive unscathed after charging a square of pikemen bristling with iron.

A character may use a pike to attack opponents in Short range (the difficulty of the check remains **Average** (♦♦)), but may not attack opponents in Engaged range. When a mounted opponent spends a maneuver moving towards a character wielding a pike, they add ☠☠ to their next Melee check targeting that character.

POLEARM

In cities, glaives, halberds, and pollaxes are ceremonial weapons wielded by palace guards and soldiers on parade. In the Wastes, and in the hands of a capable fighter, a polearm is a deadly force — deadlier still if said fighter happens to be mounted.

If a rider with a polearm spends a maneuver to engage an opponent, they may add ■ to their next combat check.

QUARTERSTAFF

Many magic users carry staffs — not because they cast through them, but because a whack or two from an iron-capped oaken pole does wonders for many problems that can't be solved by the esoteric arts.

SHIELD

Larger shields as used by the Adamant Order in its heyday have gone out of style a few decades back, but no-one will argue with the fact that a thick plank between a fighter and an enemy can mean the difference between life and death.

SHOCKER

A telescoping dull gray metal rod pulled from the innards of an Old World machine. Its original purpose is a mystery, but it's hefty and the lacework sigils on one end hum with thaumaturgical energies.

SPEAR

A length of wood with a sharpened metal head, held in higher esteem by holdouts than the sword. Most Byssarian spears are ranseurs or partizans, outfitted with crossguards to deflect sword strikes and stop wild beasts from goring themselves on the weapon in order to get to the wielder.

RANGED WEAPONS

NAME	SKILL	DAM	CRIT	RANGE	ENCUM	HP	PRICE	RARITY	SPECIAL
Beamcaster	Ranged (Mech.)	5	2	Medium	1	2	750	7	Accurate 1, Pierce 2
Crossbow	Ranged (Mech.)	7	2	Medium	3	2	600	4	Pierce 2, Prepare 1
Crossbow, Hand	Ranged (Mech.)	5	2	Short	1	2	700	5	Pierce 1, Prepare 1, Subtle
Crossbow, Hand, Repeating	Ranged (Mech.)	5	3	Short	1	1	750	7	Linked 3, Prepare 2, Unreliable
Crossbow, Heavy	Ranged (Mech.)	8	2	Long	4	2	1,000	5	Cumbersome 3, Pierce 2, Prepare 2
Crossbow, Pulse Burst	Ranged (Mech.)	5	4	Medium	3	1	750	8	Prepare 2, Blast 3, Vicious 2, Unreliable
Dagger, Throwing	Ranged (Arch.)	+2	4	Short	1	0	40	2	Concealed 1, Limited Ammo 1, Pierce 1, Subtle
Hatchet, Throwing	Ranged (Arch.)	+2	3	Short	1	0	40	2	Inaccurate 1, Limited Ammo 1, Vicious 1, Subtle
M&V Mk. I "Reprimand"	Ranged (Mech.)	7	3	Medium	3	2	800	6	Ensnare 1, Prepare 1, Stun Setting
M&V Mk. IV "Censure"	Ranged (Mech.)	9	3	Long	4	2	1250	7	Accurate 1, Ensnare 2, Prepare 2, Stun Setting
M&V Mk. VII "Little Bastard"	Ranged (Mech.)	8	4	Extreme	4	1	1600	8	Accurate 1, Burn 3, Limited Ammo 2
Longbow	Ranged (Arch.)	8	3	Long	2	2	450	2	Unwieldy 3, Pierce 2, Subtle
Runebow	Ranged (Arch.)	8	3	Long	2	2	1300	8	Guided 2, Pierce 2, Unwieldy 3
Runebow, Heavy	Ranged (Arch.)	10	3	Extreme	3	2	2050	10	Guided 3, Pierce 3, Unwieldy 4
Shortbow	Ranged (Arch.)	7	4	Medium	2	1	300	2	Unwieldy 2, Subtle
Sling	Ranged (Arch.)	4	4	Medium	0	0	25	1	Disorient 1, Prepare 1, Subtle
Spear Thrower	Ranged (Arch.)	5	4	Medium	2	1	65	1	Defensive 1, Subtle

STILETTO

Stiletos are smaller and slimmer than most daggers, and lack a cutting edge. The narrow cross-section and sharp point of a stiletto reduces friction upon entry, and the slimness of the blade makes it quite easy to conceal, making stiletos a favorite among assassins.

SWORD

A sharp, pointed murder implement that never goes out of style. At the moment slim, basket-hilted thrusting swords and cavalry sabres are in vogue among Sulfurites and Faithful both, but it wouldn't be difficult to find an old-fashioned scimitar or longsword further out in the Wastes.

SWORD CANE

Bring a rapier? To a soiree?! I would *never!*

PHANTOM SWORD

An Old World oddity that looks like a bladeless, engraved silver hilt. The blade is invisible unless bloodied or otherwise sullied, and it is cold and smooth to the touch, like a pane of glass. Phantom swords are viciously, impossibly sharp, slicing through metal armor as if it were paper, and thus require a great degree of skill to wield properly.

RANGED WEAPONS

Sunfall has a variety of ranged weapons, from bows and throwing knives to crossbows, arbalests, and runelocks. Runelock weapons are the Byssarian equivalent of firearms: much like a flintlock pistol has a flint-striking ignition mechanism, a runelock weapon has a number of miniature thaumaturgical arrays that charge, propel, or outright create a projectile. Much runelock weaponry in the Byssarian is manufactured by the Munitions House of Minor and Violante, a Livadian establishment on a mission to redefine the words *superior firepower*, though a number of rival artisans and manufacturers are beginning to challenge M&V's monopoly.

BEAMCASTER

A makeshift runelock weapon comprised of a crossbow stock, a slot for a thaumaturgical capacitor, an optical array, a simple trigger mechanism, and a tangle of brass and copper wires. Instead of discharging physical or arcane projectiles, beamcasters fire thin rays of concentrated light — not strong enough to outright pierce armor, but so precise that one does not need to be a marksman to hit a joint or seam in the steel.



CROSSBOW

More sophisticated and less unwieldy than bows, crossbows even the odds when it comes to the skill required for bloodshed. An untrained farmer with a good crossbow is a fair match for a Wasteland archer who's held a bow since they could walk — provided the farmer has time to reload.

HAND CROSSBOW

A crossbow in miniature, preferred by assassins and back-alley toughs for its subtlety and compact size. Despite this, a hand crossbow isn't the easiest thing to hide on one's person — too complex and fragile to be shoved in a boot or inner pocket.

REPEATING HAND CROSSBOW

Slightly larger than an ordinary hand crossbow, a repeating hand crossbow has a boxlike magazine that holds three bolts, instead of one. It is a weapon of skirmishers and city-dwellers — the reloading process requires a significant degree of precision, and the sheer complexity of the design makes the weapon prone to jamming.

HEAVY CROSSBOW

A crossbow built on a larger scale. Definitive proof that no matter what they say, *size does matter*.

PULSE BURST CROSSBOW

A runelock crossbow that launches exploding bolts of thaumaturgical energy — blue light arcs through the air and a powerful shockwave soon follows.

THROWING DAGGER

A small, slim dagger, weighted for throwing. Can be used as a melee weapon using the following profile: (Melee; +1 Damage; Crit 4; Range [Engaged], Pierce 1)

THROWING HATCHET

A small hatchet, weighted for throwing. Can be wielded as a melee weapon using the following profile: (Melee; +2 Damage; Crit 4; Range [Engaged], Vicious 1)

MINOR & VIOLANTE MK. I "REPRIMAND"

"*How Dare You!*" M&V's first venture into the realm of boltless runelock crossbows, the Reprimand is an old but well-loved model, engraved with propulsion arrays and fitted with a replaceable crystal capacitor. Similar to the newer and much more intimidating Censure, the Reprimand spits cold lightning and can be adjusted to stun an opponent, turning a lethal confrontation into a teachable moment.

MINOR & VIOLANTE MK. IV "CENSURE"

"*Actions Speak Louder Than Words.*" One of Minor & Violante's less ostentatious models, which isn't saying very much. Censure is a runelock arbalest that fires bolts of arcane energy instead of physical projectiles. It has a small knob near the catch that lets the wielder lower the charge intensity from lethal to shocking.

MINOR & VIOLANTE MK. VII "LITTLE BASTARD"

"*Say Hello To My Little Friend!*" A nightmarish contraption of polished redwood and brass with a caged imp on one end and a long, fluted barrel emerging from the other. Aside from a tendency to overheat and shriek obscenities when displeased, the Little Bastard is not unlike an arquebus in function, if arquebuses fired leaden slugs that ignited the target on impact.

This weapon is alive and will malfunction in the hands of a wielder it does not respect or fear. If that is the case, add ■■ to all checks made while using this weapon. The Players and GM should discuss how exactly one may frighten the Little Bastard, or earn its respect.

LONGBOW

Most often made of larch or yew, longbows are longer than a man is tall when unstrung and require great skill to fire properly. Like the spear-thrower, the longbow is a holdout weapon; many are taught to use one from a very young age, which is why a good number of Wasteland archers have a distinct lopsided stance.

RUNEBOW

A treasure! An Old Moristagian artefact, this shortbow is made of bronze and silver, its grip inlaid with still-glowing arcane sigils — and though it has no bowstring, it maintains the shape of a bow newly strung. If one feels the air where the string ought to be, they will notice a small degree of resistance, and if they hold the grip firm and draw the runebow as one would a regular bow, the movement would create an arrow of shimmering white light — an arrow that will chase its target if it misses.

☼ and ▲ cannot be spent to make a runebow run out of ammo.

HEAVY RUNEBOW

Large, more intricate, and harder to draw than an ordinary runebow — moving a hand through the "string" is distinctly uncomfortable, like moving against an icy current in a river.

☼ and ▲ cannot be spent to make a heavy runebow run out of ammo.

SHORTBOW

Having a much lower draw weight than longbows, shortbows are simultaneously less devastating at long range and much easier to wield. Most bows of this variety are compound recurves made of wood and sinew, but smaller selfbows or flatbows aren't uncommon.

SLING

A leather cord or piece of sturdy cloth, used to throw stones and hunt small game. Not the kind of weapon anyone would bring to an actual fight, but desperate times call for desperate measures.

☼ and ▲ cannot be spent to make a sling run out of ammo.

ARMOR

NAME	SOAK	DEFENSE	ENCUM	HP	PRICE	RARITY
Brigandine	+1	1	2	1	400	5
Gambeson	+1	0	2	0	50	2
Escan Rivet	+1	1	3	2	550	4
Lamellar Armor	+2	0	4	1	550	4
Mirror Armor	+2	1	4	2	1000	6

SPEAR-THROWER

Little more than a carved, weighted piece of wood with a cup on one end, a spear-thrower lets a skilled user throw a little javelin almost twice as far as they would without. A weapon for the quick and resourceful — it's easier to knap a spearhead and find a good stick than it is to fletch an arrow, and in a pinch, you can use a spear-thrower as a club.

A spear-thrower can be wielded as a Melee (Light) weapon using the following profile: (Engaged range, +1 Damage, Crit. 4, Disorient 1, Defensive 1)

ARMOR

BRIGANDINE

A thick, padded tunic with small, oblong scales riveted between the inner and outer layers of cloth. A brigandine makes the wearer look bulky and awkward, but it's a small price to pay for stopping an arrow or turning away an angry blade. In addition, a well-made brigandine is rather warm, and its layers of quilted cloth cushion and muffle the clinking of plates and rivets against each other, making it the obvious choice for fighters seeking a balance between protection, comfort, and ease of movement.

GAMBESON

Thick enough to turn away a small blade or withstand the bitter frost of the Wastes for a short time, the gambeson or arming doublet is a long, padded and quilted jacket. In the Blessed and early Sunless Ages, a gambeson counted as armor on its own, but the advent of runelock and pyromantic arms rendered it all but obsolete as a form of protection. Ever-reluctant to give up on an additional layer, the modern soldier wears her gambeson under heavier armor, but almost never by itself.

Though holdouts don't usually wear arming doublets in the style of Mandate or Sulfurite soldiers, the long overcoats they favor function much the same way, providing insulation and a small degree of protection while allowing the wearer freedom of movement.

ESCAN RIVET

Escan rivet is a reasonably flexible half-suit of munitions-grade plate armor for both foot and cavalry soldiers. It is usually uncomfortable to wear, this due to the fact that it's manufactured for army use on a "one size fits most" model.

Not every suit of Escan rivet is of Escan make; rather, this style of armor was pioneered by the Escan armed forces and quickly became a much-bemoaned fixture of army life across the Byssarian. It consists of an overlapping chest piece and back piece, sliding on rivets and accompanied by tassets and light pauldrons, all of which are worn over a thick arming jacket. Despite the discomfort, this kind of armor is easy to customize, as detaching and replacing individual pieces is not very difficult; older suits of Escan rivet tend to look nothing like the original (but somehow manage to be just as ill-fitting).

Characters wearing Escan rivet add ■ to any Stealth checks they make while wearing it.

HEAVY ROBES

The ceremonial dress of priests and nobles across much of the known world, usually embroidered, lined with silk or sporting a luxurious fur trim. Such garments vary wildly in shape, cut, and color, and often hold religious significance, though for some it's little more than a fashion statement.

LAMELLAR ARMOR

A suit of armor made of small, hard plates of ironwood, ceramic, or metal laced together in a horizontal pattern to form a chest piece, tassets, greaves, and gauntlets. Though it became briefly obsolete during the late Blessed Age, when knights favored steel plate, lamellar armor made a triumphant return during the Sunless Age — it is much lighter and easier to layer with wool and fur for cold weather. Like brigandines, good-quality lamellar armor is most often found among holdouts who pass ornate suits of it on to their descendants, and light cavalry soldiers, who value the insulation and flexibility.

Because the plates click against each other when one moves, a character wearing lamellar armor must add ■ to any Stealth checks they make while wearing it.

MIRROR ARMOR

The most expensive and comprehensive of protection available. A suit of mirror armor consists of a long riveted mail hauberk over a reinforced arming coat, gauntlets, greaves; larger plates worn over the chest, back, shoulders and hips, and smaller pieces of metal shielding joints and bridging gaps between the larger pieces. The chest and back plates are either rectangular or circular — Sulfurite artisans favor the former, while Mandate smiths prefer rondels — and often



quite ornate, engraved or inlaid with gold and polished to a reflective shine. A warrior in full mirror armor looks splendid and dramatic, and has more in common with an Old Imperial cataphract than a Blessed Age knight in full plate.

The only downsides of mirror armor are its weight and the inevitable noise of plate against chain. A character wearing mirror armor must add ■■ to all Stealth checks they make while wearing it.

CRAFTSMANSHIP

Sunfall uses the Ancient, Iron and Steel Craftsmanship rules listed on p. 97-98 of Realms of Terrinoth, in addition to two new types of craftsmanship: devilbone and ironwood.

DEVILBONE

Ivory-colored, alchemically-treated ceramics fired in the literal pits of Hell and sold at ludicrous prices in the World Above. Devilbone is harder and holds an edge better than steel, but devilbone arms and armor are brittle and difficult to repair and maintain outside their place of manufacture, as Hellish artisans are loath to let go of trade secrets as profitable as theirs. Suits of devilbone armor are also warded against devilish magics and fire, making them a staple in the Mandate's war against the Adversary.

Armor: Increase the armor's defense by 1. Upgrade all Pyromancy checks targeting the character wearing devilbone armor once. Upgrade the difficulty of all checks made to repair devilbone armor once.

Weapon: The weapon gains the Accurate 1 item quality, or its Accurate item quality increases by 1. Upgrade the difficulty of all checks made to repair ceramic weapons once.

Price: Cost x2.

Rarity: +3

IRONWOOD

Ironwood comes from several species of knotted, thick-trunked trees that grow high up in the northern mountains.

WEAPON ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT	HP REQUIRED	PRICE	RARITY	SOURCE
Balanced Hilt	1	1000	6	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 207
Bayonet	1	100	3	Sunfall
Duelist Crossguard	1	800	5	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 207
Recurve Limbs	1	300	4	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 208
Serrated Edge	1	75	2	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 208
Superior Weapon Customization	1	750	7	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 208
Weapon Sling	1	25	1	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 209
Weighted Head	1	250	2	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 209

Living ironwood is no more resilient than fir or cedar, but hardens after the tree is cut down, and hardens even more after an artisan carves it and cures it in alchemical reagents. Skilfully carved and treated ironwood makes for light and flexible armor, but poor weapons — no matter how hard one may try, it is near-impossible to hone a wooden blade to the same edge as steel or devilbone, and ironwood maces and cudgels are too light to be as effective as their metal or ceramic counterparts. Ironwood is also one of the least thaumaturgically conductive materials, warding the wearer from hostile and friendly spells alike.

Armor: Reduce the armor's Encumbrance value by 2, to a minimum of 1. Upgrade all Thaumaturgy checks targeting the character once. In addition, your character removes ■ from Stealth checks they make while wearing a set of ironwood armor.

Weapon: Reduce the weapon's Encumbrance by 1, to a minimum of 1. Increase the weapon's Critical rating by 3, to a maximum of 6.

Price: Cost x2.

Rarity: +2

ITEM ATTACHMENTS

BAYONET

A short blade fastened to the business end of a crossbow or runelock weapon.

Use With: Crossbows and other weapons that use the Ranged (Mechanical) skill, with the exception of the hand crossbow, as it is very small.

Modifiers: A character wielding a bayoneted weapon may use it as a Melee (Light) weapon with the following profile: (Engaged range, +2 Damage, Crit. 4, Vicious 1). The bayonet can break off if the character generates ☠☠☠ or ☠ on any Melee combat check they make using the bayoneted weapon.

Hard Points Required: 1.

ARMOR ATTACHMENTS

ATTACHMENT	HP REQUIRED	PRICE	RARITY	SOURCE
Deflective Plating	1	450	4	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 209
Intimidating Visage	1	125	3	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 209
Gilded	0	1,500	5	Realms of Terrinoth p. 108
Reinforced Plating	2	8000	7	Genesys Core Rule Book p. 209

GEAR

The right tools for the task at hand.

CAMPING GEAR

Traveling the Wastes is a sign of great courage; doing so unprepared is a sign of even greater stupidity. A standard set of camping gear includes an alchemically insulated tent that can house one or two people, a bedroll, a mess kit, and a light, collapsible tripod or brazier to hold a hellfire globule.

CARTOGRAPHER'S KIT

Quills, ink, paper, a magnetic compass, as well as an astro-labe or sextant — in other words, everything needed for map-making. With this, a character may create a map of the region they are exploring, or merely assist in navigation.

Any character in possession of a cartographer's kit may add $\triangle \triangle$ to any Survival checks they make to navigate.

FIRE GLOBULE

Anything can be tamed with enough skill and patience, even hellfire. Fire globules are made of thick, engraved crystal similar but inferior to the material used for the Second Sun. If one presses a small sigil in the globule's side, a thin seam appears on otherwise seamless crystal and the globule splits neatly in two, and if one brings the two halves close together, the seam vanishes. Any flame placed inside burns almost indefinitely without fuel as long as the globule remains sealed, however, sealed globules do not emit heat and are cold to the touch.

An open fire globule provides the same amount of heat and light as a campfire and consumes fuel as normal.

FIREWORKS

A small bundle of rockets, firecrackers and Akkari sparkling candles, imported along the Royal Road or one of the other eastern trade routes. Many people, particularly holdouts and the urban poor, have never seen any kind of pyrotechnics and easily mistake such things for shows of magical prowess. And how could you not — the sounds! The colors! Blessed Name, the colors!

GAMING SET

Dice, cards, or a game board with pieces. Excellent for passing time in good company.

GAMING SET (CROOKED)

Loaded dice, marked cards, and other tools of a certain clandestine trade.

When your character uses a crooked gaming set, they may add \star and \diamond to any skill checks they make to gamble.

ALCHEMICAL LANTERN

A round-bottomed glass flask with a stopper and a leather strap for tying to belts, harnesses, and the like. Inside is an alchemical solution that does not freeze, and emits a bright golden light if one gives it a vigorous shake. The solution retains its luminosity for a few hours when removed from the flask and can be applied to a variety of surfaces and objects to make them emit a faint golden glow. Technically, the contents of such a lantern can also be drunk, but that is as inadvisable as it is wasteful: while harmless, the liquid makes the drinker look like a jaundiced buffoon for months afterwards.

A stoppered alchemical lantern removes \blacksquare added to checks due to darkness and sheds bright light in Short range. An open alchemical lantern or the contents of one spilled or painted onto an object or surface do not emit a strong enough glow to see by, but can be used for the purposes of deception and distraction.

SPYGLASS

Useful for looking at things that are very far away or affecting the airs of a sea captain.

The user may add $\triangle \triangle$ to all Perception checks they make while using a spyglass to look at a distant object or creature; for obvious reasons, using a spyglass to look at something nearby grants no mechanical benefit and makes the user look like a fool.

SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY

A badge, amulet, document, or piece of clothing indicative of a position of legal or ecclesiastical authority, whether earned or obtained through less legitimate means. Depending on



GEAR PRICES

NAME	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY	SOURCE
Alchemist's Kit	3	300	6	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 100)
Apothecary's Kit	2	150	4	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 100)
Backpack	+4	50	3	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 100)
Bedroll	1	15	1	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 100)
Camping Gear	3	90	3	Sunfall
Cartographer's Kit	1	50	3	Sunfall
Extra Reload	2	25	2	Genesys Core Rule Book (p. 169)
Fine Cloak	1	90	4	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 100)
Fire Globule	1	200	5	Sunfall
Fireworks	1	100	6	Sunfall
Gaming Set	1	20	1	Sunfall
Gaming Set, Crooked	1	50	4	Sunfall
Lantern, Alchemical	1	50	1	Sunfall
Pole	2	10	1	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 101)
Rope	1	5	1	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 101)
Symbol of Authority	0	-	5	Sunfall
Symbol of Authority (Forged)	0	300	5	Sunfall
Spyglass	1	25	2	Sunfall
Thieves' Tools	1	75	5	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 101)
Torches (3)	1	1	0	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 101)
Wagon	-	200	2	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 101)
Waterskin (Empty)	1	5	1	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 101)
Winter Clothing	4	100		Realms of Terrinoth (p. 101)

the situation and the GM's approval, a symbol of authority may allow a character access to information and locations previously closed to them.

In the correct context and with the GM's approval, a character in possession of a symbol of authority may present it to add ✨ to a Social skill check.

SYMBOL OF AUTHORITY (FORGED)

A reasonably convincing forgery of a badge, amulet, document, or piece of clothing indicative of a position of legal or ecclesiastical authority. A forged symbol of authority may allow a character access to information and locations previously closed to them.

In the correct context and with the GM's approval, a character in possession of a symbol of authority may present it to add ✨ and 🗡️ to a Charm, Leadership, or Negotiation check.

WINTER CLOTHING

Technically, all clothing in this world is winter clothing, but there are garments that can withstand the worst of the high winds, and there are those that cannot. This, whatever form it may take — a giant bear- or tigerskin coat, alchemically insulated wool and leather, or something more exotic — squarely belongs in the former category.

POTIONS, INTOXICANTS AND OTHER SUBSTANCES

ACID FLASK

A glass flask containing a volatile admixture of weak azothic tincture and vitriol. Useful for etching, engraving, or corroding locks and similar small mechanisms; if one is feeling particularly mean-spirited, they may also throw it and drown the immediate vicinity in a cloud of corrosive vapors.

ADRIOLE

In its natural state, adriole is a deciduous shrub with black needles and tiny red berries. Certain enterprising herbalists collect adriole berries, boil and mash them, then cure the resulting mass into a blackish jelly which they sell in little jars. Their customers, in turn, scoop fingerfuls of the stuff, rub it on their gums, and very rarely smile. This is because adriole slowly, but permanently, blackens the gums and gives one's teeth a pinkish tinge. More immediately, adriole makes the user focus with almost inhuman intensity on whatever task lies before them, to the exclusion of all else, until they collapse. Adriole jelly is a favorite among sharpshooters (it "steadies the hands") and thaumaturges (it "steadies the soul").

POTIONS, INTOXICANTS, AND OTHER SUBSTANCES

NAME	ENCUM	PRICE	RARITY	SOURCE
Acid Flask	0	200	6	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 102)
Adriole	0	50	5 (R)	Sunfall
Azoth	0	1000	8 (R)	Sunfall
Bitter Tincture	0	25	6 (R)	Sunfall
Bottled Courage	1	25	5	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 102)
Hellsbreath	0	75	5 (R)	Sunfall
Immunity Elixir	1	100	4	Sunfall
Fertilizer, Alchemical	0	200	6	Sunfall
Lubricant, Alchemical	1	200	4	Sunfall
Moonmilk	0	250	6 (R)	Sunfall
Poison	0	200	5 (R)	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 102)
Smokebomb Vial	0	25	4	Realms of Terrinoth (p. 102)
Waybread	0	25	2	Sunfall

A character under the effect of adriole adds **□□** to all Willpower and Intellect-based skills checks, as well as all ranged combat checks, until the end of the scene or encounter. Until the character sleeps for 8 hours, they cannot recover from strain through spending symbols and do not make checks to recover from strain at the end of encounters.

AZOTH

A tablespoon of creamy cobalt paste in a triple-sealed alchemical electrum container. Azoth is the universal solvent, a substance so potent that it can eat through and dissolve anything except for alchemical electrum. Artisans working with materials as tough as devilbone sometimes use extremely diluted azothic tinctures for etching, engraving, and removal of damaged components. Thankfully, azoth begins to evaporate on contact with air, and its vapors are nowhere near as corrosive as the parent substance — while a spill of unadulterated azoth is an alchemist’s worst and most expensive nightmare, it is not entirely impossible to contain.

Azoth will eat through any surface except for alchemical electrum, and is very useful for silently passing through vault doors and similarly forbidding physical barriers. The lengthy process of opening the container and safely spreading the substance makes it more valuable as a tool than a weapon. In the event that a character uses azoth in combat, this author recommends it to have a drastic, but narrative, effect — burning away limbs and inflicting grievous, disabling wounds all while completely ignoring any armor the victim may wear.

BITTER TINCTURE

A dark and bitter mixture of distilled herbs and alcohol, prized for its powerful numbing effect but difficult to find outside a surgeon or physician’s practice. Each dose can be used a total of 3 times per session; each heals 2 wounds. After the fourth use, a bitter tincture has no effect.

HELLSBREATH

Pungent yellow gas in a little bottle with an indecent picture of a knight wrestling a devil on the label. Despite claims to the contrary, this is an alchemically synthesized gas and not the literal fumes of Hell: in antiquity, a gas similar to hellsbreath was used to inspire “courage” in pit fighters and gladiators. In lower concentrations, hellsbreath is referred to as *musk* and used as an aphrodisiac.

Inhaling one dose of hellsbreath increases the user’s Brawn characteristic by 1 until the end of the encounter; if

**RESTRICTED
SUBSTANCES AND
ADDICTION**

Several substances in this section are labeled as (R), indicating that they are restricted — either considered to be wholly illegal, or require special documentation to possess. In the case of intoxicants, the rich and powerful don’t care quite so much for matters as trivial as legality, but it is considered to be in good taste to not reveal one’s more outrageous vices in public. A noble scion who spends the bulk of their allowance betting on dogfights and horse races is a wastrel, but one who overindulges in strong drink and stronger substances is a disgrace to the family.

All consumable substances marked R are addictive, and if everyone at the table is comfortable with touching upon the subject of addiction in game, the GM may wish to use the Addiction rules listed on p. 100 of *Shadow of the Beanstalk*.

the user's Brawn characteristic is already 5, they gain ■■ to all subsequent Brawn-based checks until the end of the encounter. At the end of the encounter, the user suffers strain equal to half their Strain Threshold, rounded up.

ALCHEMICAL FERTILIZER

One of the alchemical arts is the reduction of elements and compounds to their purest essences — from a gargantuan redwood to an impet of fragrant oil, from a mass of clay to an unbreakable devilbone scale. This wax-sealed vial, labeled *CAUTION!!! AGRICULTURAL USE ONLY!!!*, contains the unadulterated essence of a great herd's worth of dung; such vials are always sold or packaged with one dose of a minty ointment that somewhat drowns out the stench. Worth twice the asking price to a rich prankster or very desperate farmer.

A character holding a vial of fertilizer can uncork and upend it as an action. All other characters with functional noses within Short range of the fertilizer must make a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Resilience check** and suffer 1 strain for every uncanceled ✕ or ☠. They must repeat this check until they move away from the stench, which remains until the end of the encounter or until a strong wind disperses it. If one wishes, they may also throw or pour the fertilizer onto another character, treating it as an improvised weapon with the Limited Ammo 1 quality.

ALCHEMICAL LUBRICANT

A large bottle of viscous and transparent liquid that makes things extremely slippery. Held in high esteem by clockworkers, engineers, and practical jokers; unfortunately for more adventurous individuals, alchemical lubricant irritates the skin and mucous membranes and is therefore unsuitable for internal or external use.

Alchemical lubricant can be poured on flat, snowless ground or the floor of a building to create difficult terrain, or thrown on an opponent of Silhouette 1 or smaller as an action; for this purpose, treat the bottle of lubricant as a small improvised weapon with the Limited Ammo 1 quality. The players or GM may spend ☠☠ or ☠ on the lubricated character's combat checks to make them fall prone or drop an item they're holding. This effect lasts for the rest of the encounter, or until the affected character spends an action cleaning themselves off.

MOONMILK

Concentrated extract of the moon rose, a creeping plant with robust, thick-petaled blue flowers. Moonmilk is sweet and dangerously intoxicating, and largely consumed as an additive to wine or spirits. Its immediate effect is soporific; a few drops of moonmilk can make the consumer near-imperious to pain and a full spoonful can send them into a deep and dreamless sleep. For this reason, surgeons purchase vials of the stuff as often, if not more often, than recreational consumers.

WHY NOT PAINKILLERS?

One painkiller, as listed in the Genesys Core Rule Book, heals 5 wounds upon first use and can heal a total of 15 wounds if administered to the same character. In the opinion of this author, this makes healers and characters with the Medicine skill that much less valuable to a group of adventurers, discouraging players from choosing these roles. A less effective "painkiller," meanwhile, provides a means to take the edge off a serious injury while making characters capable of reliably generating ✨ and ▲ on Medicine checks a tremendous asset to the party.

A character under the effect of moonmilk may ignore the effect of a single Critical Injury until the end of a scene or combat encounter; the GM may rule that the mechanical effects of some critical injuries — such as the loss of a limb— cannot be mitigated with a dose of moonmilk. Once this effect ends, the character suffers the effects of the injury as normal, and must add ■ to all checks until the end of the session.

WAYBREAD

Sold in fist-sized lumps, waybread is a bittersweet mixture of dried and ground cave mushrooms, fermented tea and a handful of herbs for additional flavor. Waybread derives its name from its doughy texture and its ability to stave off hunger while keeping the consumer alert and awake. Popular among holdouts, watchmen and bandits, who pinch pieces off the main lump, roll them into pellets for chewing, and spit out the juices.

A character who consumes a pellet of waybread recovers from all strain and adds ▲▲ to all Perception and Vigilance checks until the end of the scene or encounter. However, at the end of the scene or encounter, they suffer strain equal to half their Strain Threshold. Waybread can only be used once per encounter.

CURRENCY

Coinage in the Byssarian is staggeringly diverse. Every city mints its own money, and though the weight of the coins remains the same, their design varies from year to year. The appearance of the Escan grosso, for instance, changed drastically after the election of Prince Verdurio, and though all Mandate cities mint thrones, a Pagamean throne looks nothing like one from Isbanir or Zviadi.

Regardless of the city of their origin, most coins are cast from copper alloys and have a square hole in the middle. Strings of 100, 500 or 1000 copper pennies function as larger

units of currency, accepted by merchants based on their nominal value rather than weight — checking hundreds of 1000-coin strings for counterfeit or damaged currency is too tedious of a task even for the most pedantic individual. Other forms of currency include gold and silver coins (uncommon and used primarily in international trade due to their great value), promissory notes from Sulfurite and Mandate banks, Myranean blood-debts, and foreign moneys (Sedjai ceramic beads, black iron rings from the North, or square coins from the Pillared Kingdom).

For the sake of simplicity and convenience, in-game currency is referred to as cash.

TRADE GOODS

Money, for all its worth, can only do so much far from the reach of urban civilization. As one moves further from the great cities, their roads and their protectorates, the value of their money diminishes — such is the way of the world. One cannot eat coin, or drink it, or use it for fuel, or fashion a new coat from it. But trade goods, necessities and luxuries alike, retain, and sometimes increase in value. Knowing how to navigate the barter economies of far-flung outposts is a vital skill for any traveler.

TRADE GOODS

ITEM	VALUE
One pound of oats, barley, or dried mushrooms.	1
One pound of flour, one chicken, or one rabbit.	2
One pound of pig iron, one bottle of low-quality wine or one bottle of rotgut spirits. A satchel of onions, cabbages, or sweet tubers.	5
One pound of compressed tea adulterated with herbs or sawdust. One pound of copper.	10
One goat or lamb. A barrel of fruit or vegetable pickles or preserves.	15
One pound of average-quality compressed tea, one pound of ginger, pepper, or nutmeg.	20
One pound of high-quality compressed tea. One square yard of linen.	40
One pound of salt, one pound of silver, or one square yard of thickly woven woolen cloth.	50
One square yard of eastern silk. A thick sheet of stained mageglass, or a thick plank of uncarved ironwood.	150
One pound of saffron, one pound of roasted Sedjai coffee beans. One dim or flickering human soul.	200
One square yard of golden byssus. One human soul of average quality. One riding horse, elk, or camel in good health.	500
One pound of gold, or one pound of sur dye. A satchel of viable seeds of an exceedingly rare or allegedly extinct plant, such as coffee or the opium poppy.	1000
One pound of platinum or alchemical electrum. The soul of a leader, scholar, or mage of note; or a properly contained Incandescent soul.	5000



PART 3

CROWN, SWORD, AND SCEPTER

"I have been in several provinces. In some one-half of the people are fools, in others they are too cunning; in some they are weak and simple, in others they affect to be witty; in all, the principal occupation is love, the next is slander, and the third is talking nonsense."

Voltaire, *Candide*

IN THIS PART OF THE BOOK, YOU WILL FIND...

- **Chapter 1: Nuragos and the Republic of Esca** provides a detailed description of the westernmost peninsula of the Byssarian basin, and the bellicose Republic that claims dominion over it.
- **Chapter 2: Istria and the Most Serene Republic of Livadi** concerns itself with the great frozen plain north of the Greater Byssarian and the domed, opulent city-state at its heart.
- **Chapter 3: Other Powers of the Western Byssarian** contains information pertaining to the rest of the Brimstone Republics — Myrnos, Palla, Ter Suoli and Ithobaal.
- **Chapter 4: Tur Moresh and Pagamea** is an introduction of the eastern shores of the Greater Byssarian and the chiefest power of the Mandate — ruined, glorious, enduring Pagamea.
- **Chapter 5: Other Powers of the Mandate** lists and describes the major powers of the Mandate: Kurtalan, Zviadi, and Isbanir.



CHAPTER 1: NURAGOS AND THE REPUBLIC OF ESCA

NURAGOS

Once the farthest-flung of Old Imperial provinces and the last great conquest of the Ten Thousand Immortals, Nuragos is a mountainous, volcanic peninsula that separates the Byssarian from the Great Western Ocean. In antiquity, most believed that the Serra di Oro, the Golden Mountains on the western side of the peninsula, marked the edge of the world. Civilization, in the Old Moristagian sense, never quite took hold in this place, and neither did the Faith. The Conversion of Nuragos was a protracted, bloody affair: the tribes of the mountains and the lowlands fought hard for their fire gods, whose strivings and skirmishes beneath the earth moved mountains and made the soil rich with ash and black glass. Of all recorded Faithful martyrs, most found their martyrdom here. And of the many rebellions of the Blessed Age, the longest and the bloodiest started here.

In the past, the fertile river valleys of the Rialene Lowlands — so named for the Ter Riali, the three rivers crossing southeastern Nuragos — were the breadbasket of the peninsula. In this age the bulk of agricultural activity has moved to the volcanic foothills of the Serra, which are dotted with tiered fields, orchards, and vineyards. The Lowlands are a hard and barren place. Almost nothing grows in the frozen peat flats, and so Rialene townsfolk and holdouts make their meager living herding goats or gathering and curing medicinal mosses and lichens. The richest part of this otherwise sparse country are situated along the coasts. Northern tribes, seasonally nomadic, follow pods of whales in their brightly painted ships and profit from the sale of whale oil, meat, ivory, blubber and ambergris. Those living on the shores of the gulf sustain themselves through fishing, the harvesting of fine silk from colonies of giant pen shells along the shore, and trade with the westernmost islands of the Kyriades.

There is a significant amount of cultural overlap between Nuragos and these islands, this due to the fact that many old coastal towns were islander colonies or trade outposts in antiquity. The most audacious of these claims of relation is that Nuragos' only Brimstone Republic, the great city of Esca, had its start as a penal colony, a refuge for disgraced or politically inconvenient poets and politicians. (Telling this to an Escan's face will almost certainly send them into a fit of quivering, patriotic rage). And though the Escan Princes are traditionally viewed as patrons and protectors of the entire peninsula, the Wars of Unification have caused a degree of resentment among lesser Nuragic protectorates: a large portion of Prince Verdurio's army consists of conscripts from

the lowlands and mountains, and Esca sustains its war effort through brutal taxation of its immediate holdings. Though initially enthusiastic about the possibility of riches, many of Nuragos' inhabitants have become bitter and disillusioned with the Prince's campaign to unify the Republics into a single kingdom. There has been no word of a rebellion, but the possibility of one is becoming more and more likely with each passing season.

THE REPUBLIC OF ESCA

Built on the eastern shore of a vast salt lake, Esca was the first city to declare itself a Brimstone Republic in the wake of the Sunfall. It is a vastly old city, famous (or infamous) for its history of rebellion against Imperial rule and the atrocities perpetrated by the old Inquisition in their attempts to eradicate witches and fire-cultists. No matter how thoroughly the Inquisition scoured the city for any sign of heresy, no matter how many shrines it tore down and how many pagan corpses it displayed outside the Old Imperial Courthouse, heathen teachings would creep back in. Conspirators would gather in firelit lakeside caverns to swear terrible oaths of loyalty and fraternity amidst idols of the old gods. Weeks later, a servant would find the Imperial governor dead in his bed with a thin obsidian knife between his ribs, and Esca would erupt, once more, into fire and blood.

The city's name comes from the name of its crater lake, Eo. Even in this age, Eo does not freeze. Its waters are luminous green, and the Escan poor toil in sweltering salt-houses, turning brine into salt for a pittance and a warm place to sleep, so that merchants could eventually convert the salt to silver in distant lands. Local cuisine makes extensive use of the lake's bounty — Escans are infamous for salting and pickling just about anything, even the sweetest of fruits. In the old days, Escans believed that a particularly powerful god lived at the bottom of their lake — a Lady who whispered the secret wisdom of iron and bronze into the ears of the first smiths and the first assassins. In this age, however, there are roads that worm their way under the caldera, through the Salt Gate that leads to the World Below, and Eo is just a lake, no matter what superstitious salt workers may say.

Esca itself is crescent-shaped, hugging the Eo on the lower side of the caldera, and its streets are spanned with elegant arches and arcades. There is no dome to shelter the city from the elements, but even so, most of the buildings do not rise higher than four floors. Some of the buildings have niches above the windows and doorways, where the Escans place votive statuettes of devils and ancestor-godlings to bring



wealth and ward off evil. Horses and mules are a common sight in the city, as are large dogs: the blue-tongued, black-furred lake mastiff is among the most prized of Esca's exports, known for its loyalty, ferocity, and unnatural intelligence. Any household that can afford dogs has at least one, and the animals are fat and happy. Their owners dote on them like beloved children. Most shops invest in a guard dog or two, who lie in alcoves near the counter and impassively watch their masters' customers. A purebred lake dog, as the Escan merchants happily tell anyone who asks, can tell an honest man from a crook by smell alone half a league away. And the best way to accuse a shopkeeper of dishonesty would be to insult the pedigree of their mastiffs.

The very soul of this city rests upon four pillars: a love of dogs, a love of wine, a love of pungent fermented fish sauce, and a powerful desire to seek glory in the arena. The Imperial elite deemed blood sports barbaric and outlawed them, leading to a proliferation of underground fight clubs and dog-fighting rings during their regency. In the five centuries of Escan independence, these things returned to the forefront of city life, albeit in a form altered and softened with time. There are a number of public arenas, yes, but there are no more ritualized, lethal melees to appease the gods of the mountains. Men and women still bet obscene amounts of money on dog fights — the best kennels in the city claim to breed only from winners — but combats end when one animal yields or whimpers. Bear- and bull-baiting has almost entirely gone out of fashion, and the number of fighting swans and cockerels has declined greatly in the past century. The most popular, most riveting form of sport, however, is the duel, and accomplished duellists draw raucous crowds of spectators and admirers. When they retire, these swordmasters either try to open a sword school in the city (almost impossible given the steep competition), or find employment as esteemed tutors for children of the foreign rich.

Aside from salt, dogs, and has-been fencing masters, Esca exports herbs, fruits, and other crops grown in greenhouses on the mountain slopes immediately outside the city. The soil is black and rich with volcanic ash, and the Salt Gate warms it to an unparalleled softness. Agriculture in the Sunless Age is an uphill struggle, but it is the Escan farmer who toils least to reap the richest crop. Though the Wars of Unification began in Esca, the city has not yet experienced any of the devastation. It is well-defended, and the worst of the fighting is overseas, too far for the common folk to take notice. Most "Escan" soldiers are, in fact, Suolan mercenaries, islanders, and conscripts from the countryside. As a result, the Wars — and the man who started them — still find ardent support among the citizenry.

THE PRINCE

Everyone agrees that the Prince of Esca, Sabine Verdurio, is brilliant. Handsome, charismatic, a skilled orator and an even more skilled commander, Verdurio is young for the title, having just celebrated his twenty-ninth birthday at the

time of his nomination. A man of common birth, Verdurio is one of the two Escan Princes who had never served on the Merchant or Petty Councils. The referendum to appoint the new Prince after the passing of his predecessor was reportedly strange: despite the presence of more conventional candidates and the abundance of murderous rivalries among the daemonic members of the Merchants' Council, all visitant Councillors voted unanimously to appoint a fresh-faced young captain, moderately famous for his role in a few recent border skirmishes, to the highest position of leadership in the city.

He has proven himself surprisingly capable, particularly in the matters of war, and he is well-loved by the common people and the army. This is a source of great anxiety to the Merchants' Council, accustomed to leveraging their wealth to manipulate or outright depose weaker rulers. Now, that wealth is channeled almost entirely towards the cause of uniting every Republic beneath an Escan banner, with King Sabine as first of many great rulers to come. And despite his opponents' best efforts, the Prince's dream of a crown is slowly becoming a reality. The mercenary armies of Ter Suoli stand united behind him without thought of disobedience, the troublesome island-state of Myrnos has been pacified, and islander troops have joined Escan forces in their twin campaigns against Palla to the northeast and Ithobaa to the south.

In private, the Prince's hands tremble. He is prone to coughing fits, which are often bloody but have thus far stayed out of the public eye. At most, some members of his inner circle of advisers and sycophants may suspect that he is dying of consumption, but his private physician, a small woman by the name of Vanna Trevisande, knows that this is not the case. Unlike the advisors, she has seen the steaming green brine and obsidian shards he vomits during the most severe bouts of his illness. She suspects, correctly, that the extent of her knowledge is inversely proportional to her chances of surviving her tenure at court, and has thus chosen to make a virtue of incuriosity.

THE LADY IN THE LAKE

In truth, the Escan Wars of Unification are much greater than one man's wish for a kingdom — they are an illegitimate extension of the daemonic war against the Mandate. Despite centuries of warfare, the Adamant Order remains entrenched in the World Below, a thorn in the Adversary's side. The consensus of the majority of the Adversary's war council is that the best approach to this problem is a war of attrition. The greatest weakness of the Order is mortality, and those mortals who do not perish on the battlefield succumb, eventually, to sickness and old age. No matter how many detachments of Faithful conscripts join the Order on the battlefield, Adamant influence Below is dwindling, the eventual fall of the Mandate is a near certainty, and no daemon would complain about the steady influx of souls a perpetual war inevitably generates.



The problem with this approach is time. A war of attrition is a viable strategy in a static environment against a static opponent, but times change. There have been some worrying developments in recent years — take into consideration the great cannons the Order receives from Pagamea, or the runelock crossbows Livadian merchants sell to anyone who can afford them. And though the Order does not yet entertain ambitions of a second infernal conquest, there are those on the Adversary's war council who believe that it must not be allowed to do so.

In order to conquer the Order, one must first seal the Serpent Gate in Pagamea, cutting off the Adamants' most vital supply line. In order to conquer Pagamea, one must conquer a good half of the Mandate before attempting a siege, and no single Republic is even remotely capable of accomplishing that feat. United, however, they can topple the giant — and the great daemon Eo, the one who the Escan salt workers know from the stories of the Lady in the Lake, has dedicated herself to uniting the Republics and breaking the Faith no matter the cost.

By the standards of the Adversary's generals, Eo is young and impetuous. By the standards of things like language, war, and human civilization, she is almost impossibly old. When one looks at the shrine-carvings in the hidden caverns riddling the shores of her lake, they see plumes of smoke forming the face of a wild-haired, scowling woman, her eyes bright and narrowed in fury. Her power is such that her gaze scorches, her voice boils the blood, and her touch immolates the soul. The sheer magnitude of it is Eo's greatest limitation, forcing her to delegate field command to lesser daemons, or operate through a human proxy, if the matter in question is as clandestine as an unsanctioned war.

And so, a young and staggeringly ambitious officer went down a winding path carved into the side of the caldera — a path he had seen in his dreams since he was a boy. He had recently won a battle and attained a degree of renown, but he understood the limitations of the formerly poor in a society governed by the excessively wealthy. And like those Blessed Age heretics who rankled under Faithful rule, he cut his hand with a thin obsidian blade and swore a terrible oath of loyalty before an idol of an old god.

Eo's pact with Verdurio is both unconventional and uncomplicated. Instead of giving him magic (which would destroy him), she offered him a path to greatness. She would give counsel and guide ships and armies to victory. She would raise her Prince by the hand and set him among heroes and emperors and conquerors; she would enthrone his descendants in fire and glory. A great many daemons owe allegiance to her, and cannot disobey orders given in her name — she would let her Prince command them until the end of his days.

There is one condition: his armies must breach the walls of Pagamea and seal the Serpent Gate by the end of the century, and though Verdurio has made great progress, he has encountered spirited resistance both east and south. And Eo, though she is not unkind by the standards of creatures of her caliber, is making her displeasure clear. The Prince suffers from fevers and nightmares, and an awful sickness eats away at the Prince's body and soul. If he does not win the great victory he promised his mistress soon, he will die, and his death will pale in comparison to what awaits him afterwards. So his campaigns grow more frantic, his ploys more desperate. He has stopped caring quite so much about casualties and the rules of war. If future historians write of him, they will write of Sabine the Butcher.

CHAPTER 2 : ISTRIA AND THE MOST SERENE REPUBLIC OF LIVADI

THE ISTRIAN STEPPE

It is an old place, this vast and trackless plain beyond the Serra Lunae. It is where the first bow was made, where the first saddle was placed on the back of the first horse that did not shy away from human touch, where the first arrow was fired from the first war-chariot at the command of the first king and the first queen. No horse is as fine as an Istrian horse, and no sky is as fathomless and splendid.

This has always, and will always be true. For all of the massive, apocalyptic upheavals that shook the world, the plain

remains largely the same. Civilizations tread lightly across it, leaving few marks that outlast them. The horse is still the primary export and most valued possession of its people, and the vast majority of Istrian holdouts follow in the footsteps of their nomadic predecessors, moving their herds from pasture to pasture and performing daring migrations from one end of the steppe to another. The animals they breed are small, shaggy, hardy things that dig for lichens and moss under the snow — a far cry from the graceful mares and stallions of old. The herders themselves worship or pay tribute to the great spirits of the wind, the sky, and the stars. The color blue is sacred to many, and persons of import —



warriors, royalty, fire-callers and wise folk — are often tattooed with indigo whorls and stars, arrayed in constellations that mirror the heavens with startling accuracy. When they die, their kin and loved ones do not cremate them, but give them to the skies as offerings. They wash their bodies and lay them out on the steppe, to be eaten by great black tyrant owls, messengers of the heavens.

Too barren to support many large cities and too huge for any one city to police effectively, Istria serves as a buffer zone between the two great powers of the Byssarian. Smaller Faithful and Sulfurite protectorates crouch on its eastern and western edges, and plains holdouts extract tribute from both with equal enthusiasm, threatening to blockade the roads and rivers should these petty settlements fail to meet their demands.

THE RIVER OF STARS

The plains people may rule the steppes and the land trade routes that cross it, but they make no such claim over the Striva. A wide river, among the longest in the known world, the Striva flows too quickly to freeze completely. It is capricious and unpredictable: small gateways to the World Below open and close in the deepest parts of it, drastically altering the temperature and speed of its currents. Parts of the Striva thaw and freeze, seemingly at random. Calm waters transform, almost overnight, into furious rapids; the river itself boils and thrashes with rage, escaping its bounds before settling back into its old bed. Most merchants are unwilling to risk it, even if it means faster passage, preferring to use the roads even if they must pay exorbitant tolls to the nomads. The ones who are willing, however, hire riverfolk barges and navigators to guide them through the Striva's worst peculiarities.

The river clans came to Istria from the south, from the sea, hauling their shallow-bottomed ships all the way to the heart of the steppe. Although they are recent arrivals to the plain, closer in language and custom to their seafaring brethren than the Istrian nomads, they know the shores of the Striva and her daughter-rivers as well as any plains tribe knows the steppe. They are familiar with the rivers' mercurial thaws and freezes, and largely nomadic, traveling in ornate horse-headed barges. They build more permanent settlements and camps near Old Imperial bridges and river fords, tightly controlling all crossings likely to be used by merchants, travelers and, most recently, groups of wild-eyed adventurers chasing rumors of riches on the northern edges of the steppe.

THE TOMBS OF THE STEPPE

As much as some Mandate historians may wish otherwise, countless great civilizations preceded the Old Empire and the people who ruled Istria in that dim and distant past had been one of them. They tamed the horse and set wheels upon an axle; they brought their language and craftsmanship and

a new way of making war to every corner of the plain. Their name for themselves is unknown, but their successors called them the Golden Horse People or the People of the Sun Stallion, named for the beasts that had given them dominion over the land and for the fiercest, brightest of their gods. But by the time of the Moristagian conquest, by the time the Immortals had crossed into the steppe, the Golden Horse People had long vanished, leaving behind them a handful of half-remembered superstitions— fairy stories and nursery rhymes about the Sun sleeping in a barrow.

Until very recently, what little was known of the Golden Horse People came from the writings of Late Imperial scholars, who did not bother to discuss the quaint beliefs of steppe herders or the history and customs of long-extinct barbarians in detail. Once great shapers of history, the Golden Horse People became a footnote in its annals. Scholars brought their very existence to doubt — if there had indeed been vast kingdoms on the steppe, ruled by horse and bow and chariot, then where were their ruins? Where were their descendants, their writings, their ancient works? There was nothing in Istria; nothing but hills and wind and a vast indifferent sky.

But now, everyone, merchants and beggars alike, knows about the tombs. They were very well-hidden — a means to prevent the defiling of ancestral bodies — but eight years ago, a hillock collapsed under a caravan traveling along one of the lesser roads north of the Striva. Under the hillock, now strewn with debris and panicked animals, was a lavish earthen chamber with a raised dais at the center, upon which lay the mummified body of a woman and a small mountain of burial gifts. Clothing and weapons, jugs of soured wine and tattered animal pelts, and, most importantly, gold. Golden bracelets and golden torcs, belt buckles, rings, and combs, even a suit of gilded scale and a ceremonial helm in the shape of a lion's head. The news of the find traveled east, but did not generate much excitement: it was one tomb, a singular, unlikely find in a steppe big as the sea. But when a particularly tenacious scholar discovered another tomb under a hillock that looked almost exactly the same as the first one, and then a third and a fourth, the trade towns along the Striva and the Royal Road exploded into frantic activity. The plains north of the great river were an ancient burial ground, dozens upon dozens of generations of tombs, secret and scattered and full of ancient treasure. Istria became the land of riches. The land of opportunity.

THE LONG SLEEP OF THE DEAD

Of course, not everyone who comes to Istria dreams only of money — the tombs are of immense interest to scholars and historians. But even scholars like to be paid, and unimportant, fleeting things like correct archaeological procedure fall away at the sight of precious metals and ancient coin. When they aren't breaking skeletal fingers to snatch the jeweled rings adorning them or prying golden teeth out of mummies' jaws, the scholars sometimes notice the tattoos



on their victims' leathery bodies: indigo in color, geometric and precise. Individuals versed in a certain esoteric subset of arcane theory may note that these sigils resemble thaumaturgical arrays, similar to those used in some obscure and largely unsuccessful variations on the Rite of Resurrection. And, much to the horror of greedy bonepickers, this resemblance isn't just visual: some of these corpses, disturbed by light and the touch of human hands, shudder back to life.

Almost inevitably, these revenants meet their final death before they can climb out of their caskets, as their panicked desecrators hack and bludgeon them to pieces with their picks and shovels. This murderous panic has saved the lives of more than a few prospectors; many of the revenants would not take kindly to crude strangers desecrating their graves, and most of the Golden Horse warriors lay buried with their bows, axes and spears. But more often, the newly-awakened revenants are as terrified and confused as the grave-robbers. They raise their withered, clawing hands in self-defense, and their desiccated throats so distort their pleas for mercy that many Istrian graverobbers firmly believe that a revenant's shriek can kill whoever hears it outright, or, at the very least, curse them with grievous misfortune.

The tongue of the Golden Horse People is as dead as they are. It has not been heard in this world for many thousands of years, and it has no living descendants. And whether these ancient revenants remember their world, its bright skies and sunkissed meadows and silver grass swaying in the wind, remains a mystery...but if they do, the sight of the dark, frigid plain beyond their tombs is unlikely to inspire anything but abject sorrow and despair.

The revenants, however, are not the only occupants of these burial mounds. The Golden Horse People cared a great deal about the animals that gave them their name. They worshipped horse-gods and interred steeds with the same honor as their riders, embalmed, adorned, and ready to serve their masters in the afterlife. The coats of these mummified horses are sleek and pale gold, and their fleshless skulls crawl with the same magical sigils that grant their masters a chance at undeath. But unlike their gentle human counterparts, the horses that awaken to unlife are ferocious, trampling and devouring any living thing that comes close before bursting out onto the plain. Now, there are stories of emaciated golden beasts, beasts that have forgotten fear and fatigue, slaughtering entire herds to sate a monstrous hunger, and of brave, foolish people who set out to capture and break them.

All of this is causing some degree of upset among the plains and river tribes. They do not care about the burial mounds of the Golden Horse People — though there may be some relation between the nomads of today and the dead buried under the hills, the gulf of time is far too wide for those blood ties to have any meaning. They do, however, care about the disruption of merchant shipping and the influx of Sulfurite and Faithful trespassers, as well as the upturned pastures and ravenous ghoulish horses rampaging

across the steppe. Sometimes, tensions between the nomads and the prospectors boil over into violence: the nomads slaughter entire expeditions, and settled protectorates organize raids in retaliation. On occasion, some enterprising nomads may hire themselves out to provide "local expertise" to would-be archaeologists, which usually means that their naive employers unknowingly consign themselves to abandonment and almost certain death.

Although there still is an influx of looters and prospectors, the mass desecration of Istrian tombs is drawing to a close. The steppe may be an ancient burial ground, but tombs of kings and rich men are few and far in between. Any given gravesite of the Golden Horse People is far more likely to contain objects of sentimental value and a furious undead horse than the kind of fortune wild-eyed hopefuls imagine as they sell all their earthly possessions to buy passage north. Most ventures end in bitter disappointment, and groups of sour-faced men and women sitting next to ransacked burial mounds and making tea over burning mummies are a common sight on the plain. A good number of these unhappy prospectors have already begun their glum march westward, to the closest Brimstone Republic.

THE MOST SERENE REPUBLIC OF LIVADI

The jewel of the cold plains, Livadi is among the largest of the Republics. Due to its strategic location along the Royal Road, an Old Imperial highway running the length of the Greater Byssarian and beyond, Livadi is a major trade power, one that is ever-hesitant to go to war — hence its epithet, Most Serene — and an intermediary between the rest of the Republics and the Mandate. It has a population of approximately 150,000 individuals, discounting those unfortunate enough to be disembodied or live in the freezing slums outside the dome, making it the most populous of the Republics and the second most populous city of the Byssarian.

Its dome is a sight to see. Among the first constructed during the Dying Sun, it was too massive a feat of arcane engineering to tear down completely during the Blessed Age. Imperial engineers removed roughly a quarter of it after the successful conclusion of the Chthonic March; half of what remained shattered during the Sunfall, raining shards of mageglass onto the city but protecting it from the worst of the conflagration. The city rebuilt it soon after — Livadi was one of the few places around the Byssarian that boasted an institution of higher arcane learning with master magicians skilled enough to do so. The dome may not be what it once was, but its completion coincided with the signing of Livadi's Charter, saving the city and its surviving inhabitants from the bitter winds to come.



THE NORTHERN CROSSROADS

Having always been a trade city, Livadi is a dizzying blend of language and culture from across the Byssarian: masked islanders jostle with hard-bitten steppe nomads in the markets, purple-cloaked Ithobaalim haggle over the wares of silk-robed merchants from the distant south, Dissident refugees huddle in the slums, and Escan swordmasters give lectures to rapt audiences at Mandate-style teahouses. Livadi's gateway to the World Below, the Devil's Grin, lies at the bottom of a deep gulch on the western side of the city. Much of Livadi is built around the Grin, the city's tiered, narrow streets snaking and twisting until they encroach on its borders. Arcane lanterns and braziers of hellfire light the main thoroughfares, and a sultry gloom permeates the alleyways. Animals larger than rats, cats, and small birds are uncommon under the dome; the Councils do not permit horse-driven carriages within city limits for sanitation reasons. To travel across the city, visitors and citizens alike must suffer the indignity of walking, or, if they are wealthy enough, hire a spider-legged clockwork carriage.

Livadian opulence is a somewhat recent development: before the current Prince, the city was in a state of life-threatening decrepitude, a victim of mismanagement and corruption on behalf of generations of its former leaders. Away from the clean-swept promenades and bustling markets of the city center, slums cling to the sides of the dome like swallows' nests, and the scalding warrens of the Underworks teem with the poor, the criminal, and the Faithful. And in some parts of the city, splendor and its squalor exist in uncomfortable proximity — the white marble of the Arcane College stands in stark contrast to the Jumble, a constantly building and rebuilding shanty-town bustling with students, servants, hawkers, criminals, bureaucrats, booksellers, and impoverished academics. Due to an antiquated bylaw concerning the College, the Jumble is not technically a part of Livadi but an independent state under the Republic's auspices, and its Petty Councilor is functionally an absolute ruler, responsible for taxation and law enforcement within their little demesne. Traditionally, the title of Councilor of the Jumble belongs to the Arch-Lector of the Arcane College, but seeing as the last Arch-Lector has retired due to political disagreements with the city's Prince and the current Arch-Lector seems uninterested in juggling municipal politics with those of academia, the Jumble is in the throes of its first proper electoral cycle in over two generations.

THE SUN PRINCE

The Prince of Livadi is quite old, many times older than the city he now governs. His mind is sharp as ever, but it buckles under the weight of memory. With every passing year, he recalls less and less of the place that gave him his name. Still, of the countless spirits in and around Livadi, Prince Agares alone remembers the Sun. The true Sun. The first Sun, and not pitiful, crystalline facsimile of the Blessed Age.

He has not been in power for very long — only for a few years, the start of his illustrious rule coinciding with the desecration of the steppe. When the first wave of prospectors began overturning the frozen earth in search of old gold, one particular group discovered the tomb of a king. It was a fantastic find — three golden chariots emblazoned with silver suns, a small mountain of jewelry and coin, the king himself and his servants and horses shriveled and harmless in death. One of the items listed in the inventory of the Sun Chariot King's tomb was a sealed ivory casket engraved with the same geometric patterns seen on the mummified body of the king. It was heavy for its size. One of the men struck the seal with a shovel, hoping for more gold...but, much to his chagrin, the casket contained nothing but stale air. The looters, thrilled with their haul despite this minor disappointment, packed up their camp and started back towards Livadi. And the man who broke the seal began to dream of a green world of impossible beauty and brightness and warmth.

In retrospect, the two pyromancers traveling with the expedition should have noticed the abrupt shift in one of their companions' tempers, his newfound skill with a bow, how disturbingly good he had become with the horses. The man, too, should have panicked when he first felt a foreign intelligence caress his thoughts. But gold in such ludicrous quantities is as intoxicating as any wine, and even the barest glimpse of the Sun was enough to entrance a soul to whom its light was but a legend. And so it was not him, not really, who entered the gates of Livadi at the head of the expedition.

The spirit Agares, who had once been a vizier to a great dynasty, who was loyal enough to follow his most beloved king into death, was awestruck. He had never seen such complexity, such a marvel of human ingenuity and artifice, such brazen defiance in the face of the bitter land around it. He had

SUN CHARIOT KING

Unlike many other mummies, the body of the Sun Chariot King became part of an antiquarian's collection, rather than fuel. Its owner perished unexpectedly and named none of her heirs in her will, leaving a veritable treasure-trove to the state. The city liquidated the vast bulk of the collection, but The Sun Chariot King, re-wrapped and adorned with the few items from his tomb that did not pass to foreign collectors, now rests in a mageglass curio in the Prince's offices. The body and the trinkets it wears are near-worthless to most buyers, but of great value to Prince. This is not a well-known fact — based on Agares' general disregard for anything but Livadi, one would be hard-pressed to assume that he would be particularly shaken by the loss of a withered corpse.

resolved to take this shining city for himself, and learned and schemed and sold his share of the treasure, leaving behind a trail of soulless, sun-struck bodies until the portents were ripe to seize power in a swift and decisive coup.

Livadi flourishes under Agares. The dome, once spider-webbed with cracks and threatening to collapse, is under repairs. Wealth flows into the city, from the steppe (the defiling of his people's tombs, as much as it pains Agares, must continue for the sake of the city) and the other Republics. The Wars of Unification, as devastating as they are to the Western and Southern Byssarian, are an opportunity, and Agares turns a tidy profit by permitting and encouraging the sale of arms to both sides. The state lends much of the revenue from arms sales back to the Arcane College and independent arms manufacturers, such as Minor & Violante, to develop deadlier weapons still. Gold, to steel, to more gold — such is the alchemy of politics and war.

And yet Agares is a deeply unpopular ruler. He is chilly, inscrutable and uncharismatic, an unknown variable on the city's political scene, abruptly replacing trusted local authorities with flinty-eyed bureaucrats in his ruthless campaign

to stamp out corruption and nepotism. He makes no oaths, and owes no debt or allegiance to any other living daemon. He is shockingly indifferent towards the near-constant threat of assassination. To this day, he has not spoken of his origin, thinking it both unsuitably personal and deeply irrelevant to his rule. Most outrageously, he seems immune to bribery and seduction. The long vigil in the royal tomb has impressed upon Agares the transient nature of mortal flesh and its pleasures, and the erasure of the Golden Horse People from recorded history instilled in him an obsession with forging Livadi into a state that will persist without end.

The Wars of Unification threaten that vision. Although it is possible that they will end with the mutual destruction of both parties, Agares has taken a number of measures to deter an Escan invasion, or Mandate forces taking advantage of the chaos of the Wars. He drove a wedge between two of the larger Istrian nomad coalitions, backing one side in the inevitable series of skirmishes that followed. This secured a debt of gratitude and a network of alliances that provides the domed city with the greatest cavalry force in the region, securing its safety and prosperity for the days to come.

CHAPTER 3: OTHER POWERS OF THE WESTERN BYSSARIAN

PELASGOS & THE KYRIADES

Pelasgos consists of the two northernmost peninsulae jutting into the Greater Byssarian and the rocky islands of the Kyriades gird the sea, dividing it into the Sea of Silk to the north, and the Narrow Sea to the south. Both the islands and the peninsulae are craggy, and have poor soil compared to lands both east and west, forcing their inhabitants to rely on the waters' bounty from the very beginning of human history. The original inhabitants of both Pelasgos and the Kyriades were a number of related tribes and peoples who spoke the same language and shared much in the way of culture.

Prior to the arrival of the Moristagian armies from the east, the many ancient Pelasgian and Kyriadic city-states dominated the Sea of Silk. They made attempts at merchant empire, establishing a myriad colonies and trading posts on foreign shores — the town of Pagamea among them — and bringing their neighbors into their cultural and trade sphere whether they agreed to it or not. They were great travelers and namers of things and places; their ubiquity suffused most languages in the Byssarian with Pelasgian loanwords

and made their angular script the standard system of writing in much of the ancient world. Unlike many of their contemporaries, they had a vigorous literary tradition, producing a multitude of histories and ethnographies of dubious accuracy; it is because of Pelasgian historians the people of the Moresh and the Tagiyan kingdoms to the east became collectively known as the *Morestagoi* long before they united and brought forth the Old Empire.

In the Sunless Age, Pelasgos and the Kyriades are staunchly Sulfurite lands: Myrnos commands the islands, and Palla — the peninsulae. The two cities are bitter and ancient rivals, but they put their animosity aside to marshall their forces and halt the Escan advance eastward. This fragile alliance shattered after a particularly brutal series of battles on the southernmost islands: what remains of the Myranean forces pledged themselves to the Prince of Esca, forcing a significantly weakened Palla to fend off the invasion by itself.

PALLA

Palla is the birthplace of literature, rhetoric, the democratic process, but also political corruption, mercantile imperialism, and the most vicious forms of tribalism and interne-cine conflict. It survived both the Old and the New Empires,



changing surprisingly little since antiquity. Now encased in a shining dome, it is still a pillared and raucous center of philosophy and trade and learning, practically crawling with writers, musicians, playwrights, actors and pyromancer-philosophers. Many of the latter group live in an almost perpetual state of nudity, shielding themselves from the cold with infernal magic, taking shelter under fishmongers' stalls, and claiming that the life of an ascetic refines the soul and opens the mind to a higher truth. The city is as obsessed with art, philosophy and aesthetics as Esca is with dogs and gladiatorial combat and Pagamea — with tea and its own faded, hollowed glory. Every street vendor in Palla writes poetry, every courtesan paints, every artisan is a critic, and every beggar is a performer. Many are, in fact, professional actors and members of a mystery cult whose tenets explicitly prohibit them from holding any other position. As acting is a seasonal and not particularly lucrative occupation in Palla, the task of supporting the city's cultist-thespians in the off season falls on the city's public, which, thankfully, happens to be quite charitable when it comes to the dramatic arts.

A pair of heavily stylized scales features heavily in Pallan heraldry and architecture; a symbol not of justice, but of balance and equitable trade. During the First Sun and the Blessed Age, Palla was a commercial hub and the lynchpin of trade between the westernmost Moristagian provinces, the islands to the south, the new western capital of Pagamea, and the rest of the Empire. Imperial authorities converted the ornate and ancient citadel-temple at the city's apex into a massive customs house after the conquest, which reaped the fruits of trade for the Moristagian heartlands far to the east. And while the honor of being the first Sulfurite state to coalesce in the wake of the Sunfall belongs to Esca, the ancient Pallan mode of government is what the rest of the Sulfurite cities strive to emulate: a republic whose ruling elite is partially elected by the common citizenry.

Palla itself cleaves closer to its origins than its sister-cities, whose approach to governance favors profit over people. Instead of distinct Merchant and Petty Councils, Palla's main governing body is an Assembly twice as large as a Petty Council in any other Republic. Half of its members are elected representatives of their boroughs, the other half, however, are chosen by lot. The Prince of Palla does not govern, but rather resolves disputes and settles ties between various parties of the Assembly. In addition, they serve as an oracle through which daemonic officials from Below may speak, and organize the Manumission, an infamous yearly festival during which the city's beggars choose a new Prince for the year, noblemen prostrate themselves before their servants, dramatists compete for the Silken Crown and no deed, no matter how vile, is a crime.

Leading up to the Wars of Unification, the other Republics deemed Palla deemed politically irrelevant and left it to its peculiarities: its erratic government, lavish masques, bizarre schools of thought, and semi-regular naval skirmishes with Myrnos and Ithobaal to the south. Now, its location at the

north of the Greater Byssarian is of great interest to Verdurio, who wishes to use the city's harbors as a launching point for future naval attacks against Pagamea and an eventual land campaign against Livadi. The Pallans, however, find Escan hubris appalling, balk at the idea of a western barbarian for a king, and staunchly refuse to surrender to Verdurio's army of boorish mercenaries, peasant levies, and masked traitors.

MYRNOS

Though Palla may have been the richest of the ancient Pelasgian city-states and the seat of art and wisdom, Myrnos was the most fearsome. Perched upon a high cliff and presiding over rocky isles that simply could not support its people, the city sustained itself through warfare, coastal raiding, and the abominable institution of slavery. Its gods were war gods and storm gods, ravenous and merciless, demanding offerings of sacrificial blood and threatening to destroy the city if these demands were not met. Its legal code, perhaps the single most unpleasant body of law in human history, structured the life of the city to prioritize military matters to the exclusion of all else. Might trumped virtue and valor trumped justice; every trial within Myranean walls was a trial by combat, and outside the city, the mere sight of red-trimmed Myranean sails on the horizon would inspire nothing but hatred and dread.

Infamous and powerful, Myrnos was the first true test of the Moristagian Emperor's Immortal army. At the time of their arrival, all the Pelasgic city-states were united under the banner of Lord Iskander, a conqueror and warrior without peer. Iskander was young and brave and handsome; he made a habit of personally leading boarding parties and cavalry charges, he never lost a battle, he rode into the utmost north of barbarian Istria and returned. To Myrnos and to the rest of the Pelasgian civilization, Iskander was a living god, the triumphant culmination of an ancient martial tradition, boundless potential and heaven-high ambition made flesh. And so when the first of the Moristagian ships arrived in the great harbor of Myrnos and the Imperial envoy demanded the surrender of the isles, Iskander, in his arrogance, sent her severed head back to the Emperor and began preparations for war.

At the end of a season of bloody battle, the Moristagian Emperor himself came to the gates of Myrnos with the head of Iskander. The city tried to defend itself, but could not, and though the Immortals did not raze it to the ground, it died a slow death. For centuries, Myrnos dwindled until it became an inconsequential cliffside fishing town nestled in the ruins of a once-fearsome state, known for its olives (one of the few crops that could abide the stony earth and unrelenting sun) and a tradition of burying its dead in ornate masks. The olive groves burned and withered during the Sunfall, but the Myranean mask-making tradition blossomed in the age to come, becoming the defining characteristic of an island-state that not only recaptured, but exceeded its former glory.



Contemporary Myrnos is the City of Masks. Every embodied denizen of the city wears one. There are times and places where one need not be masked, such as in one's home or among family or bosom friends, but unmasking oneself among strangers is more shocking and uncomfortable than public nakedness. Forcibly unmasking a stranger is a particularly vile form of assault, and an invitation to a lethal duel. Each Myrnean mask serves a specific purpose: one does not wear their war-face to the theatre or the market, and Councillors never don the masks of office unless they convene in the Council Chambers to discuss matters of state. The wealth and prestige of a Myrnean can be easily determined by the number, craftsmanship and specificity of ornate visages in their possession— the rich are said to be able to live for years without donning the same face twice. Most outsiders are largely unaware of the subtleties of the Myrnean mask and prone to social faux pas, and all diplomats bound for Myrnos pack the gray-and-white mask of the envoy before departure.

Another Myrnean peculiarity is the blood debt — the city's Charter and contract with the World Below is far more brutal than those of the other Republics, demanding such a yearly quota of souls that the city would have to execute its own citizens en masse in order to keep the Wolf Gate open. There simply aren't enough natural deaths, debtors, and condemned criminals to meet it — and so Myrnos turns outwards, embracing its past as a city that preyed upon others to sustain itself. Every citizen (and here one must remember that not all Myrneans are citizens) owes to the city at least one soul per year; if they fail to procure it, they must offer their own soul instead. The debt sometimes functions as a form of negative currency among the citizenry; one may agree to shoulder another's debt for the year in exchange for favors, goods, or services. Longer arrangements and deferrals are common among the warrior-nobility, who take on the debts of their retainers in exchange for service and loyalty. The commanding officer of any Myrnean raiding party holds the debts of her subordinates; she leads them and ensures that they are well-equipped and they, in turn, collect sacrificial souls for the Wolf Gate.

For the most part, Myrnean raids target small coastal Mandate protectorates, though it turns against Sulfurite towns and Palla in leaner years. Before its defeat at the hands of the Escans, Myrnos was a staunch opponent of unification, primarily because it needs raids and near-constant warfare to survive, and Prince Verdurio's promise of an Escan Peace across the Byssarian is a direct threat to the continued well-being of their city: without the constant infighting that so plagues the Republics, Myrnos would devour itself in the span of a few generations. Now, Myrnean masked raiders form the vanguard of Verdurio's forces: as much as they disagree with the purpose of the campaigns, they must serve, for the Wolf Gate hungers and cares nothing for petty human politics.

AMMUNIR, ITHOBAAL AND THE THREEFOLD REPUBLIC OF TER SUOLI

AMMUNIR

Once, there was a great kingdom that stretched southward along the wide river Khmun. It was a melancholy civilization, old and insular and preoccupied with the mysteries of the afterlife; its tombs were twice as lavish as its palaces. Its residents grew wheat and barley in the silty floodplains along the river, and built great stelae and monuments in the surrounding desert to honor their queens, who they worshipped as living goddesses. This kingdom, Ammunir, became a province of the Old and New Empires, but did not survive the tumultuous early years of the Sunless Age. Its capital, Ta-Senet, the oldest city in the world, managed to secure a Charter but collapsed shortly afterwards, becoming the crowning glory of a civilization known for expansive and extravagant burial sites. It is the biggest tomb in the world, now — in nearly every house there is a body, perfectly frozen for generations to come.

Nobody lives in Ta-Senet save for the occasional passing band of nomadic holdouts or delvers hopeful for ancient treasure overlooked by scavengers of ages past. It is an awful place, a dead place, gruesome in its scope — cursed, some say; by all accounts, the city was granted a Charter and should have survived — and an uncomfortable reminder of how little it takes to topple the wisest and most venerable of human civilizations. The Khmun, once a great vein of trade, seems to have died with the people who lived on its banks. It flows slowly; its floods strain the ice but rarely ever crack it. Its shores are deserted. All attempts to resettle Ammunir thus far have failed: great and inexplicable misfortunes befall any township that springs up on the river shores. Now its only inhabitants are wolves, jackals, hyenas, and implacable mammoth herds, but human life perseveres to the west, in the Republics of Ithobaal and Ter Suoli.

ITHOBAAL

The city of Ithobaal, with its twin harbors, busy markets, and secret society of merchant-navigators, claims dominion over the Narrow Sea. It is Esca's oldest and bitterest rival, blocking it from the most lucrative maritime trade routes to the south while growing richer and more powerful itself. This has always been the case: before there were Esca and Ithobaal, there were the Nuragic peoples to the north and the Hadashtim to the south, the former contending with the latter over mastery of the seas from time immemorial.

Undeterred by northern depredations, the Hadashtim would eventually build a great city on the westernmost cape



of the Narrow Sea. They protected their waters and mastery of the navigator and shipwright's crafts with utmost jealousy. They were voyagers and seafarers who would burn their charts rather than share them with their rivals; their most skilled artisans and navigators would render themselves mute to prove their dedication to the city and prevent their most precious trade secrets from escaping out into the world. This commitment to secrecy did not survive the Moristagian conquest, but it did provide the Hadashtim with an opportunity to negotiate their surrender from a position of power. The Queen of Ithobaal threatened to execute all the master shipwrights and navigators in the city if the conquerors did not agree to her terms, and the Empire conceded. So it came to pass that Ithobaal and its province received unique privileges among the conquered territories — lower taxes, a lesser degree of oversight, and a right to keep some of their secrets, making Hadashtim shipwrights and sailors a fixture in every Imperial city with a harbor. And just like their ancestors, modern Ithobaalim merchants and mariners are among the most daring and far-venturing in the world, sailing along the west coast of Khera to opulent Sedjai and beyond in search of more and better opportunities for trade.

Today, Ithobaal is the city of craftsmen and of guilds: artisans and laborers of every kind band together into state-sanctioned fraternities and societies based on their profession to ensure fair pay, protect trade secrets (though nowhere near as fiercely as their ancestors), and push out competition. There is even a Thieves' Guild, which is entirely legal; most of the wealthier citizens pay a fee to limit theft to one act of minor larceny per quarter, or one act of major larceny per year (which can be scheduled in advance for an additional fee). The Guild's publicity and acceptance by the establishment are rooted in the fact that like every other professional fraternity, the Thieves' Guild pays a tax to the city — an exceedingly steep tax, at that — and this tax is a more reliable way of squeezing revenue out of the upper classes than coaxing the Merchants' Council into passing new tax laws.

Every licensed pickpocket, cutpurse, burglar, and "entry consultant" in the city carries a Guild token and pays Guild dues; unlicensed practitioners risk the attention of the city guard or the tender mercies of Guild enforcers. Professional thievery is not a respected or even particularly profitable occupation — crime is still crime and guild dues are steep — but it's better than nothing, and the public treats token-carrying Guild thieves as a menacing inconvenience rather than the scum of the earth (which is the sad fate of ordinary tax collectors, in Ithobaal and many other places beside).

The most prestigious guilds in the city, however, are the Mariners' Guild and the Dyers' Guild. The former, once the crown jewel of the city, has faded somewhat into obscurity and became little more than a secretive and prestigious businessmen's club that sends out the occasional expedition to chart uncharted lands and dispel boredom. The latter, however, keeps Ithobaal rich: these artisans specialize in the manufacture of *sur*, a family of violet and purple dyes worth

more than their weight in gold. *Sur* is made from crushed and fermented sea snails, and though many places outside Ithobaal make dyes from the same kind of mollusks, they quite literally pale in comparison. True *sur* is rich and dense, like clotted blood; so deep is its hue that no painter or mosaicist can replicate it without using it. The only downside of this otherwise profitable industry is the stench. The vats in the Dyers' Quarter (and the dyers themselves) reek so pervasively of pungent herbs and rotting fish that only in Ithobaal can a person be granted a divorce solely on the basis of their spouse's profession.

In short, Ithobaal is a maritime superpower. Its riches made it idle, complacent: though its navy is the best in the known world and its merchants are among the wealthiest, the city was not ready for a war. While it wins naval battles more often than not, Ithobaal lacks the same power on land — its troops are largely mercenary, abundant but disorganized. Under normal circumstances, Ithobaal would subcontract Ter Suoli to quench Escan ambition, but seeing as the Suolans have made a shocking declaration of allegiance to Esca at the very start of the war, they are forced to turn to hiring troops from the city's hinterland and from the southern lands beyond. More recently, the city has received substantial aid — money, soldiers, weapons, camels, horses, war mammoths — from the wealthy southern kingdom of Sedjai. Some say that this is so because the southern monarch is hopelessly infatuated with the Ithobaalim Prince; more pragmatic individuals speculate that this is nothing but an attempt to transform Ithobaal into Sedjai's northernmost vassal state.

TER SUOLI

Originally a semi-permanent mercenary camp squatting in the blasted remnants of a failed Republic, Ter Suoli is one of the two southernmost Sulfurite cities. Its history has its roots in a rather embarrassing series of conflicts between Esca, Myrnos, and Ithobaal, now called the Foolish Wars. All three cities hired substantial numbers of mercenary troops, and the three biggest companies (The Flint-and-Steel, The Gracious Sisters, and The Company of the Rose) brokered a secret alliance amongst themselves, extracting pay from their employers while fighting staged battles, claiming to have "just missed" the enemy army in the field, and pillaging the countryside at their leisure. Though the three conducted their operations separately, they did use an island off the coast of Nuragos to trade and negotiate amongst themselves and out of sight of their employers. As the "wars" went on, the camp became a town and then a city, and the three captains of the three companies decided to petition the World Below for a Charter. They did so separately — all three were ambitious and mistrustful of the others. The Adversary was generous beyond belief, but the Devil's generosity is a mixed blessing: he granted all three captains three separate Charters, patronage, and rulership of the same small patch of land.

Now over a century old, Ter Suoli is more of a political and legislative nightmare than all other Republics combined:



though it appears to be a single polity on the map, it is three cities, with three separate Charters, three Legionary Councils (there are no Merchant Councilors among mercenaries) and three Captain-Generals (there are no Princes among mercenaries, either), all of who can declare war, create legislation and collect taxes separately. Law enforcement, such as it is, runs a heady gradient between ostentatiously dressed palace guards and bands of hired thugs. Borders, drawn along the lines of city blocks and the old canal network criss-crossing the city, shift almost daily. Sometimes, although not in recent years, Ter Suoli is even at war with itself.

The only benefits of Ter Suoli's threefold government are its relatively egalitarian approach to its subjects and its accepting attitude towards outsiders seeking Sulfurite citizenship. Obtaining citizenship in one of the Three Cities is easier and

requires less of an investment than in other Republic, as long as the prospective citizen is willing to join one of the companies as a soldier of fortune and fight, if necessary. (It usually is, even outside military campaigns; crime is rampant and all Suolan citizens are expected to personally defend themselves and their belongings in the event that they find their homes on the wrong side of a border). Suolans come from all corners of the Byssarian and all walks of life, and usually have a far stronger attachment to their companies, detachments and regiments than to the creeds and vocations of their ancestors. Although the Suolans do not necessarily support the Wars of Unification, the vast majority of the city's fighting force is effectively under Verdurio's command, as the Captain-Generals and a significant number of their officers are visitants who cannot disobey the word of the Escan Prince's infernal superior.

CHAPTER 4: TUR MORESH AND PAGAMEA

TUR MORESH

Tur Moresh is a stretch of land on the eastern shore of the Byssarian, taking its name from the Moresh, nomadic people who came from the Land of the Twin Rivers at the dawn of time and settled on the shores of the Dappled and Lesser Byssarian Seas. Their descendants would eventually forge alliances with or crush neighboring states, rule one of the greatest of Arnai's empires, topple a king of the World Below and build their own sun.

To a reader accustomed to manageable temperatures and a sunlit sky, all of Arnai, the Moresh lands included, is hopelessly barren. To a reader unfamiliar with such luxuries,

these densely forested, rocky highlands boast an astounding amount of life, both plant and animal, and an unrivaled level of development: there are many towns, as well as compounds and manors belonging to local nobility, and a great multitude of well-maintained roads and causeways. There is also an abundance of Blessed Age and Old Imperial ruins, most of which have been gutted and repurposed to better fit the needs of their current occupants. Mountain fortresses formerly belonging to court wizards are now farming communities, with animal pens and orchards of stunted fruit-bearing trees nestled in the collapsed remnants of audience chambers and laboratories. On occasion, the peasants allow curious scholars and historians to take rubbings of old engravings and reliefs on the walls of their homes, but not often, and almost always for a hefty fee.

That is not to say that there are no untouched places in the Moresh highlands altogether; rather, they are few and far in between, their locations remote, secret, and guarded by jealous treasure-hunters or superstitious highlanders. The mountains are rugged, and the forests so foreboding that the nobles hunt almost exclusively in carefully cultivated deer parks and game preserves. The loggers, meanwhile, are willing to brave the woods for the gnarled highland cedar, a wood sought by carpenters and shipwrights for the beauty and strength of its wood since ancient times, so much so that the tree was almost extinct by the end of the Blessed Age. To the cedar — or, at least, to the magically engineered subspecies of the tree — the Sunfall was a blessing. The forests may have burned, as did everything, but the collapse of human civilization gave them time to recover and grow,

SOMEWHERE, BEYOND THE SEA...

The Great Western Ocean is a tumultuous, stormy mystery. Scholars are aware of the existence of a vast continent in the west; Hadashtim voyagers have made the journey 700 years ago and charted a portion of its coastline (the chart allegedly resides in the secret archives of the Mariners' Guild), but no modern individual in their right mind would even consider financing or participating in an expedition to the West — not while there is a war underway, and less costly and vastly more lucrative opportunities to the south.



only to be cut down once more, the lustrous wood shipped to distant places along the long, wide highway that runs through the highlands.

THE ROYAL ROAD

Perhaps the best-preserved of the Old Empire's great works, the Royal Road is the vein of trade that links the many petty states of the Byssarian basin to each other and to lands beyond. It was as much of a renovation project as a feat of construction; instead of building new roads, Imperial engineers often chose to link existing roads and highways to form a greater whole. Thus, the result of their labors weaves and winds through difficult terrain, avoiding cities as often as it passes through them. Its efficacy in expediting travel and trade, however, cannot be denied — any courier, traveler, soldier, or merchant would prefer a convoluted path through the wilderness to no path at all.

Even today, the Mandate maintains the Road with a fervor that borders on the religious. Where it goes, trade follows, and where there is trade there is law. To a traveler looking from on high, the Royal Road is a thread of light in a sea of darkness: the fiery red of shrine and watchtower braziers, the cold blue of arcane beacons at crossings and junctions. Every watchtower has a rotating contingent of guards, who collect tolls and ensure the safety of merchants and travelers. Highway robberies do occur, but along less guarded thoroughfares — bandit attacks on merchants traveling the Royal Road almost always end poorly for the bandits, and the scarcity of attempts means that the guards spend more time drinking tea and playing backgammon than guarding. Particularly daring or desperate outlaw chiefs, however, find it difficult to resist the temptation of one last job that could buy them a life from the cold, sharpening their weapons away from the road and waiting for an unprotected caravan or a darkened watchtower.

Aside from hopeful bandits and bored guardsmen, the Royal Road and its many tributaries boast a number of rest stops and caravanserais, most of which double as waystations for messengers of the Bayaspan, a mounted courier service that survived both the Dying Sun and the Sunfall. Originally, the Bayaspani messengers were used only by the Emperor and his governors, but times have changed — now, they carry missives for anyone wealthy enough to afford them, with an ironclad promise of rapid transit and absolute confidentiality. When they travel, Bayaspani couriers ride at breakneck speeds, almost leaping from one mount to another when their steeds are too exhausted to carry on. When one courier's shift ends, another one takes up the message, ensuring that every missive travels as fast as it possibly can, regardless of whether it's encoded diplomatic correspondence, sordid love letters from one noble to another, or something else entirely.

Most people, however, choose to send their letters via messenger birds, or simply entrust them to traveling mer-

chants, ordinary couriers, or one of the many itinerant monks and nuns from the Two Holy Mountains.

THE TWO HOLY MOUNTAINS

If a traveler looks up while walking the Moreshi highlanders, they will see the jagged crowns of Sagr-e-Kah and Aluh-e-Kah soaring high above every other mountain. Old Imperial chronicles describe the two great mountains as active volcanoes, prone to rumbling and issuing plumes of smoke at the behest of devils gnawing at their roots. Both have since been pacified by the Adamant Order — the devils responsible have either fled, starved to dissolution, or found themselves pressed into service in the Adamantine Province — and since the Order used chthonic gateway between the mountains in their invasion of the World Below, both mountains have become significant in the eyes of the Faith, attracting the devout from across the region.

The taller of the two, Sagr-e-Kah, is also called Hawk Mountain and its slopes are honeycombed with shrines, monasteries, nunneries, and ascetic retreats of every kind imaginable. Hawk Mountain, a traveler once wrote, is lousy with goatherds and holy men: if upon entering a valley one does not see a sullen highlander lookout eyeing them from a steep crag, they will likely run into a gaggle of shivering novices practicing their verses out in the cold. In addition to monks, Hawk Mountain boasts a sizable hermit population, surviving on donations from holdout clans and Faithful nobility. This is motivated in part by faith and compassion (the holy fools freeze on their own), in part by avarice (wise men attract pilgrims and pilgrims have money), and in part by a desire for prestige (what better way to impress one's piety on one's peers is there than having a picturesque hermitage on the edge of one's estate?)

Unlike ever-popular Sagr-e-Kah, few visitors walk the trails leading to the peak of Tiger Mountain, Aluh-e-Kah. Like Hawk Mountain, Tiger Mountain is home to a number of religious organizations, but ones with stricter oaths and requirements for admission: none of the six Orders Militants whose compounds ring the mountain's peak admit men into their ranks, or even permit men to ascend past a certain altitude. They enforce the Rule of Tiger Mountain strictly, with applications of thaumaturgic force. In order to support their otherwise isolated convents, the nuns of Aluh-e-Kah operate a number of vineyards, and the amber wines of Tiger Mountain are highly sought by collectors and connoisseurs from across the Byssarian. Trade does, unfortunately, require a certain degree of interaction with the outside world, and that responsibility falls on the Order of St. Katayun the Inevitable. Of all Aluh-e-Kah nuns, the Inevitable Sisters are most likely to be present in the villages at the base of the mountains, negotiating shipments of supplies up to the mountainside convents, serving as priestesses, or leading hunting parties in pursuit of bears, tigers, or other, more elusive quarry. According to an old legend, Oxyathres the Necromancer built a secret library somewhere on the



slopes of Tiger Mountain...and though it may not actually be there, the legend is enough to attract treasure-hunters, aspiring or practicing necromancers, and the undead.

The current Abbess of St. Katayun's is a tall highlander woman called Victory-In-Her-Hands. In her youth, she was quite the huntress, and even today she wears the pelt of an enormous snow tiger. Wound around her neck is a long string of prayer beads, ivory in color. Some of the more impressionable novices claim that the beads are made of ghoulish teeth, but when anyone asks Abbess Victory directly, her answer is only a wry smile.

PAGAMEA

Pagamea is the Pearl of the Byssarian and the Mother of Cities, the subject of countless songs, plays, and poems. It is the Gate of Felicity that connects East and West, North and South, the Crossroads of the World, the place through which all wealth and wisdom flow. At the apex of its power, it housed over two million people and its golden spires grasped like fingers at the heavens. Today it is a shadow of its former self, devastated during the Sunfall more than any other part of the world, many of the towers teetering on the brink of collapse, its population diminished to a tenth of what it once was.

Much of Pagamea is uninhabited, but it is far from deserted. Even when fire rained from the sky and the tallest of the spires, Sun's Shadow, cleft the city in half as it fell, a significant portion of its residents refused to abandon their homes, and the descendants of these survivors walk the streets to this day. In Pagamea, as everywhere else in the world, wealth and noble descent determine the prestige of a family, but a Pagamean family's standing also depends on its history with the city. A cobbler who can trace his descent to the days before the Sunfall is more respectable than a wealthy merchant whose family is a more recent arrival, and a noblewoman whose forefathers refused to abandon their burning estate is beyond reproach.

Needless to say, everyone from outside the city is a provincial boor in the eyes of most Pagameans. It doesn't matter if they come from another of the Mandate's great cities, or how wealthy they are, or how high their birth: an outsider nobleman, no matter how rich, is nothing more than a country gentleman, quaint in his dress, his speech and his manners. This can be quite infuriating for visiting nobility, who cultivate an accent, obsessively study fashion plates to avoid ridicule, and complain, endlessly, about how even the dogs in that wretched ruin seem to look down on them.

THE OLD AND THE NEW

It is true — Pagamea is a ruin, though *wretched* may be a bit of an overstatement. The capital consists of two parts: the New City, which has come to be habitable and even beautiful over the generations, and the Old City, a maze of ruins eight

times the size of the New City. Its restoration is an ongoing, centuries-long project not unlike the taming of a wilderness: beasts, taking advantage of the comparative lack of human activity, den in the blasted ruins and the lack of law enforcement draws criminals, heretics, and outcasts. The absence of heat and infrastructure, as well as the constant threat of collapse — some of the old towers are still standing — does not seem to deter them at all.

The unenviable task of bringing the Old City within acceptable margins of law-abiding civilization is the burden of the Order of St. Myron the Posthumous, an Order Militant that has transformed, over generations, into an organization consisting primarily of scholars, architects, bureaucrats, and arcane engineers. They are an oddity among the Orders Militant, and the subject of many jokes: an Adamant knight draws a sword to slay an enemy of the Faith, while a Myronite bores them to death with a lecture on Blessed Age urban planning. Knight-Architects, as they are called, are well-liked in Pagamea and command admiration for work they do: they are the people who keep the lights on and stop the teetering spires of the Old City from crushing the New. Entry into this Order is somewhat difficult; due to the abundance of prospective recruits eager to receive a thaumaturgical education and stable employment in the heart of the Mandate, prospective Knight-Architects must sit a series of comprehensive exams and make a sizable "donation" to the Order's coffers.

The Order uses most of its Mandate-allocated funds to finance the small army of construction workers who bring the Knight-Architects' clever designs to fruition, and a contingent of guards to monitor the border between the Old and New Cities. The Myronites' Master of Acquisitions commands what little remains, hiring marginally gifted independent contractors to explore, map, or retrieve artifacts from the Old City. The Office of Acquisitions sends items that carry even a trace of arcane power directly to the College of Elder Science at the Royal University, and returns anything bearing the seal of an extant noble house to the descendants of its original owners. However, the Myronites sell or distribute the vast bulk of these finds to private collections, often those of tea house owners, who proudly display Old Imperial curiosities in cabinets along the walls of their establishments.

TEAHOUSES AND THE ORDER OF THE RED SWAN

Pagamea does not have much of a drinking culture. Taverns do exist, but drunkenness is a vice, and the city taxes alcohol at a rate that makes many prospective bar owners open a tea house instead. There is approximately one such establishment per two city blocks, sometimes more, and all of them brew their tea so dark and strong that a customer is likely to vomit if they drink it too quickly. It is served in small cups, and taken with pastries or sugared dates so sweet that they hurt the teeth, which further slows down the process and gives ample time for conversation. The tea house is the



primary avenue for casual socialization, sharing of news and intellectual debate — indeed, many low-born Pagameans receive an education not at the Royal University (which requires all but the most gifted of its students to furnish proof of noble descent), but through listening to traveling scholars, poets, and philosophers at tea houses.

The Inquisition, unsurprisingly, takes a keen interest in these establishments. The Dissident heresy began in a tea house called The Red Swan, where the theologian Ada Yasarovic gave her first lecture on the Doctrine of Immanent Excellence. The Red Swan is long gone, its owner and most of its patrons dead or in exile, but its legacy drives those Dissidents who have not yet fled the city in fear of the Inquisition. All Dissident pamphlets from the secret presses in the Old City bear the sign of the red swan, and the brave and furtive individuals who operate the presses, distribute the pamphlets, and smuggle their fellow Dissidents out of the city are sometimes collectively referred to as the Order of the Red Swan. There is no greater hierarchy among the Swans; the organization has a cell-based structure so that in the event of capture by the Inquisition, a given Swan can only reveal the names of five or six others without endangering the whole. In addition, a small yet significant portion of the Myronite Order and the workers they hire have Dissident sympathies, and often choose to wilfully ignore Red Swan safehouses in the Old City.

THE SERPENT GATE

Unlike the impressionable Myronites, the Adamant Order remains free of heresy. Their stronghold in Pagamea is the Serpent Gate, a walled compound on an island in the Pearl Strait. It is heavily guarded, staffed almost entirely by hellborn soldiers and officers, and considered to be an unclean place by ordinary citizens — this is the place where one may enter Hell through a tunnel that runs under the island. Its gates only open to admit merchant convoys carrying grain and weapons for the Order, platoons of soldiers headed to the frontlines of the Adamantine Province, and expel Adamant dignitaries and bands of returning infernal veterans. Massive bells toll from the three towers high above the compound, signaling the opening and closing of the Serpent Gate. The schedule of the bells is highly regular, and a prolonged silence from the three towers is a terrible omen — it indicates that something in the Adamantine Province might have gone terribly wrong and that Pagamea may soon suffer an incursion from the World Below and fall, once again, to infernal chaos.

THE EMPTY THRONE

Pagamea is the heart of the Mandate, and the heart of Pagamea is the White Gold Palace, sometimes called the Court of Bliss. It fell to ruin twice: once when northern invaders sacked Pagamea near the end of the Blessed Age, and a second time during the Sunfall. It has been rebuilt, more splendid than ever before, the frescoes repainted, the mosaics and

reliefs recreated in painstaking detail. Though it bustles with clerics, bureaucrats, and courtiers, its largest, most beautiful chamber is always silent and almost always empty.

The August Throne, upon which sat kings of kings and lords of lords, rightful sovereigns of all the world under Heaven, stands in the center. No one dares to touch it, except for the servants responsible for its upkeep (dust does gather, even on the most precious object in the Byssarian) and the Pontifex of the Faith, a gaunt, hawk-faced old woman who rules the city with an iron fist. Vigilant and jealous, she has defended the Throne from pretenders for over four decades, but sometimes she lingers by it when she passes through on her way to the chambers of the Synod, and runs a curious hand over the three peacocks carved into its back.

The Pontifex, Darya VI, died peacefully in her sleep ten years ago. Next morning, she arose at dawn to lead the service in the Temple of the Word, as she has done every day for the past thirty-five years. Necromancy is, of course, an abomination in the eyes of the Name, but allowing one of the bickering, feeble-minded fools on the Synod to elect one of their number Pontifex would be a much greater offense against the divine, particularly in the midst of a crisis. Pontifex Darya does not revel in her abominable condition, but sees it as a sacrifice and an act of martyrdom in the service of the Mandate. She will guide it through this troubled time, quell the heretics, and weather the storm gathering in the far west no matter the cost. Still, the Pontifex dreads the Judgment that awaits her after her final death, and clings to power with the desperation of a woman drowning.

A shrewd, ruthless politician, an expert on ecclesiastical law, and a mage of considerable talent, Darya has not changed much since her death. Her manner of dress is somber and severe, as befits a woman of her standing, and she has worn a widow's veil ever since her husband's passing two decades ago. The veil she wears now is thicker, more opaque, making it easy to mistake a dessicated visage for one that is merely aged and gaunt. And if someone, by some odd chance, catches a glimpse of the Pontifex unveiled or discovers a certain book in her private library...well, there are few things in this world that cannot be amended with a

THE CAPITAL

For all of its posturing, Pagamea is not the original or even the only Moristagian capital. It is the second, western capital, a city that gained its high status through its fortuitous location and the sheer scope of the Old Empire at its height. The Eastern Capital and the birthplace of most of the Old Emperors is Akkar, the city of wheat and red clay, which lies far to the southeast and commands a sizable, but heathen, empire of its own.

well-placed compulsion spell. The Synod has not yet called her longevity into question, although the Cardinal of Isbanir suspects that something may be amiss.

Unbeknownst to the Pontifex, a legitimate heir with a royal soul — specifically that of Ardashir, the first great conquering Moristagian king — has been born into this world. Her name is Khatuna, and she is twelve years old. Her father and mother, former holdouts and the owners of a fashionable seaside tea house, adore their daughter and are unaware

of this fact. Khatuna has the temperament and interests of an average twelve-year-old girl born into a moderately wealthy, devoutly Faithful family. She likes cats and horses, goes to services with her parents and siblings every Soul's Day, and wants to be a wizard when she grows up. She has dreams, sometimes, of throne rooms and elegant courtiers, and of feeding the peafowl in fragrant green gardens. She hasn't told anyone about these dreams yet, but it is likely that she will soon.

CHAPTER 5: OTHER POWERS OF THE MANDATE

ISBANIR

The birthplace and former seat of the Faith, Isbanir is a place of immense holiness and spiritual importance. Its political and strategic relevance has waned considerably over the centuries. During the rise of the New Empire from the ashes of the Old and the consolidation of what would eventually become the Mandate, the vast bulk of the clergy moved to Pagamea in order to be closer to the seat of Imperial power, where they have remained ever since. Now, the Pontifex and the Cardinals, as well as members of the high nobility, generals, archmages and rulers mostly come to Isbanir after death, to be interred in the sprawling Necropolis on the northern side of the city.

The City of the Dead is a massive walled expanse of tombs and mausoleums, both lavish and humble, just outside the dome. Although officially it is a place for the dead, it boasts a robust population of the living: priests, mausoleum guards, gravediggers, embalmers, masons, professional mourners and all manner of other laborers and artisans in the business of burial, interment and tomb upkeep. Vagabonds, criminals, cultists, heretics, and those who otherwise cannot live in Isbanir proper also make their homes among the dead, sometimes going so far as to squat inside abandoned tombs. One of the most feared street gangs in the city is a Necropolis gang — the murderously nostalgic descendants of a ruined noble house and their assorted sycophants and hangers-on, whose headquarters are located under the ornate tomb of their most esteemed ancestor. Among the many unsavory things they do to maintain a sumptuous manner of living befitting nobility is smuggling, which they conduct through the upper layers of the vast Catacombs under the city.

The Catacombs, like much of Isbanir above, are of Old Imperial construction, an elaborate web of tunnels and rooms that defies all attempts to measure it. Hallways and chambers

shift, contort and expand without the city above taking notice, and seasoned explorers speak of the Catacombs as they would of a temperamental animal. The analogy holds up particularly well in certain high-vaulted chambers, where one can hear a distant and thunderous growl emanating from some unknown space below. Reliable maps of the tunnels do not exist (some claim that the very act of mapping them forces them to rearrange), but there is an oral tradition and records of certain enchanted rooms that can be encountered below. Those who pass the threshold the Red Flower Chamber, for instance, waste away and die exactly three months after; anyone walking through the cavernous Chamber of the Tortoise moves half again as fast with every step (the middle of it is littered with the skeletons of would-be explorers), and anyone who passes through the Chamber of the Moon ages backwards at a terrifying pace, becoming an infant and vanishing in the span of weeks. Maintaining the security of the Catacombs — that is, ensuring that trespassers stay far from the more dangerous Chambers, that Necropolis smugglers don't feel too comfortable in the safer tunnels, and that anything untoward that wanders from the lower tunnels never reaches the city or its underworks — is the responsibility of the city guard and the Isbaniri crown.

The current king, Emre, is hardly what one would call a *good* king: he is short-tempered, easily distracted, and vastly more talented in the consumption of expensive alcohol than he is in managing the affairs of a city-state. He mistakes his ineptitude and boorish reputation at court for earthliness and disdain for the excesses of noble life. He thinks himself a man of the people. Certainly, he has redeeming qualities — he is brave, and charismatic, and sincere in his convictions, as erroneous as they may be. He is a steadfast ally and an excellent soldier. But he is not a good king. In the span of five years, he managed to bring a once-prosperous city to the brink of bankruptcy. And when the Dissident heresy took root within his walls, his immediate response was



far more forceful than strictly advised: when the Inquisition succeeded in the capture of the founder of the movement, the young king, thinking it would put an end to the troubles, arranged for an ostentatious public execution instead of quietly sending her to face trial in Pagamea.

Now, Isbanir is a study of Mandate intervention in action: the king, having found his ministers refusing to carry out his orders, stews in his powerlessness and frustration while the new Cardinal governs the city in his name. Pagamea, generous as ever, sent enough silver to ameliorate the suffering of its sister city, but the public outrage surrounding the execution is a much more difficult and persistent problem. Emre not only failed in ending the heresy, but succeeded in the creation of a Dissident martyr: the speech the condemned gave on the scaffold has been embellished, amended, altered printed and reprinted too many times to count and distributed far beyond the walls of Isbanir. To counteract this, Cardinal Ayaz has chosen to lay the city's recent economic misfortunes and the death of its last king (a great man, much beloved by the people) at the feet of heretics, foreigners, and devil-worshippers who squat in the Necropolis and the Catacombs, causing frequent breakouts of sectarian violence in the slums and among the tombs.

The Cardinal is young for the title, dissatisfied with his station in life, and ruthlessly ambitious. He is confident that once the current Pontifex passes away he will be elected as her replacement, and not shy about shortening the span of time in which this blessed event is bound to take place. He has already attempted to poison his way to the throne behind the Throne twice. He does not know for a fact that the Pontifex is undead — it is possible that the old woman has simply built up a monstrous tolerance for certain toxins over the years, as do many who fear assassination — but has reason to suspect that it is so.

KURTALAN

Kurtalan may lack the imperious prestige of Pagamea, but it is a thriving center of Faithful scientific and intellectual life and the Mandate's gateway to the interior of Khera. The Royal Road bisects the city northwest to southeast, and many Faithful consider the eastern gates of Kurtalan to be the true border of the Mandate proper — the little towns and protectorates further East are too sparse in population, too far from Pagamea, and too prone to changing allegiances to truly count as Faithful holdings. During the Old and New Empires, Kurtalan was a relatively minor seat of provincial power, notable for its position along a key trade route and little else. Now, the city is home to the House of Wisdom, the second best institution of arcane and academic learning in the Byssarian (the first being the Royal University in Pagamea, and the third — the Arcane College in Livadi).

In addition, the city hosts the largest chapter of the Order of St. Idris the Joyful (also known as Fat Idris, or Idris the Cook). The Order's primary focus is good and charitable

works; the Brothers of St. Idris run the majority of Kurtalan's orphanages, hospitals, and kitchens for the destitute. Like the Myronites in Pagamea, the Idrisians have an odd reputation among the other Orders Militant as St. Idris himself explicitly forbade his followers to use magic or wield a blade in battle. When questioned about this set of tenets and their status as an Order Militant, Idrisian Brothers are quick to point out that their saint was neither a pacifist nor a martyr, that he was as notorious for brawling with other monks as he was celebrated for sheltering the destitute and feeding the hungry, and that he made no mention of a prohibition on fists, clubs, maces, and hammers.

It is the Joyful Order that oversees the Painted Gate in Kurtalan, and not the Knights Adamant, which gives the city itself a significant degree of leeway where religious orthodoxy is concerned — the Joyful Brothers do not aggressively persecute heretics, as running foreign merchants out of a trade city for practicing an unorthodox version of the Faith or another religion is both foolish and counterproductive. It is these merchants, after all, who ensure that the best foreign goods — the finest teas, the sweetest fruits, the freshest spices, the most beautiful silks and ceramics — stay in Kurtalan, and Pagamea and Isbanir receive only the dregs. Coffee, for instance, is so abundant in Kurtalan that it alone boasts the prestigious and exotic institution of the coffee house, which is very much like a tea house but smaller, serving an entirely different range of food and drink, and catering only to merchants, nobles, and members of the clergy.

The Queen of Kurtalan, Isra the Young, is a patroness of the arts and the sciences. Though she lavishes the House of Wisdom with gifts and royal attention, she herself lives sparsely — a habit from her days preparing for the Mage's Ordeal, which she could not complete due to the unexpected death of her father and her own subsequent coronation. Her advisors and her Cardinal agree that the young queen is too soft-hearted and inexperienced to steer the ship of state, and that she herself would much rather continue her studies than navigate the intricacies of diplomacy and court life.

And they are not wrong, at least about Her Majesty's love of scholarship. Her greatest treasure is her extensive, labyrinthine and beautifully appointed library, a small portion of which opens to foreign scholars and the literate public during the winter and on High Holy Days, thus attracting a great many learned individuals from as far east as the distant Pillared Kingdom, and as far south as Sedjai. It is said, in Kurtalan and outside of it, that one comes to the White City for three weeks, or for three generations — and the population of the city reflects this saying. There are merchants and laborers and artisans from Sedjai, from the Pillared Kingdom, even from Akkar and the distant North, a smattering of Sulfurites, and, of course, a prodigious number of Dissidents from Isbanir and from Pagamea. The latter group are far from safe — the Inquisition's eyes are ever-watchful — but it is easier for them to hide themselves among immigrants and visiting scholars than an entirely Faithful population. Some of them

are quite vocal — far more vocal than they should be permitted to be, which makes a portion of the public suspect that the queen herself may have heretical sympathies.

Though she doesn't consider herself a Dissident, the queen is quietly preparing for Kurtalan's eventual defection from the Mandate—the tension in Pagamea is becoming unbearable, and Isra feels that she does not have much of a choice. Kurtalan will not — cannot — stay orthodox enough to avoid wholesale slaughter when the Mandate finally caves to Adamant demands for a purge against the heretics. Should the city survive the turbulent period immediately after its declaration of independence — the battles between her soldiers and Mandate loyalists, and the inevitable arrival of a chapter of the Adamant Order through the Painted Gate — trade along the southern third of the Royal Road would sustain the city until she could negotiate vassalage under the kings of Sedjai or bargain for a Charter with a representative of the Adversary and dedicate a new Gate. She does not know yet where her loyalties lie, but the choice she will make will shape the destiny of the White City for the years to come.

ZVIADI

Unlike other Mandate cities, Zviadi was the capital of a province that successfully broke from the Old Empire at the start of the Blessed Age, but did not stray from the Faith. Though first offended by this show of disloyalty, the New Empire soon came to appreciate the kingdom of Anzora

THE NORTH

The North is the collective name for the lands that lie beyond the Anzoran Mountains. The politics of this place lie beyond the purview of this book, but are as fractious and convoluted as those of the lands surrounding the Twin Seas. The Northern religion, called the Path of Penance or the Path of Sorrow, does not acknowledge any gods or believe in the complete reincarnation of the soul. Penitents, as devotees of the Path of Sorrow are called, argue that all humankind is irrevocably tainted by the hubristic actions of the First Man, that the chiefest sin is the practice of thaumaturgical magics, that the actions of mages will usher forth the End of Days, and that all souls must atone for the sins of their forefather by living wholesomely ascetic, virtuous lives.

Needless to say, the Sorrowful Path is deeply unpopular in both the Mandate (which takes issue with the absence of divinity and the concept of original sin) and the Republics (which do not approve of any worldview that advocates against excess and hedonism).

for what it was — a buffer state between lawless Istria, the heathen North, and itself. Throughout its existence as an independent power, Anzora had to defend itself against northern incursions and nomadic depredations with little in the way of Imperial assistance, a task they performed admirably until the Sunfall. And though the kingdom built its cities to last, only Zviadi, the capital, was able to survive the conflagration relatively intact. The city owes its survival to its architecture — half of it perches on a mountainside that shields it from the worst of the winds, and the other is carved deep into the stone. In truth Zviadi is more of a fortress than a city — high walls, tall and narrow windows, twisting streets and insular, self-sufficient neighborhoods that can easily be blocked off from the palace district in the event of an invasion. The culture of former Anzora is similarly insular and insulated — taking considerable pride in defending themselves and the Faith on their own for centuries, Anzorrans have retained a significant degree of cultural and linguistic independence from the Mandate. These holdouts feel a much greater degree of loyalty towards a city than is customary for holdouts elsewhere, even though they insist that the kingdom itself has died long ago.

Zviadi is very much a border city, delineating where Faithful lands end and the North begins; unlike Kurtalan, however, Zviadi does not have much in the way of wealthy trade partners. There is little overt opulence in the Walled City, little excess — but there is also little in the way of disunity. The proximity of the Northern Commonwealth, the residents of which practice a religion that stands in even starker opposition to the Faith than flippant Sulfurite atheism, gives the citizens and clergy of Zviadi a common cause and a common enemy. There is no fertile ground for dissent in Zviadi, and there will be none as long as Zviadian scouts both dread and anticipate the sight of an army under the silver three banner, and as long as Northern spies and Zviadian Inquisitors wage their silent, invisible war. Curiously enough, this mindset benefits Zviadian dissidents: in this city, the Inquisition tries and convicts fewer heretics than spies and traitors. This is because Zviadian standards for proper Faithful behavior are much lower than those in Pagamea or Isbanir — as long as the supposed heretics worship the Name and do not assist a foreign power in weakening the state, they are allowed to practice their creed within the private confines of their chapels and their homes. Heresy trials do take place, but they are relatively few in number and their purpose is not to inspire zeal or intimidate the public into orthodoxy, but to assure the authorities in Pagamea that Zviadi does not waver in its faith and commitment to the Mandate.

Nowhere in the Mandate is the Inquisition as central to the operation of a government as it is in Zviadi. Its Grandmaster, one Valerian Eristavi, is a broken, mutilated husk of a man. A nobleman and former warmage, he spent over three years in the North as a prisoner of war, and returned to Zviadi blind and horrifically disfigured, simultaneously an insult to the queen and a part of a prisoner exchange. Too proud to retire,

too broken to continue active military duty, and too grotesque for the court, the Lord Eristavi was granted a supervisory position in the Inquisition and has proven himself frighteningly capable in this new set of duties.

He wears no mask to hide the hideous remains of his face, nor does he bother to cover his gaping eye sockets. Though eyeless, he has taught himself to see with magic, giving some credibility to the rumors that the Lord Inquisitor can peer through a man's soul as easily as one sees through a pane of glass. Now he is a mesmerist and interrogator without peer, and the prisoners of the Inquisition dread the possibility of an audience with the Man Without Eyes. There are ways to resist magical compulsion, of course — psychological conditioning, magical wards, raw willpower — but the Grandmaster's tender ministrations invariably end with a neatly signed confession, a detailed report, and a gibbering, near-soulless thing that was once a foreign operative or informant.

The Anzoran Mountains are rich in coal and valuable metals and minerals — iron for swords, tin for bronze, copper and silver for coin, conductors and wires — and Zviadi itself is home to a mint that is responsible for roughly half the silver Mandate coins in circulation. The Northerners, however, do not care for this as much as they care about the coal seams in the mountains around Zviadi. Their beliefs prohibit them from the use of thaumaturgy and thaumaturgical machinery, but have no such strictures against fire magics and pyromantic engines. The weapons they field are strange, reliant not on arcane arrays but on black powder and other explosive admixtures. The process of manufacturing these machines and substances are tightly guarded secrets, and a significant number of spies sent North are tasked with industrial sabotage and the theft of scientific research and schematics, in addition to military intelligence and insight into Northern political struggles.

CHAPTER 6: THE WORLD BELOW

ON THE NATURE OF THE IMMATERIAL

Hell, in the writings of Faithful theologians, is both a physical place and a state of mind. While most of them have never experienced it first-hand, this assessment of the underworld is astonishingly correct. It was once believed that the World Below was literally below — that is, underground — but it is elsewhere, much deeper than any cavern. To travel to or from the World Below, an embodied individual must physically enter a gateway, which usually resembles a fissure in the earth, a crack in a mountainside or a well at the bottom of a body of water. Eventually, in a span of a few days or a few weeks (or, in some rare cases, a few months to a few years) the traveller would emerge on the other end. Travel times at the largest gates, such as the Serpent Gate in Pagamea or the Salt Gate in Esca, are faster and more predictable, but a traveler passing through a natural gateway in the wilderness risks arriving years or decades after their departure.

Though the methods of entry and egress are common knowledge, the true nature of travel between the Worlds is far from understood. Something must lie between — otherwise, the journeys would be instantaneous — but that liminal space remains a mystery. No mortal or daemon who has ever traveled between the Worlds remembers the journey itself, though sometimes they emerge scarred or wounded, or covered in silvery-gray dust. The Grayways, as the hypothetical routes between the two Worlds are called, are the subject of much heated scientific and theological

debate: the fact that most travellers reach their destination without any memory of the journey, Faithful scholars argue, lends credence to the belief in the Judges and the Watcher at the Threshold. More skeptical individuals simply believe in a spirit's instinctive, unconscious ability to find its way through the pathways between the two Worlds.

Individual human accounts of the World Below vary wildly; it is a difficult place for the living soul to perceive and comprehend. A vast, red plain under an impossible sun the color of the midnight sky. An infinite chain of islands in a sea of drifting, fetid yellow dust. A tangled, burning forest of muscular trees with human hands for leaves and

INFERNAL DOMAINS

Adamant records claim that at the end of the First Chthonic March all of Hell was subdued to Faithful rule. This, visitants from foreign lands claim, is patently untrue: there were no Moristagian knights conquering the underworlds of Sedjai, or the Pillared Kingdom, or the North. Likely, what the Knights Adamant meant by "all of Hell" was the domain of one particular daemon lord — one now called the Adversary.

There are other domains in the World Below, but the geography of the spirit world is a contentious and negotiable matter, and it is difficult for mortal travelers to cross from one domain to another without a daemonic guide.

human eyes for fruit. The scalding interior of a vast mechanism. Daemons, when observed by the living in Hell, are similarly varied: giants with the heads of owls and limbs of apes, shining, amorphous masses of eyes and wings, three-headed serpents with leonine bodies, who walk and speak like men...Despite this, the World Below and its residents become more stable when observed by groups of the living: all soldiers in a Faithful battalion see the same foe and the same environment, but no two battalions deployed to the same portion of the World Below can ever agree on the details. Perhaps because of the length of occupation and its relatively high human population, the Adamantine Province and its daemoniac residents are more constant in form: the Province is a rocky, largely featureless steppe under a white and sunless sky, and the daemons themselves resemble pale spiders, worms, and other repulsive vermin.

THE ADAMANTINE PROVINCE

This land — “land” being an extremely generous term for a location in the World Below — is barren and harsh. Its primary industry is the punishment of sinners, which, in more practical terms, means the manufacture of clockwork soldiers. There is no shortage of flame or souls, and what ores are absent Below can be imported from Above. The Adamantine Province is a province in name only; more accurately, it is a series of fortresses and foundries surrounded by military encampments of truly prodigious size, where the knighthood trains and houses troops from Above. There are fields of weak and insubstantial grain, scant flocks of sheep and goats — usually mutated, with multiple eyes or heads (Hell does not allow wholesome animal life to propagate unchanged). There are temples for the Adamants, and pits for the squirming, subjugated devils, many of who believe quite earnestly in the Name and are dedicated to carrying out their purpose in the universe.

Those who leave the Province for the World Above find it difficult to adjust to life on the Surface, but many of them find that they prefer it. Certainly, the cold is beyond endurance and the people are baffling and overwhelming in their diversity and complexity, but compared to the Province, the frozen World Above is a paradise. It permits natural life. Animals are born healthy after the third, even fourth generation. The strange, black plants grow and bear the same kind of fruit every year. The food is richer; the drink is stronger; there are forests, and the great wide sea, and mountains; the heavens are kaleidoscopic in their beauty, vast, incomprehensible. Even the gnawing melancholy so common Below shrinks and withers under the stars.

THE DOMAIN OF THE ADVERSARY

The Adversary has secluded himself, and his generals have taken it upon themselves to govern his reconquered domain. Once a formless place of primordial chaos, then a realm bound and shackled by Adamant forces and world-view, the Adversary's domain is now somewhere between

those two extremes. The power structure present therein is nowhere near as loose as the one before the First Chthonic March. Instead of promises, which can be negotiated, most daemons swear oaths to greater daemons — oaths that often lack a concrete date of expiry. The Adversary's generals care little about the fate of individual daemons — they are insignificant, like droplets in the sea — and are altogether too willing to sacrifice thousands of their subordinates to succeed in a military ploy. Daemons cannot truly die in the World Below, after all; physical or magical onslaught can only reduce them to imps, who will eventually reform into new daemons. Even if the newborn spirit is not the same as the one who perished, there is no net loss of daemon-matter. Dissolution is an abstract, distant idea to greater daemons, but an ever-present fear for their oathbound soldiers and servants. Those who manage to slip the shackles of their oaths flee to the World Above — incarnate existence may be perilous and demanding (bodies are so fragile, and need and want so many things), but it is better than slavery and Adamant brutality on the battlefield.

WARFARE IN THE WORLD BELOW

Mortal armies owed their victory in the First Chthonic March to faith, desperation, and humanity's inherent ability to shape the World Below through the very act of perception. In addition, the World Below saw very few battles, let alone wars, before the Age of the Dying Sun. This is due to the spirits' inherent (and inexplicable) inability to violate formalized oaths and promises. A rebellious daemon cannot cast off the bonds of vassalage as easily as their human counterpart. One's word was their bond in more than metaphor, and most of the World Below's greatest battles were those of wits, rather than arms.

When the March came, the Adversary's subjects did not anticipate the power and desperation of the Moristagian armies. Though cunning and skilled in the magical arts, the daemons were no match for the might of an empire in the throes of desperation, whose soldiers and generals genuinely believed themselves to be fighting devils in Hell. Every single member of the Old Imperial armies, from the lowliest soldiers to the most esteemed archmages, understood that surrender meant extinction. The March was the most brutal war in human history, its death toll numbering in the millions. Imperial troops and commanders behaved in ways that would horrify today's soldiers and scholars: they were insane, callous, suicidal in their fanaticism. No sacrifice was too great, and no victory too costly.



PART 4

BELL, BOOK, AND CANDLE

“One who becomes a prince through the favour of the people ought to keep them friendly, and this he can easily do seeing they only ask not to be oppressed by him.”

Niccolo Machiavelli, The Prince

IN THIS PART OF THE BOOK, YOU WILL FIND...

- **Chapter 1: General Advice** contains general advice for running a Sunfall game, as well as a brief list of books and other media that may prove helpful or inspiring for players and Game Masters alike.
- **Chapter 2: Plot Threads and Political Tensions** gives insight on how Player Characters may become involved in some of the major conflicts and political tensions of the Sunless Age, as well as a brief note on how to complicate traditional dungeon crawls.
- **Chapter 3: Allies and Adversaries** lists setting-specific NPC profiles, including those for beasts, clockwork automatons, humans, daemons, and the undead.



CHAPTER 1: GENERAL ADVICE

ON BAD BEHAVIOR

This setting lends itself particularly well to bannerless vagabonds, shameless miscreants, and other semi-criminal and unsavory individuals who exist on the very periphery of civil society. One can theoretically run or play in a *Sun-fall* game in which player characters are heroic heroes performing stunning feats of righteous violence against two-dimensional villains, but why in the world would they? Scam a nobleman. Rob some merchants. Rig an election. Live a little, and dare to be dastardly.

ON PARTY COMPOSITION

As tempting as the idea of a group of an entirely daemonic or entirely undead party sounds, this kind of PC group composition can impose significant limitations on the party's ability to interact with certain locations and NPCs. The undead are so widely feared that they are often killed on sight, and exposing oneself as a visitant (or even an unsanctioned pyromancer) in a Mandate city is sure to result in an exorcism or an execution. In addition, stark contrasts between party members can create interesting tensions and narrative opportunities for both the players and the GM.

ON THE FOLLY OF ARMAMENTS AND MATERIAL WEALTH

Game Masters often feel tempted to grant the player characters wealth in two forms: weapons and armor, or money (with which characters can buy more armor and more weapons, *ad infinitum*). While both have their place in any adventure, restricting the loot selection to weapons and money is, in the opinion of this author, a poor choice.

If the Game Master only gives the party weapons and other combat-oriented items, the players are likely to see the game as a sequence of increasingly difficult combats with a reward at the end. While this can be fun — who doesn't want to see their character grow stronger and more dangerous? — it drastically curbs the need for creativity and non-linear problem-solving and, this author would argue, greatly limits the actions of player characters. A character with a bottle of alchemical epoxy, some fireworks (and a means to light

them), and a spool of magically-conductive silver wire will approach a difficult situation very differently than one with a cuirass and a big magic sword.

The same principle applies to valuables that litter the dungeon floors: priceless works of art and piles of money are just not that interesting by themselves. The perfect loot is both valuable and useful, items that can do more than take up space in a character's inventory until they sell them. An ornate gold ring with a diamond the size of a robin's egg is boring, but a gold signet ring bearing the seal of a major noble house from a conveniently distant city is not. It's both expensive and useful — player characters can sell it, wear it as part of a disguise, or use it to forge letters and official documentation.

SUGGESTED READING

For gritty, witty low fantasy taking place in distinctly Early Modern settings, look to works of Joe Abercrombie (*Best Served Cold*, *Red Country*, *The Heroes*) and Scott Lynch's Gentleman Bastards series (*The Lies of Locke Lamora*, *Red Seas Under Red Skies*, *Republic of Thieves*). Abercrombie in particular tends to write character groups that read like wonderfully scummy RPG parties: in *Best Served Cold*, a disgraced mercenary, a drunkard, a convict, a poisoner, a hapless foreigner and their assorted hangers-on set out to avenge a hideous betrayal and kill the Grand Duke of a powerful, vaguely Italian city-state...Guy Gavriel Kay's *The Children of Earth and Sky* is a gorgeously written low fantasy novel about a painter from a city that is certainly not Venice, journeying to a city that is certainly not Istanbul to paint a portrait of a man who is certainly not the Ottoman Sultan. It is excellent in its portrayal of Renaissance merchant republics and of religion during the same time period, in particular the latter's effect on regional and international politics — all of not-Christendom reels from the recent fall of not-Constantinople to the not-Ottomans, while not-Venice sees it as both a political and commercial opportunity.

For historical material, consider Ruth Goodman's *How to Be a Tudor* and *How to Behave Badly in Elizabethan England*. Both are quick and engaging reads, and while not at all about the Mediterranean world, they provide an excellent overview of life in 16th century England and enough accounts of rude, crude and criminal behavior to squeeze out at a good number of NPCs and urban encounters. Ian Mortimer's *The Time Traveler's Guide to Restoration Britain* is similarly useful, eminently readable, and exhaustive, covering all aspects of English 17th century life from agriculture to science to food and fashion.



Finally, for those interested in older material, Marlowe's *Dr. Faustus* and Dante's *Inferno* number among the works most responsible for the portrayal of devils and Hell in European literature. Alexandre Dumas' D'Artagnan Romances (*The Three Musketeers*, *Twenty Years Later*, and *The Vicomte of Bragelonne*) are thrilling visions of adventure and courtly intrigue, complete with espionage, melodrama, and a scheming Cardinal who codified Bond-style

villainy long before Ian Fleming's novels. (BBC's *Three Musketeers* series is also fantastic). Last but not least, John Aubrey's *Brief Lives* is a collection of short biographies of the best and brightest of Elizabethan London, from the notorious occultist John Dee to William Shakespeare; and is excellent for generating NPCs on the fly.

CHAPTER 2: PLOT THREADS AND POLITICAL TENSIONS

THE ISTRIAN GOLD RUSH

A game set in Istria has the potential to be a Western game. All of the building blocks are there — a vast and difficult to police stretch of frontierland, horse-riding daredevils, a gold rush, claim-jumpers and boomtowns and treasure-hunters who would do all manner of terrible things for the sake of a fortune. Player characters could take on the roles of scholars or graverobbers (or both — in Istria, the difference is academic), hired muscle protecting the aforementioned scholars and graverobbers, local residents, or individuals committed to resolving some of the unfortunate side effects of a gold rush — rampant crime, rising tensions between the Istrian nomads and the newcomers, and dozens, if not hundreds, of ghoulish rampaging across the steppe.

In addition, there is the matter of the owners of the tombs on the steppe — not every grave-robber shoots first and asks questions later, and a group of adventurers might find themselves trying to communicate with a revenant from a time before the Old Empire. Istrian revenants are generally not hostile, and individuals this old most certainly need someone to guide them through the vagaries of the Sunless Age and — potentially — protect them from the kind of unscrupulous necromancer who would kill to study a variation on the Rite of Resurrection that can seal a daemon within a casket for millennia and preserve the memories of human revenants for thousands of years. Furthermore, an Istrian survivor might prove helpful in rounding up the undead horses, and may know the location of troves of ancient treasures and knowledge — a location they may be willing to divulge in exchange for continued safety and assistance.

THE WAR OF UNIFICATION

As war ravages the Greater Byssarian, characters could become plausibly deniable catspaws for either side in the conflict. Although the war is seasonal — winter storms greatly complicate the logistics of large-scale land and naval warfare — it doesn't truly stop. Both Verdurio and his opponents make use of spies and saboteurs in the off season to gain the upper hand on the opposition — ideally, without violating the winter armistice. Alternatively, player characters could take a more overt role in the conflict, serving as part of a mercenary outfit working for either side. A game centered on the Sulfurite War of Unification would be heavy on both action and travel, regardless of whether the characters are sleek intelligence operatives, cunning diplomats, or soldiers on campaign.

The motivations of characters participating in the War vary: some might harbor a genuine desire to see one side prevail over the other, and others might see it as an opportunity for personal enrichment. (The latter group in particular is liable to betray their employers should the enemy offer better pay). Finally, even though the War is not yet a Mandate conflict, the Inquisition in Pagamea takes a keen interest in major shifts in the power balance of the Brimstone Republics. While no Mandate power (with the possible exception of Kurtalan) is likely to overtly align itself with one side or the other, they may provide indirect assistance to a power whose victory would benefit Pagamea or the Mandate as a whole. Overall, Faithful powers do not want the Republics to become a larger, unified state; while the initial years of King Sabine's rule would likely be chaotic and his

holdings would be too exhausted to compete for mercantile or military dominance of the eastern Byssarian, a Brimstone Kingdom could prove a dangerous enemy if it has time to grow, especially since the Mandate itself seems to be fracturing on ideological grounds.

THE FAITH & THE DISSIDENTS

The conflict at the core of the Faith has its roots in class divisions, the lack of upward mobility in a society desperately clinging to an ancient social order, growing dissatisfaction with the Mandate as a political institution and the actions of the upper echelons of the clergy. Many Dissident leaders embrace the Yasarevic gospels because of their politics rather than their religious beliefs: some crave power, others — independence or reform. Many Dissident leaders are quite idealistic, fighting for the common man, but their lofty goals do not always align with the methods they use to attain them.

Wherever there is a possibility of revolution, there is also the possibility of revolutionary and counter-revolutionary extremism. Both sides have members who are willing to go to shocking lengths for their beliefs, and both sides have members who are willing to compromise these same beliefs for the sake of wealth, power, or survival in a politically unstable environment. The leaders of a rebel government attempting to cement its political or religious legitimacy may become cruel in the process, and seek scapegoats to maintain either popular fervor or popular terror. Half-pagan peasants, those whose religious peculiarities the Mandate chose to overlook, are likely to become the first of these scapegoats as they are both too distant and too powerless to retaliate in any meaningful way.

On the Moristagian side, the Inquisition is an institution with questionable practices and a long and poorly buried history of brutal zealotry. Within Mandate borders, one can think of the Inquisition as a secret police: while they generally don't stage loud and public raids, they have networks of informants and an ability to make confirmed or

even suspected Dissidents disappear. There haven't been any ostentatious mass purges or exiles, not yet, but it is unlikely these events will not come to pass: the Dissident heresy is not only an ideological threat, but a threat to the Mandate itself, and only time will tell when the high clergy will cave to the Adamant Order's demands for more drastic measures.

DUNGEONS & DELVERS

This is where *Sunfall* is at its most sword-and-sorcery: there is an abundance of ancient ruins, and some of them may even be untouched by the time the player characters reach them. These places are difficult to find, and most likely the former residences, libraries, and vaults of long-dead archmages or members of Old Imperial nobility. And considering the wealth and power of these ruins' builders and masters, how jealous they were of their secrets, many of these ruins boast robust security systems: patrols of ensouled automata, traps both mechanical and arcane, and many other dangers beside. Death waits amid these hallowed stones. But so does wealth beyond imagination.

The first step of any ham-fisted dungeoneering adventure is finding the treasure, and the oft-neglected last is figuring out what to do with it. A small mountain of gold ingots each the size of a baby, an arcane weapons installation, or a vast library full of ciphered magic books are fantastic finds in theory, but they're not very liquid or immediately useful forms of wealth. Revealing or even knowing the location of such treasure-vaults can create interesting and perilous complications for the player characters. Having completed a grueling trek across the wilderness and bypassed many an ancient trap, the heroes arrive in the inner sanctum of the Library of Artaxerxes to discover that every book in the collection is made of solid gold. It is the greatest find of the century, unthinkable riches and secret knowledge, but it would take a lifetime to copy the books to paper, and each individual text is so heavy that transporting even a few across the mountain passes would be an incredibly difficult task. Meanwhile, a larger and far better equipped group of rival treasure-hunters has spotted the ruin, and is likely to try and eliminate any and all competition...



CHAPTER 3: ALLIES AND ADVERSARIES

BEASTS

BOAR (MINION)

Large. Dangerous. Delicious.



Skills (Group): Brawl, Vigilance

Talents:

- **None.**

Abilities:

- **Goring Charge:** A group of boars engaged with an enemy may sacrifice one of its number to add 4 damage to its next attack as an incidental.

Equipment:

- **Tusks:** Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Vicious 1, Knockdown.

GHOUL HORSE (RIVAL)

The loyal companions and war steeds of the kings, queens, and nobles of the Golden Horse People, these beasts have followed their riders into an existence beyond death. Now masterless, they roam the steppes, trampling and devouring every living thing that crosses their path, indefatigable and driven by a hunger that can never be sated. They are hard to distinguish from ordinary horses at a distance — decay touched them lightly and left them beautiful, with slender legs and pale gold coats. Some of them even lower their heads to the ground, as if grazing (undoubtedly some old instinct from better, sunlit days). But should one come closer, they would see that the beasts' heads are grinning, fleshless skulls.




Skills: Athletics 2, Coordination 2, Brawl 3, Survival 2, Vigilance 2

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.

- **Silhouette 2**

Abilities:

- **Terrifying:** At the start of the encounter, all characters must make an Average (◆◆) Fear check.
- **Charge!:** If a ghoulish horse spends a maneuver moving towards an opponent, its next attack targeting that opponent gains  and the Knockdown quality.
- **Devourer:** A ghoulish horse inflicts 3 additional damage on prone or immobilized targets.
- **Master?:** After engaging a revenant that has not attacked it first, a ghoulish horse must make an **Average (◆◆) Discipline check** as an incidental in order to attack. If it fails, it must choose the closest living opponent instead.
- **Undead:** Does not need to eat, breathe, or drink; immune to poisons and toxins and can survive in cold or underwater conditions.

Equipment:

- **Hooves and teeth:** Melee; Damage 7; Critical 4; Range (Engaged); Vicious 2.

INAMORATA (RIVAL)

Vicious, pony-sized invisible predators that stalk the deep woods. They often hunt in pairs, and are notorious for their uncanny intelligence, their ability to mimic human speech, and their taste for human flesh. When a pair hunts, one mimics a sound likely to attract human attention — an infant's cry, perhaps — and draws unsuspecting prey deeper into the woods, while its partner closes in.

When killed, an inamorata slowly fades into visibility, revealing its true form: a rangy fox with a gleaming, pearlescent white coat and two deformed heads at the end of a crooked, elongated neck.



Skills: Brawl 3, Deception 2, Perception 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2

Talents:

- **Silhouette 2**

Abilities:

- **Mimicry:** An inamorata may spend a Story Point to mimic the voice of someone beloved to a player character of the GM's choice, upgrading the difficulty of any checks made against the inamorata's Deception twice.

- **Invisibility:** Add ■■■ to any checks made to detect an inamorata that has not yet acted in the encounter. Unless detected, an inamorata may use Stealth instead of Cool or Vigilance to determine initiative.
- **Vanish:** After performing a check, an inamorata may spend △△ or ⊗ to hide from all characters in the encounter.

Equipment:

- **Fangs:** Brawl; Damage 7; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Knockdown, Vicious 2.

MAMMOTH (RIVAL)

The resurrection of the mammoth from a single preserved tusk and Ammuniri elephant stock is one of the greatest achievements of the Elder Science during the Dying Sun. Now, these shaggy giants roam the Southern Continent and, bizarrely, the northernmost reaches of the Istrian Plain. They are intelligent animals, but prone to nigh-unstoppable rages during the spring and summer: a farmer hates the mammoth the same way a shepherd hates the wolf. Many protectorates and nomad clans on the plains both north and south mount expeditions to thin the herds, save their crops, and make a little coin off the meat and ivory.



Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Survival 3, Vigilance 3

Talents:

- **Silhouette 3**

Abilities:

- **Terrifying:** At the start of the encounter, all opponents must make an **Average** (◆◆) **fear check**.
- **Charge:** If a mammoth spends its maneuver moving towards an opponent, it may add ■■ to its attack against that opponent. If the check succeeds, a mammoth may spend △△ to shove an opponent one range band away from itself.
- **Trample:** A mammoth inflicts an additional 4 damage and 4 strain damage on prone or immobilized targets.

Equipment:

- **Tusks:** Brawl; Damage 8; Critical 2, Range (Engaged); Disorient 2, Knockdown; may spend △△ to knock down all characters engaged with the target.

TIGER (RIVAL)

Tigers are not native to the mountains of the Byssarian; lions are. The lion, however, is a sickly curiosity in the menagerie of a queen or nobleman, and the tiger — an unfortunate reality of life in the wilderness. For the most part, tigers are

solitary and territorial, though one may sometimes stumble upon a mother tiger and two or three of her near-adult cubs.



Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Coordination 3, Survival 3, Resilience 1

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.

Abilities:

- **Pounce:** A tiger may spend △△ generated on an initiative check to gain a free maneuver on the first round. If a tiger spends a maneuver moving towards a character and then succeeds on a combat check against that same character, the attack gains the Knockdown quality.
- **Maul:** A tiger adds ■■ to all combat checks targeting prone or immobilized opponents.

Equipment:

- **Fangs and claws:** Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 2, Range (Engaged); Pierce 2, Vicious 2

TYRANT OWL (RIVAL)

Tyrant owls are massive creatures, tenuously related to Old World eagle owls, but pitch-black in plumage and dappled white and gray. Their wings are broad and soft; in flight, they are silent as ghosts. Despite their impressive size, they are rather light — strong enough to lift a deer or small horse off the ground in their talons, but not strong enough to carry it. A tyrant owl hunts travelers the same way an eagle hunts a tortoise, swooping in, lifting its prey high, and letting gravity do the rest.



Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Perception 2

Talents:

- **Wasteland Instincts:** Use Survival instead of Cool or Vigilance to determine initiative while in the wilderness.
- **Silhouette 2**

Abilities:

- **Flyer:** This creature can fly.
- **Keen Eyes:** A tyrant owl may remove up to ■■ from skill checks imposed by darkness or low-light conditions.
- **Swoop Attack:** After making a Brawl combat check, a tyrant may move from Engaged to Short range as an incidental.

- **Lift:** A tyrant owl may spend its maneuver to move an Ensnared target by 1 range band in any direction, including up.

Equipment:

- **Talons:** Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Ensnare 2, Pierce 2; (the tyrant may not use its talons if it has triggered the Ensnare quality).
- **Beak:** Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range (Engaged); Pierce 1, Vicious 2.

WOLF (MINION)

There is no sound more chilling than the long, lilting howl of a pack of wolves reverberating through the high passes.

Use the same Adversary Profile for dogs.



Skills (Group): Brawl, Survival, Perception

Talents:

- None.

Abilities:

- **Keen Hearing & Smell:** Add ■ to all Perception checks relying on scent or sound.
- **Maul:** Wolves add ■■ to all checks made against prone or immobilized opponents.

Equipment:

- **Fangs:** Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Vicious 2.

WOLVERINE (RIVAL)

An adult wolverine is a stocky, fuzzy animal the size of a medium dog, weighing somewhere around 25 kilograms. This does not stop the adult wolverine from routinely dis-emboweling elk.



Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Survival 2, Perception 2, Vigilance 3

Talents:

- None.

Abilities:

- **Frenzy:** Once a wolverine suffers Wounds or a Critical Injury, it may reduce the Critical Rating of all its attacks by 1.

- **Tenacious:** Once per encounter, a wolverine may spend a Story Point as an out-of-turn incidental to avoid becoming incapacitated due to exceeding its Wound threshold, instead suffering Wounds up to its Wound Threshold - 1.

Equipment:

- **Fangs and Claws:** Brawl; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Vicious 2.

CONSTRUCTS

CLOCKWORK BEAST (MINION)

Whether they're long-legged mechanical birds, apes, or watchdogs, clockwork beasts are works of art and miracles of the Elder Science. Many wealthy households use them as guardians, but some view them as pets and companions. Each one is powered by animating essence from an animal sacrificed during their creation, but must be wound up once per day to function at full capacity.



Skills (Group): Brawl, Perception, Vigilance

Talents:

- **Silhouette 0**

Abilities:

- **Mechanical:** Does not need to eat, breathe, or drink; immune to poisons and toxins, can survive in cold or underwater conditions.
- **Ornamental:** When inert, clockwork beasts add ■ to all Perception checks an opponent makes to spot them.

Equipment:

- **Beak, fangs or fists:** Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range (Engaged), Vicious 1, Disorient 2.

CLOCKWORK SOLDIER (MINION)

The clockwork soldiers of the Blessed and Sunless Ages are a pale imitation of the Old Empire's Immortal army: though they are mechanically sophisticated, the enchantments binding spirit to bronze are too crude to permit much in the way of strength or independent thought. Each group of three to five soldiers is called a Hand, and all soldiers in a Hand share a single human soul, divided among its machine vessels. As the process of manufacturing a clockwork soldier is both lengthier and costlier than training and equipping a human one, a platoon of clockworks is more of a show of wealth and power than a viable fighting force.



Skills (Group): Melee, Ranged (Mechanical)

Talents:

- None.

Abilities:

- **Mechanical:** Does not need to eat, breathe, or drink; immune to poisons and toxins, can survive in cold or underwater conditions.
- **Strength in Numbers:** Clockwork soldiers add ■ to all combat checks targeting an opponent who is engaged with at least two friendly constructs, and ■ when the opponent is not engaged with any machines at all.

Equipment:

- **Spear:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Accurate 1, Defensive 1.
- **Ancient crossbow:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 7; Critical 2; Range (Medium); Pierce 1, Prepare 1

IMMORTAL (RIVAL)

The vast majority of the Immortals are gone, either lost or destroyed during the Dying Sun, but a few stragglers remain — entombed, hidden away, or on display in the homes of ostentatiously wealthy collectors. They are much heavier than their modern clockwork counterparts, yet more graceful and lifelike, closer to classical statues than crude automations. Their makers fashioned them in the likeness of Old Imperial soldiers and officers, but faceless and eyeless, with only a smooth, matte pane of metal where a face ought to be. Unlike newer constructs, genuine Immortals sometimes have something akin to personalities and are capable of disobeying direct orders, although the latter is likely the result of the sheer age of their enchantments and the absence of the Old Imperial mages and officers capable of commanding the bronze legions. Every one of these ancient machines has a fascination with flowers and other beautiful things, and a violent hatred of mirrors and other reflective surfaces, which they smash until nothing remains.



Skills: Athletics 2, Discipline 1, Melee 2, Vigilance 2

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.
- **Swift:** This character may ignore difficult terrain.

Abilities:

- **Mechanical:** Does not need to eat, breathe, or drink; immune to poisons and toxins, can survive in cold or underwater conditions.
- **Breathless Terror:** When an Immortal incapacitates or inflicts a Critical Injury on an opponent, all other opponents in Short range must make an **Average** (◆◆) **fear check** as an out-of-turn incidental. On failure, characters lose their free maneuver on their next turn in addition to the normal effects of the Fear check.
- **Loathsome Reflection:** If an Immortal glimpses itself in a mirror or another reflective surface (such as an opponent's metal breastplate), it must make an **Average** (◆◆) **Discipline check**. If it fails the check, the Immortal must spend its next action attacking the mirror or surface to the best of its ability; if the surface in question is an opponent's armor, the Immortal adds ■ to its next combat check targeting that opponent.

Equipment:

- **Ancient sword:** Melee; Damage 7; Critical 2; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1.
- **Shield:** Melee; Damage 4; Critical 6; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1, Deflection 1, Knockdown

OCULUS (MINION)

Peculiar, spherical machines that patrol some Old World ruins, hovering without wings or any visible mechanism of propulsion. Mostly harmless, save for their ability to soundlessly call their allies if they detect an intruder. Some wealthy individuals use jury-rigged oculi as watchdogs for their facilities, estates, and holdings.



Skills (Group): Ranged (Mech.), Perception, Vigilance

Talents:

- Silhouette 0

Abilities:

- **Mechanical:** Does not need to eat, breathe, or drink; immune to poisons and toxins, can survive in cold or underwater conditions.
- **Flyer:** Can move in all 3 dimensions! Must spend a maneuver to move in order to keep aloft.
- **Intruders!:** On a failed Stealth check against the oculus, the oculus may alert all other automations in the area as an action on its turn. On a failed Stealth check with ⚡⚡⚡ or ⚡, the oculus alerts its allies immediately before the start of the encounter.

Equipment:

- **Beamcaster Lens:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Medium); Pierce 2.

HUMANS, VISITANTS & THE UNDEAD

AGARES (NEMESIS)

The weary and severe Prince of Livadi, Agares is a relic of a time before the Old Empire, a vizier to an ancient dynasty buried with its last and greatest king. The arcane seals on his casket kept him in a state of torpor, sparing him from hunger and dissolution. This allowed him to emerge with his memory and faculties intact when a particularly unfortunate graverobber broke the seal on his casket. Once freed, Agares, alone in a world so different from the one he remembered, possessed, fought, and schemed his way into a position of power in the city-state of Livadi. As Prince, he is intent on dragging Livadi into a golden age whether it wants one or not.

His Excellency's obsessive devotion to his city is similar to how many other spirits feel about food, drink, violence, or the pleasures of the flesh. Agares dresses plainly, never drinks, and eats only because his body would perish if he did not. He adores the process of government, and clings to his work as a cure for grief and the last shred of familiarity in the Sunless Age. Though he has no interest in the kind of dictatorial showmanship and opulence that so tempts human rulers, Agares has no qualms about brutally suppressing dissent, quietly removing vocal political opponents, and fueling an already devastating war in the west and the south by remaining neutral and selling arms to both sides.



Skills: Cool 3, Charm 1, Deception 3, Discipline 3, Knowledge (Chthonic) 3, Leadership 3, Negotiation 3, Melee 2, Pyromancy 4, Skulduggery 3

Talents:

- **Adversary 2:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.

Abilities:

- **Natural Leader:** Prince Agares' allies add Δ to all skill checks they make within Short range of the Prince; opponents in Short range add \ominus instead.
- **Cold Disdain:** Whenever another character in Short range or closer fails a social check targeting the Prince, they suffer 2 Strain.
- **The Flesh is Weak:** When Agares exceeds his Wound or Strain thresholds, he may spend a Story Point as an incidental to abandon his body and escape.
- **Daemonic Alacrity:** The Prince may choose two targets

in Short range and make a Hard ($\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge$) Pyromancy check. If the check is successful, the targets can perform 2 maneuvers and an action per turn without incurring the Strain cost, and increase the ability of any skill checks they make by 1. This effect is sustained as long as Agares maintains concentration.

Equipment:

- **Sword cane:** Melee; Damage 5 ; Critical 2; Range (Engaged); Concealed 1, Defensive 1
- **Fine coat:** +1 soak

ARCANE ENGINEER (RIVAL)

Grease-stained individuals with diplomas from prestigious universities. Arcane engineers don't have the talent or the connections that would allow them to make a living practicing the magical arts alone, but they are skilled enough mechanics to sustain themselves by tending to their wealthy employers' clockwork armies and menageries.



Skills: Cool 1, Discipline 2, Knowledge (Scholarly) 1, Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) 2, Mechanics 3, Ranged (Mechanical) 1, Thaumaturgy 1, Vigilance 2

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.

Abilities:

- **Adversary Spellcasting 2:** An Arcane Engineer can cast 2 spells per encounter without incurring the Wound cost.
- **Battlefield Repairs:** An Arcane Engineer can make a Hard ($\blacklozenge\blacklozenge\blacklozenge$) Mechanics check to revive a downed construct as an action. If the check is successful, the construct heals 3 wounds plus 1 wound per each uncancelled \star and $\Delta\Delta$ and may stand up from prone as an incidental.

Equipment:

- **Boltless runelock:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 8; Critical 2; Range (Medium); Ensnare 1, Stun Setting, Prepare 1.
- **Sturdy vestments:** +1 Soak
- Engineer's toolkit.

CUIRASSIER (RIVAL)

Heavy cavalry for the modern day, cuirassiers and demi-lancers bring the romantic image of the Blessed Age knight together with the latest advances in arcane weaponry. Instead of wearing a full suit of plate like their predecessors, cuirassiers limit themselves to a well-made chest piece, tassets, and a helm, sacrificing armor for fluidity of movement and a lessened risk of freezing solid in a sleet storm.



Skills: Athletics 2, Discipline 2, Leadership 1, Melee 3, Ranged (Mechanical) 2, Resilience 2, Riding 3, Vigilance 2

Talents:

- None.

Abilities:

- None.

Equipment:

- **Cavalry sabre:** Melee; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1
- **Heavy runelock:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 9; Critical 3; Range (Medium); Accurate 1, Stun Setting, Prepare 1.
- **Engraved cuirass:** +1 defense, +2 soak
- Volume of romantic poetry (dog-eared, with floral bookmark).

DELVER (RIVAL)

Wasteland scavengers, self-styled scholars and survivalists on the hunt for Old World salvage, treasures, and anything else that could possibly fetch a decent price on the market. Clever, resourceful, superstitious and furtive.



Skills: Ranged (Mechanical) 2, Melee 3, Knowledge (Old World) 2, Mechanics 2, Survival 2, Perception 2

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.

Abilities:

- **Jury-Rig:** Delvers add \square to all Mechanics checks they make to repair, build or maintain weaponry and Old World machinery.

Equipment:

- **Repeating hand crossbow:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 6 Critical 2; Range (Medium); Limited Ammo 3, Superior, Unreliable
- **Spear-thrower:** Ranged (Arch.); Damage 5; Critical 4; Range (Medium); Defensive 1
- **Spear:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Accurate 1, Defensive 1.
- **Heavy clothing:** +1 soak
- Rich Delver, Poor Delver (pamphlet; educational).

EXORCIST (RIVAL)

A pyromancer specializing in exorcism — either an adherent of the Faith, a Sulfurite practitioner, a Wasteland fire-caller, or something else entirely. Whoever they are, they negotiate the boundary between the Worlds with skill and finesse and are experienced in the matters of expelling foreign spirits from their hapless clients.



Skills: Charm 2, Knowledge (Chthonic) 3, Melee 2, Negotiation 2, Pyromancy 2

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.

Abilities:

- **Adversary Spellcasting 2:** An exorcist can cast 2 spells per encounter without incurring the Wound cost.
- **Spiritualist:** An exorcist may add \square to any check they make to determine if a character is possessed or a visitant.

Equipment:

- **Ceremonial dagger:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Accurate 1
- **Thick overcoat:** +1 soak.

FOOTPAD (MINION)

Bandits and highwaymen preying on merchants in the Wastes, or common criminals stalking the back alleys and seedy neighborhoods of protectorate townships and city-states.



Skills (Group Only): Coercion, Melee, Ranged (Mech.), Skulduggery

Talents:

- None.

Abilities:

- **Eat the Rich:** Footpads add $\wedge\wedge$ to any combat check they make against wealthy or apparently wealthy opponents.

Equipment:

- **Light crossbow:** Ranged (Mech.); 6 Damage; Critical 3; Range (Medium); Pierce 1, Prepare 1
- **Dirk:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1.

INCANDESCENT (NEMESIS)

A mage in the final stages of Incandescence. Most of the flesh is gone, and now the spirit is ripe for dissolution. It burns brightly in the visible spectra, hazing the pitiful, withered remains of the Incandescent's body in a cobalt glow. Their very presence chills the air. Plants wither and animals flee, but humans and daemons alike cannot resist the allure of a soul so radiant: every Incandescent has a small coterie of non-Incandescent thralls, who follow their mad masters until either they or the Incandescent perish.

Every Incandescent is preoccupied with craftsmanship and creation, though that creation is usually nonsensical and always harmful to those around them: rampaging constructs, chains of thaumaturgical sigils, maddening writings. Despite their obvious intelligence and skill, the Incandescent are terrible conversationalists. When they deign to speak, their words are the incoherent ravings of madmen. Each Incandescent's ravings are unique and usually related to their Great Work, but most of them seem to be obsessed with the "Invisible Sun" that shines "behind the world".



Skills: Brawl 3, Knowledge (Old World) 2, Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) 4, Mechanics 5, Thaumaturgy 4

Talents:

- **Adversary 2:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character twice.

Abilities:

- **Radiant Soul:** The Incandescent can make an **Average (◆◆) Willpower check** as an action. If successful, all opponents within Long range who can see the Incandescent suffer 1 strain per ✨. If the check generates ☹, the Incandescent may choose to immobilize one target; if the check generates ▲▲, the Incandescent can Stagger a target until the end of the next round. Staggered targets must spend their free maneuver moving toward the Incandescent.
- **Freezing Aura:** A character who begins their turn within Short range of the Incandescent suffers 1 Wound and 2 Strain.
- **Gnosis:** Once per encounter, an Incandescent can spend a Story Point to reroll the dice pool after making a check.
- **Logos:** An Incandescent reduces the difficulty of all Thaumaturgy checks they make by 1, to a minimum of 1.
- **Dissolution:** When the Incandescent dies, all characters in Short range must make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Discipline check**. A character suffers 1 strain for every uncancelled

✘ and ☹ generated on this check; on a ☹, the affected character must make a **Daunting (◆◆◆◆) fear check** as the last scraps of the Incandescent's fevered essence tries to take root in their mind.

Equipment:

- **Fists and teeth:** Brawl; Damage 5; Crit 4; Range (Engaged); Inaccurate 1, Vicious 1.

INQUISITOR (NEMESIS)

The Mandate's official authority does not extend beyond the borders of its lands, but its Inquisition is not quite so constrained by political boundaries. Their agents travel wide, serving as spies, investigators, and — on rare and grievous occasion — assassins.



Skills: Cool 2, Coercion 3, Deception 3, Knowledge (Scholarly) 3, Ranged (Mech.) 3, Stealth 3, Skulduggery 2, Streetwise 3, Vigilance 2

Talents:

- **Adversary 3:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character three times.
- **Scathing Tirade:** The Inquisitor may use this talent to make an **Average (◆◆) Coercion check**. For each ✨ the check generates, one enemy within short range suffers 1 strain. For each ▲, one enemy affected by Scathing Tirade suffers 1 additional strain.

Abilities:

- **Trained Eye:** If a Charm or Deception check targeting the Inquisitor generates any uncancelled ☹, the Inquisitor may spend a Story Point as an out-of-turn incidental to double the number of ☹ generated.
- **Spy Network:** An Inquisitor may spend ☹☹☹ or ☹ from any check a character makes in public to learn their present location.
- **Turn the Screws:** An Inquisitor adds ✨ to all Coercion checks they make.

Equipment:

- **Sword cane:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range (Engaged); Concealed 1, Defensive 1.
- **Wrist-mounted poison dart gun:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 6; Critical 3; Range (Short); Subtle, Limited Ammo 3; upon a successful attack target must make a **Hard (◆◆◆) Resilience check**, suffering 4 damage on failure. If the check generates ☹☹ or ☹, the target must repeat the check next round on their turn.
- **Drab coat:** soak +1.

FAITHFUL NOBLE (RIVAL)

An individual of higher standing, blessed by the Name to be born into a position of power and privilege. Or so they believe themselves to be.



Skills: Charm 3, Knowledge (Scholarly) 2, Leadership 2, Melee 2, Negotiation 2.

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.
- **Scathing Tirade:** The Faithful Noble may use this talent to make an **Average** (◆◆) **Coercion** check. For each ☆ the check generates, one enemy within short range suffers 1 strain. For each ♠, one enemy affected by Scathing Tirade suffers 1 additional strain.

Abilities:

- **Commanding Presence:** Once per encounter, a Faithful noble can spend a Story Point to add ✕ or ♣♣ to another character's next social skill check.

Equipment:

- **Heirloom sword:** Melee; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1.
- **Fine clothing:** soak +1.

GHOUL (RIVAL)

A genial, smiling stranger who happens to be an undead abomination with few desires beyond befriending and later cannibalizing almost every human they meet. They're almost impossible to distinguish from ordinary, living people — the only thing that marks their wretched nature are the arcane tattoos on their limbs and torsos, which they hide under clothing and bandages.



Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Charm 1, Deception 2, Leadership 2, Resilience 1

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.

Abilities:

- **Strength of Body:** As an incidental, a ghoul may suffer 1 Wound to add ☆ and ♠ to their next Brawl or Athletics check.

- **Bloodthirst:** As an action, a ghoul may make a bite attack (Brawl; Damage 4; Critical 4; Range (Engaged), Vicious 1) and heal a number of Wounds equal to the damage inflicted with the bite.
- **Undead:** Does not need to eat, breathe, or drink; immune to poisons and toxins and can survive in cold or underwater conditions.

Equipment:

- **Honed dagger:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Pierce 2
- **Winter coat:** soak +1.

GUARD (MINION)

Law and order in theory, a uniformed protection racket in practice.



Skills: (Group Only) Coercion, Melee, Vigilance

Talents:

- None.

Abilities:

- **Reinforcements!** Once per encounter, guards can spend ♣♣ or ✕ from an opponent's check to summon a Minion group of 3 more guards.

Equipment:

- **Standard-issue sword:** Melee; Damage 6; Crit 3; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1
- **Uniform cuirass:** +1 soak.
- Badge and manacles.

GUARD CAPTAIN (RIVAL)

Officers in charge of a detachment of regular guards, the night watch, or the personal security of a wealthy family. These individuals are often intimately acquainted with the specifics and peculiarities of their respective jurisdictions, though their position as law enforcement and authority figures makes them untrustworthy in the eyes of many.



Skills: Charm 1, Coercion 1, Leadership 2, Melee 2, Ranged (Mech.), 2 Streetwise 3, Vigilance 1.

Talents:

- None.

Abilities:

- **Mean Streets:** A guard captain adds ☼ and ☾ to all Streetwise checks they make.
- **Dubious Evidence:** A guard captain can spend ☾☾☾ or ☼ from any character's check to find or create tentative evidence of a crime, real or imagined — not enough to convict, but enough to arouse suspicion. The precise nature of this crime depends entirely on the environment and the ongoing narrative, and can be anything from petty theft or tax fraud to serial murder.

Equipment:

- **Standard-issue sword:** Melee; Damage 6; Crit 3; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1.
- **Crossbow:** Ranged (Mech); Dam 7; Crit 3; Range (Medium); Pierce 1, Prepare 1
- **Captain's cuirass:** +1 soak.
- Official badge.

MAGE ADEPT (RIVAL)

A professional thaumaturge who graduated from a university or pursued a course of self-study with enough pig-headed determination to gain a degree of magical prowess.



Skills: Discipline 2, Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) 2, Knowledge (Scholarly) 2, Mechanics 2, Thaumaturgy 3

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.

Abilities:

- **Adversary Spellcasting 3:** A mage adept can cast 3 spells per encounter without incurring the Wound cost.

Equipment:

- **Dagger:** Melee; Damage 4; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Accurate 1.
- **Fine coat:** +1 defense.

MERCENARY (MINION)

"Mercenaries are disunited, thirsty for power, undisciplined, and disloyal...they have no fear of God, they do not keep faith with their fellow men; they avoid defeat just as long as they avoid battle; in peacetime you are despoiled by them and in wartime by the enemy."

- Niccolo Machiavelli, *The Prince*



Skills: (Group Only) Athletics, Brawl, Melee, Ranged (Mech.)

Talents:

- None

Abilities:

- **Cowardice:** Without a Mercenary Veteran or Captain present or when outnumbered, mercenaries upgrade all incoming Coercion checks once.
- **Hired Muscle:** Mercenaries add ♠ to all combat checks targeting an opponent they have been hired to kill or capture.

Equipment:

- **Sword:** Melee; 6 Damage; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1
- **Crossbow:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 7; Critical 2; Range (Long); Pierce 1.
- **Brigandine:** +1 soak, +1 defense.

MERCENARY VETERAN (RIVAL)

Head and shoulders above rank-and-file killers, mercenary veterans carry state of the art weaponry and collect twice the pay of their unseasoned counterparts.



Skills: Athletics 2, Coercion 2, Brawl 1, Melee 2, Ranged (Mech.) 3

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.
- **Quick Draw:** Once per round, may draw or holster an easily accessible weapon as an incidental.

Abilities:

- **Hired Muscle:** Mercenary veterans add ♠ to all combat checks targeting an opponent they have been hired to kill or capture.

Equipment:

- **Pyromantic blunderbuss:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 6; Critical 3; Range [Extreme]; Accurate 1, Burn 3, Limited Ammo 2.
- **Sword:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1.
- **Brigandine:** +1 soak, +1 defense.

MERCENARY CAPTAIN (NEMESIS)

The commanding officers of the numerous free companies plying their bloody trade on the shores of the Byssarian Seas are as skilled in matters of money as they are in the matters of war. Many of these captains have a reputation for cunning and pragmatism, and care little for battlefield valor. They are also infamous for their capriciousness: the loyalty of a mercenary is directly proportional to the generosity of their employer, and very few captains see anything objectionable about defecting to the richer side in the middle of a war. Still, there's some romance to the profession — renowned captains are larger-than-life characters, men and women who live sumptuously, dress ostentatiously, and rarely speak about the burning and pillaging in public.



Skills: Coercion 3, Cool 3, Deception 3, Leadership 2, Negotiation 3, Ranged (Mech.) 3, Melee 3, Resilience 2, Skulduggery 3

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.
- **School of the Rose:** Use Agility instead of Brawn to determine the dice pool when making Melee checks.
- **Vicious Thorns:** All Melee attacks gain the Vicious 2 quality, or increase their Vicious quality by 2.
- **Scathing Tirade (Improved):** The Mercenary Captain may use this talent to make an **Average** (◆◆) **Coercion check**. For each ☆ the check generates, one enemy within short range suffers 1 strain. For each ♠, one enemy affected by Scathing Tirade suffers 1 additional strain. Additionally, enemies affected by this add ■ to all skill checks they make for 3 rounds.

Abilities:

- **Get 'em!:** A mercenary captain may spend a maneuver giving orders to all Minions and Rivals under their command in Short range, granting them ■ on their next check.

Equipment:

- **Arbalest:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 9; Critical 2; Range (Long); Prepare 1, Pierce 2.
- **Fine sword:** Melee; Damage 6; Critical 3; Range (Engaged), Defensive 1.
- **Cuirass:** +1 soak, +2 defense.
- **Ego:** bloated.

MYRNEAN RAIDER (MINION)

Unlike ordinary pirates, those who sail under the red hawk of Myrnos rarely, if ever, fight to kill. They fight to capture — the Wolf Gate of Myrnos hungers for souls, and each and every one of them must bring back one sacrificial captive before the end of the year. If enough of them do not, the Gate will close and their Republic will die. As is the custom in Myrnos, all Myranean raiders wear masks — carved and painted war-faces, in their case; grinning ogres and snarling gorgons.



Skills (Group Only): Coercion, Coordination, Melee, Ranged (Archaic), Stealth

Talents:

- **None.**

Abilities:

- **War-face:** Myranean raiders add ♠ ♠ to all Coercion checks they make.
- **Net:** As an action, a Myranean raider may make a net attack (Melee; Damage 3; Critical 6; Range (Engaged); Ensnare 2, Knockdown).

Equipment:

- **Spear:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 2; Range (Engaged); Defensive 1.
- **Shortbow:** Ranged (Arch.); Damage 7; Critical 3; Range (Medium); Unwieldy 3; Subtle.

POSSESSED BERSERKER (RIVAL)

Most daemons possess mortal vessels for pleasure of one kind or another, and some think that bloodshed is the finest of all pleasures. These spirits have nothing to fear from death. They face it, court it, laugh in its face. Many of their fellows call them mad, but they laugh at that, too. Only a fool sees madness where there is only joy.



Skills: Melee 2, Knowledge (Chthonic) 2, Pyromancy 3, Ranged (Archaic) 1

Talents:

- **None.**

Abilities:

- **Adversary Casting 1:** A possessed berserker may cast 1 spell without incurring the wound cost.
- **Final Conflagration:** If a possessed berserker who is engaged with an opponent has suffered more than 10 wounds, they may choose to sacrifice themselves as an incidental. Their next (and last) attack deals an additional 6 damage and has a Burn quality of 2.
- **Dauntless:** Berserkers upgrade the ability of Discipline checks they make to resist fear or intimidation twice.

Equipment:

- **Axe:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Vicious 2.
- **Javelins:** Ranged (Arch.); Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Short); Accurate 1, Limited Ammo 2.
- **Furs:** +1 defense.

POSSESSED MONKEY (MINION)

Whoever imported and released monkeys in the Byssarian is second only to the Adversary in their wickedness, and the monkey itself is beyond a doubt an invention of the Devil — consider the eyes, the hands, the *buttocks!* Would the Name have made such a crude and blasphemous parody of the human form? It's no wonder that imps, the lowliest of all devils, possess them so often.

Unlike good Faithful folk, mercenary captains *love* possessed monkeys. They are a cheap, disposable, and renewable workforce. They breed quickly, and gladly eat the corpses of their fellow monkeys if times are scarce. More importantly, they're very strong for their size, and very nimble; smart enough to dig latrines, climb the walls of besieged cities and wind up runelock cannons, yet stupid enough to do all of the above for a bottle of rotgut spirits and a bag of peanuts. Everything one could possibly wish for in a soldier! Such a pity so many of them struggle to follow even the most basic of battle plans.

Aside from more practical considerations, a troop of monkeys greatly enhances human morale and combat performance. They simultaneously remind the rank-and-file that a monkey could do the bulk of their work (the fear of unemployment stops the troops from asking for higher wages) and bring a degree of levity into the otherwise dreary life of a soldier on campaign (monkeys are funny, and betting on drunk monkey fights is a time-honored tradition). Some companies even make little uniform jackets for their monkeys, mostly to be able to distinguish them from all the other monkeys on the battlefield.

Possessed monkeys who have escaped military service often take up a life of crime. Like all possessed animals, possessed monkeys can understand and mimic human speech.



Skills (Group Only): Brawl, Coordination, Skulduggery, Ranged (Mech.)

Talents:

- **None.**

Abilities:

- **Climber:** Possessed monkeys may move up or down vertical surfaces, across ropes, and otherwise impassable structures.
- **Monkey See, Monkey Do:** If a possessed monkey observes a human, visitant or simian superior or commanding officer perform a skill or combat check before its turn, it adds one symbol of each type generated on the superior's roll to its next check of the same type, directed at the same target. If the superior's check generates a ☉ or ☿, the possessed monkey must add a ☼ or ✕ instead.

- **Silhouette 0**

Equipment:

- **Fists and fangs:** Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range (Engaged); Pierce 1, Vicious 1.
- **Tiny crossbow:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Short); Pierce 1, Prepare 1.
- Ratty uniform.

POSSESSED MONKEY SERGEANT (RIVAL)

Large monkeys who display an aptitude for leadership (i.e. bullying other monkeys) can rise to the rank of sergeant, and must be addressed as such by their human comrades-in-arms. This is to ensure that enlisted men, corporals, and other lowly forms of life don't experience undue feelings of superiority. A monkey sergeant's buttocks are larger and redder than those of his subordinates, which is how one can tell that he is a sergeant. Like all possessed animals, monkey sergeants can understand and crudely replicate human speech.

Outside a military hierarchy, a monkey sergeant is a monkey boss, a crafty and enterprising individual at the head of a gang of simian criminals.



Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Coordination 1, Leadership 1, Ranged (Mech.) 2, Skulduggery 1

Talents:

- **Silhouette 0.**

Abilities:

- **Climber:** A monkey sergeant may move up or down vertical surfaces, across ropes, and otherwise impassable structures.
- **Brass Monkey:** Upgrade the difficulty of all checks targeting the monkey sergeant once for every group of 3 possessed monkeys within Short range of him. If the check fails, one individual monkey dies or is incapacitated in a comical manner.
- **Gorilla Warfare:** A monkey sergeant may spend ☠☠ or ☠ on an opponent's check to summon one possessed monkey as an out-of-turn incidental.

Equipment:

- **Fists and fangs:** Brawl; Damage 5; Critical 4; Range (Engaged); Pierce 1, Vicious 1
- **Tiny crossbow:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Short); Pierce 1, Prepare 1.
- **Monkey sergeant's jacket:** soak +1.
- **Buttocks (colorful).**

SCHOLAR (RIVAL)

Academics, lecturers, graduate students, and other layabouts spending the taxpayer's coin on frivolous nonsense like mathematics and the liberal arts.



Skills: Charm 1, Cool 1, Knowledge (Scholarly) 3, Knowledge (Old World) 2, Mechanics 1, Medicine 1

Talents:

- **None.**

Abilities:

- **Imperfect Comprehension:** Scholars add 1 ✨ and ☠☠ to any check made to decipher or comprehend ancient or encoded writing.
- **University Affiliation:** While in a city with a university or library, a scholar reduces the difficulty of all Knowledge (Scholarly) checks by 1.

Equipment:

- **Dagger:** Melee; Damage 3; Critical 3; Range (Engaged).
- **Scholarly vestments:** +1 defense.

SULFURITE GENTRY (RIVAL)

The upper crust of Sulfurite society — someone who either earned their position at the top of the social hierarchy, or just poisoned and blackmailed their way upwards.



Skills: Charm 2, Cool 2, Deception 3, Melee 1, Skulduggery 2

Talents:

- **Clever Retort:** Once per encounter, your character may use this talent to add automatic ☠☠ to another character's social skill check.

Abilities:

- **Everything I Own Is Poisoned:** A member of the gentry can spend a Story Point to retroactively declare that one Silhouette 0 object in their power or possession is poisoned; one character who touched it in the last round must make a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Resilience** check or suffer 4 Wounds and become Staggered until the end of their next turn.
- **Vicious Gossip:** A member of the gentry can spend a Story Point to become aware of a piece of incriminating or personal information about another character.

Equipment:

- **Ornamental rapier:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Pierce 2.
- **Fashionable clothing:** +1 soak.

OUTRIDER (RIVAL)

There are no better archers than those who come from the Wastes. Those who question this truth in particularly stupid ways often find themselves trampled under the hooves of a horse or looking, in shock, at the half-dozen arrow wounds that weren't there a second ago.



Skills: Melee 2, Ranged (Arch.) 2, Riding 3, Resilience 1, Survival 2

Talents:

- **Hamstring Shot:** Once per round, Outrider may use this talent to perform a ranged combat check against one non-vehicle target within range of the weapon used. If the check is successful, halve the damage inflicted by the attack (before reducing damage by the target's soak).

The target is immobilized until the end of its next turn.

- **Steady Aim:** No penalty from using ranged weapons while mounted.

Abilities:

- **Born in the Saddle:** When an outrider directs their mount, the mount may perform an action and maneuver and is not limited to using its maneuvers to move.

Equipment:

- **Light spear:** Melee; Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Engaged); Accurate 1, Defensive 1.
- **Shortbow:** Ranged (Arch.); Damage 7; Critical 4; Range (Medium); Unwieldy 3, Subtle.
- **Quilted coat:** +1 soak.
- War mount.

TABNIT OF ITHOBAAL (NEMESIS)

One of the most celebrated and prolific theatrical directors, satirists and playwrights of recent years, Tabnit of Ithobaal is a reclusive genius with a wicked sense of humor and a great fondness for travel. He is also a flesh-eating ghoul. Although he appears to be in his late thirties, he is at least three times as old and far more dangerous than his unassuming appearance may suggest. Over the course of his long life, Tabnit has written and directed under multiple aliases, faking his death once his appearance could no longer match his supposed age, going to ground for a few years, and resurfacing in another city as a playwright or director who then “rediscovers” a “lost” theatrical masterpiece attributed to one of his dead selves. His talent is immense and quite literally unnatural: he was mediocre at best when he started his journey in the world of theater, but undeath and a steady diet of poets, actors and the occasional mage have changed that. He is, however, starting to get bored with his current fare and profession, and is considering switching to painters and sculptors instead.



Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Charm 2, Deception 3, Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) 1, Melee 2, Stealth 2, Skulduggery 2, Thaumaturgy 2

Talents:

- **Adversary 1:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.
- **Clever Retort:** Once per encounter, your character may use this talent to add automatic ☹☹ to another character’s social skill check.

Abilities:

- **Dread Hunger:** At the start of a combat encounter, all opponents must make a Hard (◆◆◆) Fear check.

- **Bloodthirst:** As an action, Tabnit may make a bite attack (Brawl; Dam 5; Critical 4; Range (Engaged), Pierce 2, Vicious 1) and heal a number of Wounds equal to the damage inflicted with the bite.

- **Soul Eater:** After inflicting Wounds with a bite attack, Tabnit may add ■ to his next skill, combat or magic check. If Tabnit incapacitates a character with a bite attack, he upgrades the ability of his next skill, combat, or magic check once.

- **Undead:** Tabnit does not need to eat, breathe, or drink; he is immune to poisons and toxins.

Equipment:

- **Sword cane:** Melee; Damage 6; Critical 2; Range (Engaged).
- **Fine coat:** +1 soak.
- Latest manuscript
- Genuine and utterly disarming smile.

YASMIN SARRAF (NEMESIS)

One of the greatest war mages of her generation, Dr. Sarraf spent her youth in Hell, serving as support and artillery for a detachment of the Knights Adamant. Having since retired from a life in the field, she presides over the Serpent Gate in Pagamea, serving as both its commander and its last line of defense. She gives the occasional lecture at the Royal University from time to time. Her students are terrified.



Skills: Cool 2, Coercion 3, Discipline 3, Knowledge (Thaumaturgical) 3, Knowledge (Scholarly) 2, Leadership 2, Ranged (Mechanical) 1, Thaumaturgy 4

Talents:

- **Adversary 2:** Upgrade the difficulty of combat checks targeting this character once.

Abilities:

- **Sarraf’s Shockwave:** Dr. Sarraf may choose one target in Short or Medium range and make a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Thaumaturgy check**. If this check is successful, this attack inflicts 6+ 1 Damage per uncancelled ☼, with the Blast 3 and Concussive 1 properties.
- **Mesmerize:** Dr. Sarraf can make a **Hard** (◆◆◆) **Thaumaturgy check** to captivate all hostile targets in Medium range, Disorienting and dealing 3 Strain per turn to each target until the end of her next turn.

Equipment:

- **Hand crossbow:** Ranged (Mech.); Damage 5; Critical 3; Range (Medium); Pierce 1, Prepare 1.
- **Sigilwood armor:** soak +2; upgrade all Thaumaturgy checks targeting Dr. Sarraf once more.

SUNFALL

A THOUSAND YEARS AGO, THE SUN PERISHED.

To cope with a cooling world, a great empire staged a successful invasion of the spirit world, captured a demon prince, and imprisoned him in an artificial Second Sun.

It has been almost five centuries since the Second Sun shattered and its furious prisoner bore down on the world like a comet. Now, the ruins of antiquity dot these frozen, starlit lands as human civilization, resilient as ever, thrives among the desolation. Great city-states shelter and protect their inhabitants through tithes and pacts with the spirit world or by waging war against it, and foolhardy daredevils strike out into the Wastes in search of riches and glory -- or seek adventure within the confines of city walls.

Sunfall is a post-apocalyptic Gothic fantasy setting for the Genesys Role Playing System. In this 104 page sourcebook, you will find new rules, mechanics and options for character creation, advice for Game Masters, and a rich, baroque world of war, magic, and intrigue.

- 8 new Archetypes, including the Visitant, an otherworldly spirit in a stolen body, for use in Sunfall or other settings.
- 13 new Careers, many of which fit seamlessly into steampunk or fantasy settings.
- 42 new Talents, 2 new spells, 3 novel weapon properties, 2 new Craftsmanship options and a multitude of new items.
- Rules for duelling, demonic possession, and exorcism.
- A map and detailed descriptions of the lands surrounding the Byssarian Seas, including politics, a major religion, 10 city-states, and multiple story hooks for Players and Game Masters alike.
- New Adversaries, including (but not limited to) possessed monkeys.

