

ASUNDER

THE KEEPER'S TOME

TABLETOP ROLEPLAYING IN
A WORLD WITHOUT METAL



ASUNDER

THE KEEPER'S TOME

**A GAME BY THE
FAILED SUPERHEROES
CLUB**

**THE WORLD OF ASUNDER
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System Mechanics, Game Play Rules, and the explanation for the *Asunder* table top roleplaying game adapted from the table top roleplaying game *Shadow of the Demon Lord*. "Game System" under license from Schwalb Entertainment LLC.

Hardcover ISBN: 978-1-954720-03-9. Digital ISBN: 978-1-954720-07-7

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FOREWORD

“Relax,” they said. “It’s just a game...” they said. They didn’t bother to mention that I would be submerged by my greatest enemy: my own mind.

I sighed. I took a deep breath, made peace with my maker, and began to describe the situation in which my players had found themselves. “You have discovered that the tunnel you are in is actually a giant worm, and the ‘stalls’ are giant cysts and pustules on the worm’s interior wall. You are reminded of that one night when you writhe up against a crustacean-covered living pirate ship, both you and the ship reaching climax at the same time. But you have no more time to fantasize because you see a humanoid formed of wriggling worms with a gaping, oozing mouth approaching you. It’s the leader of the bloody death cult that you stole out from under him. You can’t be too sure, but something tells you he wants it back.”

Asunder is not my first RPG; nor will it be my last. But it will go down in history as the first RPG to give me permission. Permission to go stranger, deeper, and darker than I’ve ever gone before as a Game Master (or, in *Asunder* lingo, as a Keeper). Permission to basically let my freak flag fly.

As a Keeper, my first priority (on paper, and that I will repeat to anyone who asks) is to advance and elevate the players’ experience; but I have another, more selfish directive when I design a session of RPG gameplay. I want to have fun, too. That’s why (pre-*Asunder*), I tended towards silly comedic antics. Like a grand alchemist, I transmuted gritty, rough, sacrificial, horrific, and sexual storylines into lighthearted shenanigans, galvanized with fart jokes and one-liners. And yet, here I am, willing to admit I was wrong. I love *Asunder* exactly because it encourages and celebrates the stuff of stories I once avoided.

I owe my enjoyment of the game solely to the craftspeople of *Asunder*. They are all game-lovers, game-builders, and even creators of television shows about games. They are storytellers at their core, and therefore front-row witnesses to the answer of the fateful question, “What makes games fun?” They’ve put their knowledge together and written not only a game, but an entire world that sparks the big kind of creative magic... the kind where infinite “What if’s...?”s play around in your subconscious.

What is fun? I can almost hear *Asunder* herself, humbly answering, “Me.”

Without gods or metal, *Asunder* catapults your mind into mutating the world you know into horrible, terrifying, and strangely beautiful amalgamations. It begs you to take inanimate objects and change their composition to organic material: something that is alive, something that was alive, or--my favorite option--parts of things that are or were alive. It truly is a playground built to intrigue and terrify.

The world of *Asunder* is so rich that the game rules are secondary to the story of the Seekers, the protagonists of the game. Its mechanics are eloquently simple, and every single one of them has a narrative in-game purpose. Whether you’re an RPG savant or a first-time player, the sourcebooks have everything you need. And no matter your level of expertise, *Asunder* urges you to use the mechanics as you wish, at times merely as a suggestion or a stepping stone that will lead you to more adventure.

In your games, you can look forward to beginning play in the middle of a threatening situation; a dire need to keep up with an unrelenting pace, infinite sources of suspense, unforgiving battles that will have Seekers running away to try to escape certain death; harsh ideals of groups to match the harsh environments, and one of my favorite

Asunder-isms: moral ambiguity, specifically around what humans will do to survive. You’ll never want to stop playing. For those of you entering this world, I wish you steadfast heart, a weird spirit, and superb intestinal fortitude.

Fantastically yours,

Amy Vorpahl



WELCOME, KEEPER!

If you're reading this book, you've probably already read the *Seeker's Guide*; if not, go read that book first, as it contains rules you need to understand in order to run a game of *Asunder*. In particular, familiarize yourself with Seeker Creation, Playing the Game, Combat, and Novice Paths; you can read other rules as the need arises. Some of the advice in this book may be familiar if you've read Rob Schwalb's *Shadow of the Demon Lord*, because some of the advice and rules here are adapted from his excellent game. *Asunder* and *Shadow of the Demon Lord* are similar games, so many of the same rules apply to both. *Asunder* has some unique characteristics, though, so you'll find plenty that will be of interest here.

This book is for you, the Keeper. It's designed as an aid and guide to help you understand the world of *Asunder* more fully, and to use the rules to best effect in play. In its pages, you'll find the following chapters.

CHAPTER 1: THE KEEPER

This chapter contains advice and rules to help make your role as the Keeper easier and more rewarding. It explains the purpose of the Keeper in the game, what your core responsibilities are, and how to run the best game of *Asunder* you can.

CHAPTER 2: THE WORLD OF ASUNDER

In this chapter, you'll learn about the world and its peoples, the history of the various lands of *Asunder*, and what it's like to live in this world.

CHAPTER 3: FACTIONS

Humans aren't the only sentient beings who live in the world of *Asunder*. This chapter details other kinds of people your Seekers might encounter, such as the serpentine Naga and powerful demons.

CHAPTER 4: CHAOS AND PURE LIGHT

Chaos is the primal force of creation and destruction, and Pure Light is a massive shaft of burning light that travels around the Mainland continent. This chapter will tell you how they work.

CHAPTER 5: FORBIDDEN LORE

There's a difference between what your Seekers know and what's actually true. While chapters up to this point include a significant amount of knowledge the Seekers might have at their disposal, this chapter contains the secrets of the world, things no Seeker yet knows.

CHAPTER 6: BESTIARY

From monsters to brigands to Chaos-wielders, you'll find statistics for the various threats the Seekers will come across in this chapter.

CHAPTER 7: THE JOURNEY BEGINS

This chapter contains information on how to build your own adventures in *Asunder*, and techniques for running different kinds of conflicts.



CHAPTER ONE THE KEEPER

As the Keeper, your role in a game of *Asunder* is unique. While the other players at the table each portray a Seeker, making decisions and taking actions on that character's behalf, your job is to portray *the rest of the world*. That probably sounds difficult. If you're new to RPGs, it may even sound impossible. Don't worry, it's not as hard as it seems, and it's actually incredibly rewarding. We'll show you how to do it.

THE KEEPER'S RESPONSIBILITIES

As the Keeper, you have many roles within the game. You portray all of the non-player characters (NPCs) in the game as well as all of its monsters. You get to say when the sun rises and sets, how fast time passes, and you have power over life and death. The Keeper is tremendously powerful but, as with all power, it comes with responsibility.

NARRATOR

While you're not the *only* one at the table who gets to narrate things, a lot of the narration does rest on your shoulders. You control the NPCs; you decide what they say and do. You set the scene, give the Seekers a reason to care about what's happening in the world, and provide the call to action. It's your job to get them involved.

REFEREE

In any group, there are disagreements. That's okay; when disagreements happen, it's your job to try to adjudicate those disputes in a way that's fair and satisfying. You'll need to know the rules well, because you'll need to apply them in a way that feels consistent.

Occasionally, you'll have serious disagreements at the table—conflicts between players rather than between Seekers. When this happens, the best course of action is usually to halt the game and have a few one-on-one conversations to try to smooth things out and come to a resolution. Remember that one of the core responsibilities of every person at the table is to make sure that the game is fun. Sometimes you'll need to remind the other players of that. When all else fails, it's okay to take a break from the game and come back to it when tempers have cooled.

ADVOCATE

You control the opposition the Seekers face, but that doesn't make you their enemy. You're not trying to kill them, you're trying to give them a challenge they can either overcome or run from. Sometimes their victories will cost them.

Sometimes their losses will teach them. Through all of it, it's your job to be your Seekers' biggest fan, to urge them on and give them reasons to keep fighting. Push them to the limit, make them work for their victories, but smile and laugh with them when they overcome seemingly impossible odds, and make sure their victories feel rewarding.

TEACHER

As the Keeper, you probably know the game better than anyone else at the table, and you almost certainly know the secrets of the world better. As such, it's your job to teach your Seekers how to play the game, what the world is like, and how *your* version of *Asunder* is different from anyone else's. Be patient and, again, be your Seekers' fan. Don't tell them what to do; teach them how to do it themselves.

WORLD BUILDER

There's a lot of setting information in the next few chapters, but remember that this is *your* version of the world of *Asunder*. The setting information provided in this book is designed to give you ideas, to help you run a great game, but it is *not* intended to be a limitation. You don't need to memorize all the histories and place names, you don't have to worry about whether or not some decision you make at the table is "canonical." What you have to do is portray the place and the peoples in a consistent and believable way. Give the NPCs depth, describe locations vividly, take notes about the decisions you make and ensure they circle back into play later. The more consistent your world feels, the more your Seekers will enjoy playing around in it.

THE KEEPER'S AGENDA

Now that you know your responsibilities, it's time for you to learn how to put them into practice. Your agenda is just that: a set of guidelines you can use to portray a vivid, consistent world that challenges your players and teaches them what *Asunder* is like. Whenever you're at a loss for what to do in a given situation, fall back on one of the items of your agenda and use it as a springboard toward the next cool story beat.

PUT THEM THROUGH THE WRINGER

Asunder is a harsh world, often brutal. Death can be quick and messy or slow and agonizing, but it comes to everyone

sooner or later. Show your Seekers how brutal the world is. Kill without warning, destroy without mercy. This does *not* mean kill and destroy your Seekers without warning or mercy. You can certainly send dangerous threats against them and make their victories hard-fought, or even force them to flee, but arbitrary player death isn't fun for anyone. Rather, inflict these terrible fates upon your NPCs, *especially* NPCs the Seekers have grown fond of.

MAKE THE WORLD WEIRD

Asunder is not like Earth. There are huge mushroom forests, shafts of burning Pure Light that move about the land with inscrutable purpose, sentient insects, mutated pirates, symbiotic thorn-spitting plants, and people who can jump hundreds of yards. The world is weird—show it to your players! When you describe a new NPC, think about what odd little detail you could give them to make them an *Asunder* NPC. When you describe a place, imagine how that place differs from a similar place in our world. Add tentacles, spores, chitin, extra arms, strange colors, odd smells, weird behaviors, and whatever else springs to mind.

KILL YOUR DARLINGS

This is related to the first agenda item. Remember that your NPCs exist to facilitate the stories of the Seekers; they're not the main characters themselves. As much as you may love an NPC, resist the temptation to put them in the spotlight for too long. Seekers may kill your beloved NPCs, and that's fine. Good even. Let it happen. Kill your NPCs yourself if you have to, if it enhances the drama and drives home the brutality of the world. NPCs are easy come, easy go. You can always make more.

FORESHADOW THREATS ON THE HORIZON

Your Seekers need goals. They need things to work toward or against. Foreshadowing some big threat can be a good way to give them something to strive for. It can also be a good way to hammer home the consequences of doing nothing or to push them into action.

MAKE IT EPIC

Asunder is a world of big, epic forces and powerful individuals. Shafts of light a mile wide. Enormous, centuries-old storms. Cities in the sky. Armies of the dead. Sometimes it can be good to take an idea you have and just make it...bigger. More fantastical, weirder, more awesome. Don't overuse this technique, but every once in a while, maybe the bodyguard your Seekers have to get past really is 20 feet tall.

PUSH TOWARDS ESCALATION

First, provide opportunities for your Seekers to escalate situations based on their Fatal Flaws. Remind them about their Fatal Flaws, and the Seeker points they can earn by

falling victim to them. You can also escalate situations yourself. Maybe the black-market dealer they're talking to takes offense at something they say and sends her bodyguards after them. Maybe they all get arrested and thrown into the arena to work off their crimes. Escalate toward conflict, and use conflict to create new, fun stories to tell.

PROVIDE MOMENTS OF RESPITE

It can't be all escalations and brutality all the time. *Asunder*, for all its harshness, is also a place of astounding beauty. Show that to your Seekers. Give them brief periods of time to enjoy it. Whether you're describing the chaotic glory of the far-off God's Eye storm, or your Seekers are walking through a cave lit by tiny, airborne, bioluminescent spores, give them moments to enjoy just how amazing the world can be.

STEAL LIBERALLY

When preparing a game—and while running it—don't be afraid to steal anything and everything you can. Think about cool places you've visited or seen in magazines or websites and fill your world with such locales. Draw on stories and adventures from other games, characters from books and films, science fiction or fantasy, comics, even a TV commercial—whatever makes you excited. Steal ideas that are amazingly cool or nightmarishly awful. All these things can be the seeds of great stories. Plant them in your game and watch them grow into wonderful, terrifying, strange, and memorable experiences.

DECIDING WHAT HAPPENS

When a player describes an activity, it's up to you to decide on one of three possible outcomes:

- ☞ **Success:** it happens.
- ☞ **Failure:** it doesn't happen.
- ☞ **Maybe:** a roll determines success or failure.

Most tasks the characters might attempt are already covered by the game rules. Just follow the instructions to determine the outcome of the activity. If there isn't an obvious rule for resolving the activity, use the following guidelines to help you make a decision.

USING COMMON SENSE

Let common sense be your guide above all. If the activity is something that an ordinary person could perform in a reasonable time, then the outcome should be a success. Similarly, if the described activity is simply impossible—attempting to punch through a 10-foot-thick wall of solid stone, swim up a waterfall, or eat a boulder—then the outcome should be automatic failure.

If you're not sure whether the activity should succeed, consider the circumstances of the attempt. If all of the following are true, the activity should succeed automatically.

- ☞ The character attempting the activity is under no time constraint.
- ☞ The activity is something a competent person could reasonably perform.
- ☞ There are no significant consequences if the activity fails.
- ☞ The activity does not affect another creature against its will.

If one or more of these circumstances do not apply, you might call for a roll. For example, scaling a wall in Sky City while wyvern riders are closing in has both a time constraint and a potentially lethal consequence for failure.

ATTRIBUTES AND CHARACTERISTICS

Think about what attribute or characteristic best applies to the intended activity. Then decide if a challenge roll is required or if the activity automatically succeeds or fails.

STRENGTH

Use this attribute for feats of physical power or resisting harmful effects that attack the body. Examples include breaking down a door; climbing a wall; running a long distance; swimming; and resisting disease, poison, or intoxication.

AGILITY

This attribute is best for feats of physical dexterity, tasks requiring fine control, and dodging out of harm's way. Examples include balancing on a ledge, escaping restraints, picking someone's pocket, hiding, sneaking, jumping, and avoiding a falling boulder.

INTELLECT

Use this attribute for anything that involves learning and memory, as well as resisting manipulation of (and attacks against) the mind. Examples include passing off a lie as the truth, recalling an important detail, solving a puzzle, detecting a falsehood, resisting a mind-influencing effect, and recognizing a hallucination.

WILL

This attribute covers sheer willpower or force of personality, as well as resisting attacks on the emotions or attempts at mind control. Examples include maintaining concentration in the face of a distraction, persuading a person to do something or to back down, making a friend, seduction, and resisting effects that cause fear.

PERCEPTION

This characteristic is used for anything that involves using the senses: finding a hidden creature or object, listening at a door, or spotting a clue in a room.

BOONS AND BANES

Boons make tasks easier to perform and banes make them harder. In many cases, the rules instruct you whether to apply a boon or a bane. Otherwise, consider the circumstances under which the task is attempted. As a general rule, you should grant 1 boon for each circumstance that would help the character complete the described action and impose 1 bane for each circumstance that would make it harder.

For example, a character attempting to climb a wall made of living vines that writhe and pulsate makes the Strength roll to climb with 1 bane. A character attempting to track a creature through the desert might make the roll with 1 or 2 banes, depending on the time of day, the weather, and how old the tracks are.

AUTOMATIC SUCCESS

When a Seeker attempts an activity that does not involve another creature, you can use the relevant attribute score as a guide. Unless circumstances impose banes, you can just rule that having a score of 13 or higher automatically grants a success on most tasks related to the attribute. Otherwise, a challenge roll is appropriate.

BOONS AND BANES

For each boon that applies to the situation, add 3 to the relevant attribute score needed for automatic success. For each bane, subtract 3 instead. For example, a character with Strength 14 attempting to climb up a wall should succeed most of the time. If the character has an affliction that imposes 1 or more banes, treat his or her Strength score as effectively 10 or even lower. In that situation, you should call for a Strength challenge roll unless the task is trivial and there is no pressure.

AFFECTING ANOTHER CREATURE

When the activity would affect another creature and that creature is unwilling, you should resolve the outcome with an attack roll using an appropriate attribute. Consult *Attributes and Characteristics* for guidance about choosing the attribute both for the attack and the target of the attack.

PROFESSIONS

Generally, a Seeker who has a profession related to the activity should have a good chance of succeeding. You

might rule that it automatically happens, or you might require a roll, possibly with 1 or more boons. These examples can help guide your decision.

EXAMPLE 1

A Seeker attempts to forage for food and water. The landscape is pretty desolate, so normally the character wouldn't find anything. However, let's say that the Seeker doing the foraging has a wilderness profession, such as gatherer or hunter. In this case you might call for a Perception challenge roll or simply rule that the activity is a success.

EXAMPLE 2

A Seeker attempts to communicate with a Naga who speaks only Nagese. A character who speaks Nagese can talk to the Naga for as long as she's willing to listen. If the Seeker attempts to speak to the Naga in any other language, the task simply fails. But if the Seeker attempts to communicate through pantomime and the Naga is inclined to pay attention, you might allow an Intellect challenge roll to get the gist of the message across.

EXAMPLE 3

A Seeker sits down at a table with local rubes for a game of chance. Normally, this would require an Intellect attack roll against the other characters' Intellect, or possibly against Perception if the Seeker is trying to cheat. However, if the Seeker has the gambler profession, you might grant 1 boon on the attack roll or just decide that he or she relieves the locals of a few slivers.

EXAMPLE 4

A Seeker encounters a Chaos site. Most people would have no idea what it is, but this Seeker has an academic background with a specialty in Chaos. In this case, you might allow the character to make an Intellect challenge roll for a clue about the Chaos site or to just learn a bit about its power without a roll.

SETBACKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Making most outcomes a simple success or failure ensures the game moves quickly, but sometimes these choices aren't enough to describe what's actually going on in the story. One way to address the complexities that arise in normal game play is to attach a setback to a success or an opportunity to a failure.

A **setback** means that the activity succeeds, but with a downside. For example, a marauder wants to rip through the bars of a living cage. The marauder has a high Strength score, but a simple success doesn't feel right in this situation, so you introduce a setback. You rule that she rips the bars down, but doing so causes the cage to shriek in pain; it might stun the Seekers for a round or

two, or it might summon the guards who were holding them.

Similarly, an **opportunity** is a possible workaround gained from failing at an attempt. It can be much more interesting than a simple failure. Say a vanguard tries to sneak up on an opponent in the middle of a big fight, but the roll results in a failure. The vanguard gets spotted... but happens to notice that this particular enemy is wearing the regalia of an officer and a noble. Taking him down might break the morale of the rest of the enemy party.

OPTION: PLAYER-DRIVEN SETBACKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

A fun variation on this idea is to let the player decide on an appropriate setback or opportunity, rather than making the call yourself. This option can make success and failure more interesting and opens up other avenues for the game to take.

Whenever a Seeker would make a roll with at least 1 boon, the player can forgo 1 boon to gain an opportunity if the result of the roll is a failure. Likewise, whenever a Seeker would roll with at least 1 bane, the player can forgo 1 bane to take a setback if the roll succeeds. No more than 1 boon or bane can be forgone this way. You and the player should work together to decide the setback or opportunity.

EXAMPLE 1

Anna's Seeker makes an attack with a chitin axe against a rampaging horok. The attack roll would normally be made with 1 bane because her Seeker is frightened. She decides to forgo the bane for a better chance of succeeding, but with a setback. She rolls and gets a success. The Keeper decides that she manages to jam her axe into the horok's hide, but it twists and rips the weapon from her grip.

DESCRIBING OUTCOMES

You can just say that an attempted activity resulted in a success or a failure, but adding detail enriches the play experience. This game is about telling stories, after all. Once you decide the outcome, take a moment to describe what happens, using the following examples as a guide.

EXAMPLE 1

Natalie's Seeker makes an attack roll with his blowgun against an insect weaver fanatic but gets a failure. "You fire the dart at the weaver, but she raises her arm and, in response, swarms of tiny insects knock it out of the way."

EXAMPLE 2

Amrita's character is caught in an explosion created by a volatile spore pod. She makes an Agility challenge roll to resist the effect and gets a success. "The pod detonates. You duck and cover, holding your breath to avoid inhaling any noxious fumes, and succeed in getting covered in a little bit of glowing slime and not much else."

EXAMPLE 3

Tyrese's character makes a Perception challenge roll to find a trap and gets a success. "Your eyes catch on what looks like a tiny eyeball embedded in the wall near the floor. Something tells you you don't want it to see you."

DAMAGE AND HEALING

Sometimes an attempted activity should result in damage being dealt or possibly healed. Most such game effects are already defined: power descriptions, weapon entries, talent descriptions, and creatures' statistics all instruct you what dice to roll for damage and under what circumstances. Sometimes, though, it's not clear how much damage is appropriate for an outcome.

The **Baseline Damage** table sets out expected damage for effects based on the group's level, both for damage dealt and for damage healed. Refer to the Unlimited column for an ongoing effect, such as catching fire or immersion in a pool of acid. Use the Limited column for a one-time effect, such as in a cave-in, explosion, or applying a healing poultice.

BASILINE DAMAGE

Starting	1d6	1d6 + 2
Novice	1d6 + 1	2d6 + 1
Expert	2d6	4d6
Master	4d6	8d6

TIME & PACING

Time within the game moves at whatever rate makes dramatic sense. In tense and interesting scenes, the game might progress at the same pace as real time or even slower. When nothing much is happening, you might briefly narrate the events of a few weeks to move the story forward to when things get interesting.

Unless it's somehow important to the overall story, you don't have to worry about precise timekeeping. If a character spends a few months growing and tending a nascent piece of living gear or researching in a library in Sky City, the only reason to track time for these activities is if something important happens during this period. Even then, you should speed time up again after the important event until the players need to make decisions about what to do next.

SWITCHING TO ROUNDS

Rounds usually matter only in combat, but you can also drop into rounds to cover other tense scenes, such as when the characters spring a death trap or when they pursue an enemy through a crowded marketplace. Rounds also help you manage complex situations, such as exploring a dangerous cavern or sneaking up on any enemy encampment. Make sure everyone gets a turn each round until the scene is over.



A demon wrestler tears the horn from his latest kill. He must be careful that he does not become addicted to the blood.

ELEMENTS OF ASUNDER

Asunder incorporates elements of swords-and-sorcery fiction, high fantasy, dark fantasy, horror, and science fiction. Which of these elements you choose to emphasize and which you choose to downplay will affect how your game of *Asunder* feels at the table. Here are a few touchstones you can use to inject a distinct *Asunder* flavor into your scenes.

ASUNDER IS WEIRD

People develop symbiotic bonds to living organisms on a regular basis, feeding these organisms their own blood in exchange for power or utility. Seafarer pirates sail on massive living ships, and they grow extra eyes, limbs, or gills, or scales all over their bodies. The Pacari can talk to animals. Stories say that some weavers are able to keep insects living inside their bodies and vomit them up at will. *Asunder* is a strange place, and its people and environs have a distinctly alien feel. Hammer this home by giving NPCs strange descriptions, by describing gear with words like “pulsating” or “chitinous,” and by reminding the Seekers that they’re just as weird as everyone else. As alien as *Asunder* can seem to us, it’s important to remember that, for the people who live there, weird is normal.

ASUNDER IS UNTAMED

There’s a city in the sky, a civilization in the deep jungles of New Gaia, and a collection of city-states on the mainland... but that’s kind of it. While there are smaller settlements here and there throughout the world and nomadic bands are not uncommon, much of the world is wild and untamed, and pockets of civilization disappear without warning with worrying frequency. Sometimes a village is doing fine, and then a pack of giant carnivorous beasts, or a shaft of Pure Light, or a demon, decide to wipe it off the map. The wildernesses of the world aren’t just dangerous, they’re teeming with life, and most of that life feeds on other forms of life.

ASUNDER IS BRUTAL

Just as *Asunder* is untamed, so too is it red in tooth and claw. The environment is at times harsh, the beasts of *Asunder* are dangerous and violent, and its people have adapted to life in a brutal world. Most people know how to defend themselves by the time they’re old enough to be considered adults. Even in the larger pockets of civilization, like the city-states or Sky City, brutality exists. There is a form of law in each of these places, but law is often more about maintaining order than protecting the public good. Breaking the law can elicit a harsh punishment, but just as often those in charge of enforcing the law will let crimes pass if they don’t pose a significant disruption to the daily routine. And there are

MATURE TOPICS

Asunder is a dark game, and can explore troubling topics. Remember always the core responsibility of every player at the table: to ensure that everyone else has fun. It can be fun to make your Seekers a little uncomfortable and get them to squirm a bit, but it’s important to recognize the thin line between *fun* uncomfortable and *not-having-fun-anymore* uncomfortable.

When you start a game of *Asunder*, it can be useful to establish lines and veils. A veil is a topic that players are okay with having in the setting, as long as it happens off-camera. Maybe it’s okay for a village to be full of cannibals, as long as nobody describes another human being butchered and eaten. A line is much firmer in nature: it is an indication that a particular topic is off-limits in the game. Sexual violence or violence against children are common lines, and lines must always be respected at the table.

It can also be useful to play with an x-card. An x-card is simply an index card or a piece of paper with a big, bold “X” drawn on it, and it sits in the middle of the table. If, during the course of the game, somebody is made uncomfortable by the discussion or play at the table, that person can tap the x-card to indicate that it’s time to move on, and possibly even to rewind a bit and edit the problematic material out of the story. An x-card is a way to ensure that everyone has a good time and nobody’s boundaries are pushed farther than they can tolerate. It is *not* a way to avoid the consequences of a roll or a way to troll the other players at the table.

Finally, remember that an RPG is a conversation. It’s a group of friends talking to each other about things happening in a made-up world. If there’s a problem with that conversation, it’s okay to talk about it with your players. It’s okay to take a player or two aside and work out any issues that may be causing problems in play. And, if a particular player is being a consistent problem, or is not respecting the rest of the group, it’s okay to part ways with that player.

For more information on lines and veils (as coined by Ron Edwards) visit: <https://bit.ly/2OQOASg>

For more information on the x-card (coined by John Stavropoulos) visit: <https://bit.ly/2PrWRH7>

always people who've learned to skirt the law and get away with murder. Sometimes they even run the place.

ASUNDER IS FANTASTICAL

An entire city floats in the sky, with flying ships darting here and there throughout it. Pirates ply the high seas in search of plunder. Fully half the population of the world has strange powers tied to their Essence, powers that make them capable of truly amazing things by Earth standards. Things that would be considered miraculous in our world are commonplace in Asunder but, for all that, things still regularly occur that amaze and terrify even the citizens of that world.

ASUNDER IS GODLESS

It's commonly accepted theological fact that the gods left the world long enough ago that nobody alive remembers when they were real. There are no gods in Asunder, but that doesn't mean there's no religion or faith. People worship Pure Light, Chaos, demons, the Naga, sea serpents, the God's Eye, the Noble Houses, and any number of other powers. Some follow philosophies that are very like religion, which focus on behavior in this world without any notion of an afterlife. And, just as everyone knows the gods left, everyone also knows that Gaia is the animating force of the world, and many worship her as a deity. Some even follow prophecies that foretell the return of the gods and seek to hasten their return.

ASUNDER HAS NO METAL

It's easy to forget. When the gods left, they took the metal with them. This is another thing that everyone knows, though nobody really remembers what "metal" actually is. People have adapted. Tools and weapons are made of bone, stone, chitin, hardened leaves, wood, the teeth of massive animals, and other exotic materials. They've created living beings that serve as tools and weapons, beings they can bond with and feed blood and Essence in exchange for their gifts. When you describe people and places, remember that there is no metal. There is no magnetism. People navigate using the sun and stars because compasses don't exist. They use precious gems as currency because there are no precious metals.

ASUNDER IS HORRIFIC

There's an army of the dead on the march, legions and legions of corpses, and nobody knows where they came from or what they want. Insects the size of horses feed on the unwary in the jungles of New Gaia, and the plants are just as dangerous. Demons bathe in the blood of the slain and tempt the weak with promises of power, wealth, and revenge. *Asunder* has plenty of room for horror storytelling, and the brutality of the world dovetails nicely with the themes of horror fiction.

EXPLORATION AND TRAVEL

The story dictates how much attention you should pay to travel. If the plot focuses on a specific location, you can summarize what happens en route to that location with a few words of description. However, if the story is about exploration and discovery, you might spend more time describing in detail what the characters find, based on where they go.

USING PERCEPTION

Characters rely on Perception to hear noises, find clues, or detect hidden foes.

👁 **Listen:** When a character tries to listen for sounds, you can just tell the player if there's anything to hear or you might call for a Perception challenge roll. Trying to hear a faint noise or eavesdrop on a conversation through a closed door might impose 1 or more banes on the roll.

👁 **Notice:** A character might find a detail while exploring an area. For example, he or she might track footprints on the floor, search a section of wall for a hidden button to open a secret panel, hear a noise through a closed door, or spot a trap. A Perception challenge roll is appropriate if a detail is difficult to notice. You might impose 1 or more banes on the roll, depending on the size of the area searched or whether something is well hidden or in a poorly lit spot.

If a character examines a specific area, such as the contents of a wardrobe, the darkness under a bed, or a closet, tell the player if there's something noteworthy there. However, if the area contains something that's deliberately hidden, such as a trap, you might still call for a Perception challenge roll.

TRAVEL

A group of characters can walk 3 miles in about 1 hour. The characters can reduce the travel time by riding beasts or picking up their pace, though they risk taking damage and becoming fatigued if they sustain a fast pace for long (see **Speed** in **Chapter 3** of the *Seeker's Guide*).

Difficult terrain increases travel time, as shown on the **Terrain and Movement** table. Just multiply the time it would normally take for a group to move 3 miles by the listed multiplier for that terrain. For areas that have several

TERRAIN AND MOVEMENT

Terrain	Multiplier
Desert	× 1.5
Forest	× 1.5
Hills	× 1.5
Mountains	× 3
Plains, Roads	× 1
Swamp	× 2

terrain types, add the multipliers together. For example, a group moving at a normal pace would need to travel 3 hours to cover 3 miles of forested hills ($1.5 + 1.5 = 3$).

WEATHER

Traveling groups might also have to contend with bad weather. At the start of each day of travel, choose an appropriate weather condition or roll 3d6 and consult the *Weather* table to determine the prevailing condition for that day.

Multipliers imposed by weather conditions are cumulative with any imposed by terrain. Therefore, a group traveling through mountains in the middle of heavy snowfall would require $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours to travel 3 miles ($3 + 1.5 = 4.5$).

WEATHER

3	Powerful storm	x 4 (see text)
4–5	Heavy precipitation	x 1.5
6–8	Unseasonably cold	x 1
9–12	Normal conditions	x 1
13–15	Unseasonably warm	x 1
16–17	Precipitation	x 1.5
18	Storm	x 2

NORMAL CONDITIONS

Normal conditions are any that are appropriate for the season.

UNSEASONABLY COLD OR WARM

This result indicates that temperatures are higher or lower than normal for the time of year, usually by about 3d6 degrees Fahrenheit. You can make the weather more extreme, possibly imposing the effects of exposure.

PRECIPITATION

Based on the climate and season, rain, sleet, ice, or snow falls for much of the day. Precipitation partially obscures terrain in which it falls.

HEAVY PRECIPITATION

Based on the climate and season, heavy rain, sleet, ice, or snow falls for much of the day. It heavily obscures terrain in which it falls.

STORM

A storm passes through the area, usually preceded and followed by bands of normal precipitation. Stormy conditions might be brief or occur at various times through the day. A storm heavily obscures terrain where it occurs.

POWERFUL STORM

A powerful storm might be a hurricane, blizzard, tornado, or an unnatural phenomenon. The storm heavily obscures

terrain where it occurs and devastates the landscape, knocking down trees, flattening buildings, or burying everything under feet of snow. Travel isn't usually possible; if the attempt is made, multiply travel time by 4.

GETTING LOST

Unless the characters follow a road, use a map, or hire a guide, they have a chance of becoming lost while traveling. At the start of each day, secretly roll a d20. On a 10 or higher, the characters move in the direction they intended. Otherwise, they get turned around and move in a direction you choose, becoming lost in the process.

Boons or banes might apply to the roll based on prevailing conditions, as shown on the *Travel Conditions* table. These are cumulative; for example, traveling through forested hills during rain would impose a total of 4 banes.

“Navigator” refers to any character with some ability to find the correct path, such as those that have the navigation or guide profession.

TRAVEL CONDITIONS

Navigator	3 boons
Plains	1 boon
Desert	1 bane
Forest	2 banes
Hills	1 bane
Mountains	2 banes
Swamp	2 banes
Precipitation	1 bane
Storm	2 banes
Powerful Storm	3 banes

RANDOM ENCOUNTERS

Travel can be dangerous beyond the reach of civilization. While traveling or resting in the wilderness, the group might run across a potential hazard. The *Encounter Frequency* table shows how often you should check for such random encounters based on the threat level of the group's current location.

- ☞ **Extreme:** A haunted ruin or underground complex infested by foes.
- ☞ **Major:** Within 1 mile of a place of extreme danger.
- ☞ **Moderate:** A wilderness capable of sustaining living things.
- ☞ **Minor:** A barren wilderness.

A group traveling in a city, town, or other civilized place under normal circumstances should not risk random encounters.

ENCOUNTER FREQUENCY

Extreme	Hourly
Major	Once per 4 hours
Moderate	Once per 8 hours
Minor	Once per day and once per night

At each time interval, consult the *Encounters* table to see what happens. Find the appropriate column under Threat Level, then roll a d20 and read across for the result.

ENCOUNTERS

Helpful	20	20	—	—
Harmless	18–19	18–19	20	—
Environment	14–17	14–17	18–19	19–20
Nothing	6–13	8–13	14–17	17–18
Easy combat	2–5	4–7	8–13	13–16
Average combat	1	2–3	4–7	7–12
Challenging combat	—	1	2–3	3–6
Hard combat	—	—	1	1–2

HELPFUL

A person or group offers assistance, such as information, healing, food and water, or shelter. Examples include pilgrims, a wandering weaver, a caravan, a band of merchants, or a nomadic Pacari clan.

HARMLESS

The characters notice a creature or creatures at some distance from them. The creatures might be dangerous or not, but they are too far away to pose a threat to the group. Alternatively, the characters come upon an interesting but harmless site: a ruined building, the wreckage from an old battlefield, a toppled statue, or a forgotten monument.

ENVIRONMENT

Something changes in the characters' immediate environs. The event is not dangerous but can heighten tension or build atmosphere. Examples include a cold wind through the trees, thunder, a rising fog, a shrill scream in the distance, weird knocking noises, rain or snow, or anything else suitable to the setting.

COMBAT ENCOUNTERS

A combat encounter features hostile creatures that are likely to attack the group. Most combat encounters are planned, but if a random encounter is combat, you can quickly create an appropriate threat by consulting the *Encounter Difficulty* table for the group's level.

COMBAT

Many situations in the game place characters in battles with dangerous creatures. Combat might be the result of a random encounter or a planned event, or the Seekers might decide on their own to take the fight to an enemy.

COMBAT DIFFICULTY

A combat encounter has four danger categories: easy, average, challenging, and hard. An easy combat should not tax the group overmuch, while a hard one could very well end with one or more characters dying.

The danger category determines the total Difficulty of the hostile creatures present for the encounter, as shown on the following tables. You populate the encounter by choosing appropriate creatures and summing their Difficulty, up to the maximum recommended for the encounter's danger. The table also indicates the maximum Difficulty for any individual creature present in the encounter. You can exceed this number, but be careful—using higher Difficulty creatures can be lethal.

ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY

Starting	3 or less	4–15	16–30	31+	25
Novice	10 or less	11–30	31–50	51+	100
Expert	30 or less	31–50	51–125	126+	250
Master	50 or less	51–125	126–200	201+	None

ADJUSTING ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY

These tables assume a group size of three to five Seekers. If your group is smaller than three, halve the Difficulty numbers. For groups larger than five, increase them by half again or double them for really large groups.

FUDGING THE NUMBERS

The Difficulty totals in these tables are only guidelines. You might need to adjust the numbers up or down, depending on your group's composition and any special resources available to them (such as chaos relics or powerful living gear).

OUTNUMBERING THE GROUP

If the number of hostile creatures is double the number of characters in the group (rounding down), the danger increases by one step. For example, an otherwise easy encounter featuring ten creatures against a group of four characters would become an average encounter. Each



time the opposition doubles, increase the danger of the encounter by one step. For groups of twenty or more, consider creating mobs as described in **Chapter 6**.

DIFFICULTY PER DAY

Combat is exciting, but there are limits to how much fighting a group can handle in a single day. Creatures have a Difficulty rating that represents the challenge they pose in a fight. The *Difficulty Per Day* table shows what a group can typically handle in one day of the story. You can use this number as a “budget” for populating your combat obstacles.

Simply add up the Difficulty of all the creatures you expect the characters to face. If the total is equal to or less than the recommended Difficulty for the day, the characters should be fine. More than this is likely to be lethal if they don’t have ways to heal damage and recover resources during the day. If the total is less than half the recommended Difficulty, you will need to challenge the characters in other ways or stiffen the opposition. See **Combat** later in this chapter for more about setting up these sorts of obstacles.

DIFFICULTY PER DAY

Starting	25
Novice	100
Expert	200
Master	500

EXAMPLE

An easy encounter for novice characters can have a total Difficulty of up to 40. You could use any combination of creatures whose total Difficulty is 40, though if the number of creatures is more than that of the number of characters in the group, the danger increases by one-step. So, a group of four Difficulty 10 creatures would be an easy encounter, while a group of eight Difficulty 5 creatures would be an average encounter, even though the total Difficulty is 40 or less.

If you wanted to create a combat encounter of challenging difficulty for novice characters, the total Difficulty would fall somewhere between 76 and 150, with no individual creature having a Difficulty of more than 50. So, you could build an encounter of three creatures of Difficulty 25 or an encounter featuring one creature of Difficulty 50 and one creature of Difficulty 25.

BATTLEFIELDS

The battlefield is wherever combat takes place. It can be inside a long-forgotten temple to the gods, on the deck of a hostile living ship, on narrow bridges of Sky City, across the fields of obsidian in the Black Isle, or anywhere else a fight happens to break out. A battlefield can have few notable features or be a complex environment as dangerous as the creatures the characters fight.

BATTLEFIELD ELEMENTS

Complex battlefields make combats more challenging, but they also make them more exciting. Introducing battlefield elements gives the player characters new tactical options and lets them engage with the game in different ways. Be careful about adding too many battlefield elements, though, since they can slow down game play. Simple fights shouldn't include more than one element. For big, set-piece battles, three or four is a good limit.

OBSCURED TERRAIN

Reduced visibility from precipitation, shadows, darkness, foliage, and other factors can make a combat more challenging, imposing banes on attack rolls against obscured targets. Obscured terrain also creates opportunities for characters and their enemies to become hidden.

OBSTACLES

Large objects such as doors, pillars, massive plants, and piles of pulsating matter can block sightlines and grant varying degrees of cover to one or both sides.

DIFFICULT TERRAIN

Rubble, undergrowth, staircases, slippery surfaces, and narrow surfaces hinder movement on the battlefield, channeling combatants into cleared areas where they can maneuver more easily.

CHALLENGING TERRAIN

Some kinds of terrain require a success on a challenge roll to traverse safely; they can also make combat more exciting. For instance, a battle might start while the group is climbing up the side of a cliff; the increased danger means a character might fall at any time.

HAZARDS AND TRAPS

You can turn an ordinary battle into a memorable one by adding dangerous elements such as explosive spores, hidden traps, fields of carnivorous plants, pockets of Chaos, and anything else you can think of. See *Traps* later in this chapter for some ideas.

INTERACTIVE ELEMENTS

You can create opportunities for the player characters to improvise in combat by adding ways to interact with the battlefield environment. Examples include a vine to swing from or climb, banisters to slide down, furniture to knock over or smash, and staircases for thrilling dagger-fights.

INCAPACITATED AND PRONE CREATURES

When a creature on the battlefield becomes incapacitated or is knocked prone, it remains where it falls. Other creatures can move through its space, which is difficult terrain until the creature gets up or its body is removed.

In general, creatures should ignore incapacitated characters during the combat unless the creature's description says otherwise. A Chaos beast, for example, may take a round to mutate an incapacitated creature into a new Chaos beast, if it can.

STARTING POSITIONS

After describing the battlefield, you determine the starting positions for all the combatants based on what they were doing when the combat began. Players determine the positions for their own characters, while you set up the enemy creatures.

The starting distance between the group and their opponents depends on where the fight takes place. Indoors, the combatants might not become aware of each other until they come within medium or even short range. In fog, forests, or other areas where sight is limited, the characters might start within medium range of their opponents. In open environments, long or even extreme range might be appropriate.

Before the first round of combat begins, determine if either side is surprised. The combatants are usually aware of each other, but circumstances can increase the possibility of surprise, such as the distance between the two sides, whether any creatures or characters are hidden, or battlefield elements that limit sightlines or hinder senses.

USING MINIATURES AND MAPS

It's possible to play out combat in *Asunder* entirely in the imagination, without using maps or ways to represent the combatants. Many groups, though, find that visual references help them keep track of where everyone is in relation to their opponents. Accessories such as battle maps, miniatures, and tokens clear up confusion, but the price for using such props is that game play slows down. For this reason, use these accessories only as needed. An enormous battle featuring scores of combatants would benefit greatly from visual aids, but a minor fight between a few creatures probably doesn't require more than a sketched map for reference.

If you're sketching a rough battlefield on scratch paper, precision isn't that important; the map is just to give a general idea of the area. You can draw it to whatever scale you like, or even ignore scale. When using miniatures or tokens, though, it's best to use a scale that corresponds to the combatants' space and Speed. A typical battlefield map uses 1 inch to represent 1 yard; if it's drawn on a square or hexagonal grid, 1 square or hex corresponds to 1 yard. A typical character occupies 1 square inch on the map and moves 1 inch for each yard traveled.

OPTIONAL RULE: SURROUNDING

You might allow creatures working together to surround a foe; each surrounding creature makes attack rolls against that target with 1 boon. This rule works best if you're using miniatures. A target is considered to be surrounded if it is within the reach of a number of hostile creatures equal

to its Size + 1. For example, a Size 1 creature is surrounded while within the reach of two enemies.

AREA EFFECTS

Area effects originate from points on the battlefield. Determining the origin point of an effect depends on how the battle is laid out.

NO GRID

If you're fighting out the combat on a tabletop or rough map without a grid, you can choose any point within range as the origin. Measure or estimate the effect's area from that point. Treat any miniature or token as affected if it's at least halfway inside the area. As Keeper, you make the final call when the situation is unclear, but it's best to err in favor of the players.

SQUARE GRID

The origin point is always the intersection of two gridlines within range. When determining the radius of a sphere, circle, or cylinder, you have two options. If you want a more realistic representation, treat diagonal paths from the origin point as 1½ yards per 1-inch square. Otherwise, just count diagonals as 1 yard each to create a "square circle" that is slightly larger but simpler to use.

HEXAGONAL GRID

Choose any intersection of three gridlines within range as the origin point and count out hexes from that point equal to the number of yards. In the case of cubes, the area should be roughly square in shape, centered on that spot; cut across hexes as needed rather than following their borders.

ROUNDS, TURNS, AND ACTIONS

Whenever a fight breaks out between the Seekers and their enemies, the game switches from freeform narrative mode to rounds, during which time each combatant has a chance to act. This structure ensures that each Seeker and each opponent has a chance to contribute to the scene's outcome.

As described in the *Seeker's Guide*, a combat round has three parts: fast turns, slow turns, and the end of the round. Unless the rules instruct you otherwise, creatures under your control always take their turns after the player characters during each fast and slow turn. Each creature you control must complete its turn before another can take a turn. A few creatures can take multiple turns in a round, as noted in their statistics boxes.

The creatures under your control can take fast turns or slow turns as appropriate for the combat situation. Creatures with simple thought processes, such as animals, constructs, and mindless dead of the Green Army, usually take fast turns in an effort to bring down opponents quickly. They take slow turns only if they need to move into combat

range. More intelligent opponents might use slow turns more often to set up advantageous attacks.

IMPROVISED ACTIVITIES

The freeform nature of the game encourages player creativity, so the Seekers might attempt activities during combat that aren't covered by the rules. Don't panic. In all likelihood, such an activity is similar to something else that the rules do handle.

First, consider what's being attempted. Can you imagine the character performing the activity multiple times in a round? If so, it's a minor activity. If not, it requires an action. It should also require an action if it would harm a creature in some way.

If the activity is something that can be reasonably accomplished within 10 seconds, then it can probably happen during a single turn, using an action. If the activity is complicated or involves multiple steps, you can either break it up into separate actions or allow the character to resolve it as a single action by making an attack roll or a challenge roll with 1 or more banes.

IMPROVISED ATTACKS

Your Seekers might describe unusual or improvised attacks. Most of the time, these descriptions simply add narrative color; combat is abstract, and the rules can handle most of the fancy things a character might attempt without you having to do anything special. You only need to make a call if the player wants the attack to do something more than deal damage. Here are some guidelines for adjudicating these situations.

EXTRA DAMAGE

Generally, a talent is required to increase the damage from an attack. If a player describes an attack that might deal extra damage, and the character doesn't have an appropriate talent to cover the situation, you might allow the attack roll with 1 bane. On a success, the character treats a 1 on the damage roll as if it was a 2.

ATTACK MULTIPLE TARGETS

As with extra damage, multiple attacks normally require talents to pull off. In some situations, though, allowing the attempt might be appropriate: a weaver wielding a staff attempts to push two bandits away; a demon hunter launches a wild roundhouse kick; a Pacari beastmaster kicks a table at a group of guards. When a Seeker describes an attack that can affect multiple targets and you rule it's possible, have the player make the attack roll with 2 banes for each target beyond the first.

You also need to decide what attribute or characteristic is being attacked. For example, the weaver in the above example might make the attack roll against each bandit's Strength score; the demon hunter's kick would attack the enemies' Defense; and the beastmaster's kick would target the guards' Agility.

IMPOSE AFFLICTION

A Seeker might describe an attack that hinders the target in some way. You might rule that it's possible, imposing an affliction on a success. Such afflictions should not be so serious that they prevent the creature from using actions. For example, the slowed or frightened afflictions impose disadvantages but allow a creature to act normally, so they are reasonable outcomes; the stunned condition prevents it from doing anything and is too severe for a typical attack.

If you rule that the proposed attack is reasonable and possible, you can allow it to impose a suitable affliction. If the proposed effect replaces dealing damage, the Seeker makes the attack roll with 1 bane. If the effect is in addition to dealing damage, the attack roll is made with 2 banes.

For example, Cassie states that her Skimmer wants to pin an enemy House agent's cloak to a nearby wall with a thrown crystal shard. The Keeper rules this is possible, and Cassie makes the Agility attack roll with 1 bane since this effect replaces damage. Cassie gets a success on the attack roll. The Keeper interprets the outcome by causing the agent to become slowed until the end of the round because of the pinned cloak.

ENDING THE COMBAT

The combat ends when one side defeats the other. Defeat occurs when one side flees, surrenders, or is completely eliminated.

Only mindless creatures sacrifice themselves without reason. When faced with overwhelming odds or clear defeat, most enemies will choose to give up or run away.

FLEEING

Creatures risk their lives when the cause is worthy, the fear of failure outweighs the fear of death, or they have no alternative. Otherwise, they flee if the battle turns against them and there is a clear avenue of retreat.

If you're not sure whether enemies would retreat, you can make Will challenge rolls for them. Each creature that gets a failure on the roll becomes frightened for 1 round. If it is already frightened, it must take the next turn it can to use an action to rush away by the safest available route. If prevented from fleeing, the creature surrenders.

SURRENDER

Creatures surrender when they have no chance of victory, flight is not an option, and they stand a chance of surviving if captured. A creature that surrenders drops its weapons and does not move or take actions until it is secured or given a chance to flee. It obeys the commands of its captors unless doing so would put itself, its property, or its loved ones in danger. Should it receive such a command, the creature is free to act in whatever manner you deem appropriate.

PLAYER CHARACTERS

The Seekers are at the center of your *Asunder* campaign. These stories are their stories, and they are the main characters. Their efforts, their triumphs, and their defeats advance the story through play and shape the overarching plot.

STARTING LEVELS

The game assumes that Seekers start at level 0. Doing so gives players the chance to become acquainted with the rules and the world and lets them make decisions about their characters' future development based on what happened in the starting adventure. This approach works well for new players and casual players, but it can be unsatisfying for more experienced groups who want to dive in right away.

If you decide to start the game at a level higher than 0, it's best to choose a point where players would normally pick a path: level 1, 3, or 7. Doing so gives the players time to experience the full range of levels for a given path and helps guide future character development in a satisfying way.

In a higher-level game, you and the Seekers should spend some time working out the details about how the group formed and what the characters have done so far. Try to come up with at least one important event for each member of the group to give each player a hook for story development. You don't need a full accounting of what happened at each level—just enough for everyone to have a place in the group and a reason to stay together.

A COHESIVE GROUP

How do your Seekers know each other? Why do they trust each other enough to travel together and get into dangerous situations together? Most people wouldn't trust a complete stranger to watch their back in a bar fight, let alone a battle to the death in the wastes of the Black Isle, so why do your Seekers do so? Creating a cohesive group, one that makes sense together, and is more than just a collection of random weirdos adventuring together for the plot's sake can be challenging. Here are some tips for making it work.

DEVOTE A SESSION TO CHARACTER CREATION

When you and your group sit down to play *Asunder*, plan not to actually play the game during the first session. Instead, set that time aside to create characters and figure out why they've formed a group. The various Origin tables and other parts of character generation will give the Seekers plenty of good ideas for their own backstories, and they might suggest some ideas for how they're connected to other members of the group.

CONNECT EVERYONE TO THE GROUP

Not every Seeker in the group must be connected to every other Seeker, but every Seeker should be connected to at

least one other Seeker. Here's an easy way to make this work. First, gather up as many index cards or scraps of paper as you have Seekers, plus one for you. Hand one to each, and have each of them write down a different relationship on the card; do the same yourself. Keep it broad for now, like "childhood friends," "rivalry," or "war buddies." Then, each player passes their card to the left. With their new cards, each player further defines the relationship on that card. Maybe the childhood friends

were inseparable once, but are now estranged. Maybe the rivalry comes from both Seekers being in love with the same man. Maybe the war buddies saw things they'd rather forget, and only they understand the horrors they've been through. Now, gather all the cards up and put them in the middle of the table. Each Seeker, in turn, gets to take one card from the middle of the table and place it in between themselves and either the Seeker to their left and the one to their right, defining their relationship with those Seekers. There'll be one left over; keep that one for an NPC you can introduce later.

CREATE MUTUAL ACQUAINTANCES

Choose a Seeker and have them define a relationship they have with an NPC. Then, point to another Seeker and say, "How do you know that NPC?" Do this a few times, until you have several mutual acquaintance NPCs you can call upon later. A particularly good trick is to create one NPC that everyone has in common. The first session starts with that NPC's death or funeral.

CREATE COMMON ENEMIES

Much like the last tip, common enemies can help unite a group and keep them on the same page. It can be particularly effective when a common enemy is the reason for the uniting NPC's death. Nothing unites a group quite like shared revenge.

CHARACTER EXITS

Seekers leave the story from time to time, for a variety of reasons. Someone could have objectives that are at odds with the rest of the group. Another might be burdened with a crippling Essence break or a lingering plague that makes it impossible to go on. Sometimes a player just wants to try something different.

A Seeker's exit can be good for the game, especially if it makes the story more interesting. He or she doesn't have to leave the game, but instead becomes a secondary character under your control. In this role, the former Seeker can continue to interact with the group, perhaps as an occasional ally, a source of information, someone to visit when the characters return to the area, or a bitter rival who vies against the group.

CHARACTER DEATH

Seekers can and should die in *Asunder*. Death is the risk they take when they explore the world. A string of bad die rolls, incautious exploration, or impulsive action can all bring a Seeker to a swift and sudden end. It's possible (if very rare) for dead Seekers to return to life, but doing so is beyond the capabilities of all but those who reach the highest levels in this book, with very few exceptions. For this reason, death usually means the end of a Seeker's story—but it also marks the beginning of a new Seeker's journey.



Since you are the players' advocate, it's in your interest to limit the frequency of Seeker death in the game. Eradicating an entire group can and will happen once in a while, but if it happens all the time the players will come to see you as an adversary. If your Seekers keep dying horribly, you might want to scale back the challenge of the encounters they face.

Sometimes a Seeker simply has a poor run of luck. It's okay to fudge the numbers in such cases, perhaps disabling the Seeker instead of accepting a lethal outcome. Alternatively, a dead Seeker could return to life through the intercession of a powerful being—though such an event never occurs without cost or expectation of service. But you can always choose to just let the Seeker die. Violent death is certainly in keeping with the game's grim tone.

INTRODUCING NEW SEEKERS

Whether a new player joins an existing group, or a player wants to bring in a new Seeker to replace one who died or left the story, you should introduce that character into the game as quickly as possible. Don't make the player wait. Sitting on the sidelines and waiting for the chance to contribute isn't fun for anyone. If you have to bend the story to accommodate the new Seeker's entrance, do so. Here are some suggestions.

SECONDARY CHARACTER APOTHEOSIS

The easiest way to introduce a new Seeker is to have the player take over an existing secondary character. They could be a hireling or companion, someone the Seekers met in town, or a person they rescued from danger.

SEEKING THE SEEKERS

The new Seeker has been searching for the group and finally catches up to them. They might have heard of the group's exploits and want to share in the glory. Perhaps the new Seeker has dire news or a warning to deliver. New Seekers can also be old friends from the past or the siblings, parents, or the offspring of existing Seekers.

CHANCE ENCOUNTER

The new Seeker happens upon the group. They might have recently escaped a dangerous situation and need the group's help. Perhaps the new Seeker is after the same thing as the group, and wishes to join forces to accomplish a common goal.

SECONDARY CHARACTERS

As Keeper, you control and portray all the people and creatures the player Seekers meet, interact with, and fight. Keeping such a large cast of secondary characters straight can be a challenge. The easiest way to manage this situation is to divide characters into three groups: major, minor, and background.

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Major characters play a significant part in a story. They might be villains and their subordinates, temporary companions, patrons and employers, contacts the characters rely on, and anyone else you deem significant. Since major characters are important to the story, they need the most detail.

NAME

These characters deserve appropriate names. Sample names for various Origins can be found in the Seeker's Guide.

BACKGROUND

Major characters' histories and personalities are important to how they interact with the player characters. For each such character, come up with at least one significant event from his or her past. Also choose one or two professions that make sense for the character's role in the story.

PHYSICAL TRAIT

Everyone has a distinctive physical trait, even if that trait is the lack of notable traits. Physical traits help make a character memorable to the players and should be one of the first things their Seekers notice. You can add other traits, but the first thing mentioned is what stands out most. You can use the *Physical Traits* table to generate traits quickly or as inspiration to come up with your own.

MOTIVATION

Everyone wants something. What drives this character: wealth, glory, fame, security, or something else? Noting the motivation ahead of time means a realistic portrayal when the character has an opportunity to gain the thing he or she wants, or is at risk of losing that thing.

PERSONALITY TRAIT

Next, give the character a personality trait that you can use when portraying him or her. You can play this up or not as you decide, but a distinct personality helps bring the character to life.

OTHER DETAILS

The more details you add to your characters, the more alive they become. However, you should always weigh the effort you put in against the importance of the character to your game. A patron who stays offstage much of the time probably doesn't need much detail. A villain who will vex the characters for an entire campaign needs a complete history, a well-established personality, and specific objectives and plans, at the very least. To make a character stand out in the players' minds, you can give that character one interesting thing to distinguish them. This could be a mannerism, a word they use a lot, a physical characteristic, an odd name, a sense that follows them, or anything else you can think of; the point is that

this interesting thing is a touchstone for this character, to help you embody them and to help your Seekers remember them. Perhaps the vicious bandit is a doting father, or maybe the infamous Sea King is much shorter than the Seekers expected.

If you intend a final confrontation between the group and this character, or if this character will accompany them on their adventures, you need to produce detailed game statistics. You can build the character from scratch using the rules in the *Seeker's Guide*, picking paths as necessary, or use a template (see **Customizing Creatures** in Chapter 6). You can

PHYSICAL TRAITS

1	Odd odor	11	Ugly
2	Grubby-looking	12	Nice clothing
3	Wrinkled	13	Bare feet
4	Oddly shaped mouth	14	Covered in plant growth
5	Strange skin texture	15	Diseased
6	Lots of hair	16	Extra body part
7	Little hair	17	Strange Chaos mutations
8	Noticeable limp	18	Freckles
9	Nasty scar	19	Tattoo
10	Attractive	20	Missing body part

MOTIVATION

1	Adventure	11	Love
2	Atonement	12	Magic
3	Chaos	13	Order
4	Glory	14	Peace
5	Good	15	Power
6	Immortality	16	Salvation
7	Improvement	17	Security
8	Justice	18	Validation
9	Knowledge	19	Vengeance
10	Liberty	20	Wealth

PERSONALITY TRAITS

1	Overprotective	11	Calm
2	Wicked	12	Reasonable
3	Cruel	13	Generous
4	Loud	14	Honest
5	Vulgar	15	Noble
6	Ignoble	16	Genteel
7	Scheming	17	Quiet
8	Greedy	18	Benevolent
9	Erratic	19	Virtuous
10	Nervous	20	Focused

also take statistics from **Chapter 6** that accomplish most of what you want, make slight modifications to them, and call it a day. Unique statistics are actually far less important to making the character feel real than the details above are.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Minor characters play bit parts in the story. You portray them for a scene or two and then move on. Examples include sources of information, lesser opponents, major characters from previous stories, a Seeker's relatives, and individuals hired to perform a specific task.

Minor characters don't require the same kind of attention to detail as major characters. Usually all you have to note is the character's name, profession, why they're important, and one thing that's notable about the character.

You usually don't need full game statistics for minor characters. You might create one quickly by assigning a role (see **Customizing Creatures** in Chapter 6).

BACKGROUND CHARACTERS

Everyone else is a background character. These people are little more than scenery. You might describe what they're doing as a group—a crowd gathered in the town square, ship-feeders on the docks, a gang of raiders springing out of an ambush—but they don't have names, backgrounds, or histories. They exist solely to add texture to scenes or to present obstacles.

Background characters don't need more than a simple description, and any statistics you need are likely easily found in **Chapter 6**.

ROLEPLAYING SECONDARY CHARACTERS

You should portray secondary characters just as you would a Seeker you created. Play up an element that makes that person distinct. If they have a facial tic, you might adopt one while you play the character. If the character speaks in whispers, do the same. An arrogant character should boast, sneer at the player characters, and give them backhanded compliments. A cowardly one might cringe, be overly suspicious, and be reluctant to take risks.

Above all, be consistent. People can change, but rarely so much that their personalities are no longer recognizable.

PLAYER-DRIVEN ADVENTURE

Seekers in *Asunder* are proactive. They're each actively looking for something, and that means they decide the course of their own journeys, at least to an extent. While it's good to do some prep work beforehand so you have a general idea of what's going to happen in a given session,

it's just as important to remain flexible and, if needs be, to ignore or throw away the preparation you've done in favor of the plots and stories that your Seekers are interested in. There are some techniques you can use to make this easier.

KEEP FIGHTS FLEXIBLE

Is there a particular villain or rival they're likely to encounter? Stat that character up, as well as any allies or minions they might have along. But remember that your Seekers might encounter that villain in any number of locations and situations. You might see the fight happening at the edge of a cliff, but what if it winds up on the deck of a living ship? What if it's not even a fight at all? It can be useful to come up with some touchstones as far as how your villain acts in a social situation, what's important to them, what they might do if approached in a way that isn't outright violence. Also, for fights, come up with several interesting locations in which they could take place, figure out how the terrain works, but don't necessarily tie them to specific enemies. Keep them in your back pocket and mash a group of enemies up with a terrain type at the table when you need to.

KEEP A LIST OF NPCs

Your Seekers will also wind up meeting a lot of strange people in the course of their travels, and coming up with new characters on the spot can be tough. Keep a list of NPC names, and add to it periodically. Whenever you hear a name you like—whether it's from a TV show, a movie, a book, a newspaper article, a blog post on the internet, or a conversation you overhear—jot it down and add it to the list. Make names up periodically, too. When your Seekers meet a new NPC, grab a name from the list, cross it out so you don't double-use it, and go. For an added bit of magic, do the same thing for interesting character traits. Does your NPC chew on something incessantly? Curse a lot? Are they pregnant? Combine a name with a character trait and you've got enough detail to start roleplaying them right away. Jot the name and the trait down on an index card. You can always add more detail later.

CONSERVE NPCs

The NPC name list trick is great, but sometimes a new NPC is the last thing you want. If the Seekers already know a shady merchant and you need an NPC who has connections to the slave trade, maybe that shady merchant is the contact they're looking for. Reuse NPCs you've already established whenever you can do so without straining credibility. This has two big benefits. First, it reduces your cognitive load. If you have fewer NPCs to worry about, you're less likely to forget one or get them confused. Second, every time you bring an NPC back into the Seekers' field of view, you have the opportunity to add more dimension to that character and get the Seekers more invested in them. If they keep relying

on the shady merchant to help them take down the ring of slavers, and he keeps being useful and even engaging to deal with, it's all the more effective when he does something terrible to the Seekers, or something terrible happens to him.

RE-SKIN

Did you spend a bunch of time statting up a group of pirates you expected the Seekers to encounter, but they went to the desert instead? That's frustrating. But could those pirates just be desert bandits instead? Could you add a simple ability to all of them, pair them with some medium animals, and call them a Pacari warband? You'll know the difference, but it's pretty unlikely your Seekers will. As long as you describe your erstwhile pirates in a new, flavorful way and make them behave consistently with their new role, all your Seekers will remember is that they had a cool run-in with a Pacari warband in the desert. To that end, don't make up new stats for a creature or NPC unless you absolutely have to. There are dozens of fully-statted NPCs and monsters in **Chapter 6**; if you can re-skin existing stats, or make only a few modifications to an existing stat block, and achieve the same effect, do that. It's much easier, and you can even do it on the fly.

ASK QUESTIONS

One of the most powerful questions in the Keeper's arsenal is "What do you do?" Start by describing a situation: "A pack of stampeding horoks are heading directly for the village. They'll be there in minutes. They're sure to destroy every building and kill everyone they see. What do you do?" Asking that question tells the Seekers that they must do *something*, but it also leaves the actual action up to them. It's both leading and empowering. It implies not just that they *must* do something, but that they have the power to change events. Other questions can be useful, too. Questions that call upon the senses (What does that sound like? What does that smell like?) can be useful for getting a little more description out of players who are speaking mostly in mechanical terms. Leading questions (Who did you piss off the last time you were in town? What was your favorite bar when you were here?) can help give Seekers the ability to shape the world around them, and thus get more invested in it.

CALL FOR BREAKS

Sometimes your Seekers will throw you for a loop. They'll stump you. It happens to all of us. When that happens, it's okay to call for a quick time out so you can figure out what comes next. Sometimes it's enough to just say, "Hold on, let me think a sec," and get back to things in thirty seconds or so. Sometimes you may need to break for five or ten minutes so you can throw together some stats for the monstrosity they just unearthed. If you have to call for a break, don't sweat it. It'll make your game better in the long run.

THE KEEPER'S TOOLBOX

You have access to a wide arsenal of challenges, obstacles, and mood-enhancing opportunities while running the game.

HANDLING ESCALATIONS

One of the most powerful tools that the Seekers have to shape their narrative is the escalation. When a Seeker leans on their Fatal Flaw to escalate a situation, they're telling you what they want out of the scene. A Seeker who turns an argument into a fistfight wants some combat. A Seeker who grabs the priceless vase and runs while the noble, stunned, calls for his guards, wants to run a chase and get away with something. Learn to identify what your Seekers want when they escalate, and then give it to them. Here are three things to keep in mind about escalations when they happen at your table.

ESCALATIONS BEGET ESCALATIONS

When a Seeker is arguing with a guy in a bar, and he just hauls off and hits him for the insult he just heard, the NPC isn't going to continue the argument like nothing happened; she'll escalate right back. Not only that but, whenever a Seeker escalates a scene, the other Seekers get the opportunity to buy into that escalation and be rewarded for doing so. This means that it's easy for the Seekers to start off haggling with a merchant and wind up running from the guards by the end of the scene. It's fine for this sort of glorious chaos to happen in your game. It can lead to some great stories and, most importantly, gets them invested. When your Seekers escalate the scene, lean into it. Escalate right back.

ESCALATIONS HAVE A COST

No escalation is ever free. If the Seekers start a bar fight that injures several people, they may not be able to set foot in a bar in the wharf district of Hyden for a good long time. If they steal a priceless artifact from a Hand of Gaia, they may find themselves on the wrong side of a tribunal. Whenever your Seekers escalate, show them that their actions have consequences. Note that you're not punishing your Seekers. Rather, you're showing them that the world reacts to them in a believable way when they do terrible things. Most importantly, you're creating new fun, complicated situations for them to deal with and find their way out of. Whenever you show the Seekers the consequences of their escalations, ensure that those consequences drive the story forward rather than grinding it to a halt.

ESCALATIONS GIVE THE SEEKERS POWER

When a Seeker escalates, or buys into another Seeker's escalation, they're rewarded with Seeker points. Seeker

points are powerful: they allow the Seekers to get boons or extra uses of their abilities. The power the Seekers derive from their Seeker points allows them to take bigger risks, be more proactive in the story, take on bigger challenges, and achieve greater things. If your Seekers are escalating a lot, you'll have to challenge them that much more.

SEEKER POINTS

Seeker points give Seekers more power and more control over the direction of the narrative. Seekers with more Seeker points will be able to exert more influence over events but, just as crucially, Seekers gain Seeker points by drawing attention to their own Fatal Flaws. In effect, those with more Seeker points have more mechanical power to exert on the world around them, while those with fewer Seeker points are incentivized to seek more spotlight time.

Seeker points have a number of specific effects, from granting boons to boosting Essence powers, but this list isn't meant to be restrictive. When a Seeker wants to do something that the rules don't allow, but that makes sense for the story and their Seeker, consider allowing it and charging a Seeker point. For example, if a Seeker with Insect Control powers wants to be able to know how many venomous insects are within thirty yards of them, there isn't a specific power or profession or talent that allows them that information, but you could just charge them a Seeker point and give them the information.

Similarly, it's okay to grant Seeker points as rewards when Seekers do particularly daring, dangerous, fun things. Technically, Seekers only get Seeker points for escalating situations based on their Fatal Flaws, but sometimes a Seeker does something that just makes everyone at the table go "Yeah!" and smile ear to ear. When this happens, it's okay to reward that Seeker with an Seeker point. There is one caveat, though: Seekers only gain Seeker points for doing things that put themselves at risk. Your Essence doesn't grow stronger when you play it safe.

STRAIN

Strain represents the Seekers taxing their Essence beyond its capabilities. Typically Seekers gain Strain by pushing Essence powers beyond their normal limitations or by using certain talents; if an effect causes Strain, it will specify how. Strain grants the Seekers the ability to achieve short-term power at a cost. Each time a Seeker takes Strain, it causes a short-term penalty in the form of an affliction, but if they take too much Strain, they can suffer an Essence break and even die.

Encourage the Seekers to take Strain; they can take a decent amount before suffering any serious effects, and many of the Essence break effects are survivable, if nasty. As their Strain totals become higher, play up the fact that they feel stretched thin, slightly out of focus, or are buzzing with anxiety. When a Seeker suffers an Essence break, it's a

Cutting off the head of a blight walker while suspended from a vine whip. Not safe, but easier to do with a Seeker point.



traumatic event; play that up, describe how painful it is, and emphasize how they'll never be the same again.

CHAOS AND DISCORD

Like Strain, Discord is a way for Chaos-wielders to gain power at a cost. Chaos is capable of incredible, destructive, and wondrous feats, and Chaos-wielders have a huge amount of power at their fingertips...if they're willing to risk using it. Chaos is also highly addictive, and even those

who aren't Chaos-wielders who suffer Discord will start to crave Chaos's touch. Chaos-wielders are often either languidly content or violently manic, and their moods can turn quickly. As a person accumulates more Discord, they become less human, more unsettling, and they draw closer to their inevitable destruction. To Seekers without Discord, emphasize how *wrong* those with Discord feel to them. To those with Discord, play up the fact that the surge of power running through them feels good, and that they want more.

ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Some environmental hazards are generic and are things that can be encountered virtually anywhere, like fire or disease. Others, like the potent chlorine gas that wafts from the seas, is found in more specific areas. Note that some hazards—specifically Chaos and Pure Light—are described in detail in **Chapter 4**. Here's how various environmental hazards work.

DISEASE

Living creatures risk contracting disease when they explore filthy and crowded conditions. They also might become infected by a creature's bite. Disease takes many different forms, from parasitic infections to flesh-eating bacteria to terrible fungi that assume control of the victim. You can describe these effects in any way you like, but most diseases work the same way in the game. The rules included here in the *Keeper's Tome* for any creature, power, or other effect that can spread disease spell out how the illness is transmitted.

LETHAL DISEASE

A creature affected by a lethal disease is diseased. As well, each time the creature completes a rest, it must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes a -1d6 penalty to Health. If this penalty reduces its Health to 0, the creature dies. After three successes, the creature removes the diseased affliction; the next time it completes a rest, the reduction to Health ends.

DESIGNING A DISEASE

If you are creating a disease, consider the following factors.

- 🌀 **Transmission:** How does the disease spread? Most diseases require contact with or injury from something infected. Others might be transmitted through contaminated fluids or even spread through the air.
- 🌀 **Virulence:** How nasty is the disease? Diseases can be normal, in which case it just applies the diseased affliction, or lethal, using the lethal disease mechanics above and with other possible consequences such as disfigurement, Strain, or worse.
- 🌀 **Infection:** When a creature is exposed to a disease, it must make a Strength challenge roll. It makes the roll with 1 bane against a major disease or 2 banes against a lethal disease. On a failure, the creature becomes diseased.

EXPOSURE

Each hour a living creature is subject to extreme cold (temperatures of -50 degrees Fahrenheit or lower) or extreme heat (temperatures of 150 degrees Fahrenheit or higher), it must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, the creature becomes fatigued. If it is already fatigued, it instead takes a cumulative -1d6 penalty to Health. This penalty remains until the creature is no longer fatigued and is no longer subject to exposure. A creature

fatigued from exposure removes this affliction when it completes a rest in a comfortable environment.

FIRE

Fire ignites combustible materials it touches. Objects that catch fire take 1d6 damage at the end of each round until they are destroyed or the fire is extinguished.

Creatures can also catch fire, usually taking 1d6 damage each round as above; some effects might deal more damage. A creature can use an action to extinguish the flames on itself or another creature within its reach by smothering them or by dousing them with water or some other nonflammable liquid or substance.

SUFFOCATION

A living creature generally needs to breathe air (or water, if it is aquatic). It can go without breathing for a number of minutes equal to one-quarter its Strength score. If the creature uses an action during this time, it reduces the minutes it has remaining by 1 unless it gets a success on a Strength challenge roll.

When the creature runs out of time, it must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes a -2d6 penalty to Health. At the end of each additional round it goes without breathing, the creature repeats the roll, but with 1 bane for each additional round it has gone without breathing. If the creature uses an action during a round when it cannot breathe, it makes this roll with 1 additional bane. Each failure imposes another cumulative 1d6 penalty to Health. If the accumulated penalty reduces the creature's Health to 0, it dies. The penalty to Health ends after the creature spends a few minutes breathing clean air or water.

TRAVELING THE SEA

The seas of *Asunder* generate a constant vapor of chlorine gas. While on a ship, creatures are usually high enough above the sea that they can smell the gas, but be unaffected by it. Closer to the sea (usually within about 3-6 yards of the surface), and characters not immune to poison must hold their breath or suffer the effects of suffocation. As soon as a character suffers a Health penalty in this way, they become poisoned, and they remain poisoned for as long as they have a Health penalty. Unlike suffocation, however, the effects of chlorine poisoning linger; a creature reduces their total Health penalty by 5 every time they complete a rest. Once the Health penalty is gone, so is the poisoned affliction.

If a creature that is not immune to poison drinks sea water, they immediately become poisoned and take a -3d6 penalty to Health. This is cumulative with multiple drinks, and creatures recover in the same way that they do from poisoning from chlorine gas.

Note that only the sea generates chlorine gas like this; other bodies of water in *Asunder* do not, nor does rain. At your option, being caught in a particularly violent storm on the sea might force even creatures on ships to have to deal with chlorine gas.

TRAPS

Fusillades of poisoned darts, pits covered by false floors, or alarms that emit a deafening noise when sprung—all traps protect sensitive areas from intruders. You can use traps to create tension when the Seekers explore dangerous areas. Try not to overuse them, though; too many traps can make the players so cautious that they spend all their time scouring their surroundings.

Some natural (and unnatural) hazards work much like traps. They might be native to a location or placed there by canny occupants. They can be detected and avoided, but it isn't usually possible to disarm a hazard.

SEEKER-CREATED TRAPS

Some Seeker talents grant the ability to create traps; guidelines for doing so exist in **Chapter 8** of the *Seeker's Guide*. These guidelines can also be of use when you create traps for the Seekers to deal with. Be aware that as Keeper, you have a bit more flexibility in the creation of traps than the **Traps** section referenced above allows for. However, should you so desire, you can adhere strictly to the rules in the *Seeker's Guide* when creating traps.

INTERACTING WITH TRAPS

Traps work well in any scene. A simple trap throws a complication into an otherwise routine encounter, while a complex, dangerous organism that functions as a trap might be the primary obstacle in an area or the final challenge to achieving an objective.

To remove the threat posed by a trap, a character must first find the trap, then either disarm it or activate it harmlessly.

FINDING A TRAP

Nearly all traps are hidden. A creature examining an area that contains a trap can make a Perception challenge roll to locate it. You privately decide how many banes apply to the roll, based on how well hidden the trap is and any other relevant circumstances such as time pressure. Unlike other challenge rolls, you roll that many d6 instead of the player and adjust the player's roll accordingly. If the total of the player's roll is 0 or less, the character makes challenge rolls to find the trap or avoid its effects with 1 bane.

DISARMING A TRAP

A character can use a tool kit to disarm a trap by succeeding on an Intellect challenge roll. Complex or living traps might impose 1 or more banes on the roll. Failure to disarm a trap might spring it, at your discretion.

A character might attempt an unorthodox action or improvise tools to neutralize a trap. You decide whether to allow the attempt, imposing banes if necessary. Refer to the guidelines for improvisation earlier in this chapter.

DESIGNING TRAPS

Each trap has a specific method of activation, which you decide when you create it. A character might activate a trap by stepping on a living segment of the floor or snagging a tripwire. Other traps spring when a character opens the lid to a chest or pushes open a door. Even a loud noise might spring a trap. Decide the trap's method of activation when you create it.

Most traps fall into one of four categories: alarm, obstacle, snare, or lethal.

ALARM

An alarm alerts nearby creatures to the presence of intruders. Silent alarms give no obvious sign that they were activated but might send a psychic signal or trigger a noise some distance away.

OBSTACLE

An obstacle creates a barrier to intruders' progress. Such a trap could bar doors, close off a passage by constricting it with massive vines, or spray a curtain of flame from the walls.

SNARE

Snares confine and contain intruders. Pit traps, living cages, self-sealing rooms, and similar mechanisms fulfill this function.

LETHAL

A lethal trap is intended to maim or kill intruders. Refer to the *Baseline Damage* table earlier in this chapter to judge appropriate damage. Use the Unlimited column if the trap can deal damage each round or if the trap's effect also imposes an affliction. Otherwise, use the Limited column.

SAMPLE TRAPS AND HAZARDS

You can drop the following example traps into your adventure or use them as guides for designing your own traps. The *Traps by Threat* table summarizes them, noting each trap's type and the level of groups for which it is appropriate. The trap is equivalent to an average combat encounter. A master trap, for example, is suitable for characters of level 7 and higher.

You can make traps easier or harder by adjusting damage, imposing or removing banes, and so on at your discretion.

COLLAPSING CEILING

The ceiling above an area is rigged to collapse when a creature steps on a hidden pressure plate below. When a creature that is unaware of the pressure plate enters its space, roll a d6. On an even number, the creature steps on the plate and springs the trap.

When the trap is sprung, the ceiling falls and everything in the area under it takes 6d6 damage. Creatures in the area take half the damage with a success on an Agility challenge roll. The floor in the area becomes difficult terrain thereafter.

TRAPS BY THREAT

Thorn trap	Lethal	Starting
Poisoned needle	Lethal	Starting
Webs	Obstacle	Starting
Concealed pit	Snare	Novice
Spear trap	Lethal	Novice
Concealed spiked pit	Snare, Lethal	Expert
Falling cage	Obstacle	Expert
Flesh-eating slime	Lethal	Expert
Pendulum blade	Lethal	Expert
Collapsing ceiling	Lethal, Obstacle	Master
Flame jet	Lethal	Master
Poison gas	Lethal	Master

This trap is difficult to notice. Perception challenge rolls to find the pressure plate and the Intellect challenge roll to disarm it are both made with 1 bane.

CONCEALED PIT

A 2-yard-square section of false floor in a room or corridor covers a pit 5 yards deep. The false floor collapses when a Size 1/2 or larger creature steps on it or when a Size 1/2 or larger object is placed on it. A creature that gets a success on an Agility challenge roll does not fall into the pit. Anything that falls takes 2d6 damage on landing at the bottom.

The false floor cannot be disarmed but can be safely triggered.

CONCEALED SPIKED PIT

This trap functions as a concealed pit, but spikes, thorns, or barbs line the floor and/or walls. Anything that falls to the bottom of the pit takes 4d6 damage.

Some concealed spiked pit traps are actually living organisms designed to chew those who fall in. Such traps deal 2d6 damage initially, and 2d6 damage each round unless a creature inside makes a Strength challenge roll to halve the damage.

THORN TRAP

A nearly undetectable ocular organ monitors an area, such as a doorway or archway, at ankle level. When a creature that is unaware of the organ moves through the entrance, roll a d6. On an even number, the organ spots them and springs the trap.

A dozen thorns fly toward the entrance from the surrounding walls. The creature that sprung the trap must make an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane, taking 1d6 + 2 damage on a failure. On a success, the thorns fly past the creature. If there's a creature behind the one that sprung the trap, that creature must also make an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane to avoid this damage.

FALLING CAGE

This trap uses bait, such as a treasure chest, a closed door, or a bottle of spirits, to lure intruders into a room or the end of a corridor. A creature springs the trap by touching the bait.

Springing the trap causes a cage to fall from a compartment in the ceiling, filling the entrance into the area and closing off the sole avenue of escape. Each creature in the area must make an Agility challenge roll.

On a failure, it is pinned by the cage. It takes 2d6 damage, falls prone, and becomes immobilized.

On a success, the creature must roll a d6. On an odd number, it springs into the area beyond the cage, where it is imprisoned. On an even number, the creature tumbles backward and remains free.

Raising the cage or breaking through it requires a success on a Strength challenge roll, which is made with 3 banes.

FLAME JET

A hidden pressure plate is on the floor 2 yards from a concealed nozzle in the wall. When a creature that is unaware of the pressure plate enters its space, the trap springs. Flame spews from the nozzle into a 6-yard-long cone that includes the space containing the pressure plate. Everything in the area takes 6d6 damage; creatures take half the damage with a success on an Agility challenge roll.

This trap is well hidden and hard to deactivate.

Perception challenge rolls to find the pressure plate and the Intellect challenge roll to disarm it are made with 1 bane.

FLESH-EATING SLIME

Found in warm, damp places underground, this semi-mobile fungus dissolves flesh, turning it into more slime. The slime clings to ceilings and drops onto creatures passing under it. It blends in with its surroundings, so Perception challenge rolls to spot the slime are made with 2 banes.

When the slime drops, each creature under it must make an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, it doesn't avoid the slime. A creature made of flesh and bone takes 2d6 damage from acid when the slime drops on it, and another 2d6 damage at the end of each round. A creature that becomes incapacitated while covered in slime dies instantly and becomes a new pool of flesh-eating slime in the space it occupied.

Up to the end of the first round after exposure, a creature can use an action to scrape the slime off itself or another creature it can reach. After this time, the slime can be removed only by dealing any amount of damage to it with cold or fire or by cutting off the body part that it coats.

PENDULUM BLADE

A pressure plate is hidden in the floor in front of a door, archway, or other entrance. When a creature that is unaware of the pressure plate moves into its space, roll a d6. On an even number, the creature steps on the plate and springs the trap.

A hatch opens overhead to release a heavy pendulum blade, usually made of bone or chitin, into that space. The creature that sprang the trap must make an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, the creature takes 4d6 damage. On a success, the blade swings 1 yard past the creature into the space behind. If another creature is there, it also takes the above damage unless it gets a success on an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane.

The pressure plate and the hatch are very well hidden. Perception challenge rolls to find the pressure plate are made with 2 banes and the Intellect challenge roll to disarm the trap is made with 1 bane.

POISON GAS

This trap is held within a chest, box, or other similar container. Opening the container causes thick green gas to spread out in a 10-yard radius around the container. The gas totally obscures its area and remains for 1 minute or until dispersed by wind. Each living creature in the area must make a Strength challenge roll when the gas appears and at the end of each round until dispersed. On a failure, the creature takes 2d6 damage and becomes dazed for 1 minute. While dazed this way, the creature also becomes poisoned; if it is already poisoned, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

Detecting the presence of the gas is extremely difficult without opening the container. Perception challenge rolls to find the trap and the Intellect challenge roll to disarm it are made with 2 banes.

POISONED NEEDLE

This trap is normally found attached to a door or container. Any creature that attempts to open the door or container without using a key or specific technique springs the trap, causing a poisoned needle to shoot out. The triggering creature must make an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, it takes 1 damage and must then make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. If the creature gets a failure on the second roll, it also takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 hour.

Perception challenge rolls to find this trap are made with 1 bane.

SPEAR TRAP

A pressure plate is hidden on the floor. When a creature that is unaware of the pressure plate moves into its space, roll a d6. On an even number, the creature steps on the plate and springs the trap.

Spears shoot up from the floor in a 3-yard-radius circle around the pressure plate. The spears deal 2d6 + 1 damage to everything on the floor in the area. A creature that gets a success on an Agility challenge roll takes half the damage. The spears then retract as the trap automatically resets.

Perception challenge rolls to find the pressure plate and the Intellect challenge roll to disarm the trap are made with 1 bane.

WEBS

Large spiders and similar creatures sometimes spin webs across passages and entrances near their lairs. They are never immobilized by their own webs and can move across them at full speed.

A creature that enters a space containing the webs becomes immobilized. It can use an action to make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. A success removes this affliction as the creature pulls free from the webs.

Perception challenge rolls to spot the webs are made with 1 bane.

REWARDS

Rewards encourage the players to undertake dangerous expeditions. Gems, favors, and living gear not only improve the player characters' capabilities, they also create an appetite for more stories, more adventures, and more excitement.

LEVEL INCREASE

The most valuable and immediate reward you can grant is to increase the group's level. A level increase can occur whenever you choose, but it's best to award it when the group completes an adventure objective: thwarting a House agent, bringing down a Pure Light cult, or wresting a potent piece of living gear from a villain's grip.

Path selection changes the way the game plays since it gives players the chance to develop their Seekers in significant ways. For this reason, you shouldn't advance the group level to the point where they choose new paths until they have accomplished a significant campaign objective or have completed a major quest.

OPTION: TRAINING

You can require Seekers to spend time training before they advance a level. Training immerses players in the story by making their Seekers seek out teachers to instruct them in their new talents. Those teachers and, in turn, their contacts, can open up further possibilities for new stories.

Despite these advantages, training also has drawbacks. It delays the gratification of a level increase and can frustrate players who feel they have already earned the reward for achieving the story objective. If you're considering this optional rule, talk it over with your players first, and don't use it if they aren't enthusiastic.

TRAINING FOR LEVEL ADVANCEMENT

A Seeker must find a willing trainer who follows the same path or the path the character wants to enter. Advancing to the next level takes 1 week per level the character has already attained. Aside from living expenses, the Seeker must also pay his or her instructor 1 pearl per week.

TRAINING FOR NEW PATH

Rather than require training for each level, you can just require training when a character would choose a new path. Such training has the same time requirement as above and the same cost. For example, a character entering an expert path from a novice path would require 2 weeks of training (to advance from 1st level to 3rd level).

TREASURE

Treasure isn't the main reason for an adventure, and the Seekers aren't guaranteed to find riches during their expeditions. Still, they need some gems to replace and improve weapons and armor, pay for living expenses, and replenish their supply of potions, kalea venom, and other expendable equipment, so you should ensure they earn some wealth along the way. The Seekers might loot a defeated enemy or discover a lost hoard while exploring an ancient site. Or they could instead earn a reward, perhaps for rescuing a prisoner or helping someone in need.

You can award as much treasure as you like, but try to avoid giving too much at a time. The *Treasure Limits* table shows the maximum recommended total treasure the group should find at a particular level.

TREASURE LIMITS

Starting	2
Novice	10
Expert	100
Master	1000

AWARDING TREASURE

Treasure can come in in many forms: chests filled with precious gems, jewelry, paintings, statues, or anything else of value.

GEMS

At lower levels, distribute treasure with less valuable gems. For example, you shouldn't hand out more than 2 sapphires at level 0, which doesn't sound like much at all. However, if you translate that amount into 10 pearls or 100 slivers, you can spread the treasure throughout the story rather than just dump it all at the end.

VALUABLE GEMS AND JEWELRY

Less valuable gems can become cumbersome at higher levels, especially when they number in the thousands. Instead, award some treasure as the equivalent value in more valuable gems, like diamonds or rubies, and pieces of jewelry.

OTHER VALUABLES

You can mix up treasure awards by swapping out gems for art objects such as paintings, tapestries, statuettes, fine clothing, rare spices, trade goods such as bolts of cloth, livestock, or other valuable goods. Aside from being more interesting than mere gems, such items can become the seeds for future stories. For example, a tapestry the characters find might contain a clue about the location of a fabled tomb or insights on the resting place of a legendary living relic.

SPECIAL ITEMS

Rather than award monetary treasures, you can provide the equivalent amount of gems as unusual goods or advantages to the player characters. Such treasure might be in the form of performance enhancers, living gear, kalea venom, engineering workshops, black market goods, property, vehicles, or anything else that seems fun to you.

TREASURE MAPS

Treasure maps are a great way to plant the seeds of future stories. A map has value in its own right to interested parties, but it has the potential to lead the group to even greater rewards. However, be careful of using this device too often. If every treasure needs a map to claim, you delay the acquisition of rewards and can create a sense of being railroaded.

CONNECTIONS

Not all rewards have monetary value. Sometimes a reward can be a connection made with a person or an organization whose capabilities or resources could be valuable to the Seekers.

COMPANIONS

Companions are secondary characters who join the group for one reason or another and, if permitted, accompany the Seekers on their expeditions. Companions might join up because of the group's reputation, to gain help, to offer assistance in accomplishing a particular goal, or for any other reason that makes sense to you.

Adding companions to a group increases its survivability simply by increasing the number of characters, so you should be cautious about introducing too many, especially to a large group. Also keep an eye on temporary companions who join from talents or Essence powers.

Companions have no obligation to stay; if they are poorly treated, they might leave. As well, they remain with the group only as long as doing so makes sense in the story. For example, someone might not want leave his homeland or is unwilling to go to a place where death seems certain. Another companion might decide to settle down somewhere the characters visit to start a new life there.

CREATING COMPANIONS

A companion is a major character under your control, as described in *Secondary Characters* earlier in this chapter. He or she advances in level at half the rate of the player characters.

CONTACTS

The Seekers meet many people during their adventures, forming contacts with some of them. A contact's value lies in the assistance they can provide. Contacts are minor characters (see *Secondary Characters*). Determine how the contact is useful to the group by choosing one or two of the following options.

INFLUENCE

The contact can open doors for the characters and make things happen by pulling the right strings. An influence contact could have the ear of a powerful noble (or might be the noble); alternatively, he or she might be a merchant, the captain of the guard, or a ranking member of a criminal guild.

INFORMATION

The contact knows or can acquire information about a particular topic. Such a person might be a scholar at a university, a bartender with a penchant for eavesdropping, or a member of the criminal underworld with ears everywhere.

SECURITY

The contact provides the characters with a haven when they need it. They could be a lover, a family member, or a wealthy patron with plenty of room to spare.

ARTIFACTS

There are many strange and unusual objects in the world. Some of these are remnants of civilizations from before the breaking of the world. Others might be fragments of the fabled God-Machine, strange inventions of modern people, or demonic objects designed to tempt humans. Whatever form they take, artifacts have a few things in common.

UNIQUE

Every artifact is unique; it's unlikely that you'll ever find the same one twice.

INSCRUTABLE

The original purpose of the artifact is likely a mystery. While clever Seekers may be able to figure out how to use the artifact in a useful way, it's unlikely that they're using the artifact in the way it was initially intended. It should take time for a Seeker to figure out how to use an artifact and, once they do, using it should be unreliable and should seem a little dangerous.

PRICELESS...OR NOT

Some are priceless because they're powerful or beautiful and there's nothing else like them. Some are so mysterious that they're virtually useless as anything more than a curiosity, and so they might be worthless to buyers. Either way, trading artifacts on the open market doesn't typically happen; if the seekers want to find a buyer or seller for an artifact, doing so takes time and is likely the seed for an adventure in and of itself.

INCREDIBLY RARE

Artifacts don't pop up all that often. Generally speaking, don't hand out an artifact in each adventure, and don't give more than one to a given Seeker at a time without a very good reason. Artifacts are often the subject of entire adventures.

SAMPLE ARTIFACTS

There are no hard and fast rules for creating artifacts; they can basically do anything you want them to be able to do. The Seed of Gaia introduced in the *Planting Seeds* adventure is an artifact, as is the Wellspring introduced in the adventure, *The Wellspring*. The skystone dagger from the same adventure could wind up being an artifact, too, if you wish. Any number of items on the *Interesting Things* tables in the *Seeker's Guide* could be artifacts, at your discretion. Here are a few more examples; you can use these as-is or as inspiration for your own artifacts. Each of these artifacts has numerous other abilities that can be discovered; the ones listed here are just the ones the Seekers are most likely to discover first.

THE STONE CAT

This small statuette of a cat is carved of an unidentifiable stone, in a style that's clearly very old. It's warm to the touch. If a Seeker places it in a pile of kindling, it will start a fire within five minutes.

THE MAP

A map, etched on a slab of petrified wood, of a land you don't recognize. There are recognizable landmarks on the map, but they seem to be in the wrong places. If you could figure out how to make sense of the map, it might lead you to something.

THE SUNDIAL

A simple stone sundial, large enough that it must be carried by two people. Its shadow does not move with the sun, remaining in one spot always. If a Seeker spills blood on the sundial (at least 1 damage) and asks it a question that can be answered with a specific time or a duration (example: "How long will it take for the bounty hunter to catch up to me?"), the sundial will answer the question by moving its shadow to the appropriate mark.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WORLD OF ASUNDER

A Black Isler collects spores for food while another meditates as she's splashed with freezing cold water. This is her second day with no break.



THE BLACK ISLE

Soruva crouches at the edge of an outcropping, a drop yawning in front of her toes. It's not far...but it's far enough, and there are jagged black rocks jutting up from the ground below. She tastes the air, the acrid sting of it, and underneath, buried like a cloying aftertaste, is that too-sweet flavor, the one she's been looking for. A demon. She can't see it, but it can't hide its scent, try as it might. She holds up her left hand, fist clenched, then extends two fingers to the sky.

Barely a whisper and Foral is next to her, crouched low, watching the canyon. He says nothing...just waits.

"How many?" Soruva asks.

Foral's tongue darts out, then he licks his lips. "One, for sure. Maybe a second."

Soruva's eyebrow raises and she turns her eyes to Foral. "Maybe?" It's not like Foral to be unsure. He's her best tracker, his senses refined to a knife's edge; this close to the thing—or things—he should be sure.

His eye twitches. "Maybe," he repeats. "It's masking

somehow. It could be two but...it's hard to tell. There's another scent there, interfering."

"Fess weed."

Foral nods. "Fess weed. We've seen them use it before. But why here?"

Soruva sighs, eyes turning back to the canyon. "It's expecting us. Or they are. We have to assume there's more than one."

"How many can you take?"

Soruva thinks for a moment. "Two. Perhaps. Not more than two."

"Should I tell the others to stand down?"

She can feel her jaw clench at the question. "No. We need its blood."

Foral studies her for a moment quietly before speaking. "You won't be able to save Biress if you're dead."

The words sting, but she flashes Foral a fierce grin instead. "Then I'd better not die."

A slight smile touches his lips. "As you say."

"Signal the others. Tell them to be ready on my mark."

Foral nods, creeps away. Soruva watches him go; he's all sinew and gangly limbs, strong but slight, quick on his feet, built for speed and stealth. Soruva clenches her fists and stands, stretches her thick biceps, and goes through a quick routine to get herself ready. She's built for something else entirely.

Okay, Soruva thinks to herself. *If this is a trap, let's go ahead and spring it.* And, with that, she leaps down into the canyon, slicing through the air, hitting the bottom with a crunch of rock and an echoing boom. The jagged spikes of black rock lay shattered around her, and she stands up straight and brushes rock dust off of her arms.

"Well, demon?" she calls out, all defiance and confidence that she *mostly* feels. "Let's get this over with, shall we?"

Soruva's eyes dart left and right, watching the shadows, the blind corners. They always come at their prey sideways. And then it's there, nearly nine feet tall and seemingly made of darkness, its eyes piercing white dots of light in the inky black form, and she can hear its voice in her brain, its unwholesome touch on her psyche.

My, my. You're a brave one, aren't you? Are you here alone?

Soruva grins at the demon. "Are you?"

A discordant chuckle rakes across Soruva's brain and she almost flinches. Almost. *Look around and find out, little meat.*

Soruva's eyes dart left and right, she steals a glance behind her, and she sees not one but *three* more demons. *Gods of misfortune*, she curses to herself. Raising her voice, she shouts, "Now!"

Almost immediately, she feels the demon to her left dart forward for a strike, and she dances out of the way. Already she can feel the strength of the hunting party flowing into her, making her skin harden, her reflexes sharpen, turning her fists into weapons that could fell a tree if need be. Another demon charges her, but this time she doesn't dodge away; instead, she blocks its blow, catching its claw between her hands. With a savage twist she sends it rolling end over end to her right.

Soruva edges back, putting sheer rock behind her, and watches as her enemies fan out, flank her, and ready themselves for the attack. She wants to escape. To run away to safety. To leave these four things behind her, find some other prey.

Instead, she drops into a low stance and says, "Which one of you wants to die first?"



ARRIVING IN THE BLACK ISLE

The seas are not kind around the Black Isle, and there is but a single port as you approach. A bare stone dock leads to a steep staircase cut into the cliff-face of hard black rock with a sparse excuse for a town clustered around it. This is Coward's Point, so called both because it is how outsiders arrive and also how natives leave. The air here is pungent and acrid, a smoky smell hanging everywhere that mixes with the salt of the sea along the coasts. Perhaps the most striking thing about the Black Isle, though, is the thing it takes its name from.

Every part of the Black Isle—every plain, every mountain, every house—is made of the same black stone. It's glossy in some places and matte in others, and it juts up in spires and spikes, all hard edges and sharp points. The people here are just as hard. They have thick muscles and dour expressions, and they wear clothes spun from the black silk of the native worms, one of the few creatures that dwells here. To outsiders, they're gruff, sometimes overtly hostile. They dislike weakness because in this place, weakness gets you killed. Among each other they can be warmer, but there's always a distance, a reserve that comes of losing dear friends early and often.

When you enter the home of one of the Black Islers, the first word that springs to mind is utilitarian. They are not great craftspeople or artists; they build things to be functional and durable, and the only material they

have to build with is the rock of the island. Their food is utilitarian for similar reasons: those who cannot hunt demons spend their days harvesting a thick, hardy gray moss from the cliffs and a mustard-yellow, melon-shaped spore from the caves; these two substances comprise most of their food, supplemented occasionally by fish caught from the sea. Most of it is eaten raw or treated with salt. They also use these substances—spore sacks, moss, fish scales and fish bones—to fashion tools, sacks for carrying things, and other useful items.

Outside the small, clannish settlements are fields and mountain ranges of black rock, dotted with numerous entrances to a vast underground cavern system. From those cave mouths comes a pungent smell, like rotting meat and smoke, that heralds the places where the demons come forth.

THE WAY OF SORUVA

She is a demon hunter, one of those who are trained specifically to fight the demons in hand-to-hand combat, to wrestle them into submission and break them until they die. She does this for two reasons. The first and most important reason is to prevent the incursion of the demons into Asunder; to halt their depredations on humankind and to foil their plans. The other, more pragmatic reason is that many of the substances that can be harvested from demon corpses are useful and

valuable. Their blood can be brewed into medicinal concoctions, their skin fashioned into armor or weapons. Their eyes can be dried and crushed into a powder that allows people to see in the dark, and the tongue of a demon contains powerful hallucinogens that the demon hunters of the Black Isle use in meditative rituals to induce visions.

She does not hunt the demons alone, though; nobody does. She ranges with her hunting party, a group of twelve at the least, and sometimes up to twenty, each with a part to play in the hunt. Scouts have the ability to move with utter silence and have senses that allow them to detect demons from a distance, even track them. The rest are warriors, demon hunters like her or those still in training. Only a single demon hunter is chosen to lead each foray, and that warrior will be the lone person to fight the demon that the party hunts. But fighting alone does not mean fighting without support.

Perhaps the most potent tool a demon-hunting party has at its disposal is the ability to enter into a gestalt form, a kind of group meditation wherein several warriors lend their strength to a single champion. Hunting parties work this way because demon hide is as thick as the bark of the hardest tree, and a single powerful punch that channels the power of a dozen fighters is far more effective than twelve fists falling weakly in different spots. The hunting parties learned this the hard way, after groups of twenty or thirty hunters were wiped out by a single demon, none of their blows dealing any significant damage to the beast.

Even without the aid of her hunting party, Soruva is a force to be reckoned with. From early adolescence, she learned meditative techniques and martial arts that made her stronger, faster, more powerful than those who grow up outside the Black Isle. Here, there is nothing to bond with—no living thing that a human can link his or her Essence to—and so the natives of this island turn their focus inward, using their Essence to create a biofeedback loop. They learn to bolster their muscles for strength and speed; to enhance their recuperative abilities; to harden their skin and bones; sharpen their senses; to jump higher; run up vertical surfaces or across liquid; or even to breathe underwater. The demon hunters are capable of many feats that others must rely on symbiotic creatures for, and they typically eschew such bonds for that reason.

Between hunts, Soruva meditates. She trains. She sharpens her fighting skills and she teaches others. The techniques and practices of the demon hunters are an oral tradition, as is virtually every other form of learning on the Black Isle, and in order for knowledge to pass to the next generation, it must be constantly taught, told, memorized, learned, refined. There is no wood here, no paper, no ink; the Black Islers rely instead on memory and tradition, as well as on a bare handful of runes that they carve into stone to serve as warnings, guide-posts, and so forth.

Because of this oral tradition, and because of the dour, withdrawn nature of the Black Islers, each clan has its own version of history, its own dialect, its own

runes, and its own fighting style. There is some cross-pollination here, but the Black Islers are a proud people, and each clan believes that its way is the best. The clans' fighting schools are the purest expression of this national competition; clans are constantly refining their fighting styles, training, developing new techniques, and pitting themselves against representatives from other clans in (mostly) nonlethal combat.

Within Soruva's holdfast, everyone belongs to the same clan: the Barath-el. The clan is divided into distinct castes: warriors, gatherers, teachers, builders, elders. Each has a job to do, each a responsibility, and each is reliant upon the others for their expertise. The elders lead the clan collectively as a council that makes decisions for the holdfast and who all defer in turn to the King, who rules all clans.

There are no festivals here, no days off. Constant vigilance is required not just to halt the demonic incursion, but for simple survival. Every able-bodied person, man or woman, with any fighting skill at all is required to fight in defense of the clan; those who can't fight raise the children, harvest materials, and pursue other necessary non-martial tasks. The demon hunters of the Black Isle would never leave this place unless it was absolutely necessary. If they did, who else would stop the demons?

THE LIVING WORLD

Though all people of Asunder bond with and use elements of the living world to their advantage, this is the least true of the denizens of the Black Isle. The Isle has precious little life on it: few animals, almost no plant life, and only the demons to keep the people of the Black Isle company. In response, rather than bonding with parts of the natural world, denizens of the Black Isle turned their Essence inward, focusing it on themselves, creating a feedback loop that allows them to do seemingly impossible things. They are a potent and self-sufficient people.

That said, no tribe of humans, no matter how self-sufficient, can survive without the support of Gaia. What few gifts Gaia offers the Black Islers, they take readily and do not waste. The Islers fish the waters around the Black Isle, eating the meat of the creatures they catch and using their bones and scales to craft tools. They hunt birds that fly overhead, and their beaks and feathers are used to make long, hooked arrows that the Black Islers throw. The mustard-yellow spore that grows in caves all over the Isle is one of their food staples, and they use its tough exterior to make pouches to carry the things they need. They supplement this diet with a gray moss, and they burn both that substance and the spore husks to create fire when they need it. The clans even have silk farmers, people whose job it is to raise and care for the giant silk worms native to the Isle. They harvest the silk and spin it into cloth for clothing, blankets, and other necessities. This durable, breathable black cloth, sometimes called demonsilk, is highly prized in all parts of Asunder beyond the Black Isle but nearly impossible to come by.

PLACES OF INTEREST

There's little on the Black Isle of interest to outsiders, but these places seem to draw people just the same.

THE GREAT SCAR

Near the center of the Black Isle is a large cleft hewn from the bedrock of the mountains with a hot, noxious steam pouring forth from it. This is the one place on the Black Isle where hunting parties do not venture, for demons pour out of the Scar in such high numbers that any hunting party venturing here would be overwhelmed. Some wonder what their purpose is. Perhaps they're amassing an army. Perhaps they're waiting for something. Only the demons know for sure.

KINGSWATCH

The only large structure to speak of on the Black Isle, Kingswatch is a fortress of black rock close enough to the Great Scar to keep watch on it. It's shaped like a giant skull and it houses more demon hunters than any other settlement on the Black Isle. Outsiders are tolerated here, provided they assist with training and other duties, but they are watched carefully by the natives. Kingswatch is the seat of the King, whose duty is to remain vigilant against the Great Scar until his death.

COWARD'S POINT

It is said that only cowards flee the Black Isle, and that the world sends only cowards to the Isle. For this reason, the only port on the Black Isle is called Coward's Point. There's hardly even a town here, and no trade to speak of; the Black Isle has no exports and imports little. Instead, there's a long black dock of stone at the base of a staircase cut into the cliff-face, the same cliff-face that surrounds the entire island. At the top of the cliff-face is the Silent Sentinel, a great stone statue that maintains vigil over the only way on or off of the island.

THE MINES OF KORUNNA

When outsiders come to the Black Isle, it's usually for the wealth of the mines. The Islanders care nothing for the gems said to be in the mines, but they *do* watch the entrance, for demons regularly emerge from the Mines of Korunna. Those who come to the Isle to visit the Mines are allowed to pass; the demon hunters care nothing if some fool outlander wants to kill himself trying to take baubles from the stone. Those who emerge afterward are subjected to rigorous questioning and examination in order to guard against demonic corruption.

THE SKYWARD TEMPLE

Carved into the peak of one of the black mountains, the Skyward Temple owes fealty to no cowardly god, but is a temple of the self. Every demon hunter, upon completing her training, must make a pilgrimage to the Temple, a trek that often takes as long as a week. Once at the summit of the mountain, the demon hunter is faced with a wide, flat platform, open to the elements and entirely unprotected, next to the mouth of a cave. The hunter must meditate at the Temple for seven days and seven nights, killing any demons that emerge from the cave. Those who survive are allowed to lead hunts. Those who don't are forgotten.

THE GREEN VALLEY

More a legend than a place, the Green Valley is said to exist somewhere on the Black Isle. It is a lush place of vegetation, animal life, clean water, and tranquility. So the stories say, at least. Occasionally someone claims to have seen it, but most of these claims are dismissed as the ravings of idiots looking for attention. The legends persist, though, and many wonder why and how such a place would exist on the Black Isle.

THE FACE OF THE SEA

Just beyond Coward's Point, jutting out from the sea, is a chunk of black rock that has formed into the visage of a grinning skull. The Black Islers say that nobody carved this skull and that it was there even before humans walked the world. Its mouth, slightly open, is large enough for a human to crawl into, and legends say that there are great treasures and knowledge waiting for those who can brave the perils inside. Black Islers aren't specific about what



Kingswatch overlooking the Great Scar.

those perils might be; nobody who's ventured in has made it back out to talk about them.

PEOPLE OF IMPORT

The Black Islers have few rulers and no nobles to speak of, but there are still important people on the Black Isle.

THE CIRCLE OF SIX

Although King Stolgart rules the clans of the Black Isle, he is advised by the Circle of Six. The Circle consists of the wisest and most respected elders of each of the six major clans of the Black Isle; they meet three times per year to discuss clan business, mediate disputes, make decisions, and advise the King. Hroweath of Clan Starrow is the *de facto* leader of the Circle. Though the Circle officially has no leader, it's also true that the elder with the greatest force of personality usually winds up running things, shaping the Circle's decisions, and steering its conversations. Hroweath is nearly seventy, and is one of the few demon hunters to have lived to old age. His wealth of combat experience, vast knowledge of the Black Isle, insights into demon behavior, and unnerving stare cause the other elders of the Circle to defer to him more often than not, and to at least heed his advice when they disagree.

Outsiders rarely get an opportunity to talk to members of the Circle directly, but Venna of Clan Corit has been pushing for the Black Islers to be less insular. Some of the other elders disagree with her, Hroweath most vehemently, but she's winning friends within the Circle, and her arguments have sparked the King's interest and curiosity. Some even whisper that she might be the one to lead the Circle when Hroweath dies.

VAKAN THE PURIFIER

Vakan once hunted demons for Clan Fleath, but he left the clan several years ago to "wander and learn". Nobody's sure quite what he meant by that, but since he left there have been many sightings of Vakan out in the Black Isle, mostly by outsiders to the island. He seems to avoid his own people or, at the very least, to allow them to handle their own affairs. Outsiders encounter him often. He watches from a distance initially, observing how they handle the various trials that the Black Isle have to offer. A few groups have reported that Vakan have approached them, offering to lead them to shelter but, instead, leading them into danger. He then observes how these outsiders fare against the danger into which he has thrust them, almost as if he's teaching or testing them.

THORN-EYES

A powerful and dangerous demon, Thorn-Eyes has been haunting the Black Isle for centuries, always one step ahead of the hunters who try to kill it. Thorn-Eyes is cunning and clever, evading traps, leading hunting parties into ambushes, and sometimes simply vanishing without a trace. Thorn-Eyes is so named because, where eyes would

be on a human, two barbed, curved spikes jut out of its face. Though dangerous, Thorn-Eyes does occasionally approach humans to talk, usually to offer them bargains. Most Black Islers know well enough to refuse these bargains and to either drive Thorn-Eyes off or try to kill it. Outsiders, on the other hand, have been known to fall prey to Thorn-Eyes' games, inevitably to their detriment.

POINTS OF CONFLICT

Every land has conflicts; the conflicts on the Black Isle just tend to be a little more direct.

THE GROWING SCAR

The Great Scar itself does not grow, but its influence grows every year. Every year the demons push further out from the Scar, taking more and more land around it. Every year, there are more demons congregating around the Scar, waiting, watching...preparing for something. Most fear that the demons are readying themselves for a full-scale invasion, not just of the Black Isle but of the entire world. The Black Islers, unfortunately, are too few to cleanse the Scar on their own; in order to halt the demonic advance, they would need to enlist the aid of the other human nations of the world.

OLD GUARD, NEW BLOOD

The people of the Black Isle have always been an insular, even xenophobic lot. Outsiders are seen as weak distractions, unworthy of walking the Black Isle, unable to help defend the world from the demonic incursion. Sentiments, however, are starting to shift. Many younger Black Islers believe that the only way to truly stop the demons is to enlist the aid of the rest of the world. Members of the Council of Six, following Venna, are starting to push for active change, for trade with the outside world. They want to establish positive ties with those beyond the Black Isle so that when the Black Isle must eventually call upon them for help, they will come. Many still oppose this notion, though, and would rather die by the claws of a demonic horde than ask any outlander for aid.

THE USURPER

King Stolgart has been sitting upon the Obsidian Throne for more than thirty years, and general sentiment is that he's a good ruler. Not everyone feels that way, though, and a coup is brewing in the Black Isle. Kared, Stolgart's greatest political enemy, has not yet begun to move against the King, but she's gathering support. She feeds the flames of dissent by pointing out that the King is entertaining the idea of allowing more outsiders into the Black Isle, and that he sits idly by while the Scar becomes a greater and greater threat. These claims are only partially true, but their veracity is unimportant to those who wish for a stronger ruler. Kared is only too glad to be that ruler, and one day soon she'll likely lead a rebel army against Stolgart.





PACARI

Predators approach from the sunset. The great rhino's voice comes to his mind like it has so many times before, calm and implacable.

Harut turns to face the direction of the setting sun and waits. Before long, four figures emerge from the trees. A tall woman holding a bone axe paces next to a sleek six-legged garou cat and a stocky man with a club lopes along beside a great gray wolf.

"What brings you to Nanok territory, Harut?" comes Betiru's terse question.

"Since when is this Nanok territory?" Harut's hand tightens on the spear.

"Since Karaji claimed it," says Betiru, a fierce grin on her face. "Do you dispute her claim?"

"No," he says calmly. "But neither do I acknowledge it. A claim with no proof is nothing but wind."

"Then maybe we'll mark our territory with your beast's blood," barks Feka, the man standing next to Betiru.

Harut pats Vati's massive flank, feeling the strength of the

rhino. "You're welcome to try," he says, smiling. "Vati doesn't bleed easy."

Without warning, the garou darts forward, eyes glistening, flanking to the left. At the same time, the wolf moves off to the right, circling around to Vati's side. Harut raises his spear and reaches out with his mind to Vati, drawing on the beast's strength, hardening his skin and reinforcing his muscles. The hexiped cat darts toward him and he throws one arm up; its teeth latch onto his forearm and sink in, drawing blood. Silently, Harut is thankful that his thickened skin keeps the beast from tearing his arm completely open.

Harut draws his spear back to thrust it into the cat's throat, but Betiru is beside him, catching his spear-arm and twisting it savagely. Her own speed and strength is enhanced by her bond with the garou. Harut flicks his eyes over his shoulder and sees Vati behind him, fighting off Feka and his wolf. The big rhino can take quite a lot of punishment, but Feka's fighting smart, using pack tactics.

The wolf harries Vati to keep his attention while Feka darts in for quick cuts with his long knife. Eventually, Vati will tire from exertion and blood loss.

Selari, now! He sends the thought to the snake coiled around his waist like a belt, and it immediately uncoils and springs at Betiru's face, its twin heads sinking poisonous fangs into her cheek. She reels back and screams, trying to claw the snake off, but it's already detached, slithering away into the grass. Harut's spear lays on the ground, but he brings a massive fist to the side of the garou's head with all the force of a charging rhino and sends it reeling away, yowling in pain. Harut kneels to take up his spear and looks for an opening, a way to even the odds against Betiru.

That's when he hears them.

Footsteps. Hundreds of them, thousands of them; the

sound of an army on the march. Harut turns to look and sees a vast field of men and women marching toward them. No, not men and women—corpses! Thousands of corpses, clothed in ragged armor and armed with a motley assortment of weapons.

"The Blight," he moans. He lets out a shrill whistle and Vati and Salari return to him, both bloodied and exhausted. "I'm going to have to rely on your endurance, old friend," Harut says to Vati, and the great rhino huffs his agreement. Harut climbs on top of the beast's back and Vati lumbers into a run, leaving the wounded, confused Nanok in their wake. They deserve what's coming to them.

He hunkers into the warmth of his rhino and rides hard to the north, heading for the forest's edge. It's time to mobilize the tribes.



ARRIVING IN PACARI

Pacari is vast. It is an island teeming with life, where the law of tooth and claw is just as important as the law of man.

The island is a study in contrasts. To the west are the Grazelands, vast plains punctuated with mighty Oken trees and swaying with razorglass, inhabited by enormous herd animals and stealthy predators. The Grazelands seem like the safest part of Pacari, but that safety is an illusion. The plains, though flat and wide, hide many dangers, from stampeding herds of reptilian behemoths to hidden packs of hunting cats to giant predatory birds that circle overhead. The Grazelands continue for a time before butting up against the dense tree cover of the jungle in the center of the island which, in turn, fades into sand dunes to the east. The sand dunes wrap around the east and north of the island, becoming the Scalegrass Desert, a place of sand and sere scrub where life is both scarce and fierce. Then, to the south, the great marshes of Yemoja fester, home to all manner of deadly and poisonous creatures.

The people here live simply, bonded to great beasts that roam the wilds. Their way is a nomadic one, claiming territory but never staying in the same location for long. There are villages here and there; they mostly exist to grow crops. Great beasts help to till the fields and carry harvests, but occasionally a group of tribemates settles for a time at a sacred place for spiritual renewal. Because of this nomadic lifestyle, visitors to Pacari often feel that there's nowhere permanent or safe in Pacari, no bastions of civilization or cities with walls to hide from the dangerous animals of the island. This is, for the most part, true. Pacari is a wild and dangerous place, but the people of Pacari have learned to live in equilibrium with the wildlife here, and to become just as dangerous as it is.

THE WAY OF HARUT

Harut is a warrior of the Oema tribe, one of those tasked with protecting the tribe from its enemies, from predators, and from other threats that might crop up. Like many of the Pacari tribes, the Oema divide themselves up into loose roles with significant overlap and flexibility. A warrior learns the way of battle and protects the tribe, but "protecting the tribe" is deliberately vague. During a time of famine, a warrior protects the tribe from starvation by hunting or gathering food from the jungle. Warriors are trained to heal as well, because they must protect the tribe from sickness and their fellow warriors from wounds and infections. All of the roles of the Oema tribe operate like this. Hunters hunt for food, but also hunt fugitives, track those lost or separated from the tribe, and hunt for new places to settle. Scholars keep history, but they're expected to use their knowledge in practice by teaching other members of the tribe, tending to the sick, helping the gatherers find the best food, and so on. In this way, Pacari tribes build redundancy into their social structure, ensuring that if anyone is lost, there's always someone who can take up the slack.

This redundancy is crucial in Pacari, because members of the tribe are lost frequently. Predators, sickness, exposure, accidents, inter-tribal disputes, and myriad other hazards are common on Pacari, and tribes must be resilient in order to survive. They also must be mobile. Continuous movement allows the Pacari tribesfolk to forage without depleting resources too much, to hunt without interrupting the cycle of life, and to live without coming under the hungry eye of predators too often. Instead of permanent settlements, the Pacari mark off large swaths of territory using glyphs carved into trees, made from sticks and hung, or painted on rocks, and they move freely within this territory, following a path of least resistance and highest chance of survival.

For the most part, tribes respect each others' territory, not entering without invitation or without carrying a banner of trade or parley. Sometimes, though, circumstances force tribes into conflict. Scarce resources, large predator populations, or natural disasters can cause a tribe to try to seize territory from another; when this happens, war is the inevitable result.

When Pacari tribes go to war, the conflict is usually quick and decisive. The tribes clash in force, warriors and war-beasts battling with spear, knife, tooth, and claw. A single battle is often enough to decide the result of the war; no tribe has so many members that it's willing to throw them away on a protracted conflict. The victor keeps their territory or seizes new territory, while the loser must find some other way to ensure their survival.

That said, tribes on Pacari are rarely wiped out entirely. Such a thing has happened only a handful of times in recorded history, and these events are typically spoken of with regret, if not horror. Tribal extinction is rare because the Pacari are incredibly hardy people, and they bond with the beasts of the island. Harut is bonded to Vati, an enormous rhinoceros. Through that bond, Harut gains the rhino's great strength and resilience, and Vati takes on some aspects of Harut's personality.

THE LIVING WORLD

Long ago, longer than anyone remembers, the first Pacari tribes bonded with beasts, turning their Essence toward the creatures they lived amongst, using it to communicate with those beasts and to form a strong symbiotic link. The bond has several effects. The Pacari who bonds with the beast takes on elements of that beast's nature: thick hide, night vision, or even claws or the ability to fly. The beast, similarly, takes on aspects of the Pacari's personality and intellect. The bond also allows beast and beastmaster to communicate telepathically with each other over great distance and, through that connection, each can communicate indirectly with other beasts or humans.

The beast bond forms the core of Pacari society and guides the ways in which they interact with their world. Pacari know the dangerous areas of the island because their beasts know. Tribes are kept safe from many of the beasts of the island because their tribesfolk are bonded to members of those species, and so they're able to communicate in meaningful ways with herds and packs around the island.

Pacari use tools, but those tools tend to be simple in nature: a club, a hammer, a knife. This is not because the Pacari are savage or unintelligent; rather, it is because the beasts are the most effective tools at the Pacari's disposal, able to help them complete tasks far beyond what they would otherwise be capable. A snakebonded Pacari can send her snake down a rabbit hole to hunt rabbits for her. A Pacari bonded to a mammoth can use him to move large deadfalls, haul firewood, or sound an alarm with its great bellow.

Those tools the Pacari do use tend to be made of wood, stone, and bone. Their clothes are made of the hides of animals they hunt, or from wool or other hair shorn from beasts.

Pacari, on the whole, have enormous respect for the animals that they share the world with, and for the resources at their disposal. They realize that their survival depends upon living in symbiosis with the world around them. The beasts, after all, bond with Pacari voluntarily, and could choose to forsake their human kin if they wished. For this reason, the Pacari hunt and gather only what they need, killing animals or felling trees only when necessary.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Like the Pacari themselves, some of these "places" move about the island.

THE GREAT MENHIR OF ORDRU

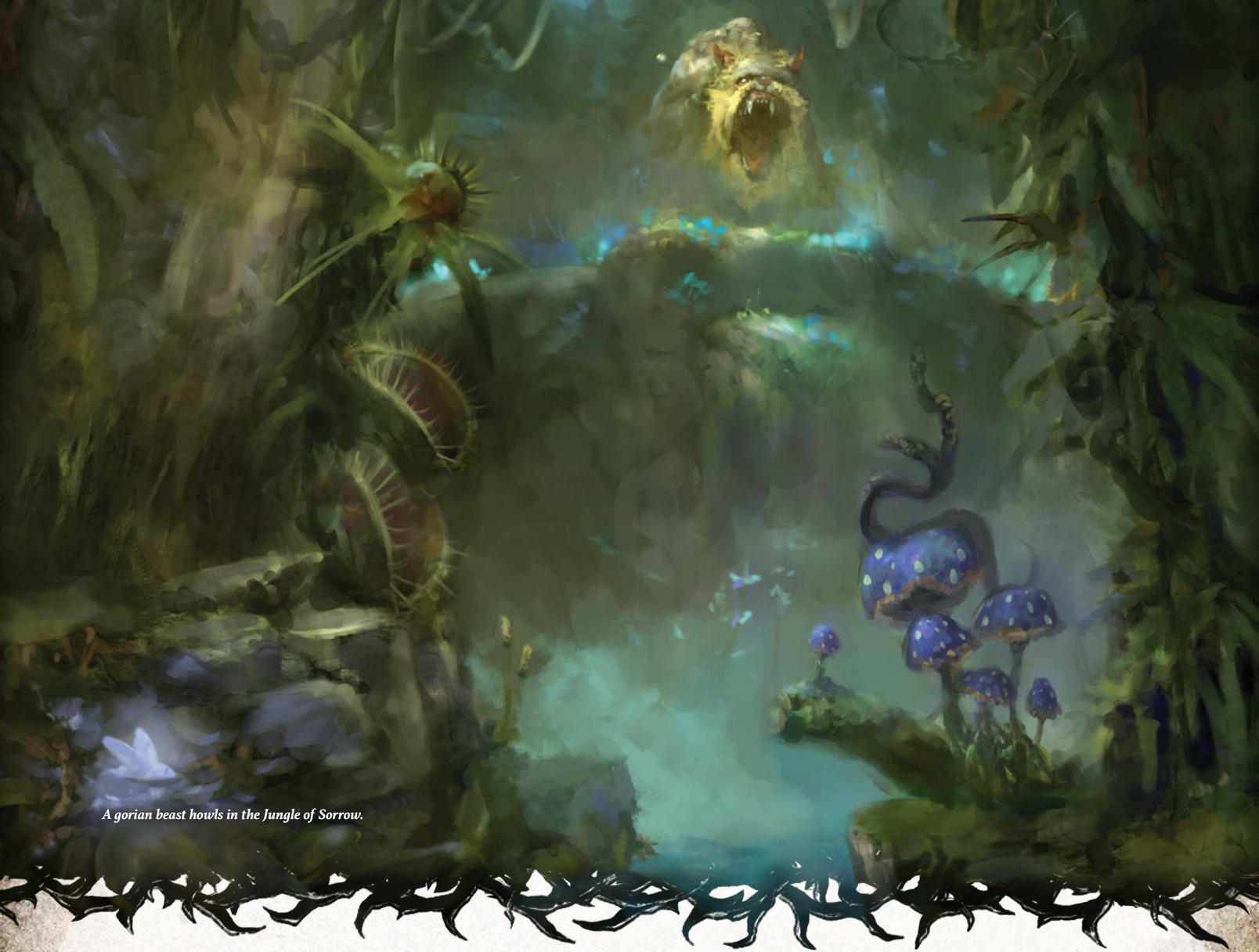
Once every six years, animals from all over Pacari march to the Great Menhir, a massive standing stone that towers lonely atop a hill at the center of the island, carvings of beasts etched all over it. They gather around the Great Tree, filling land for miles in every direction, and they wait. This event, which the Pacari call the Gathering, is considered a sacred and indispensable part of life on Pacari. While at the Gathering, the animals don't attack each other. Predators stand side by side with prey, and they wait.

When the Gathering occurs, Pacari from all over the island make a pilgrimage to the Great Tree, bringing children with them. At the Gathering, these children walk amongst the herds and packs, hands outstretched, until they find their bondmates. When a child finds her bondmate, she reaches out her hands and touches the animal, and the two beings link each other, their souls entwining, becoming one being with two bodies. During the Gathering, these children come of age; when they return, they are full members of their tribes. Because the Gathering happens only once every six years, the age at which a Pacari is considered an adult varies considerably; the determining factor is whether or not the Pacari has a bondmate.

After one day, the animals disperse and go back to their usual haunts and hunting grounds.

THE JUNGLE OF SORROW

It is said that the jungle that occupies a vast swath of the middle of Pacari Island is a place that does not see the sun...and that it knows only sorrow as a result. Whether or not the jungle feels anything itself, and whether or not it chooses to visit sorrow upon those who enter in order to ease its own burden, the fact remains that the Jungle of Sorrow is one of the most dangerous places on Pacari. The tree canopy is so thick that the entire jungle exists in a perpetual state of dusk. Few edible plants grow here, and much of what does grow here is poisonous. The animals are similarly venomous, and nearly everything in the jungle is food for something else.



A gorian beast howls in the Jungle of Sorrow.

THE BLACK CLOUD

There's a saying on Pacari: "When the Black Cloud is on the horizon, those who linger will feed the soil." The saying refers to a massive herd of animals—thousands, of every description—that stampedes around the island, trampling everything in its wake. Nobody knows what drives these beasts to such madness, but it seems that the fevered state can be transmitted to other beasts, which then join the stampede. In fact, some Pacari lose their bondmates to the Black Cloud; some power that binds all the beasts within the stampede calls out to others nearby and seeks to bring more into the herd. A beast bond is for life, and when the bondmate is consumed by the madness of the Black Cloud, some of that madness seeps into the bonded human. The lucky ones simply become husks of their former selves, while those more deeply affected by the madness become dangers to their tribes, sometimes trying to join the Black Cloud themselves. Once a beast is part of the Cloud, there is no way to communicate with it. The name "Black Cloud" comes from the great plume of dust that surrounds these beasts, kicked up by their hooves and claws, blotting out the sun where they go.

SCALEGRASS DESERT

The northern portion of the island is a place where few things grow and rain is scarce. What does grow is scalegrass: a rigid, sharp-edged plant that looks like the scales of a fish, iridescent when it catches the light. Though few live in the desert because of its general lack of natural resources, many travel there to gather the scalegrass. Scalegrass is useful in making clothing and light, flexible armor and shields, and is highly sought-after both for its durability and its beauty. It's said that when scalegrass catches the sunrise, Gaia sings to those who watch.

The Scalegrass Desert is home to few animals, but those that dwell there are nearly all predatory and dangerous. There are flying lizards that spit poison, huge insects that catch the unwary in sand-traps, and great, wingless dragons that dwell within the heart of the Desert; all these dangers and more are waiting for those who venture too far in.

THE GOD'S CORPSE

In the northern Grazelands are the skeletal remains of some great beast, impossibly vast, intact, sprawled amongst the grass, its bones turned to stone. The Pacari believe that when

the gods left Asunder, some of them died; this great corpse is thought to be one such casualty. Some tribesfolk come here to pay homage, but nobody ventures into the grounds that contain the dead god; the Sanholo tribe considers the God's Corpse sacred ground and punishes anyone who defiles it with their presence. What most outside of the Sanholo tribe don't realize is that the tribe considers the God's Corpse to be both sacred *and* incredibly dangerous. They've learned of some power that dwells within the bones, and they believe that if the wrong person spends too much time studying them, that person might learn to wield that power to devastating effect and with little ability to control it. The Sanholo see their mission to keep people away from the God's Corpse as a way of protecting the world from danger.

MARTU CANYON

Near the edge of the dunes to the east of the island there's a great canyon that most of the tribes steer clear of. At the bottom of the canyon are the ruins of an ancient city, built amongst and into the rock itself. The Pacari consider it a cursed place, evidence that those who stay in one place come to an untimely end. Legends tell of a god who went rogue and created a race so abhorrent to the other gods that they cast that god down and destroyed his creations before they departed the world. Those same legends say that the god still dwells within those ruins, stripped of his godhood but still powerful, still creating things that should not be. Visitors to Pacari sometimes come here to plunder the ruins, though doing so is not without its dangers.

PEOPLE OF IMPORT

Every tribe has rulers, elders, and ambassadors. Some tribes are more likely to interact with outsiders than others.

THE NANOK TRIBE

Though a small tribe, the Nanok have developed a reputation for ferocity and violence among the Pacari tribesfolk. They're known for painting their faces with the blood of their enemies, coating their weapons with poisons gathered from the southern swamps and the Jungle of Sorrow, and for attacking anyone who ventures too close to their territory. Insular and xenophobic, the Nanok strike first and speak later, and they pursue outsiders more fervently than they do members of other tribes of Pacari. Rumor has it that they're bolstering their numbers somehow, and that they seek to expand their territory.

ATRA STAR-EYES

Speaker for the Oema tribe, Atra makes it a point to greet and speak to outsiders whenever she sees them. The Oema are one of the largest tribes on Pacari, and their territory spans a large swath of the Grazelands. They seek trade both with other tribes and with outsiders to Pacari; as speaker for the tribe, it's Atra's job to cultivate relationships, seek opportunities to trade, and ensure that outsiders know enough to survive in Pacari. Lately, Atra has been steering many foreigners toward Martu

Canyon. She's interested in some of the artifacts that have come from the city at the bottom and, though Oema tribesfolk have no interest in venturing down there, Atra knows that outsiders often do, and she's capitalizing on that fact to get goods she otherwise might not be able to acquire.

THE WOODEN MAN

Stories abound in Pacari of a great man, twelve feet tall and made of wood like a tree, who wanders the island. They say he rewards those who show proper respect to the natural order of things and punishes those who are greedy, rapacious, or careless with the island's resources.

POINTS OF CONFLICT

Tribal conflicts are common on Pacari; these conflicts are likely to affect outsiders.

THE TO'ATO/ISHNUALO FEUD

These two tribes, both of them warlike and violent, have been feuding with each other for generations. Periodically, the conflict erupts into open violence, and a few times this violence has spilled over into other tribes, creating tribal wars on a scale rarely seen on Pacari. The feud has been quiet for several years, but there's talk of things coming to a head soon. Verato, the Ishnualo war leader, has been making noise about taking To'ato territory and driving them into the sea once and for all, and Ovoka of the To'ato has responded with threats of utter destruction. It's only a matter of time before the fierce rhetoric turns into bloodshed.

RELIGIOUS ZEALOTRY

The Sanholo tribe holds many places in Pacari as sacred, and lately their spiritual leaders have been preaching about the return of the gods. Some members of the Sanholo believe that they must prepare the world for the gods' return, and the first step is to cleanse the world of those who don't believe. This sect, though not openly supported by the Sanholo leadership, is growing both in size and influence.

VINICH RECRUITING

Sometimes a child attends a Gathering and doesn't find a bondmate. Somehow, the Vinich tribe always learns of these children, abducts them from their tribes, and indoctrinates them in their ways. The Vinich aren't a large tribe, but they're extraordinarily dangerous because every one of them has been subjected to experiments that twist their Essence. These unnatural bondings forcibly merge the child with a chosen animal, blending the two creatures together into a chimeric whole. Something has changed recently: Vinich recruiting is becoming more aggressive, and the tribe is starting to abduct adults, including those who have bondmates, occasionally even outsiders. When an adult with a bondmate is abducted and indoctrinated into the Vinich tribe, the person's bonded beast invariably goes mad, becoming a dangerous, violent creature.



SKY CITY

Shouts. Footfalls in the hallway behind her. The sound of weapons rattling free. Cassit throws a quick glance over her shoulder as she runs down the hallway, the rolled-up painting under her arm, the dark hallway stretching out in front of her. If she's too slow they'll round the corner and just open up on her with shard spitters. That'll be it for her. Svit venom kills quickly, and their weapons are no doubt coated in it.

As she runs, she holds her stolen treasure close. She rounds the corner and leans into her sprint. Then she sees the two guards turn toward her from where they wait at the window. *Damn.*

She leaps. They start to bring their shard spitters up, but she lashes her feet out and kicks at them. One of the kicks is solid, right to the bridge of the nose, and Cassit hears a crunch as the guard topples over. The other guard jukes out of the way, blocks Cassit's kick with one arm, and sends Cassit tumbling end over end out the window.

Cassit struggles to control her freefall. She concentrates, makes herself lighter, slows her descent. She's never been strong enough with her gravity control to levitate, but she can slow herself, and she can make herself light enough to fly around with gas pods, if only for a short time. She remembers back to her Great Leap, the thousand-foot-jump she had to make, *did* make, in order to become a citizen...but in there here and now, her momentum is causing problems.

She twists and turns herself so that the gas pods are facing down, tries not to think about the ground rushing up to meet her, and then activates one of her pods. She feels the rush of compressed gas shooting out of it, slowing her descent further. She hopes it's enough.

There is nothing but open sky below her. *Double damn,* she thinks, starting to sweat. If there were a plaza or a bridge beneath her, she might be able to slow down enough to land roughly, make a landing she can walk away from. But open sky...if she's not careful, she'll end up in a drift that takes her all the way down to the sea, and then she's food for serpents.

Then she spots it: a little sub-basement balcony off to her right. She twists and fires off all three of her gas pods in a panic. If this doesn't work, she's dead anyway. She accelerates, a diagonal downward arc, and Cassit tenses for the impact she desperately hopes is coming.

That's when she hears the screech and sees a crystal shard buzz past her face. Cassit looks to her right and spots a trio of guards—wyvern-riders—bearing down on her, enormous lances in their hands. The weapons are too big for a ground-dweller to wield, but not so difficult with the right training and the ability to manipulate gravity. Two riders break off to either side while one comes right at her. Cassit can see that the left-hand wyvern is pulling ahead of her, trying to cut off her path to the balcony.

The Rebel Islands are a collection of single spires seeking a way outside the caste system.



Okay, she thinks. Plan B. Again, Cassit leans into her momentum, diving directly at the wyvern-rider in her path, not even trying to avoid it. With her free hand she unlimbers her little grappling hook attached to a fine linen cord. Under normal circumstances she'd be able to make herself lighter so that she could climb the cord without breaking it. This is going to be...a little trickier than that.

At the last minute, just before she collides with the now-alarmed wyvern rider, she cuts her gas pods off and shifts her momentum into a dive. She twists, hurls the grappling hook and waits for a weightless, breathless moment...until it wraps itself around the wyvern's neck. Not wasting any time, Cassit shifts her gravity, making herself lighter—but not *too* light—and feels the rope turn her into a pendulum. She sails outward in a smooth up-turning arc. She's about to let go and fire her gas pods again, but the line breaks and she starts hurtling akimbo toward a sheer wall.

Cassit scrambles for ideas as she braces for impact, and she feels her wrist snap as she slams into the barrier. The pain is dizzying. She wants to pass out, but she grits her teeth, flexes her muscles, and pushes with her legs,

rebounding upward off the wall toward a plaza several hundred feet above. If she can get to that plaza, she can lose the guards in the crowd. That's when she realizes that, with a broken wrist, she's not going to be able to fire off her gas pods. Not with that hand, at least.

Damn, damn, DAMN, she curses, then reaches across her body to fire her gas pods with the hand that's still holding the painting. She fumbles with the activator, trying desperately to keep hold of the painting...but it slips out of her fingers and flutters down toward the sea. *No help for it now,* she thinks. She fires her gas pods and shoots upward, deactivating them once she's almost past the plaza, arcing down and landing lightly on the edge, then darting as quickly as she can into the crowd.

She's clear of the guards. She's alive. But that painting, one of many in House Cerru's great hall, would have fed her for months. And now her contact in House Atena likely won't work with her again. *And* she's got a broken wrist that needs mending—that'll keep her out of the action for a while.

Damn everything, she thinks, shouldering past merchants, peasants, and outlanders. *It's going to be a lean few weeks.*



ARRIVING IN SKY CITY

There's nothing quite like your first arrival in Sky City. An outsider arrives by boat, stepping onto a wood and coral platform laced with strange amber crystals. Once all passengers and cargo are loaded onto the platform, it begins to rise, controlled by a pair of attendants, apparently by their will alone. The journey takes about half an hour, but during that time the scent of the air changes from the briny smell of the sea to a clean, crisp smell, then transitions into the strange mixture of spices, roasted meats, perfumes, and ozone that makes up the scent of Sky City.

Sky City itself is a place of wonders. On the surface of each obelisk-shaped island is a collection of huge, impressive buildings—some ancient, some new—all in a variety of architectural styles. Palaces, gardens, manor houses, museums, and other such ostentatious displays cover the islands' upper surfaces, the dwelling places of Sky City's nobility. The common people live on the sides of the islands, in buildings grown out of plant matter and reinforced with ropes and gas spores. The islands are connected by bridges and walkways, some of them spider-webbing into hanging squares and plazas above open air. Only the outsiders seem afraid of falling here. Indeed, the natives sometimes leap from place to place, covering vast amounts of distance in a single bound.

Sky City is often intimidating to outsiders. Though the natives can jump from island to island and even fly under some circumstances, outsiders must use the bridges and walkways that connect the islands to each other. The Skimmers maintain these walkways, creating man-made rocks held aloft by blice crystals to help connect distant

islands to each other. They go to all this trouble because commerce is important to Sky City and outsiders therefore must be able to navigate it.

The air up here is cool and crisp, filled with the sounds of talking, laughter, music, street actors, sea birds, and the buzzing hiss of the occasional flying lizard. People here are polite and welcoming, but experienced outsiders know that underneath this veneer, plotting and scheming are the unwavering rule in Sky City.

While walking on one of the many wooden walkways, an outsider can look up and see people hanging from the bottom of one of the floating islands, harvesting the strange amber crystals that grow there. Were you to see that, you'd also notice that those crystals are worked into nearly everything here, from the masonry to the bridges to the clothing that some of the Sky-Dwellers wear.

Sky City is patrolled both on the land and in the sky. Guards walk the streets and walkways, but also ride atop the backs of wyverns—large, flying reptiles with vicious bites and poisonous stingers—keeping the skies safe. These guards work for the various noble houses and keep the peace according to the rules that the noble families agree upon.

Sky City is a bustling place, full of activity and action, but be careful not to get jostled—it's a long way down.

THE WAY OF CASSIT

Cassit is a thief, a common profession in Sky City. While not precisely a city of thieves, Sky City *does* have more than its share of artists and artisans, and a thief can make an excellent—if dangerous—living stealing their wares and



A youth attempts their 1000 foot leap towards the Isle of Ascendance.

selling them to less scrupulous members of the nobility. Though thievery is publicly frowned upon and punished severely, many of the noble houses employ thieves as pawns in their Great Game, a complex web of political maneuvering and illegal activity that happens in the shadows.

Sky City is different from many other regions of Asunder in that social status is very important here, and society is rigidly stratified. Nobles are born into their class, and they live lives of power and privilege. They also live literally higher than everyone else, occupying the surface areas of the floating islands that comprise Sky City. Because these areas are the ones that get the most exposure to the sun, nobles often have numerous farmers, gardeners, and ranchers living on their property; these people provide food and other goods to all of Sky City, but the nobles take a tithe of each harvest in exchange for the use of their land.

Each island that comprises part of Sky City is owned by one of the noble houses, and every person who dwells on that island and is not a part of the family is, effectively, a vassal of that family. For peasants, merchants, artisans, artists, and everyone else, the rule is the same: where you live determines who owns you. There are nine major noble houses that effectively rule Sky City, controlling

trade, lawkeeping, government, and even crime (though one would never accuse a noble of such a thing without sufficient proof, of course). There are innumerable minor noble houses, ranging from two to three people up to dozens, but their influence is limited and few of these have their own islands like the major houses do. The minor nobles vie with each other constantly, trying to rise in the ranks and become recognized as a major noble house.

Nearly everyone else lives in homes built into the sides off the islands. These structures are made of vegetable matter grown on the rock and are reinforced with ropes and gas spores to provide buoyancy. These houses often continue into man-made caves in the islands, though there are strict laws about how far one can dig into an island. Ostensibly these laws are to prevent islands from losing their structural integrity. In reality, the laws exist to prevent commoners from smuggling or hoarding goods that the nobles want to tax. Some people dig extensive tunnels into the rock and hide behind false walls or curtains. The penalty for this crime is severe, but the risk of being caught is low, as guards would need to have cause to enter your home and search it in order to find such tunnels.

People move about using bridges and walkways or occasionally by flying. The lower castes of society are made up of laborers, gatherers, craftspeople, bankers, and numerous other professions. Although art and quality craftwork are highly sought after by the nobility, the people who create these works are only occasionally invited to come live amongst the nobility; most artists also live on the shaded undersides of Sky City's islands.

Though Sky City has guards who keep the peace, there isn't a military caste to speak of. Because Sky City floats miles above the ocean, it's nearly impossible to invade, and outsiders are only allowed to enter the city in small numbers that don't present a threat. The nobility of Sky City has never instigated an invasion of any other country or land; they consider other lands inferior to their own by virtue of the fact that none of them fly. That being said, many people in Sky City know how to fight, even if it's only in an academic sense. Hand-to-hand combat is considered an art form similar to dance or acting, and many of the citizens of Sky City learn at least a little of the unique form of combat practiced on the floating islands, a style that makes significant use of mobility and Sky-Dwellers' ability to defy gravity at will. Many Skimmers learn how to wield oversized weapons that would be impossible to wield normally; their ability to manipulate gravity allows Skimmers to alter these weapons' weight until the moment of impact. Archery is also commonly practiced because so much of Sky City's diet consists of birds shot down by the city's hunters. Crystal throwing shards are another common weapon. Some people also use shard-spitters: modified gas spore pods that propel crystal shards further than one would be able to throw them.

Many people aren't happy with the rigidity of the caste system and the difficulty of moving upward in society. In response, those people become criminals, operating outside of society's strictures, taking what they want instead of waiting in vain to be rewarded for being an obedient little commoner. Cassit, like many in Sky City, has simply had enough, and has decided to improve her lot in life by any means necessary. It's a common story in Sky City.

THE LIVING WORLD

When the gods left the world and tore the metal from it, parts of the land itself floated up into the sky. A unique crystal—blice—found in those parts of the world had a natural buoyancy that had been counteracted until then by the weight of the world's metal. When the metal disappeared, the blice tore free of the planet and floated skyward, taking chunks of land with it, until those floating islands found equilibrium where they are today.

The people of Sky City have a symbiotic relationship with blice crystal. Their Essence bonded with the blice, which had two effects. First, it gave the people of Sky City the ability to defy gravity, becoming just as buoyant as the crystal itself. Second, the people of Sky City learned that

blice is *alive*, that it grows and can be cultivated like a plant. Knowing that without blice crystal the floating islands of Sky City would plummet to the ocean below and that their people would lose their ability to defy gravity, the Skimmers started growing and cultivating the crystal to ensure their own survival and prosperity.

This relationship with blice crystal takes on a number of forms. There are people whose job it is to grow and cultivate it, but they are also tasked with harvesting the crystal to keep its growth in check. After all, if too much blice grows on Sky City, there's no telling where the city might drift off to. Once harvested, the Skimmers use blice for a number of purposes. The most common use is the concoctions that the alchemists make by grinding blice crystals up and mixing them with water and various herbs and roots. People drink these potions to enhance their "sky-dancing" abilities; while nearly every Skimmer can defy gravity enough to leap an extraordinary distance or even levitate for a short time, those who drink copious amounts of the potion can do so for longer, with less effort, and can even effect gravity around other people and objects. Warriors use this power to wield weapons much too large to normally hold, altering the gravity around these weapons so they can lift them with ease.

Blice is also woven into clothing, called "sky-weave," that the Sky-Dwellers wear for both status and utility, which they even occasionally trade with outsiders. Craftspeople use blice to create "skim-rafts," wooden skiffs buoyant enough to float from island to island carrying passengers. Even the artists use blice, creating sculptures with floating components or tapestries that hang in mid-air.

The Skimmers' ability to sky-dance has one significant limitation: once in the air, it's difficult for them to control where they go. To mitigate this problem, they long ago started harvesting gas spores: sacs of compressed gas that grow naturally near blice. Sky-Dwellers fashion these spores into backpacks that they use for propulsion while sky-dancing, affording them the ability to truly fly for short periods of time. Smaller gas spores are fashioned into bolt pods: arm-mounted projectile-throwers that can shoot anything from simple wooden spikes to the venom-coated spines of the svit, a flying lizard native to Sky City.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Sky City is a place of wonders that most don't believe until they see them.

THE ISLE OF ASCENDANCE

Sky City is made up of a number of small, floating islands, most of them connected by bridges and walkways and thus staying in close proximity to one another. The one notable exception to this is the Isle of Ascendance, a floating island not tethered to any of the others. It floats nearly a thousand feet away from its closest neighbor. A small contingent of monastic Skimmers lives on the Isle, tending to it and using their powers to ensure that it stays

in the same relative location. Though few occupy the Isle and few visit it on a regular basis, the Isle of Ascendance has great significance to the people of Sky City. When a Skimmer reaches the age of maturity—about sixteen years old—she must undergo the Rite of Ascendance in order to become a full citizen of Sky City. The Rite is a day-long affair involving ceremonial garb, ascetic practices, consumption of blice potions and, finally, the Great Leap. The soon-to-be citizen must leap from one of the islands attached to Sky City to the Isle of Ascendance, a thousand-foot leap that all Skimmers are expected to make. Those who make the leap complete the Rite among the monks and rejoin Sky City as a full citizen. Safety precautions ensure that those who fail to make the leap can try again in one year, though a few unlucky souls have plummeted into the ocean after a failure.

THE SVIT SWARM

Svits are a flying lizard native to Sky City. A svit is about a foot and a half long, winged, with poisonous spines running down its back. Svits are vegetarians and not truly dangerous to the Sky-Dwellers if left alone, but they are considered a nuisance by many. Periodically, thousands of svits will band together into a great swarm that covers entire islands and moves about the city consuming whatever they can. Many people believe that the swarm is part of the svits' reproductive cycle, and those who catch svits to harvest their venom or their spines take advantage of the swarm to increase their stock a hundredfold.

Svits aren't all that dangerous individually, but their poison *can* kill if they're provoked. During the swarm it's best to stay inside. Those who don't often wind up dead from a svit venom overdose within minutes.

THE BLICE FIELDS

Blice crystals grow throughout the islands of Sky City, both on the surface and the interior. The easiest place to harvest the crystal is the underside of each island, where there are no buildings to get in the way. The underside of each island is rigged with scaffolds and harnesses, and blice farmers hook themselves to these structures and hang from the bottom of the islands, painstakingly doing the work that supplies the people with blice potions and keeps Sky City floating. Blice is soft and fairly easy to harvest, even for someone who doesn't really know what they're doing, and those who want to buy blice directly from the farmers can do so for a good black-market price.

BESSAR PALACE

Sky City is ruled by the noble houses, and the nobility are ruled by the Bessar family. The Bessars have dominated Sky City for generations, and their palace is easily the grandest structure in Sky City. Many years ago the Bessars seized power from the Kafrat family, nearly wiping that family out. They used their pillaged riches to build a great palace for themselves made of opulent red marble imported from the mainland. Then they employed a large number of talented Skimmer engineers to raise their island above all the others, placing themselves literally at the top of Sky City. It's said that the view of the sunset from the east tower is nothing less than magnificent.

BAZAAR SQUARE

Sky City has a highly mercantile disposition, and it is one of the few places not located on the mainland



A family of Svits rest on a perch on the central floating island.

that trades actively with those city-states. As such, Bazaar Square is a place always bustling with activity, where nearly any kind of good or service can be procured for the right price. Imported goods, information, deadly poisons, assassinations, thefts, and nearly everything else can be bought here—and the City Watch turns a blind eye to almost all of it. After all, for the Skimmers, this is just how things are done.

THE SKY BRIDGE

Not really a bridge, the Sky Bridge is a series of massive wood and coral platforms laced with blice crystal that hover just above the ocean, along with a number of floating docks for ships to moor themselves to. The Sky Bridge is the only way in and out of the city for someone who can't actually fly. Boats dock here and unload goods and passengers onto the platforms, and then the platform attendants use their powers to raise the platforms skyward, all the way to Sky City. The journey from the ocean to the city takes half an hour, and those who make it for the first time are nearly always struck dumb by the grandeur of the view as the platform rises.

THE REBEL ISLANDS

On the outskirts of Sky City are a number of small floating islands peopled by outcasts, criminals, and other disenfranchised people. The nobility would like nothing more than to bring them all to heel, but doing so would require an enormous cooperative effort. So far the major houses haven't been able to stop their infighting long enough to undertake such a massive task. The people who live on these islands call themselves rebels and eschew the rigid class structure of Sky City. Despite what the nobility says, the Rebel Islands are *not* lawless; rather, the rebels have a communal society led by a council of elected officials. Everyone is equal on the Rebel Islands, though outsiders visiting them are often surprised at the kinds of things that *are* legal there. The Rebel Islands use duels, for example, as a way to resolve disputes; to outsiders, this just seems like government-sanctioned murder in the streets.

THE ACADEMY

When Sky City was first founded, one particular set of islands grouped into an unusual formation: three flat islands, one floating above another in a series of islands that decrease in size as they ascend. The people who founded Sky City—then a people with a strong martial tradition—decided to take this as a sign, and made the three islands the site of their martial training school: The Academy. The largest of the islands, the bottom one of the stack, is where the initiates train. Those who make it through their basic training ascend to the middle island, where they are recognized as true warriors. Many terminate their training here, becoming guards, soldiers, or members of other martial professions. A select few ascend further, to the smallest, top-most island, where they train to achieve the rank of Master or even Grandmaster.

Beyond the basic grouping of skill level, there are different paths one can follow in the Academy. Those who learn to fight with hand, foot, and weapon become Wind Riders upon ascending to the second tier of the academy. Wind Riders are often guards and soldiers; those who become masters or grandmasters are personal bodyguards of the nobility, special agents for noble houses, or they ply their skills outside of Sky City. Some initiates learn to become Wyvern Riders, forming a bond with one of the dangerous beasts. Wyvern Riders often serve as shock troops in the army or patrol the skies of Sky City to keep the peace. Finally, some become Sky Sailors. On the middle tier, this means working on a Sky Ship, defending it if needs be, usually as an officer of some sort. Captains are pulled from the ranks of Sky Sailors who make it to the third tier of the Academy.

PEOPLE OF IMPORT

In Sky City, knowing the right people can be the difference between life and death.

THE NOBLE HOUSES

Sky City has countless noble houses, some of them consisting of only a handful of members with a small amount of wealth and influence, and a few that are hundreds strong and wealthy beyond measure. These noble houses rule the city, and their machinations shape nearly everything that happens here. Assassinations, thefts, and other underhanded deeds are often performed at their request and, in Sky City, such things are legal as long as nobody can prove anything. The most powerful houses are the Bessars, who rule the city, the Alachese, and the Ferruti. These houses often welcome visitors from out of town, probably because they're always looking for assets they can disavow.

AMBER WILLIAM

It's said that Amber William got his name because he drank so much blice potion that his skin turned honey-colored. Most think the story is true because his skin really *is* amber in hue, and because his sky-dancing powers are incredibly potent. But that's not what makes him an important person in Sky City. Nothing happens in Sky City without Amber William knowing about it. He's the most influential information broker in the city, and his spy network is so vast that some think that nearly everyone in the city is on his payroll. He's willing to meet with anyone who wants to procure his services, but he's not cheap and he's happy to refuse service to someone who he doesn't trust. William has also been known to hire people who come to him asking for information, trading his information for services, expanding his network in the process.

THE SWALLOW

Nobody knows who the Swallow is, but everyone whispers her name with both reverence and fear. In a city where assassinations are all too common, the Swallow is anything



but a common assassin. Death is her stock-in-trade, and the Swallow is an artist of murder, able to get to anyone, no matter how well-protected, and with a signature killing style all her own. When people die by the Swallow's hand, they're found curled up on the ground, their skin white, their blood frozen in their veins.

POINTS OF CONFLICT

Conflict is a way of life in Sky City, though such conflict is usually subtle rather than overt.

THE GREAT GAME

Intrigue and subterfuge are a part of life in Sky City, and just about everyone takes part in the Great Game in some way or another. The nobility drive it, plotting against each other, acting in the shadows, staging coups, assassinations, thefts, and other underhanded acts on a regular basis, trading power and wealth freely. The citizenry is often caught up in noble schemes by virtue of being employed by the nobles, whether they like it or not, and many have learned to mimic the games of the nobility on a smaller scale. A merchant who wants to improve his business might hire someone to sabotage a competitor, for example, while a blice farmer might poison a rival in order to get access to more lucrative or prestigious fields.

That said, the Great Game occurs in the shadows. Getting caught doing something underhanded is considered an inexcusable breach of etiquette and protocol, and is punished harshly. Those who succeed at the Great Game are able to play it without hinting at their involvement in it.

Outsiders are often swept up in the Great Game upon arrival. Everyone's looking for agents they can disavow if things go wrong, and outsiders (particularly adventurers) are highly sought-after pieces to be used and discarded in the Game.

FOREIGN INCURSIONS

The city-states in the mainland have long had enclaves within Sky City, the better to support merchants who sell their wares and to protect their interests within the city. Lately, however, there have been rumors of foreign agents operating within the city, acting against the noble houses, possibly softening the city up for an invasion of some sort. Whether there's truth to these rumors or they're just wind and words is anyone's guess. One way or the other, it's verifiably true that there have been thefts, sabotages, and assassinations that don't seem to be a part of the Great Game lately.

THE BLICE SHORTAGE

Though not common knowledge (the nobility doesn't want to start a panic), the Bessar family suspects that the city is consuming more blice than it's producing. Bessar's scholars and scientists have noted that Sky City has been slowly sinking over the last few years. While it amounts to only a few meters at most so far, the rate at which the city is dropping is accelerating, which suggests that something has to be done to either curtail blice consumption or kick-start its cultivation. The Bessar would be grateful to anyone who could help them with this thorny problem, but their enemies would happily take advantage of the situation if they found out.

NEW GAIA

Vetta leans in close and whispers to the little plant at the core of her creation, coaxing it into growing just a bit more, feeding her machine just a bit more power. The little plant shudders slightly, sending a ripple throughout the entire creation, and Vetta flinches, hoping the entire thing won't explode or fall apart. After a breathless moment, she leans back in relief and looks at the entire machine: a central column of supple wood like the trunk of a tree surrounded by twisting vines, giant spore pods, leaves, flowers, and other plants specialized to their tasks.

"I told you a red thistlethorn is the wrong power source for this thing. It's too small; it can't produce enough power." The voice comes from behind her: Sebira, her assistant, helpful as always. "We should have used a stone oak. The power would be more consistent."

Vetta rolls her eyes without looking behind her. "We've had this conversation before, Sebira. Oak is reliable, but its sap is too thick. It can't push life to the entire machine without a *bunch* of redundant support systems. It's inefficient."

"Inefficient but safe."

"The thistlethorn will be fine," Vetta sighs. "We just need to make sure it's properly vented and properly fed. Did you check all the venting pods? Are the nutrient tubes in place?"

"I double-checked everything," says Sebira. "We've only got a few minutes before the Council is ready for our presentation."

Vetta stands and turns to Sebira, places both of her hands on the other woman's shoulders. "We're going to do this. It's going to work."

Sebira nods, a half-smile on her lips. "I know. I'm just nervous. We've double-checked this thing into the ground. I need to stop second-guessing everything and relax."

The explosion blows them both off their feet and they end up on the ground in a tangle. Vetta rubs at her forehead, wishing Sebira didn't have such a sharp chin.

"What—?" Sebira starts to ask, but Vetta's already on her feet, leaning over the railing, peering through the smoke now filling the room. The cloud is thick, a vast plume of gray-green spores billowing up toward them like a live thing. She

A New Gaia city. The living pods serve as the most modern homes in all Asunder. The roots serve as transport and tree stumps as cauldrons for inventors to weave their craft.



pulls her mask off of her belt and straps it to her face. The mask is made up of several different plants: shrike moss for filtering out smoke and toxins, night rose membranes over the eyes for heat-based vision, a mixture of seeds to provide nutrition and power to the whole construction. Vetta looks for heat signatures in the cloud and sees a handful.

"At least three injured," she says, her voice muffled by the shrike moss in front of her mouth. "One might be dead. Four alive. Looks like it happened at Atanu's station. Damn it all, I told him his suppression matrix was faulty. Turn on our baby. I'm going to go help." Without waiting for a response, Vetta runs toward the cloud, cuts into it. The mask will allow her to breathe for ten, maybe twelve minutes, and she's got about sixteen before her heat vision fades. "High Mother? Are you all right?" she calls out.

"I'm..." the weak voice is interrupted by a fit of coughing. "...here."

"Okay," she says, following the voice and kneeling next to a figure struggling to stand. "I'm going to help you out of here."

Another coughing fit. "The others?"

"We're about to get this spore cloud out of here, so they'll be fine with a little luck. You're the priority right now." The High Mother is the ranking Hand of Gaia on site, and Vetta whispers a quick prayer of thanks to Gaia that she was able to find her so quickly.

Vetta takes the old woman's arm and drapes it over her shoulders, helps her stand, and starts to move back toward her own station beyond the cloud of spores. In the distance, she hears a familiar wet whirring sound, the sound of the machine she and Sabira invented powering up. *Good, that'll help with the cloud.* The two women move for a few moments, then Vetta leans the High Mother against a wall, removes her mask, and puts it on the woman's face. The smoke is already starting to clear, but the shrike moss will help her breathe a little easier in the interim. Vetta watches with no small swell of pride as the machine—*her* machine—starts to draw the

plume of spores into itself, clearing the atmosphere in the room within minutes. Once the cloud is clear, she takes the mask off the matriarch's face.

"Are you all right, High Mother?"

The woman nods. "Where did the spore cloud go?"

Vetta points to her machine. "We got rid of it."

The High Mother's eyebrows raise. "You built a machine that clears spores?"

Vetta purses her lips. "Sort of. It's actually designed to work on swarms of insects. Just in case."

The High Mother nods, understanding. "But you thought it might work on a cloud of spores, too. Impressive. The man whose device I was looking at was for air purification. It likely would have helped too...had it not exploded."

"Atanu," Vetta replies, nodding. "He's good, I suppose. His Essence bond with plants is almost as strong as a woman's, and he makes up for any shortfall with boldness."

"Perhaps too bold," the High Mother says, shaking her head. "If he'd been a little more careful, perhaps his machine wouldn't have exploded."

Vetta nods in understanding. "Are you all right by yourself, Madam? I'd like to go check on the other injured."

The woman nods, making a shooing gesture. "Go."

Vetta jogs over to the wreckage of Atanu's machine.

Others are there already, helping the injured, but Vetta draws up short when she sees Atanu's body, his head lying at a grotesque angle. Her jaw clenches. *Damn it, Atanu.*

She walks over to the body and kneels, at a loss for what to do or say. Her eyes stray away from the body to the wreckage of the device, and that's when she sees it.

Moments later she approaches the High Mother again. "High Mother, I don't think that explosion was an accident," Vetta says, face grim. She holds up the partial, blackened husk of a beetle, four inches long, in one hand. "I think someone sabotaged that machine. I think this was an attempt on your life."



ARRIVING IN NEW GAIA

"Verdant" doesn't begin to describe the island known as New Gaia. Upon stepping off the boat, an outsider is greeted with what looks like a vast, prehistoric jungle... until they look closer and see that many of the trees have been *grown* into buildings—houses, meeting halls, schools, shops, and whatever else the weavers need. The people of New Gaia strive to live in harmony with nature as much as possible and, while they still have to hunt and take wood from trees, the way that their Essence has bonded with the plants of New Gaia allows them to do so in ways that don't disrupt the ecosystem too much.

The vast majority of New Gaia is covered with thick jungle, plant life everywhere, tangles of vines, and abundant fauna.

The air is thick and wet, heavy with moisture and full of the sounds of birds, insects, and other animals. It carries with it the earthy smell of loam along with an odor that can only be described as "green". Near settlements, the smell of cooking food often fills the air, spicy and intensely aromatic. Settlements in New Gaia are also full of the sounds of people talking, going about their business, and working on the complex plant-machines that keep life going.

These machines are everywhere, and they vary considerably in size, complexity, and intent. There are plant-machines to make life more comfortable for the weavers, plant-machines that defend settlements, plant-machines that tend to other plants, and still others that make food. Invention and industry are intrinsic parts of life in New Gaia. According to the weavers, every plant has

a purpose it was born to and ten more that haven't been discovered yet.

Outsiders to New Gaia should find guides first and foremost. The jungles of the island are entirely trackless; the weavers don't bother with roads or paths because the trees tell them which way to go and the plants part at their crossing. An outsider can easily get lost without a weaver guide, and a lost outsider won't stay alive for long.

THE WAY OF VETTA

Vetta is an inventor—an innovator who makes the complex plant-machines that make New Gaia the most advanced civilization in the world. She's far from the only one; invention is a way of life for New Gaia, with numerous competing mercantile houses trying to outdo each other, trying to make the machine that *everyone* needs.

Long ago, when the first people to live on New Gaia gained Essence from the departure of the gods, that Essence bonded with the plants of New Gaia...but not for everyone. The Essence of a small subset of the population bonded instead with the insects of the island, giving those weavers control over them and the ability to communicate with and even create them. For a time, the two distinct types of weavers lived together in peace. Over time, inevitably, tensions arose. Many in the upper echelons of society began to treat the insect-bonded with disdain, even open hostility. Insect-bonded weavers had a great deal of trouble rising in society and were treated poorly in general. Resentment built and, eventually, the insect-bonded rose up, demanding equality and a place on the Council of Mothers. They wanted to be treated like everyone else.

Eventually the Council granted this request, allowing a sole insect-bonded weaver onto the council. Though not always the case, the current Councilmember representing the insect weavers is also the only man with a seat on the Council. Granting a seat was meant to appease the insect weavers, but little actually changed. Insect weavers are still a minority and are still treated badly by plant weavers on the whole. Things *are* getting better, but there's a long way to go before true equality.

But now history starts to repeat itself. While the last schism in New Gaia was over differing Essence bonds, this new schism is along ideological lines. On one side: the Council of Mothers, the governing body who has led New Gaia through centuries of peace and prosperity. On the other, an upstart movement calling themselves the Red Alliance. The Alliance believes that New Gaia has grown weak and complacent, that the Council spends too much time chasing after legends of an omnipresent planet-spirit and not enough time dealing with the real-life concerns of the here and now. The Red Alliance preaches trade and building alliances with foreign powers, but it also preaches conquest. They want to eradicate the exiles and spread the borders of New Gaia beyond the island itself.

Unlike the insect weavers before them, the Red Alliance is an underground organization; its membership is

secret, and they've infiltrated various strata of society. In response, the Council of Mothers has created a new organization: the Inquisition. It's the Inquisition's job to hunt down dissidents and bring them to justice by any means necessary.

New Gaia has been a place of relative peace for the last several centuries. Visitors to the island now, however, will find a very different place: a place where people don't trust their neighbors, and where open conflict is all but certain at some point in the near future.

THE LIVING WORLD

When the first people of New Gaia gained Essence, that Essence bonded with the plants of the island. This caused accelerated growth in those plants and also granted a hint of sentience, giving the plants the ability to observe and form opinions about things in their environment. Initially, only women bonded with the plants of the islands, and only the men born to those women shared that Essence bond. For this reason, the society of New Gaia is traditionally matriarchal. Even now, the ways in which the two genders bond with plants is different. Men typically are capable of a broader array of methods for controlling and manipulating plants, but women have much deeper and more powerful bonds and are capable of much greater specialization. This typically leads to a clear division of roles: women create and innovate, and men use these creations to keep things running.

The new weavers of the island learned to communicate with these plants, to control and cultivate them, and to live in a kind of symbiosis with them. Instead of building dwellings and other buildings from materials in their environment, the weavers gather together in a great joint effort of shaping, willing the trees of the jungle to take the form they need. Instead of cutting down trees for firewood, the weavers simply ask the trees for wood, and the trees give it freely. In exchange, the weavers protect the plants from outsiders, grow them and cultivate them, and even converse with them using a kind of empathic communion. The weavers create great plants for transportation, small plants that they graft to their bodies in order to enhance their abilities, plants that they use as weapons or tools, and myriad other kinds of plants for an infinite number of purposes.

This ability to simply ask for things from the natural environment and receive it informs nearly every facet of weaver culture. Clothes are made of vines, leaves, and other bits of plant matter. Weapons are made of wood, shaped and hardened into the form required. Weavers grow specialized plants for specific tasks: irrigation, ranged combat, hunting, heating and cooling homes, holding fire for cooking, and nearly everything else. Weavers even make complex plant-machines to handle advanced tasks like filtering smoke from a room, providing light to an entire city, or creating a public transportation system of hollow root networks traveled by people in great seed pods. In



many ways, New Gaia is the most advanced civilization on Asunder; their society not only has the most conveniences available, but is the most socially progressive, ensuring that everyone has what they need and is treated well. Except for the insect weavers. They are seen as less than human and thus deserve less.

The insect weavers can communicate with the insects, control them, and—like the plant-bonded weavers—can grow specialized insects for specialized tasks. Among the insect weavers, one might see insects used for hauling heavy loads, insects for battle, insects for espionage, or insects for harvesting resources from the natural world. It's this last function that is the major source of contention between the two factions of weavers.

The insect weavers control a force with great destructive potential to the ecosystem of New Gaia and, while they're careful with how they use that force, they don't have the ability to live in harmony with plant life like their cousins do. So, instead, they use insects to strip trees for wood when they need it to build their dwellings or cook their food. They grow food using traditional agricultural methods, using insects to fertilize the ground and then to harvest and haul the food when they're done. And they use insects for battle, turning them into a terrifying force capable of stripping an entire village to the bone in mere minutes.

For this reason, these weavers are often treated with hatred, resentment, and fear. Many live in ghettos within the weavers' cities, and few are able to aspire to the same social stations as plant weavers.

PLACES OF INTEREST

The jungles of New Gaia may be trackless, but they aren't featureless.

THE GREAT TREE

At the center of the island is an old, gnarled, ancient tree that legends say has been standing since the dawn of time. The weavers of New Gaia believe that it is a direct conduit to Gaia herself: a way to interact with the living spirit of the world. The Great Tree has a unique property that backs up this claim: it is a repository of knowledge. Many weavers of New Gaia have learned to commune with plants such that the seeds of those plants impart specific kinds of knowledge to an individual that consumes the seed. They learned this trick from the Great Tree. Legends say that the Tree contains the accumulated knowledge of every weaver ever to have lived on New Gaia. Weavers often come to the Tree seeking wisdom and guidance. When they do so, they sing a song asking for knowledge, eat one of the Tree's seeds, and mediate for a day and a night. Those who do this are flooded with knowledge from weavers long-dead, and thus history is passed from generation to generation. In the upper branches of the Great Tree is the Council Chamber, where the Council of Mothers meets and makes decisions for weaver society.

The Great Tree is, of course, carefully guarded and protected. It is considered the most precious resource on the island as well as its most sacred place. Outsiders are not permitted near the Great Tree except under the most extreme of circumstances.

HEARTWOOD

Though there are settlements grown into the jungle all over the island, Heartwood is the largest such settlement, and is the seat of the Council of Mothers. When the weavers first discovered the Great Tree, they settled near it, and over time a city grew up around the Tree. That city became Heartwood. In every respect that matters, Heartwood is a city; it has the conveniences of a city, it has a massive population, it's well-defended, and you can find people and businesses in Heartwood of every stripe. Heartwood welcomes outsiders, though they're only allowed in Outer Ring, a district on the perimeter of the city. Outer Ring is primarily a commercial district, made up of businesses, shops, and some dwellings for outsiders or people who prefer to live at their place of business. Next to Outer Ring is Inner Ring, where the vast majority of native weavers live. Inner Ring is mostly residential, though there are a few businesses here that cater exclusively to weavers. In the center of Heartwood is Mother's Heart. This district contains the Great Tree and provides housing for all those who tend it, but it is also the governmental district of the city. It's here that the Council of Mothers resides and meets, and it's here that those who shape policy for all of New Gaia must come to do so.

BUGTOWN

The northern part of Heartwood, roughly one fifth of the city in total, has been turned into a ghetto for insect-bonded weavers. Colloquially known as "Bugtown," it's a place where the insect weavers can live in relative peace and where the plant weavers don't have to look at them. For the most part the insect weavers keep to themselves. They're able to produce most of what they need and they trade with non-weavers when they can for whatever they can't produce themselves.

THE POISON LANDS

There is one place in New Gaia where neither faction of weavers goes willingly: the Poison Lands. The plants here are unruly, rebellious, even malicious. Many of them have toxic sap and can spray toxic spores, and their sap has leached into the soil and turned it into a poisonous bog. Few creatures live in the Poison Lands, and the weavers believe that a god, a great corrupter, is imprisoned here and seeks to spread his influence and escape. The Poison Lands spread every year, though the weavers strive to hold the corruption back. Occasionally, people—both natives and outsiders—are drawn to the Poison Lands, looking for forbidden knowledge. Many of them die in the toxic bog and become food for the trees. Those who survive become dangerous individuals indeed.

THE STARLIGHT CAVERNS

A complex web of tunnels criss-crosses the land beneath New Gaia. The weavers call these tunnels the Starlight Caverns for the bioluminescent fungus that grows throughout the tunnels. Some weavers go down into these tunnels to cultivate and harvest this fungus; they spread it throughout the Caverns, bringing light to dark places, and they harvest it for use in street lamps, lanterns, and other such things. Despite this, there are many parts of this vast underground network that are unexplored, dark, or haven't even been discovered yet, and the tunnels are not without their dangers. Giant crab-like creatures scuttle about the tunnels looking for prey, and occasionally entire parties of weavers are lost to things that creep out of the dark...things best left undescribed.

SHIPWATCH

Trade is important to New Gaia, and so the weavers take pains to ensure that ships can reach their shores safely. Shipwatch is an enormous, hollow tree that reaches above the jungle's canopy. It stands near the shore and, from its heights, weavers watch for approaching ships and use light generated from bioluminescent fungus harvested from the Starlight Caverns to guide ships safely to the docks of Landfall, the island's one major port of call.

THE BARRENS

There is one place on New Gaia where plant life does not grow. This blasted land is small, but entirely empty and devoid of life. Stranger still, the Barrens are devoid of sound; those who venture in report that their voices do not carry, their footfalls make no noise. Some who venture in also speak of strange and terrible visions, visions that often have a kernel of truth to them. Periodically, weavers make pilgrimages into the Barrens to experience these visions, though not all of them make it back out again.

PEOPLE OF IMPORT

Though New Gaia is not a densely populated island, there are people here who rise above the rest.

THE COUNCIL OF MOTHERS

New Gaia is a matriarchy, a tradition that comes from the fact that women were the only ones to bond with plants initially. Even now, women's bonds with the plants are stronger than those of men, and so they rise in the ranks faster and achieve higher rank than men can. The highest governing body on New Gaia is the Council of Mothers, a group of nine women, each of whom have contributed to society in some significant way. They are inventors, innovators, and leaders. They lead the Hands of Gaia, the ruling class of the island in all matters political, mercantile, and spiritual. The Council makes laws and proclamations, the Hands carry them out, and the weavers of New Gaia abide by them. So far, the Council has led the weavers to prosperity, peace, and security.

Of particular note is Pressus, the Councilmember who represents the insect weavers. He's the only man on the Council of Mothers and is often used as a scapegoat for things that other Councilmembers would rather not admit to. Many don't trust him, and some even believe that he's the orchestrator behind the Red Alliance.

THE CRIMSON MASK

Nobody knows who the Crimson Mask actually is; in fact, many people believe that the Mask is not one person, but a number of people adopting a persona at different times for different reasons. Regardless, the figure known as the Crimson Mask is the figurehead of the Red Alliance, a group of weavers who want to upset the status quo, overthrow the Council of Mothers, and usher in a new way of doing things. The Crimson Mask appears in public from time to time, denouncing public figures, riling up crowds, and spreading the Alliance's rhetoric. On rare occasions the Crimson Mask has been seen committing wantonly criminal acts, such as assassination or sabotage. Many upstanding plant weavers believe that the Mask and his Red Alliance are in league with the insect weavers.

GRANDFATHER ASH

Though few men develop bonds with the jungle as strong as those of women, it does occasionally happen. Grandfather Ash is one such man, a man whose bond with the plants was so strong that, one day when he walked out into the jungle and sat down to mediate, he simply turned into a tree. This happened almost a hundred years ago, but Grandfather Ash still sits there, a few miles outside of Heartwood, a great ash tree with a human face on it. He sleeps most of the time, but he is occasionally amenable to visitors and has a wealth of knowledge at his disposal. According to Grandfather Ash, he knows everything the jungle knows, and he's willing to share that information—for a price. Grandfather Ash never gives anything away for free; instead, he asks for a favor in return. These favors often make little sense to those they are asked of, but Grandfather Ash has a plan.

POINTS OF CONFLICT

With so many schisms on the island, conflict is inevitable.

OPPRESSION

Although open hostilities between the plant weavers and the insect weavers have been quiet as of late, there's quite a bit of bad blood between the two groups, and neither has forgotten what the other has cost them. They don't trust each other and they don't like each other, and many say it's only a matter of time before the current peace turns into outright war again. The death toll in the last war was enormous; when one side can summon great swarms of insects and the other can control the jungle itself, people die by the thousands. There are some on the Council who believe a preemptive strike is the only answer, while others believe that they must



The Red Alliance is an unforgiving foe, often leaving messages in the form of corpses.

broker a more lasting peace or face the extermination of both sides. Councilmember Pressus argues for the latter, though few listen.

THE RED ALLIANCE

Fueling the tension of this cold war is the Red Alliance. Though decentralized, the Alliance has been effective in turning weavers against one another and stoking the fear of the insect weavers to get more people on their side. At times it seems as though the Red Alliance has no leadership or goal aside from chaos and change. Their one figurehead—the Crimson Mask—doesn't appear to have any motivation beyond hatred of the way things are done now or any goal besides tearing down the current system. Despite this, the Alliance has managed to create quite a lot of conflict and tension by masking their hateful rhetoric behind a veneer of wanting an “ethical society.”

OLD GUARD VERSUS NEW BLOOD

Times are changing. New Gaia is a society based on innovation, but there are many—mostly younger

weavers—who believe that technological innovation isn't enough. These weavers argue for social innovation, as well as for changing the way things are done. For all its advances and conveniences, the society of New Gaia is still very much one of tradition. The government is ruled by a council of nine women (or, as is the case currently, eight women and one man) because that's the way it's always been done. Outsiders aren't allowed beyond the Outer Ring of Heartwood because this has always been the case. Insect weavers are shunted off into ghettos because that's the way things are. But many of the younger weavers argue that “because that's the way we've always done it” isn't a good enough reason to do something. These weavers agitate for equality for all weavers regardless of gender or Essence bond, for allowing foreigners free access to all of New Gaia, even for allowing them to hold office. At their best, these upstarts argue for things that could strengthen New Gaia and cure many of the ills plaguing its society. At their worst, they act and speak recklessly without regard to the consequences, causing more strife.

THE SEAFARERS

Jezir leans on the rail, peering out over the roiling waters. It's here. She *knows* it's here. "Hard to starboard! Put the sun at our backs, Sevik!"

She casts her glance backwards, looks at the broad, four-armed man at the helm of the ship. Two great tentacles rise from the raised platform he stands on, and they wrap around his lower two arms, steadying him on his perch, allowing him to commune with the great living ship beneath him, to control it. With his upper-right arm he takes a bristling urchin and attaches it to his eye. His mutation makes him the best helmsman she's ever worked with, just as her own mutation—a mouth on her right knee—makes her one of the best serpent-killers around. Jezir sees Sevik blink several times as he adjusts, but she knows that he'll soon be able to see the heat emanating from creatures around him, knows that the great serpent they chase will blaze red against the cold of the sea.

Jezir looks back out at the sea, grips the long harpoon in her right hand in readiness. That serpent can feed the crew for weeks, and the heartstone at its core will replace the dying stone in the hold of the ship, generate heat for the

crew and for the ship itself, to keep everyone from freezing in the coming months of cold. But any serpent could do that. *This* one is different. *This* one is the serpent that claimed her brother, her father, half of her crew. *This* serpent will die by her hand, and hers alone.

The little ship rocks. Jezir keeps her feet and looks about, sees the telltale wake left behind by the serpent that just passed under them. "Sevik!" she cries. She withdraws something from her belt, a squirming crustacean, and she places it against her face. She feels its legs grip her, feels the tube extend into her mouth and down her throat. She smiles slightly, recalling the horror that landfolk often display when they see her or her crew wearing their masks.

The helmsman nods at her, already steering the ship toward the beast, the maw at the front of the ship gulping water, the ship spewing it out the back, propelling the entire thing forward with a speed and maneuverability unmatched by the land-goers' ships of frail wood. Jezir's eyes scan the waters, and then she sees the fleshy scales of the serpent's back. The ship is sleek, made of chitin and bone, one great organism bred and grown by her



The great and terrifying sea port in the center of the Mainland, Megalith. High above the city is the blood arena where gladiators fight for glory.

people, acting in concert with Sevik. It bristles with spiked protrusions, and the fins and tentacles beneath the waves allow it to maneuver much more effectively than some ship of mere wood.

Jezir heaves the bone harpoon, feeling the tug on her arm as the long tendril attaching her to the harpoon unravels itself. She feels the harpoon strike home and she wills it to unfurl. The harpoon's head spreads, spins, becomes a flower of agony in the serpent's flesh, and the enormous creature rises up out of the water, bellowing its rage and pain at the ship. It's even bigger than she expected.

Jezir detaches the harpoon from herself before she can be pulled overboard, then signals Sevik. Beneath her, Jezir feels the jaws of the ship lunge forward, biting into the serpent, locking in place so that the beast can't escape. "All hands," she cries, her voice muffled and garbled by her living mask. "Now!"

At that cry, dozens of bone harpoons fly over her head, most of them finding purchase within the serpent's body, spreading and anchoring themselves, creating a ladder she can scramble up. Jezir leaps and grabs the first harpoon, hoists herself up onto it, then leaps to the next, and the next after that. The serpent starts to thrash in pain and anger, trying to violently dislodge itself from the ship and the little spikes of bone and chitin piercing its body. She holds on, drives her knee into the serpent's side and bites down with the jagged mouth there to keep herself from falling down into the sea. She can taste the thick wetness of the beast through her second mouth.

Jezir continues to climb. The crew keeps the serpent distracted as it rages. She sees it take one of the crewmen, biting him viciously and tossing him overboard, his torso separating from his legs mid-air. Another crewman rushes forward, brandishing a great sword of bone, and slashes at the serpent's belly. Foolish. The serpent takes him too, swallowing him whole. Then it grabs the side of the hull with its great jaws and starts to pry a chunk of spiny plating away from the hull. She needs to move more quickly, for the sake of her crew and her ship.

She continues to climb, using harpoons as well as the bone knife in her hand and the mouth on her knee to find purchase and continue upward. She pulls herself up one final time and looks into the serpent's massive eye, watches as its three pupils adjust, focusing on her. Now it sees her as a threat rather than a nuisance. It releases the badly damaged hull and tries to snap at her, to dislodge her, nearly takes her left leg off at the knee, leaving her with a bleeding gash. Jezir grits her teeth; this isn't her first serpent. She scrambles further to the side of its head, where no amount of snapping at her will allow the serpent's jaws to reach her.

Jezir reaches down to her side and pulls free another harpoon, feels the tendril on its end wrap around her wrist and burrow itself into her flesh. Once it's in place, she draws back her arm and plunges it forward, into the beast's eye, pushing until she's up to her elbow in it, and then she unfurls the harpoon in the serpent's brain. It thrashes madly, and she holds on as hard as she can, gripping the inside of its skull, trying to find purchase on the newly slick surface of the monster's head. It lurches, and then it starts to fall over. All at once, Jezir lets go and dives into the sea below, the crustacean covering her mouth allowing her to breathe through the intense chlorine gas above the water and even filter air out of the water itself.

She surfaces and watches the serpent thrash madly against the hull of the ship, crushing members of her crew, throwing them overboard, ripping great hunk of meat off of the little ship. She watches as Sevik runs forward, four axes in his hands, and is devoured whole by the dying serpent for his trouble. She watches her ship slowly sink beneath the waves, damaged badly by the serpent's death throes, and she can feel the wound in her leg bleeding into the sea.

She's out here now, in the middle of the ocean, soon to be alone without a ship, bleeding heavily, and the sharks will find her soon. The serpent is dead, sinking beneath the waves with the remains of her ship and crew. She got it. She killed the serpent that took everything from her.

She's waited for this day for years, but now all she can do is wonder at the cost.



ARRIVING ON THE SEAS

The first thing that strikes you upon approaching one of the Seafarers' vessels is how...alive it is. Most land-based cultures on Asunder make their ships out of wood and use sails to harness the wind and ply the seas. But the Seafarers, those who are born on and near the oceans of Asunder, grow their ships. These ships are living organisms, often made up of multiple creatures living in symbiotic harmony, both with each other and with the crew. The hull of the ship is a great bony carapace, spiked protrusions jutting out at odd angles, rugged and dangerous in a dozen ways that a wooden ship is not. At the front of the ship, below the water line, is a great maw that gulps water. As the water enters the

ship, it passes through an organic propulsion system and is ejected from the rear of the ship. Seafarers' ships have no sails; they have no need for them. Beneath the ship are several finned tentacles that the ship uses to steer itself, granting it unmatched maneuverability in the water. Two more tentacles spout from a raised platform at the helm of the ship. A trained helmsman can bond with the creature through these tentacles, allowing him or her to command it mentally.

The second thing that strikes you is what a varied and strange lot the Seafarers are. Because of their bond with the chaotic and changeable sea, all Seafarers have physical mutations: extra limbs, mouths, or eyes, chitinous skin, a flexible skeleton of cartilage gills, spikes, claws, or other

natural weapons, and myriad other adaptations to their environment and lifestyle. Because most land-dwellers consider these mutations disturbing or grotesque, Seafarers are frequently shunned and even feared on land. Some of them, though, either have no obvious changes or else have mutations that give them an appeal that land-dwellers find exciting and exotic. There are many stories of youths falling in love with mysterious Seafarer captains and being spirited away to live on the waves, and at least some of these tales have a kernel of truth.

The ships of the Seafarers are the most efficient and rugged vessels on the seas. This is fortunate, because the seas are not kind. Churning maelstroms, rough seas, poisonous chlorine gas, and great sea-beasts all wait to make short work of those who would sail. The Seafarers, however, do not merely sail: they live on the ocean. They brave the maelstroms, hunt the sea-beasts, and use specialized sea creatures—crustaceans, urchins, and so forth—to help them deal with the other dangers of the seas.

The Seafarers are a tumultuous people, chaotic and unpredictable like the seas on which they thrive. To outsiders, they seem dangerous, rash, wantonly violent. The truth is that they are what the sea makes them. The sea is a chaotic, unforgiving habitat, and so the Seafarers must be equally chaotic and unforgiving. They adapt to whatever situation is laid out in front of them, cull the weak from their ranks, and do not allow things like morality or law to get in the way of survival.

THE WAY OF JEZIR

Jezir is a ship's captain, and so her word is law aboard her ship. This is the way Seafarers operate while they're at sea: each ship is an independent territory, each captain that ship's ruler, and nobody, not even another captain, can countermand the word of a captain while she's on her ship. This is the only consistent rule on the seas, and it exists for the simple reason that to question a captain's word is to invite division and weakness into the crew, and those things spell doom for both crew and ship. Some captains rule with an iron fist, while others inspire their crew by earning their respect, but no captain brooks a question to her authority.

On the seas, different ships have different functions. Hunting ships like Jezir's exist to hunt down the great sea serpents and other beasts of the sea for the resources they represent. Most sea beasts provide food for the crew, allowing ships to stay out at sea for longer durations, but some creatures are hunted for the specific resources they provide. Dusk crabs provide huge amounts of chitin for plating ships, while schools of thresh whales can produce enough blubber and oil to keep fires and lanterns lit for weeks. The most sought-after and dangerous beast is the great sea serpent. Serpent bones make excellent weapons, allowing the seafarers to create axes, knives, or harpoons. Their leathery skin makes warm, durable clothing when

cured. Their meat is considered a delicacy both among the Seafarers and on the mainland. But their most valuable resource is the heartstone: a huge mass of bone and living tissue that produces enormous amounts of heat for several weeks. When kept in the hold of a living ship, the ship can feed off of the heat of a heartstone, allowing it to move faster and with more agility. During the cold winter months, the heartstone also provides necessary warmth for the crew.

Hunting ships are not the only ones on the seas. The Seafarers are also traders, piloting freighters that ferry goods from island to island. In this way, the Seafarers have made themselves an integral part of commerce on Asunder. Most land-dwellers' ships are capable of little more than sailing the shallows or making the occasional cross-ocean journey, but Seafarer ships can travel from island to island at speed and for long periods of time, effectively keeping the trade routes alive. In exchange, captains ask for a tithe of the goods being ferried; this is how the Seafarers get goods they can't otherwise produce or acquire themselves.

Seafarers also carry passengers between islands, though this is somewhat rarer. The seafarers' unpredictable dispositions and disturbing mutations make many land-dwellers uncomfortable, and so most land-dwellers rely on their own ships to travel to other parts of Asunder. Still, most know that the Seafarers' ships are safer, faster, and in many cases cheaper. Where a land-dwelling shipping company would charge handsomely for a trip from Pacari to New Gaia due to the danger of the expedition, a Seafarer ship would take their price in barter, and ask for far less. It's also an open secret that many seafarer ship crews engage in piracy, and the chances of your ship being attacked and boarded are virtually nil when you ride with the pirates themselves.

But even the Seafarers can't spend all their time at sea. For this reason, they have one great city: Megalith. Situated on and over the rivers near the center of the mainland, Megalith is a great, bustling port city, a place of freebooters and sailors, rife with crime and piracy, rough and ready, and a great place for misfits to find their home. Under the shadow of the Father Serpent's skeleton, Seafarers conduct inter-ship business, meet with family members and friends in other crews, drink, spend their booty, and enjoy the hospitality of the City on the Sea.

THE LIVING WORLD

Like many other people of Asunder, the first Seafarers' Essence bonded with a part of the world when the gods left. In their case, it was the sea itself. The sea is, by nature, chaotic, unpredictable, and ever-changing; so, too, are the seafarers. Every seafarer is born with one or more mutations: extra limbs, claws, mouths or eyes in odd places, chitinous skin, and, in many cases, gills. Each mutation serves a purpose, though, and a seafarer's mutations often determine his or her role on a ship.

For those things that their mutations don't help them with, the seafarers cultivate living organisms to help them. Specialized crustaceans are grown to serve as masks to help the seafarers breathe the chlorine gas that emanates from many parts of the sea, and these masks can also help seafarers without gills breathe underwater. When poisoned or sick, a seafarer can attach an urchin to his body to help filter toxins and build antibodies, allowing him to recover much more quickly. Their ships, too, are outfitted with different organisms to help them function more efficiently, such as the nets of seaweed that filter fish and other small sea creatures out of the ship's propulsion system, both clearing the way for water and providing a crew with food to eat. The list goes on and on.

But the ships themselves are the most obvious, impressive way in which the Seafarers have mastered their environment. Long ago, the Seafarers learned to create a cross-bred, mutated amalgam of crustacean, cephalopod, and shark. Now, the seafarers hatch and raise these creatures from birth, breeding their ships, raising them from young and training them to accept the mental control of their helmsmen. Stories sometimes surface of wild ships that have broken free of the Seafarers' control, creatures that sail the seas without crew, attacking other ships, devouring people, and causing mayhem. This can happen, but it's rare, and the Seafarers have specialized ships that they use to hunt down and destroy such rogue ships.

PLACES OF INTEREST

Though geography is fluid on the high seas, there are a few places the seafarers keep track of.

MEGALITH

While every Seafarer considers the sea his home, each one also has a home away from home: Megalith. Situated near the center of the mainland where the three major trade rivers converge, Megalith is a bustling freebooter city full of sailors, pirates, and traders. Seafarers bring the goods they take from the sea, or goods they've agreed to carry for land-dwellers, to Megalith. Meanwhile, traders from every city-state on the mainland send caravans to Megalith to trade their own goods for the exotic wares of Megalith, making the city the central trade hub of the world. Though the city is farther from the ocean than most Seafarers might like, the fact that it is easily accessible from every other city-state on the mainland makes it a necessary port of call for pirate and trader alike.

The city itself is unique among cities of Asunder. Fully two thirds of Megalith is built over the water, on docks, floating platforms, rope bridges, and repurposed boats and ships. Architectural styles from all over the mainland exist in amalgam here right alongside the organically grown dwellings of weavers living here or the graceful spires built by Skimmers. The Seafarers' own dwellings are usually simply ships at dock or, for those who stay here permanently, ships and boats that have

been permanently fused to the structure of Megalith. But perhaps the city's most striking feature is the Father Serpent, the towering skeletal remains of a great sea serpent—the largest to have ever been killed—that form the walls of the city's great Arena, looming over the waters where the rivers meet and churn.

Megalith, like the seafarers themselves, is chaotic and changeable. There are few hard-and-fast rules here, which makes it a safe haven for criminals and miscreants the world over. The people of Megalith organize themselves into boroughs by nationality, and each borough has its own laws that are, at best, loosely enforced. This can make Megalith a dangerous city to visit, so people rarely do unless they've hired someone tough to watch their backs. Those who come to Megalith are either traders looking to do business, Seafarers coming back from a long time at sea, criminals looking for a fresh start, or the people who provide services to any of the above.

There is one striking feature of Megalith that draws people to the city for visits: the Arena. Megalith's Arena is a building suspended upon great pillars and buttresses of serpent bone above the point where the three rivers meet. Its walls are the curved ribs of Father Serpent's corpse, and his skull rears proudly overhead. The Arena hosts brutal bloodsports frequently, pitting dangerous beasts against each other or against slaves captured by the Seafarers. Anyone is welcome to fight in the arena, and the reasons to do so are considerable. First of all, the prize is significant: a huge sum of money for the tournament winner and, if the winner is a slave, freedom. Beyond that, though, mercenary companies, bands of Seekers, and the Bone Army itself all watch the arena fights, and those who win often get lucrative contracts from impressed observers.

The rich and mighty often come to Megalith to watch fights in the arena, wager large sums of money on the combatants, eat, drink, and engage in all manner of pleasures that would be illegal in other mainland cities. Very few things in Megalith are illegal, and so Megalith is known the world over as a place one can indulge in myriad vices without fear of being jailed or otherwise punished by the law. This simple fact keeps people coming back, despite the dangers of such a lawless city.

THE SERPENTS' GRAVEYARD

A thousand miles off the east coast of Pacari is a place of stillness and death. The waters here are calmer, the air blows less harshly, and sound does not carry far. Jutting up from beneath the surface of the sea are bones, thousands of bones, all from sea serpents who have come here and died, their calcified remains inexplicably floating here, remaining here forever. Occasionally, a Seafarer ship will come here seeking to harvest bones or hoping to find a heartstone with some life left in it. The crews of these ships are often disappointed, and not all of them make it back out of the Graveyard. A sickness infects the place, and sometimes living ships come here only to lay down and die.

THE GODDESS'S EYE

Seafarer legend holds that, when the gods left Asunder, Kavestra, Goddess of the Sea, left behind her watchful eye to ensure that her favored children remained faithful to her. This eye manifests as an enormous, raging storm that travels the seas of Asunder, never dissipating, never staying in the same place for very long, and never coming near land. One can see the Goddess's Eye from a long way off, but it moves with a speed and uncanny purpose that makes it impossible to outrun. If the Goddess's Eye is fixed on your ship, try as you might, eventually it will catch you and you will feel its terrible, destructive gaze.

THE HUNGRY FLEET

Every once in a while a seafarer ship goes rogue, throws off its shackles and takes to the sea to hunt and kill. The Seafarers hunt these ships relentlessly, killing them when they find them, but not all are found. What's more, some crews report running afoul of a great fleet of unmanned ships, many dozens of number, that give chase until the

crew is able to escape. These ships, the Hungry Fleet, are little more than a legend...but legends often have a kernel of truth.

THE THOUSAND PORTS

There's an archipelago—a continuous ring of tiny islands—that surrounds the entirety of the mainland. Though a great many of these islands are too tiny to support any kind of life or settlement, there are still quite a few that *are* big enough for settlements, and nearly all of them are inhabited at least part of the time. Known collectively as the Thousand Ports, some of these small islands have permanent settlements that act as places for Seafarers to stop and replenish supplies, while a great many more serve as temporary homes for the nomadic sea people. In both cases, permanent residence is rare. On the occasionally-inhabited islands, crews will make landfall, set up a temporary camp, blow off steam or take shelter during a storm, and move on, ensuring that the dock and any other structures on the island are well-maintained for the next crew. Even on the islands that have a constant population, the residents tend to come and go at a



The Hungry Fleet is said to be rumor. That's what all say until it rips their leg off.

moment's notice. Seafarers live on these islands, then leave with a crew for a time, then settle on another island or in Megalith without ever considering any one of these places to be their permanent abode. Similarly, Seafarers who need a break from the open seas will take leave of their crews on these islands and live on them for a time, until they take up with their old crew or a different one altogether.

PEOPLE OF IMPORT

Every ship captain is a person you should treat as important, but a few Seafarers rise above the rest.

CAPTAIN VEL THE WATER-DEVIL

Captain Vel, known to most as the Water-Devil, is the closest thing the Seafarers have to a leader. Eight feet tall with webbed hands and feet, gills, a finned tail, and great, curled horns on his head, Vel is a sight to behold. He became captain of the *Night Gambit* by seizing control of the ship from its previous captain, a weak man who kept leading his crew to disaster and misfortune. Though the crew was wary of Vel initially because of his mutinous rise to power, he won their respect quickly by leading them on numerous successful hunts, pillaging vast amounts of treasure from unsuspecting ships, and making them all rich.

Word of his exploits spread quickly and, soon everyone wanted to be on the crew of the *Night Gambit*. The ship now operates with a rotating crew, exchanging existing crewmembers for new ones every time it makes port at Megalith, and the more seafarers serve under the Water-Devil, the more his legend grows. Though Vel has no true political authority, he's immediately recognizable and widely respected, so what he says is usually met with enthusiastic agreement.

THE CUSTODIAN

A gaunt man with fish-like skin, the Custodian is known by no other name. Though Megalith has no mayor, the Custodian fulfills many of the functions that a mayor would. He manages the day-to-day operations of the city, brokers trade agreements, sees to it that merchants have safe places to do business, and welcomes people to the city. Nobody appointed him or hired him, but everyone defers to him on subjects concerning Megalith, and he seems to have the city's best interests at heart. That last bit is important: he has the *city's* best interests at heart, and anyone who acts in a manner he considers counter to the best interests of the city usually meets a swift demise.

CAPTAIN LSHIK

It's not uncommon for Seafarer crews to clash with or even prey upon each other; the occasional raid or sea battle is considered fair play, part of life on the high seas. There is one ship, though, that many Seafarers fear and that nearly

all would love to see sink beneath the waves: the *Blue Shark*. Captain Leshik of the *Blue Shark* is a notorious pirate, even among his own people, and he has a reputation for raiding any ship he sees. Numerous Seafarer crews have met their end when the *Blue Shark* found them, plundered them, and scuttled them.

POINTS OF CONFLICT

Conflict is a way of life among the Seafarers, but some fights are bigger than others.

BLACK MOLLY

Some Seafarers believe there's a great black sea serpent with a vicious disposition that's gotten it in its head to hunt down Seafarer vessels and sink them as retribution for the hundreds of serpents that have fallen to the Seafarers. Many dismiss Black Molly as a myth, an excuse for cowards to argue against hunting sea serpents, but more and more reliable reports of the black serpent are starting to surface. This has led to a split in Seafarer culture. While most want to continue as they have, hunting the serpents for food and resources, there are a few who believe that Black Molly is a warning that the Seafarers are killing too many serpents too quickly, and that they should find other things to hunt lest the serpents rise up and destroy them all. The general populace dismisses this vocal minority as a pack of raving fools, but that doesn't stop their ideas from spreading.

THE SEAFARERS VERSUS THE LAND-DWELLERS

The Seafarers have always lived in an uneasy peace with their land-dwelling kin. The land-dwellers know they need the Seafarers for trade and travel, and so they ignore the occasional raid on their own vessels. But some of the city-states of the mainland are starting to complain that they're being raided too often, that the Seafarers are becoming a threat, and that they must either stop the raids or be put in their place. So far, open conflict hasn't happened, but many believe it's not long before open warfare on the high seas breaks out.

THE ALLURE OF MUTINY

Mutiny is generally frowned upon in Seafarer culture. Your captain is your leader; it's her responsibility to keep you safe and fed, and so you owe her your fealty and support. Captain Vel's rise to power, though, has sent the message that mutiny sometimes works out just fine. This has had the unfortunate effect of making mutiny more common aboard Seafarer ships and, while many of these mutinies are soundly put down, a few of them have succeeded, putting new captains behind the helms of ships. This, in turn, creates instability amongst the Seafarers themselves: if a ship's crew is the basic unit of society, and you can't trust your own crew to follow you, then you don't really know who is an ally and who is an enemy.



Captain Vel The Water-Devil on the bow of his terrifying ship, the Night Gambit.

THE MAINLAND

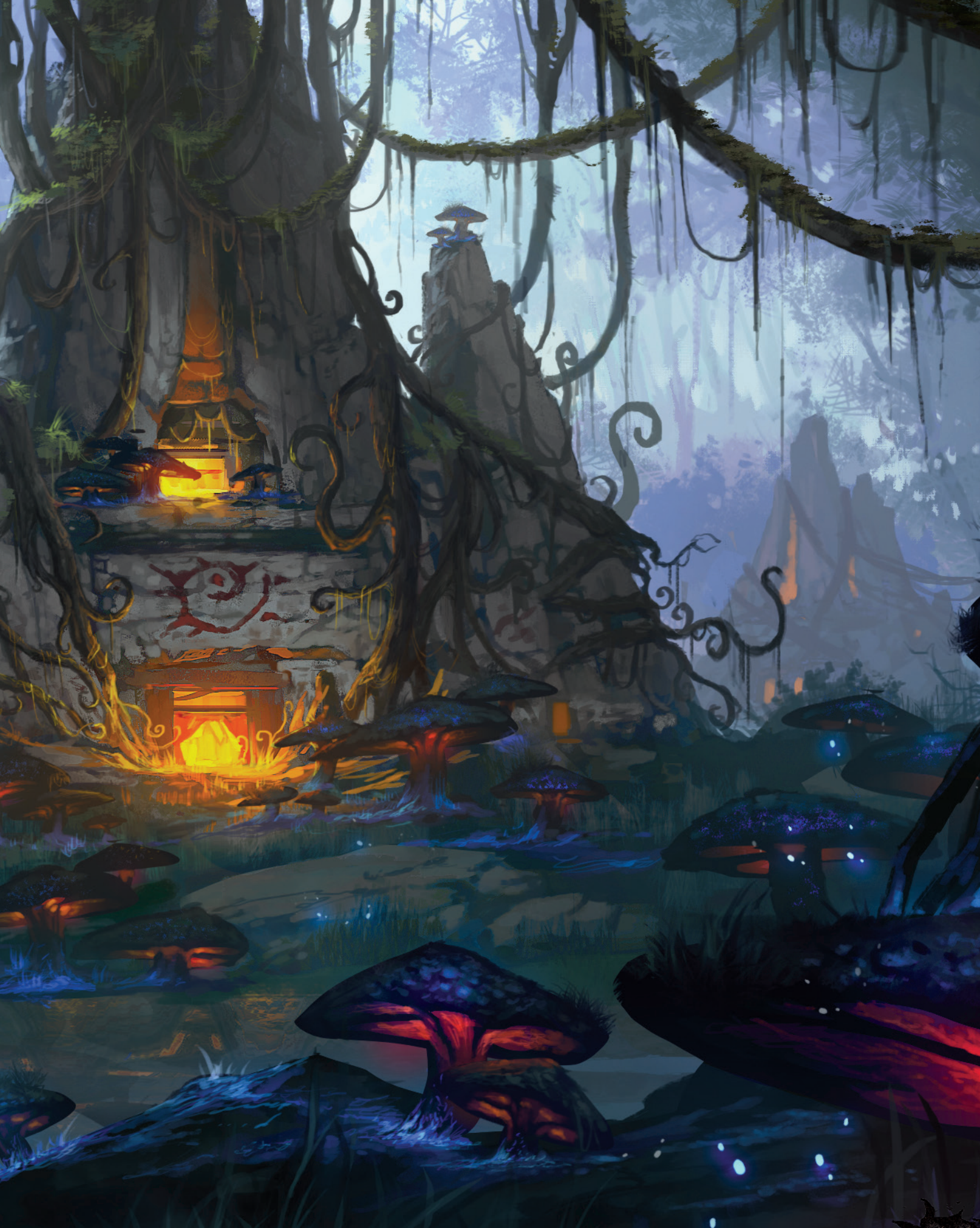
Krescien remembers the beast's bellow, its final charge, all horns and teeth and fury bearing down on him, the sense of frail mortality he felt in that moment. This moment is like that one in many ways. The Naga is huge, a mountain of a woman nearly eight feet tall with a snake's tail twice that length and face full of exultant rage. She surges forward at Krescien, spittle-froth flecking her lips, her cry a ragged hiss not unlike that of the beast so many years ago.

But there was another part of that moment with the beast: the instant of avoidance, Krescien's desperate side-step, the final thrust of his make-shift spear, the giddy chaos of riding that beast to the ground, feeling the life bleed out of it, kicking and grunting, defiant even at the end, then silent, still. He spent the rest of that night skinning the thing, removing meat from bones. The meat served as adequate sustenance on his march back to camp, but the bones were the real prize. Horok bones are hard, durable, capable of holding sharp edges and protective forms when shaped into weapons and armor. That

process, a task that occupied two full weeks of Krescien's time, was crucial not just because it left him with weapons and armor of the highest quality, but because such weapons and armor are the signet of the Bone Army, and one must hunt a horok, kill it, and make its bones into weapons and armor as a rite of passage, proof that you belong.

Krescien steps to the side and brings up the shield he once made to earn his place. The Naga's club-blow is a meteor strike and he feels it reverberate through his entire body, numbing his shield-arm. It'll take at least a second or two for the creature to recover from such an attack, and that second or two is everything. The Naga is quick—quicker than Krescien would've thought possible for a creature her size—and she gives Krescien only one second to react, spinning about and taking Terric's head from his shoulders in that brief interval. Trusty Ardin steps in, shield raised, and jabs at the Naga with his spear. The creature dodges easily, but the distraction gives Krescien the window he needs. He plants his feet, thrusts his





A Pacari paddles to an inn located at the center of a village in West Twin, which plies trade from the very rare night mushrooms.

spear forward, and feels it dig into flesh, break past bone, emerge from the other side of the Naga's body.

The Naga grunts, her left eye twitching, and the fury-spittle on her mouth is replaced by red bubbles, but the snake-woman refuses to fall. She turns, lurching, the motion yanking the spear from Krescien's hand, and the great woman's enormous hands close around Krescien's throat and start to squeeze. Even covered head-to-toe in horok-bone armor, the throat is a vulnerable spot, and the Naga's hands find deadly purchase. Krescien can feel the air in his throat cut off, can feel the blood squeeze against the inside of his eyes, flails in horror against the Naga's inhumanly strong arms in vain as she starts to choke the life out of him. Ardin steps in from the side again, thrusts his spear, drawing blood, but the Naga's tail whips up, wraps around Ardin's head and twists it too far to the side with a sickening crack. The huge snake-woman grins at him, her teeth red, and Krescien realizes that even though his opponent will die in the next minute or two from blood loss, she's got all the time she needs to take Krescien with her. *Where in the hells is Vartu?* he thinks desperately.

In a panic, Krescien fumbles his bone knife from his belt and starts thrusting, stabbing wildly into the Naga's midsection, opening wound after wound in her abdomen, but the creature refuses to yield, refuses to fall, refuses to die. *This is it, he thinks. I'm going to die at the hands of a Naga I've already killed.* Krescien thinks about his daughter, Ralla. He's taught her well, taught her to lead. She can take over for him, lead the unit after he dies. She's ready. Krescien closes his eyes.

He falls to his knees, the Naga's hands no longer at his throat, and he takes a searing, sputtering gulp of air. He coughs, chokes in as much air as he can, falls to his side, rolls over to his back. *Alive.* It's all he can think.

"Getting sloppy, old man," comes a voice from his side. Krescien opens his eyes and sees Vartu standing there, wiping blood from her sword with a cloth. Vartu smiles at him, sheathes her sword, and offers a hand that Krescien gratefully accepts.

"Maybe so," he says, his voice a raw whisper, but he cracks a half-smile. "Lucky you were here to rescue me, I guess."

Vartu smiles back. "Again," she quips. "That's, what, four you owe me now?"

Krescien grunts and looks around. The outpost is half-burned at this point. Twelve Naga did this, only twelve against a full company of Bone Legion Soldiers. And now, of the six in his unit, only he and Vartu remain. Krescien shakes his head, grips the haft of his spear, and yanks it from the now-dead Naga's side. He looks at the corpse: both hands severed at the forearm, head neatly removed from the body. "Three, but only if you don't stack them up against the dozen or so times I've pulled you from the fire, or the fact that the training I gave you saves your life every damn day."

Vartu tilts her head and gives a mock frown. "Well, who's counting?"

Krescien grunts another laugh and kneels down next to the dead Naga. "These wounds are pretty clean." He looks over at Vartu. She's fondling the hilt of her sword...a sword he's never seen before. "Where'd you get a glass blade, Vartu?"

"You really gonna complain about the legality of the weapon that saved your life, Captain?"

"Glass swords are illegal for a reason, Vartu."

"Maybe so, but not a good one."

Krescien purses his lips. "You get a pass on this once. I owe you big for saving me just now, and I do appreciate it. But you need to get rid of that thing. If I see it on you again, I can't turn a blind eye a second time."

"Even if I save your life with it again?" Vartu asks, a smile on her lips.

"I'm serious."

"Yeah, I know," she sighs, holding up her hands. "You're right. I'll sell it off by morning."

Krescien grunts, hiding a smile. Vartu's impetuous, careless even sometimes, but she's a good kid and a good soldier. Krescien turns his attention back to the dead Naga and starts rifling through her belongings.

"Looking for loose gems?" Vartu jokes.

Krescien shakes his head. "Orders. We've been protecting outlying outposts from Naga attacks for nearly three months, and I'm hoping to figure out why they're so riled up. They're clearly focused against Storm Point and its holdings, and I want to see who they're working for. My money's on Far East or the Twins."

"Why's it important who hired them? Storm Point hired us to take care of the raiders and that's what we're doing. Say you go tugging at the thread of who hired them and you end up being right about Far East or the Twins. Then what? They might be our clients next month."

Krescien grunts again. "Here we go." He pulls a crumpled piece of parchment out of a pocket in what little clothing the Naga was wearing and unfolds it. *Wait. That's not right. "Tevarian."*

"What?"

"These orders are from Captain Tevarian."

Vartu purses her lips but says nothing.

"This whole damned job is a con." He stands, crumpling the note in his fist. "Tevarian hires Naga to cause trouble for Storm Point for a pittance, then negotiates a contract to take them out for six times what he paid. This...we need to tell the General."

"I told you to leave it alone, old man," comes Vartu's voice, regretful and too close to Krescien's ear. Krescien starts to spin around and raise his spear but he can already feel the glass sword burrowing through his back. His legs go limp as it cuts through his spine and he falls to his knees, looks down in horror at the blade protruding from his chest. He can feel Vartu's breath on his cheek.

"I'm really sorry, Captain," whispers his sergeant. "Orders are orders."



ARRIVING ON THE MAINLAND

The mainland is the largest land mass on Asunder, much larger than the islands scattered throughout the rest of the world. People refer to it only as “the mainland”; it has no proper name. Where the islands of Asunder are each predominantly populated by a single culture, the mainland belongs to many and to none. As such, your experience arriving on the mainland will vary considerably depending on *where* you arrive.

The mainland is controlled by four sprawling city-states that constantly vie for territory and resources; between them are a myriad of outposts, towns, villages, and other tiny settlements. These settlements usually belong to one city-state or another, but the ones along the territorial borders change hands often, and there’s even a strip of independent settlements, a “no-man’s land” that acts as a buffer for the city-states. Megalith, the city of the Seafarers, is also situated on the mainland; see its section earlier in this chapter for more information.

HYDEN

The people of Hyden pride themselves on their universities, theaters, and thriving art trade. Hyden is a wealthy city-state; the art they export is highly sought-after, and non-residents often travel to Hyden for the theaters and universities, providing a lucrative tourist and student trade. As such, when you arrive in Hyden, your first impression is often one of opulence, wealth, convenience, and modernity. The streets are clean and safe, the people who live there wealthy and attractive, and there’s plenty for a visitor with extra money to do in Hyden. The well-to-do exterior hides a core of excess and indulgence, a decadence that threatens to consume the entire city. Although the central parts of the city, as well as the parts nearest the river, are wealthy and well-maintained, the city-state is ringed by slums and depressed neighborhoods. The outskirts of the city are not nearly as dangerous as places like Megalith, but crime is common and people are desperate. There hasn’t been a revolution yet, but many whisper that it’s coming. Were it to happen, the ensuing conflict would be potentially cataclysmic; Hyden doesn’t have a standing army or militia. Instead, they employ the largest force of Chaos-wielders on the planet. While these Chaos-wielders act as an effective deterrent to invasion, if Hyden had to call upon them to quell an uprising, the rampant use of Chaos by a force of drug-addled hedonists with a poor grasp of consequences could do irreparable harm to the city-state and the surrounding area.

FAR EAST

Far East, on the other hand, has already lived through its revolution. Several years ago the Queen was overthrown and assassinated and a new one took her place, and the current Queen has made a number of sweeping changes to policy and life for the people of Far East. After capitalizing on Far East’s easy access to popular luxury goods like

textiles and sugar, the new Queen set about establishing fair wages and working hours for the people of the city-state, as well as brokering a peace agreement with the nearby Naga. Few know the terms of this peace agreement; the truth of the matter is that the current Queen and her supporters had been in league with the Naga for quite some time and cooperated with them to overthrow and kill the previous Queen. Now, the Queen of Far East has secret Naga allies that she uses to gain advantage over her rival city-states. The resultant mood in Far East is one of peace and prosperity, tinged with expectant wariness. The people of Far East are treated well and the city-state is well-protected both by its standing army and its secret Naga allies. Many, though, are waiting for the other shoe to drop. While almost nobody knows about the alliance with the Naga, the citizenry is suspicious of the sudden peace and aware that the Naga continue to attack other city-states while leaving their home alone. Many wonder why, and what will come of it.

STORM POINT

Though not founded by weavers, Storm Point nevertheless has the largest weaver population on Asunder outside of New Gaia itself. The fact that the city-state is constantly buffeted by rainstorms probably has something to do with this; the plants the weavers cultivate and manipulate thrive here, and they’re able to both grow many of the same plants that they can on New Gaia as well as create new varieties that they can’t grow back home. The result of the large weaver population is that Storm Point, like New Gaia, is a marvel of technological innovation. While Storm Point isn’t quite as advanced as New Gaia, it’s close, and the people of Storm Point have access to conveniences that citizens of other city-states can only dream of. A side-effect of this is that, while Storm Point doesn’t have the largest standing army of the city-states, it does have the most well-equipped and, if another power attacks Storm Point directly, many parts of the city itself can rise up in its own defense.

THE TWINS

The Twins are one city in name, though they’re sometimes more like two in practice. The city-state is bisected by a wide and vigorous river, and the two halves of it are connected by a few bridges and little else. While it’s common to travel between the two halves of the Twins, East Twin and West Twin have grown into very different places, and their citizens are distinct. West Twin is the agricultural hub of the mainland. The urban portion of West Twin is sparse and primarily consists of homes and markets. What West Twin does have, though, is sprawling, fertile farmland for miles and miles. The people of West Twin use farming techniques passed down through generations; when combined with some of the best soil on Asunder, the result is a yield and quality of produce that is greater and more consistent than anywhere else on the mainland, possibly anywhere else in the world. East Twin, on the other hand, is a center of business, trade,



The Twin Cities. They could not be more different and they could not resent each other more.

and banking. A common saying in the Twins is “What the West Makes, the East Takes.” This is true to a point, but it’s not the whole story. East Twin does indeed take a considerable amount of the produce grown by West Twin, but most of that is sold to other city-states or traded for other goods, and that profit benefits West Twin as much as it does East Twin. There’s a fair amount of resentment and rivalry between the two Twins, and some people grumble that the two will split off from each other and become their own separate city-states. The truth, though, is that the Twins exist in symbiosis. East would die without West’s yield, and West would shrivel without East to sell their goods to the wider world.

THE WAY OF KRESCIEN

Krescien is a captain in the Bone Army, the largest and most sought-after mercenary company in the world. Recognized easily by the armor and weapons they carry—made of incredibly durable horok bone—the bone army sell their services to the various city-states, villages, and outposts for a variety of reasons and purposes. Many city-states supplement their own standing armies with Bone Army

soldiers, keeping them on retainer and using them for patrols or dangerous missions. Outposts and villages will also sometimes hire Bone Army squads to handle disputes with other settlements, take care of bandits, scare off Naga, or deal with wild beasts and other threats. The Bone Army is happy to take everyone’s money. They’ll fight for anyone, even opposite sides of the same conflict, though they have a strict rule that no Bone Army soldier will fight another Bone Army soldier. An employer who violates this rule forfeits all command over their hired soldiers, as well as any pay that has already changed hands.

The Bone Army is a common sight on the mainland; their soldiers are numerous and omnipresent, such a part of daily life that people hardly notice them. Life on the mainland easily justifies the existence of such a large mercenary force, too. The city-states are constantly rattling their sabers at each other, bandits are a rampant and ever-present problem for outlying settlements, and the threat of the Naga always looms.

The Naga are, indeed, the most ancient and feared foe of the people of the mainland. Larger, more powerful, and far more dangerous than the average human, most people are terrified of meeting a Naga, much less having to fight

THE LIVING WORLD

The Essence of those on the mainland, however, bonded with their own souls. Unlike people from other parts of the world, the people of the mainland have no weird powers or mutations. They cannot defy gravity or punch through rock. Instead, they work hard, adapt to their surroundings, and rely on their ingenuity and perseverance to win the day. Mainlanders do make use of many of the pieces of living gear that come from other parts of Asunder and may even make some of their own, but their soul-bound Essence means that, individually, they're far more vulnerable than those from the islands or the sea. They are much more numerous, and mainlanders tend to be educated and have varied backgrounds and skills.

The fact that the mainlanders' Essence bound to their souls does give them a few perks not shared by other people of Asunder, though. The most dramatic is their ability to wield Chaos. While the number of Chaos-wielders on the mainland is small, only a person from the mainland has the ability to actually bond to a shard of Chaos and learn to wield it; a Skimmer or weaver attempting the same thing would be destroyed utterly, consumed and warped by the Chaos shard. Because of this, some of the most powerful beings on Asunder are from the mainland. Chaos is capable of far more than a bond with plants or blice crystal, for example, but that bond is also far more dangerous to the wielder.

The other thing that mainlanders are capable of is being transformed by Pure Light. While a barbarian monk or beastmaster struck by pure light would be vaporized, there is a small chance that a mainlander would instead be transformed and given power by such an encounter. Because of this, Pure Light cults are common on the mainland.

PLACES OF INTEREST

The mainland is riddled with interesting and dangerous places to go and explore. Here are a few of them.

UNIVERSITY OF CHAOS

Though Hyden is famed for its universities, the University of Chaos is not actually one of them. "The University of Chaos" is a colloquial name that the people of Hyden use to refer to a sprawling, walled campus of dormitories, cafes, restaurants, taverns, and drug dens that the governor of Hyden uses to house his force of Chaos-wielders and keep them happy. The University's high, thick walls keep the cityfolk mostly safe from the random explosions and bursts of destructive energy that are a regular occurrence on the campus, but accidents still sometimes spill out into the city proper, and most Hydenites have learned to avoid the areas around the University of Chaos.

NO MAN'S LAND

Situated at the point where the territories of Hyden, Far East, Storm Point, and the Twins meet is a belt of neutral territory. This territory, called No Man's Land by most, is

it, though encounters are much rarer than they once were. The Bone Army, as well as the presence of soldiers who actually owe fealty to the individual city-states, makes the citizens feel safer. It makes them able to function during their daily lives without fear of monsters invading and killing everyone they know.

Interestingly, there's a much more immediate threat to public safety in every city-state that most ignore or accept as a necessary evil: Chaos-wielders. Chaos is unpredictable and mind-bogglingly dangerous, capable of melting stone, turning your organs into hair, or causing the wind to flay the skin from your bones. To make matters worse, those who wield the primal force of Chaos tend to be entitled, hedonistic, mercurial, and high on any number of drugs. The governors of the city-states hire Chaos-wielders, keep them on retainer, feed them drugs, alcohol, food, and sex to keep them happy, and unleash them on their enemies when the time comes. Governors do everything they can to attract Chaos-wielders to their cities; it's commonly understood that a city-state that controls more Chaos-wielders than any other has the power, though this control is, ultimately, an illusion. Still, it's a pretty lie, and it's one the citizenry is more than willing to swallow in order to feel safe.

not neutral by design, but rather by sheer stubbornness. The villages and outposts inside of No Man's Land are collectively small and would be easy for any single city-state to swallow up...if the other city-states would let them. To exacerbate the issue is the fact that these territories are far from the seats of power of each of the city-states, they've banded together into an adamantly neutral alliance, and they've pooled their resources to buy protection from the Bone Army. All these factors combine to create a small chunk of territory that no city-state can seem to take or hold onto for any length of time.

MOOT POINT

Within No Man's Land is an outpost known as Moot Point. It's belonged to every city-state over the years, and currently belongs to none. It earned its name by being considered a

place where representatives of different city-states could meet with an expectation of safety during times of war. Once each year, each city-state sends a representative (two from the Twins) to meet and discuss the coming year. This is mostly a formality, a show of good faith, but sometimes important decisions are made at Moot Point.

THE THUNDERING PLAINS

There are no settlements on the Thundering Plains, despite the abundant natural resources present there. This is because the Plains are home to thousands of horoks, great territorial herd-beasts that have been known to level entire villages over the course of a day. The evidence of such doomed settlements is scattered throughout the Thundering Plains, still littered with the treasures of those who once tried to live there. Mainlanders have stopped trying to cull the herds or start settlements there; now, the only ones who venture into the Thundering Plains are foolhardy scavengers looking to rob the husks of dead villages or aspirants to the Bone Army undergoing their rite of passage.

THE NAGA SWAMPS

Beyond the territory of Far East lies a vast and trackless swamp that is said to be impassible. People say this for two reasons. First, because anybody who's ever tried to chart a way through has never come back. Second, because the swamp is inhabited by numerous clans of Naga. Naga are enormous, powerful, gifted with strange powers and great hardiness, and they tend to prey upon humans when the two groups encounter each other. Few venture into the Naga swamps, and those who do are mostly people seeking the power of Chaos.

THE BEYOND

There is a swath of land beyond the Naga swamps that is virtually unreachable by land, and the oceans around it are so buffeted by violent storms and riddled with jutting rocks and coral that no one save the occasional Seafarer vessel dares to brave the seas to make landfall. Those who speak of this place believe that a god lives there, one that was cast down and never left with the others. They believe this god hides in his land, hoarding great treasures and protecting them jealously from those who would usurp them. Some have gone and come back, though, and tell stories of a great well of Chaos there that offers unlimited power to those strong enough or insane enough to take it.



*A Black Isler and an Insect Weaver battle a clutch of Nagas.
This may be the worst decision they've ever made.*

PEOPLE OF IMPORT

The mainland is home to numerous politicians, rulers, diplomats, merchant-princes, and other important (or self-important) people. Only a few are truly important, though.

GENERAL HARRIK

The General of the Bone Army is one of the most powerful individuals on the mainland. Though each city-state commands its own standing army and force of Chaos-wielders, nobody commands more able-bodied soldiers—each with a high degree of training, discipline, and loyalty—than General Logen Harrik. With soldiers posted in every city-state and nearly every outpost and settlement on the mainland, the General has the power to take any of the city-states by force if he so desired. General Harrik is a man of honor and integrity, though, and he never goes back on a contract once signed unless the other party breaches it first. Not all of his officers and soldiers are as noble as he is, but those who aren't are at least wise enough to act the part. Duty and honor are important facets of the Bone Army's code, and those who break the rules too frequently don't last long.

STORMCROW

Nobody remembers his name. He lives in a tower out near No Man's Land, and while that tower is within Hyden territory, nobody in Hyden would have the courage to lay claim to it or try to collect taxes from the Stormcrow. Stories of his origin are varied and numerous, most of them lies or exaggerations, but they all agree upon one thing: ten years ago, Stormcrow was a Chaos-wielder in the employ of Hyden, and he decided to leave. The governor sent men to dissuade him, and Stormcrow turned them all to straw. Now, Stormcrow is quite likely the oldest living Chaos-wielder in the world and (many say) the most powerful. For the moment, he seems content to stay in his tower alone. Everyone wonders what will happen when he decides to leave home again.

BETTY BLUE-EYES

Each city-state is home to numerous cartels, thieves' guilds, bands of assassins, and other criminal enterprises, but none is quite so famous as Betty Blue-Eyes. Betty earned fame some time ago via a string of high-profile, high-risk assassinations in Storm Point. While those who hired her were eventually outed, tried, and executed, Betty Blue-Eyes remained at large. A few years later she surfaced in Far East, killing a minor noble who was proving to be a political obstacle to a number of prominent courtiers in the city. Again, nobody was able to find Betty or bring her to justice. Since then, she surfaces periodically, each time killing in the same fashion: a glass dagger through the eye, left at the scene. Nobody

knows what she looks like or where she gets so many glass daggers, but she's both feared by the aristocracy and admired by both the criminal underworld and the commonfolk. The people have a saying: "When you see Betty's blue eyes, buy yourself a burial plot."

POINTS OF CONFLICT

In a place with so many different political powers, conflict is inevitable.

THE CITY-STATE SABER-DANCE

The city-states are always at odds with each other. They need each other—each produces resources or services the others don't—but they exist in a state of intense and constant rivalry, and the governors of each city-state would like nothing more than to muster their forces and swallow up one of their neighbors. Open warfare is rare, though, as no single city-state has a significant advantage over the others, and any city-state weakened by war, whether the winner or loser, would be quickly swallowed up by its rivals. Instead, the city-states exist in a perpetual state of cold war. Trade and travel between city-states are common, and most citizens aren't particularly invested in the political machinations of those who rule them, but the nobility, the politicians, and the military all want a bigger piece of the pie, and some say it's only a matter of time before something sparks a conflict.

THE NAGA

The Naga are an ever-present threat for those who live near their swamps, as the snake-people frequently send raiding parties out to smaller villages and outposts to steal goods and resources from those who live there. Though not much of a threat to those who live inside the city-states proper, Naga raiding parties have been venturing further and further into city-state territory, attacking settlements further away from their home. Some think the Naga have been laying low, building their numbers and stockpiling weapons for a major incursion. Others have noticed that most of these raids are against the holdings of city-states *other* than Far East.

THE THREAT OF CHAOS

Chaos-wielders are a constant presence on the mainland, at least in the city-states. Every governor keeps Chaos-wielders on retainer for the day open warfare breaks out. The fact that each and every Chaos-wielder is a catastrophe waiting to happen is conveniently ignored by most. In the city-states, this means periodic events of mass destruction with death tolls in the hundreds. Out in the outlying settlements, it often means an unretained Chaos-wielder wandering into town and effectively taking it over until he or she is either scooped up by a governor, killed by a clever or lucky townsperson or Seeker, or pushed to the point of a massacre.



CHAOS

Blood thrums in her ears, a steady, deafening pulse that pushes on the backs of her eyes and tints her vision red. She lifts a hand and wipes blood from her lip, smiles, and spits out a tooth. She can feel her ribs, broken from the fall, and she's favoring her left leg, but all the pain is strangely muted in the face of the whirling strangeness all around her. Her climbing gear was faulty—she'll have a talk with the merchant who sold it to her when she returns to the Twins—but she's here now, and nothing else really matters.

Cati looks around. Nothing makes sense here; the water that she's standing in drips up toward a pulsating ball of water hovering in the air. The trees twist and writhe, and some of them look like they're part stone, part flesh, or part fire. The air itself crackles with mercurial energy, an energy that pulls her forward, beckons to her. That energy—that *Chaos*—wants to consume her, to make her part of itself. It has a will of its own and a need to become more, to eat the world around it and pervert the laws of reality. But it won't. Cati won't let it. She'll turn the tables, consume *it*, make it bend to *her* will. She laughs at the thought, not even noticing how ragged the sound is.

She walks forward, dragging her injured leg, holding her ribs, her grin manic on her face. She can feel it—the Chaos is getting more excited the closer she gets, and so is she. She lifts her eyes up and looks at the orb of water hanging in the air. There's something at its center: fractured, multicolored light, painful to her eyes, sickening in its changeability, hypnotic in its lack of pattern. The Chaos shard. Her need surges up into her throat and she nearly vomits. Instead, she dives upward, plunges into the hovering ball and feels both a shock of cold and blistering heat at the same time, an unwholesome mixture that nearly triggers her gag reflex a second time.

Cati can feel blisters forming on her skin, but she swims up toward the shard, struggling to keep her eyes open in the hot-cold water. Now the Chaos seems to realize her purpose and she can feel resistance, a current in the water pushing her away, but she won't be deterred. She swims on, against the current, eyes nearly blinded by the cacophony of light in front of her. Finally, her hand closes around the shard. It does its best to tear her apart.

The first thing Cati feels is the shard's will struggling against her. Its consciousness is unknowable, alien, but it's clear that it intends to destroy her utterly if she persists. The weird hot-cold of the water around her intensifies, burns her eyes, her skin, tries to force its way into her nostrils and her lungs. Cati struggles not to choke, not to breathe in a lungful of the water. She holds her breath, clamps her jaws and eyes tight, and tightens her grip on the shard. Even behind closed eyelids Cati can feel the water burning her eyes away, leaving her blind. She feels the skin of her hand, the hand gripping the shard, melting away, exposing the muscle beneath; that, in turn, starts to bubble. She grits her teeth.

No, she thinks. You are mine. I will take you into me and possess your power. You are mine.

The shard surges against her, pulses with wild fury, but she does not relent. She will not relent. Cati pulls herself toward the shard. She wraps her other hand around it, then levers her body forward to wrap herself around the shard entirely, a fetal position with the shard at her stomach. It's appropriate in a way; she's being reborn today. This orb of water is her womb, the Chaos energy in the shard is her mother and father, and when she is born the world will tremble. She holds onto that thought and slowly, slowly, she starts to bend the shard to her will.

The orb of water bubbles and twists. It surges inward, then explodes outward, showering the swamp around it with blistering hot-cold water. Cati's limp form falls to the ground. Much of her skin has sloughed off on her hands, her legs, her stomach. Where her eyes were there are only burned-out holes, and the hair has been eaten away from her scalp. But she grins. She sputters and coughs and starts to laugh. Her right hand opens and there, in the palm, is a dull gray shard of stone. Cati discards it and struggles to stand. Slowly, her skin begins to knit. Tissue reforms, closing wounds and covering muscle. Where her eyes were, pinpricks of electric blue light kindle, and Cati sees the world anew. She sees the components of reality around her, its building blocks, and she knows instinctively how to reshape them to her desire.

The world shudders in horror.



"Can I help you?" the merchant asks. The customer looks like a young woman, face hidden by a deep hood; maybe he can sell her some perfume or silk.

"You sell climbing gear," she says. It's not a question.

"I do," he replies, unsure.

The woman tosses a ruined length of rope and a broken grappling hook on the counter of his stall. "You sold me this. It broke and nearly killed me."

The merchant puts up his hands, placating. "I'm very sorry, miss, for your misfortune. All sales are final though, and —"

His words cut off suddenly, and in a fit of panic he realizes his mouth is gone, a patch of smooth flesh in its place. The young woman raises her head and pulls back her hood. Her eyes are crackling points of blue light, her hair a mane of fire, but the most terrifying thing about her is her grin, manic and fierce, full of wild fury. He tries to say something, to plead for his life, but no sound comes, and when he raises his hands he sees them turn to sand and fall away. He can't even scream as his body crumbles.



THE WAY OF CATI

One of the rare few who wield the primal forces of Chaos, Cati is a terrible force of turmoil and destruction when she wants to be. Like Cati, all Chaos-wielders must track down and discover a source of Chaos. Most such sources are shards that exist in remote or dangerous parts of the world. The Naga Swamp has quite a few shards, and there are many out on the open seas, either above or below it. Only those from the mainland, those whose Essence is bonded with their souls, are capable of bonding with and wielding Chaos energy—and only a fraction of those who attempt this bonding survive the process. Chaos is an inherently dangerous and destructive force, and it seeks to consume any who try to control it. The rare few who learn to master it do so through sheer force of will, and the reward they reap is nothing short of the ability to reshape reality as they see fit.

There are, of course, limits. Chaos-wielders are not omnipotent, and Chaos is dangerous and destructive to the wielder when used incautiously. A relatively small use of Chaos, such as imbuing a weapon with light or throwing a ball of fire at someone, is reasonably safe for the wielder and taxes her only slightly. A much more powerful use of Chaos, such as turning an entire platoon of soldiers to stone, is possible, but the chances of the Chaos-wielder losing control and destroying herself are high in such a scenario. Only the strongest-willed, most disciplined Chaos-wielders are capable of such feats, and those people are perishingly rare.

One of the reasons this is so is because Chaos is like a drug to those who wield it. The more you call upon Chaos energy, the more it impels you to do so. It floods your senses with pleasure, creating an addictive high unlike any drug in existence. Many who learn to harness Chaos die within the first few years of doing so because they draw upon it too much. The more you use Chaos, the more of a tolerance you develop to its high. This drives you to draw upon it more, for more spectacular feats, in order to get the high you long for. Eventually, you draw upon Chaos too powerful to control, and your physical form is annihilated in a spectacular kind of drug overdose.

For most, the risks of Chaos are simply too great to consider trying to wield it. Those who do seek it out become powerful, dangerous individuals, but also become highly sought-after by the governors of the city-states. The city-states long ago realized that controlling Chaos-wielders was the key to controlling territory, and so the governors aggressively recruit Chaos-wielders. They hire them for large sums of money, give them drugs, food, sex, and other hedonistic pleasures, and keep them happy and sedated most of the time. The reason for this is twofold. First, the constant supply of earthly pleasures keep Chaos-wielders from drawing on their power too often and thus destroying the cities they're hired to protect. Second, the fact that everyone knows that this is how Chaos-wielders are treated encourages people

to become Chaos-wielders, filling the ranks even more. After all, if you can learn to harness Chaos, odds are good that you'll have your every whim attended to for the rest of your (admittedly short) life.

PLACES OF INTEREST

There are a few different places on Asunder where people seek out Chaos energy.

THE NAGA SWAMP

On the mainland, the place most aspiring Chaos-wielders seek out their power is within the Naga Swamp. Nobody's sure why, but the swamp is home to a large number of Chaos shards. Though the Naga can't harness Chaos in the same way that humans of the mainland can, they guard these shards jealously because they know people will come to seek them, and those people make for easy plunder.

THE CHAOS WELL

Few even believe that this place exists, but enough stories are told by people who have supposedly been there and come back that the legends persist. People say that, if you cross through the Naga Swamp to the Beyond, you'll find the Chaos Well there, a churning maelstrom of unnatural energy. The legends also say that, if you learn to attune yourself to and harness the Chaos Well, you will become a god. So far, a noticeable lack of new gods leaves the theory unproven.

THE GODDESS' EYE

Chaos-wielders believe that the Goddess' Eye, the great storm that travels the seas, never diminishing or stopping, is actually created by a powerful shard of Chaos at the storm's heart. Many Chaos-wielders have tried to enter the Eye in order to claim this shard, but their vessels never return.

PEOPLE OF IMPORT

There are very few notable Chaos-wielders because their life expectancy tends to be so short. That said, there is one who has managed to live to old age.

STORMCROW

Among Chaos-wielders, Stormcrow is a bit of a legend. Chaos-wielders don't study to become better at wielding Chaos, so none ever seek him out to learn his secrets or study with him; instead, young upstart wielders seek Stormcrow out to challenge him, hoping to gain fame, fortune, and respect by defeating him. To this day, nobody has succeeded; the battles that ensue are short and brutal, and they have left the landscape around Stormcrow's tower a blasted ruin. For more information on Stormcrow, see his entry in the **Mainland** section of this chapter.

Chaos wielders attempt to destroy Stormcrow only to be turned to ash.



POINTS OF CONFLICT

Chaos is conflict, in its purest, most elemental form. Chaos-wielders tend not to have strong allegiances to any earthly power, and the only belief that tends to be strong among Chaos-wielders is their belief in themselves. As such, they get involved in external conflicts only when they must (because of a contract with a city-state, for example).

That said, conflicts between Chaos-wielders are common. These individuals tend to be arrogant, self-important, entitled, and drunk on both power and alcohol. When two or more of them get in one place, conflicts are inevitable. The governors minimize this by keeping them in a drug-induced stupor most of the time, but little in the world can cause more devastation than two lucid Chaos-wielders in the same place at the same time.

CHAPTER THREE FACTIONS



The Wooden Legion believes their holy war will save Asunder from ruin. So do the other factions. The only problem: their wars are the thing destroying the planet.



Three of Dadara's nails are chewed to the quick by the time the runner brings word to the General and her staff: *east wing, seven hostiles sighted, active Shard in play*. Her stomach does a flip and she starts in on the fourth nail. She's seen plenty of combat, but Chaos Shards are another story.

"Are we certain this is worth the risks?" Dadara hears herself say. "It might be a low-level Shard. Someone setting us up for a trap."

The General looks up from her whispered conference with a squadron leader, her face twisted in disgust. "What's your name, lieutenant?"

Damn my loose lips. "Dadara Exal, sir. Your newest aide?"

The General bares her teeth in something that might be a smile. "First rule, aide girl. Don't say stupid shit where I can hear it."

"Yes, sir." Dadara wishes she could disappear, but with the entire command structure of the Bone Army hiding inside a hedge, all she can do is shuffle to one side a few inches. Her captain, Fisker Amman, gives her a pitying grin and pats her on the shoulder. He was the one who'd recommended her as an aide, widely known as one of the worst positions in the mercenary group, and now he was enjoying watching her squirm. She plays with the carved crystal embedded in the bone ring she wears on her left hand and ignores him. *Eat dirt, Fisker. I'm right where I want to be.*

The General finishes her whispered orders, and the squadron leaders crawl out of the hedge, each heading for their respective positions. "As soon as we hear the doors, give, we go," she says to her cluster of assistants and aides, rubbing her bone-backed gauntleted hands together in

anticipation. “Expect resistance as soon as we hit the east wing. Kill whoever you can, but so help me, if you get in my way, by Gaia’s tits and teeth I’ll cave your head in myself.” She strokes the massive war maul she always carries with something akin to sexual pleasure, lost in the thought of murder and mayhem. The weapon’s haft is the thigh-bone of a good-sized horok, and its head has jawbones affixed in a hexagonal pattern with jagged teeth jutting out on all sides. The General is whispering to it.

Dadara jams her bone helmet on her head and steadies her breathing. *Being an aide is important. I’m helping one of the women who makes the world turn. Just don’t get in front of her. Shit, don’t most generals stay in the rear? There’s a Chaos Shard in there!*

The doors cave in with a sound like thunder, and the General bursts out of the hedge whooping like a madwoman. Dadara yanks her bone axe free from its loop and follows with a curse.

The mansion being invaded by the Bone Army is an opulent place nestled in the quiet foothills of Hyden, surrounded by grounds and gardens that make a perfect staging ground for covert actions without alerting the Governor and his army. The mansion is made of the most beautiful pink quarried stone, and broad steps lead up to the thick rockwood doors currently hanging askew on broken hinges. Two footmen lie motionless in their own blood just inside. The entirety of Blue Squadron is clanking their way double-time toward the west wing, and Black Squadron should be circling outside the windows of the east wing ballroom even now.

There’s still plenty for Dadara and her mates to do, though. The General wouldn’t have it any other way. Four guardsmen come thundering down the hallway with pikes extended as the command squad breaches the east wing. The General laughs, thumps her maul against her hand, and rushes out to meet them.

The clash of weapons sounds like a mountain falling in the stone confines of the torch-lit corridor. The General sweeps her massive weapon at just the right moment, breaking the shafts of three of the spears. A fourth lodges in her thigh and she bellows mightily. It almost sounds as if she enjoys the wound.

Dadara steps around her deftly and jabs the blunt tip of her axe into the throat of the guardsman currently digging his pike into her boss’s leg. The man gasps and clutches at his neck, his windpipe collapsed. He’ll be dead in seconds. She’s seen it plenty of times, and there’s no need to watch again. Together with her comrades she makes short work of the men and moves to secure the intersection of hallways. *Understaffed, and they can’t have had more than a couple of months practicing with those spears. Whoever runs this place wasn’t expecting the Bone Army to show up.*

The General roars and kicks aside the man who’s trying to tend to her leg. “Keep up!” she barks as she lumbers past Dadara. From there it’s a short, sweaty, blood-soaked run to the east wing ballroom, and the boss uses her shoulder as a battering ram to get them through the doors. Dadara’s

heart is pounding, and it’s not from the fighting. A dancing hall of stunning grace and opulent wealth waits beyond, lit by a chandelier of vidrin and rainbow glass. Dadara tries to imagine how much the owner of this hall spent on the frivolous, useless, illegal rainbow glass twinkling so prettily over their heads, and guesses that it’s as much money as she’d make in three or four lifetimes as a lieutenant.

A ring of scared-looking guardsmen in leather armor surround...something. Dadara is having a hard time looking at the distortion in the center of the room. It’s like all the light is bending toward a focal point behind the soldiers, and something dark rides at the center of that disturbance. A figure. A man.

She grits her teeth and forces herself to look. *Oh Gaia oh gods oh forgotten ones save me*, her mind shrieks as she smoothly, calmly takes the General’s flank and rushes forward with the others. *It’s Chaos, it’s the end of everything, I’m going to die!* She wishes she’d had the chance to shit in the General’s pillowcase like she’d always promised herself she would one day.

The guardsmen break like dry twigs before their assault, and the sound of mocking laughter rides under and around the men’s screams. One of the guards aims a thorn spitter at her and Dadara kicks him in the chest. He falls backwards into the darkness, and it’s as if a bubble pops – instead of the twisting glamor of Chaos, she sees a spindly young fellow holding a yellow-shining piece of glass. The guard has bumped into him and disrupted his concentration.

He’s barely more than a kid. His clothes might have been nice once, but they’re ripped and stained with all sorts of foulness and hang from his skinny frame in tatters. He looks scared. He looks angry. He looks insane.

“Don’t touch me!” he shrieks, backhanding the luckless guard. “How many times have I told you?!”

And then the guard is gone, and a pulsing black mass the size of a large melon wobbles on the floor where he stood. *I’m next. He’ll see me and I’ll be next. I never should have taken this assignment.*

Sure enough, the mad young man’s gaze shifts and lands on Dadara. Her guts freeze and so does the rest of her. She’s never frozen in combat before. She has faced down a charging horok ten times her mass and made her armor out of what was left over. But this kid has her pegged. *This is the part where I die.* The filthy lad sneers, stretches his hand toward her, and the light of Chaos flares in his eyes.

Then he screeches in pain, a thumb-sized thorn jutting from the meat of his cheek. One of the other Bone Army adjutants kept his head, apparently. The mad Shard-wielder clutches at the barb, swearing, and the spell is broken. Dadara sweeps in and shatters the boy’s forearm with her bone axe, and the pretty, deadly Chaos Shard tinkles to the floor, inert but intact.

“Hnnnggg, feels good!” the General growls with feral pleasure as she swoops in and kicks the poor downed fellow in the head. “Clean it up, grubs! I think we’re done here.”

Dadara is inclined to agree with the statement until someone tears off the north wall of the ballroom.

She'd wondered why the Black Squadron never came in through the windows like the plan had called for, and it turns out that it's because they're all dead. Through the gaping hole in the finery she sees bone-clad corpses littering the manicured lawn. The bodies are hard to focus on, though, because there's six monstrosously large figures standing in the gap looking like someone shaped a nightmare out of a copse of trees and brought it to life. The wooden, leafy monsters stand a good nine feet tall, and the floor shakes as they step forward.

"STEP AWAY FROM THE SHARD," an amplified voice booms from the lead figure.

The General squints at the tree monsters and spits on the floor. "Vesta, is that you?"

The lead figure sweeps into a parody of a bow, its leafy arms spreading wide and its head dipping. "HELLO, GENERAL."

"You horrid bitch!" the General laughs. "I think you made my new aide piss in her armor. What's the Commander of the Wooden Legion doing in Hyden? I heard you were at the Twins."

"BUSINESS TAKES ME WHERE IT WILL."

"Don't I know it," the General says, lounging on her war maul. "Take that shit off and come have lunch with me. Looks like you killed some of my men, so you're paying this time."

"I HAVE TO TAKE THE SHARD, GENERAL." The massive wooden figures advance, forming a loose, threatening semicircle around the remaining Bone Army soldiers. Dadara tenses again, feeling exhausted and strung-out. Getting a reprieve from a certain, horrible death only to be faced with another was more than she had prepared for today.

"Well..." drawls the General, hefting her massive maul, "you're welcome to come and try if you want."

The room bursts into motion, and Dadara is in the thick of it once more. An armored wooden hand smashes into the floor where she had stood one second before, and she hammers at it with her club. Bark and wood chips fly, but the person riding in the wooden skin only laughs and draws back for another blow.

Out of the corner of her eye she can see the General locked in combat with the Commander of the Wooden Legion. The fallen Chaos Shard is on the floor between their feet, and they trade blows that would fell other women without flinching. The General takes a fist the size of her head in the ribs and laughs as she spits blood onto the translucent face mask of her opponent. *She'll probably take the woman out for drinks afterward, no matter who wins.*

Dadara's opponent crashes forward, trying to crush her in its grasp, but she dances out of the way. In passing she sees a man's face through the facemask of the wooden skin. He's not bad-looking, though that mustache is disgusting.

Then hard wooden arms wrap around her from behind, lifting her off the floor. One of the others had gotten behind her as she was focused on the fight in front of her! A man's voice booms in her ear.

"I've got this one. Mop up the others."

The mustached fellow waves in agreement and clomps off in another direction.

Dadara struggles with all her might, but it's useless. The wooden skin these warriors wear is several times stronger than her. All this man has to do is squeeze and she'll die.

"Take the note," the Wooden Legionnaire whispers in her ear.

The wooden giant opens its hand while still holding her to its chest, and a crumpled piece of paper lies within. On top of the note is a bone ring. With a carved bit of crystal embedded in it shaped like a bird. Exactly like the one she wears.

She's been expecting contact from her handlers in the Kingfisher Society, but not at a moment like this. *We really do have agents everywhere that matters.*

She reaches for the note, and the arms around her loosen just enough for her to slip free. She looks at her erstwhile captor – inside his armor he's an old fellow, bald, with crushed ears.

"Time frame?" she asks.

"Immediate."

"Assistance?"

"Me."

She tears open the paper; it's embossed with the Kingfisher bird. The message is simple. *Secure the Shard. Do not allow the Bone Army or the Wooden Legion to take possession. Do not disrupt either command structure.*

She sighs. "You couldn't have gotten this to me an hour ago?"

The battered old man in the wooden skin gives her a flat, unfriendly look, and she shrugs. Pandemonium still rages on all sides.

"Well, let's get to it, then. I need a distraction."

Her handler nods once and lumbers off into the knot of fighters, laying about himself with massive wooden fists that connect with a fury and abandon that is truly impressive. As many punches land in the faces of the Wooden Legion as on the Bone Army. He rampages from one conflict to the next, sideswiping combatants on both sides, leaving a wake of stunned fighters staring after him.

"HARREN'S CRACKED," the Commander of the Wooden Legion calls. "BRING HIM DOWN. BE GENTLE."

"The hell I will," laughs the General. "Clean up your own mess." She's standing over the fallen madman, and there's a bundle of cloth in her hand through which a faint glow is shimmering. *She's wrapped up the Shard so it doesn't touch her skin. The woman might be an avalanche walking, but she's no dummy.*

The instructions had said she couldn't kill the General or the Commander, but she assumes the others are fair game. If the unknown leaders of the Kingfisher Society wants to quibble with her on the matter, next time they could damn well get the orders into her hands *before* she's standing in the middle of a mercenary skirmish.

Dadara dips her hand into the secret pocket in her sleeve and pulls out two plain black seeds. They look like

something a girl would spit out as she raids a melon patch, but each one cost her a month's salary and the promise of the Weavers' wrath if she was ever caught using them. *Time to roll the dice.*

"General!" she shouts as she races toward her supposed leader. "New intelligence!"

The burly woman jerks her head in Dadara's direction, her face still locked in a battle grimace, blood staining her teeth. She looks as if she might rip off her aide's head just on the principle of the matter, but after a moment she nods and motions her to come close.

Dadara sidles up close and motions the woman closer as if she has a secret to tell. Two other Bone Army lieutenants stand close by, but they take several steps back and avert their eyes, well-versed in the need for privacy when new information comes in. Besides, there's so much commotion still going on as Harren the Wooden Legionnaire rampages through the ballroom that their eyes keep drifting toward the melee. The impassive old man is holding three of his own comrades at bay and no less than six of the Bone Army at the same time. *Better diversion than I could have hoped for.*

"Out with it," urges the General, her face inches away.

"It's like this," Dadara tells her, and she presses one of the black seeds to the woman's throat right where it meets the jaw.

The General's eyes bulge and her hand flies to her neck. The seed adheres to her skin as tiny green creepers burst from within and worm their way beneath her skin. Before the General can even draw breath, Dadara is spinning away, pulling her black glass dagger from the sheath hidden inside her left bracer. The blade flashes in and out of the back of one of the nearby lieutenants as easy as cutting butter, puncturing the man's lung and sending him to his knees with a gurgle. The other one is only halfway turned with surprise on his face when the glass dagger tears out his throat. Blood spurts past his grasping fingers and cascades down his bleached-bone breastplate. No more than five seconds have passed.

The General is on her knees, eyes glassy. "Treason," she mumbles, movements weak and sluggish. "It's the stupid one."

"It's always the stupid one," Dadara tells her, pushing the big woman onto her back. "You should have known. Now shut up and fall asleep, you awful cunt." Taking a deep breath, she grabs the cloth-wrapped Chaos Shard and tucks it inside her breastplate. She feels a worming tingle in her breast where it sits and hopes she can offload the piece to her handlers before too much time passes. *Chaos kills. I hate this shit.*

It's a textbook bit of espionage, but as Dadara looks up from her handiwork, she sees the Commander of the Wooden Legion looking right at her from across the room. A giant wooden hand points accusingly. "TREACHERY! THE GENERAL IS DOWN!"

Every head turns toward her.

Well, dammit. Dadara shuffles her feet. *So much for keeping my cover.*

There are windows on all sides, and she'll be through the closest one before anyone can stop her. The mission will be completed, and she'll move on and embed herself somewhere new as the Society directs her. This isn't the first time she's had to make a hasty exit.

Except that then the ceiling caves in, and everyone's on their back, Dadara included. She blinks the dust out of her eyes and looks about. Dirty, dusty figures are struggling to find their feet on all sides, and the groans of the injured fill the air. The entire ceiling is gone, and the noonday sun paints the wreckage yellow and white. A truly disturbing number of crawling insects are swarming out of the ruined chunks of wood.

In the midst of it all stands a single upright figure, ominous in its dark robes and gleaming red beetle-carapace mask. The dust doesn't touch those dead black robes as it picks its way carefully to Dadara's side.

"It's so pleasant to watch little children play their games, don't you think?" the mask asks her. Dadara can't tell if it's a man or a woman – the voice has a multi-toned buzz that sounds like a wasps' nest speaking. "Look at me, mother, I'm a soldier, I'm a spy, I hold the Chaos!" She hears a chuckle made of plaguefly wings. "Such silly stories you tell yourselves."

The red-masked intruder kneels at her side, and Dadara is ready, glass blade flashing, seeking the jugular...but her arm is limp, and the dagger is falling to the ground. Blood should be gushing from this imposter's throat, but instead Dadara feels a curious lethargy. A coldness in her fingers. *What?*

Then she sees the red-masked figure's hand buried in the meat of her chest. He – it must be a man – has punched through her breastplate and driven his knuckles right into her heart. *Impossible.* All she can see is his wrist emerging from the ruined hole with blood burbling up on all sides. "Oh," she says stupidly.

"The Red Alliance thanks you for your assistance," the red mask says with his alien, insectile chorus-voice, withdrawing his gory hand from Dadara's crushed chest. "Our business is concluded." He plucks the Chaos Shard out from behind her ruined chestplate. The glimmering Shard drips with her blood, and the red mask holds it uncovered in his bare hand. *Madness. Death. I knew it. I never should have come.*

Her vision is dimming, and all the maneuvering she's lived for the last five years seems utterly pointless. A centipede skitters across her cheek, but she can hardly feel it. All she can focus on is the sparkle and shine of the Shard in the man's fist. Nothing else. *It's so beautiful. Kingfisher, Bone Army – who cares? This is the only thing that has any meaning. The only thing that shines. Chaos. Why was I so scared of it? Why didn't I understand?* Her muscles unknit, and the cold invades everything. Only the shine remains.

THE WOODEN LEGION

Formed more than a century ago by a New Gaian Weaver named Sybilan Croe, the Wooden Legion is one of Asunder's biggest open secrets. While the Legion officially doesn't exist, rumors abound, and most monarchs and governmental leaders have a contact or two in the Legion. Though based primarily in New Gaia, the Wooden Legion hold themselves apart from any world government or political body.

This does not make them neutral. Rather, the Wooden Legion have strong convictions and motivations, and they fight for their purpose with fervor and tenacity. The purpose of the Wooden Legion is simple: to combat the Blight in all its forms. They see the Blight and its Green Army as the greatest existential threat to humanity in the history of Asunder.

While this occasionally means that the Legion works in tandem with local armies or mercenary forces, it does occasionally put them at odds with the powers that be. The Legion consider themselves to be bound by no national law; while they do their best to respect local law where they can, they see breaking laws to be a righteous act, provided it's in pursuit of their purpose. This is why, most of the time, they work alone, in small groups of three to five.

Each Legionnaire owns a living suit of wooden armor called a wooden skin. These wooden skins are highly individualized and varied, because each prospective Legionnaire is required to grow their own wooden skin as part of initiation. While the Legion comprises primarily Weavers, they are not an exclusive organization, accepting people from all nations and walks of life.

This does not mean that the organization is easy to join. For one thing, finding the Legion is a challenge in and of itself; in fact, new recruits are typically invited. The organization is decentralized, operating as cells throughout the world, each of them communicating through various secret and esoteric means with Command back in New Gaia. Once a prospective Legionnaire finds the Wooden Legion, they must prove themselves worthy. This involves a number of trials, from combat to investigations to infiltrations, and culminates in the creation of the new Legionnaire's wooden skin. If, at any point, the applicant falters, they are rejected, and unlikely to be able to find the Legion a second time.

Though formidable, the Wooden Legion is not large. Their ranks number some 300 warriors, give or take, as well as another hundred or so support personnel. What this means is that, while the Legion tries to answer the call when the Blight become a threat, they can only be in so many places at once. The Legion is spread thin, and so calls often go unanswered.

In practice, this means that Legionnaires are often sent on assignment in small groups of three to five. In the majority of cases, a small group can take care of a problem on their own. However, each strike team is empowered

to hire mercenary help when necessary, and to work with local governments and military forces to bolster their fighting power when necessary. They do this only very rarely, when at great need. The Legion believes that secrecy is their most potent weapon, and so they involve outsiders as infrequently as they can and, when they do, they use proxies to obtain the help.

Complicating the Legion's ability to effectively be where they need to be is a schism within leadership. The current Commander of the Legion is a woman named Vesta Gale, though most simply know her as "the Commander." Beneath her in the hierarchy are the Council of Generals, comprising seven individuals, and this is where the schism exists. Two factions exist within the Council and, while both believe that the Legion's purpose – to fight the enemies of humanity – is of utmost importance, they differ on who exactly comprises an "enemy of humanity."

One faction, led by General Alric Heldon, cleaves close to the Legion's original mandate: to fight the Green Army, demons, devourers, monsters of various kinds, and (when necessary) the Naga. Heldon's faction believes that maintaining distance from national politics is crucial to this endeavor, so as to avoid being swayed by the agendas of kings, emperors, and noble houses.

The other faction, led by the much younger General Myrkala Kadrass, argues that humanity is often an enemy to itself. Kadrass believes that the Legion should take a more active hand in shaping and guiding national politics, and her argument that humanity's propensity for petty wars and unnecessary atrocities proves their self-destructive nature is gathering support within the Legion. While the Commander publicly backs General Heldon's faction, even she must admit that General Kadrass makes some good points, and that broadening the scope of the Legion's mandate may eventually become necessary.

For now, the old guard remains in control of the Council and, by extension, the Legion itself. But General Kadrass's arguments are taking root within the Wooden Legion, and more and more Legionnaires – particularly newer, younger Legionnaires – are flocking to her cause. Kadrass has yet to openly defy Legion policy, but rumors persist of "Shadow Missions," unsanctioned operations by Legionnaires designed to prevent wars or foment rebellions, depending on the nation in question.

THE LEGION AND OTHER GROUPS

Because the Legion doesn't align itself with any particular power or nation, many groups and organizations within Asunder fall into both the ally and enemy category, depending on the situation. Some of these organizations hold grudges, while others take a more pragmatic approach. The Wooden Legion is far from the only powerful group with a vision for how to save (or rule) Asunder, and many of these visions are incompatible.

THE BONE ARMY

The best example of this latter approach is the Bone Army. The Legion and the Army have clashed dozens of times, but they've worked together even more often. When fighting the Green Army, Naga, or other threats on the Mainland, the Legion commonly bolsters their own combat strength with both local militias and Bone Army mercenaries. However, it's not uncommon for the Legion to act against the interests of one city-state or another while pursuing their mandate and, when this happens, they often must fight mercenaries of the Bone Army. Sometimes both of these situations occur simultaneously.

The Bone Army is famously pragmatic in their approach to combat and loyalty. As mercenaries, a contingent of Bone Army soldiers owe their loyalty to whomever is paying them in that moment. This means that they're used to fighting people they've worked alongside pretty regularly, and this includes the Legion. While individual members of the Army might hold grudges against the Legion, the Bone Army as a whole tends to approach each skirmish as the situation dictates.

The city-state that most often causes conflicts between the Bone Army and the Wooden Legion is Far East. Because that city-state often works with the Naga and pursues their ends, they frequently come into conflict with the Wooden Legion. When they do, they often employ the Bone Army for protection.

THE RED ALLIANCE

Back home in New Gaia, the Legion has clashed several times with the Red Alliance, though this is typically a circumstantial event that happens when the two organizations are working at cross-purposes. Officially, the Legion doesn't work for the government of New Gaia and does not consider the Red Alliance an enemy or a threat to humanity. However, the Red Alliance has, in the past, used the Green Army to their own ends, which has put them into conflict with the Legion.

Within the Legion, there are those who *do* consider the Alliance to be a threat to humanity. While General Kadrass hasn't taken that stance herself, people within the Legion are trying to convince her to run Shadow Missions against the Alliance, including at least one member on the Council of Generals.

THE CIRCLE OF SIX

The Legion has, on occasion, gone to the Black Isle to help the Islers fight demons, but this doesn't happen as often as one might assume. While demons are undoubtedly an enemy of humanity – every member of the Legion agrees on this point – the Legion has found that the Islers don't need their help that often. This could very easily change soon; the Great Scar is quickly becoming a threat that the Islers are ill-equipped to handle, and when a horde of demons spills out of the Scar (as it's undoubtedly going to, and soon), the Legion will have to step in.

The Circle of Six has, in the past, been resentful of Wooden Legion involvement in Black Isle affairs. While the Legion and the Circle have cooperated on occasion, King Stolgart's stance is that the Black Isle needs no help from soft outlanders. The Legion does have an ally within the Circle, however, in Venna of Clan Corit.

THE SKY CITY HOUSES

The Noble Houses of Sky City are troublesome for the Legion. Their constant politicking and backstabbing, their incessant shadow wars, are one of the primary reasons General Kadrass argues for the Legion to get more politically involved. Agents of the Houses are always meddling with forces best left alone, trying to gain advantage against their rivals, often with disastrous results. Because of this, nearly eighty percent of Kadrass's Shadow Missions target one or more of the Houses, trying to stop them from unleashing some destructive force on Asunder. Several of the Houses, most notably House Alachese, count the Wooden Legion as bitter enemies, and undermine their efforts whenever possible.

SEEKERS AND THE WOODEN LEGION

Because of its diverse makeup, mission-based approach to conflicts around the world, and mandate to fight dangerous creatures, the Wooden Legion makes a good organization for Seekers to belong to, and a Keeper could easily build an entire campaign around Wooden Legion activities. In addition, because the Wooden Legion is a secret society, a Seeker group comprised of Legionnaires can look like any other group of Seekers. They can take on whatever missions they like, hiding in plain sight, until the Legion gives them an assignment.

While this does mean that most or all of the Seekers in the group will take the Wooden Legionnaire expert path, this path is a particularly versatile one, and has no requirements for entry. Because of the versatility of the path, and the fact that Seekers can easily differentiate themselves with novice and master paths, Origins, living gear, and so forth, it's still possible to have a very diverse group of Seekers with a wide variety of abilities to call upon, but with a unified purpose.

If a player or two don't want to take the Wooden Legionnaire path, but do want to be a part of the Legion, remember that the Legion employs a number of support personnel who, while they aren't Legionnaires, are still valuable members of a strike team. For example, a player who doesn't want to take the Wooden Legionnaire expert path could instead be an Inventor who provides all manner of useful devices to the strike team, of a Shadow who acts as an infiltration expert, for example. These individuals are part of the Legion and privy to their secrets and agendas, but aren't technically Legionnaires.

THE BONE ARMY

There are many mercenary armies in Asunder, spread across many different parts of the world. None, however, is as well-known or renowned as the Bone Army. Based on the Mainland, the Bone Army started almost three centuries ago, when the city-state of Keldon fell. Keldon was engaged in a protracted war, and the bulk of the city-state's army was off fighting a battle against Hyden's army when an army of Naga decided to take advantage of the army's absence.

The Naga swept over Keldon like a wave, slaughtering the skeleton crew of soldiers left behind, as well as most of the civilian population. The survivors --- those who didn't escape the slaughter --- were either sold to slavers or taken by the Naga to serve the clutch. When Keldon's army returned home, weakened, bloodied, and substantially smaller than when it left, they found the city-state in ashes.

Many generals would have gathered strength and marched on those who murdered their kin, exacting vengeance. Vedras Khel was not like many generals. The

way he saw it, with Keldon now just a ruin and a memory, the army's first duty was to each other, to their brothers- and sisters-in-arms. The Keldonite army was now an army without a home or a people; in order to survive, they became soldiers for hire.

Over the next few decades, the Keldonite army trained and strengthened itself. Only the fittest in the mainland survive, so the Keldonites set out to become apex predators. It became the army's custom to hunt horoks, one of the most dangerous beasts in the land, both for meat and for the incredibly hard bone in their bodies, bone that could withstand the blow of a maul and hold a razor's edge indefinitely. This practice became an initiation rite for those who wished to join the army and, eventually, the practice evolved into new recruits being tasked with hunting a horok alone, killing it, and fashioning armor and weapons from its bones.

Soon, word began to spread of the "Bone Army," an elite band of mercenaries who clothed themselves in bone and fought with bone weapons. Ever a pragmatist, General Khel insisted the Bone Army take a stance of absolute neutrality in all conflicts, except when being paid for their loyalty.



Captain Krescien and his squad battle the Naga outside of Hyden. Sixth fight his week. They can't keep this up.

This proscription proved to be wise in the long term; within just a few years of Khel's death, the Bone Army was already known across the land as a formidable, reliable, and highly competent fighting force. Khel's teachings became the Code of Bone, which persists to this day:

To be a soldier in the Bone Army is to embody the Duties of Bone.

Duty of Loyalty: *Be always loyal to your comrades in arms – the Bone Army is your family. To betray the Army is to forfeit your life.*

Duty of the Contract: *Your employer is your liege lord, and is to be obeyed in all things. Follow your employer's commands for the duration of the contract, except where they force you to break the Duty of Loyalty.*

Duty of Excellence: *Do not accept mediocrity in yourself or others. A soldier of the Bone Army strives for excellence in all things and demands it of allies and enemies alike.*

Duty of the Mission: *When you are given a mission by a superior, you complete it or you die trying. There are no exceptions.*

Duty of Honesty: *War sometimes calls for subtlety and subterfuge, but a soldier of the Bone Army is honest in all dealings with allies and enemies alike. Always speak the truth and treat others with respect, unless your mission demands you do otherwise.*

Duty of Control: *The Bone Army trades in violence, but we do not engage in it unnecessarily. Do not raise blade or fist against another creature unless your life is threatened, or the mission demands it. Wanton, purposeless slaughter serves no one.*

Duty of Mercy: *While an enemy is a threat, fight them with all your might. Enemies who are no longer threats are to be spared, taken as prisoners, and treated with respect. An enemy you fight today might be an ally tomorrow.*

The Bone Army today is known throughout the world. Their reputation is beyond reproach, and everyone knows that when you buy the loyalty of the Bone Army, the only thing that will break it is dealing with them in bad faith.

While the Bone Army rarely travels outside the Mainland, foreign powers do sometimes procure their services to see to their interests within the Mainland. The Army's reluctance to travel is a matter of practicality more than loyalty or patriotism; sea travel is dangerous, expensive, and requires them to put their lives in the hands of unproven strangers. The Bone Army has no particular problem working for one of the city-states one day, and then accepting a contract from Sky City the next. Their contracts do usually allow for a period of safety for a former client; attacking someone you just worked for is seen as being bad for business, though after the period of safety is over, all bets are off.

THE BONE ARMY AND OTHER GROUPS

The Bone Army has few consistent enemies or allies. Because their loyalty can be bought, they are often seen as a resource rather than a rival by those in power. There are a few exceptions to the rule, though.

THE NAGA

The Bone Army and the Naga clash frequently, even when the Bone Army isn't under a contract that requires such battles. Long ago they accepted contracts from the Naga, but doing so proved to be bad for their reputation, so they abolished the practice. Because of this, they are at odds with various Naga clutches more often than not and, while this doesn't cause any particular animosity on the part of the famously pragmatic Bone Army, the Naga see the matter differently.

Most Naga clutches see the Bone Army as a frequent obstacle at best and an existential threat at worst. Entire clutches have been exterminated by the Bone Army, and that is an affront the Naga will not forgive or forget.

THE WOODEN LEGION

The General of the Bone Army is one of the few people in the world who knows for a fact that the Wooden Legion exists, and even knows how to contact them. The two groups often work together against the Blight and, even though they do end up on opposite sides from time to time, there exists a general sense of professional decorum and camaraderie between the two groups.

For the Bone Army's part, the Wooden Legion is often a source of work, whether directly or indirectly, and they more than pull their weight on the battlefield. The Wooden Legion see the Bone Army as a convenient asset that they can use from a position of anonymity when they need to. This arrangement suits both groups just fine.

THE GREEN ARMY

The Blight grows stronger on the Mainland with each passing year, and attacks by the Green Army grow more and more frequent. City-states and outlying settlements often hire the Bone Army for protection against Blight Walkers, but the two forces often clash even in the absence of a contract. The Green Army has no allies and takes no prisoners, and they attack humans on sight. Because of this, they're one of the few forces against whom the Bone Army must remain constantly vigilant.

THE SKY CITY HOUSES

The Bone Army doesn't have any particular loyalty or animosity toward any particular House of Sky City, but they see the Houses as a whole as being both a good source of income and a general irritant. The Houses are constantly scheming against each other, and many of the Houses have holdings and interests on the Mainland. This

means there's rarely a shortage of work for the Bone Army where the Houses are concerned, but it also means that the Army is constantly being pulled into foreign politics that they frankly couldn't care less about.

Worse, the Houses of Sky city have a very different view of loyalty and contractual obligation than the Bone Army does. The Bone Army has had to sever contracts with Houses on more than one occasion because of bad faith dealings, and Houses often complain about the Army's period of safety for former contract-holders. All this combines to make the Houses both a reliable source of clients and a risky proposition to deal with at the best of times.

THE KINGFISHER SOCIETY

For the most part, soldiers of the Bone Army aren't even aware of the Kingfisher Society or, if they are, they dismiss it as a social club for the idle rich. However, the Kingfishers are deeply invested in infiltrating the Bone Army, and they have agents placed in almost every level of command. The general is aware that the Army has been infiltrated, and seeks to expose Kingfisher spies, but she doesn't know who to trust, so she works against the Kingfishers alone.

SEEKERS AND THE BONE ARMY

Seekers with a mercenary bent can find a good home within the Bone Army. A Bone Army campaign is likely to have an overtly military feel to it, as the Bone Army is, after all, an army. However, they're also a mercenary crew and, as such, are open to approaches beyond simple warfare. The Bone Army employs a variety of infiltrators, assassins, specialists, beast trainers, and so forth, so a player who wants to be part of the Bone Army but doesn't want to take an associated expert or master path does still have options.

Seekers in a Bone Army campaign may start as support personnel, or may have to prove themselves to the Bone Army before they can join. In either case, those who want to take on the Bone Recruit expert path will have to hunt and kill a horok, a Difficulty 50 opponent. This is likely to be a challenging fight even for a well-prepared Seeker, so emphasize the need for clever tactics, traps, and other ways to weaken the horok before closing in for the kill. If a Seeker doesn't wish to play through the actual hunt, that's fine; work with them to describe it and explain how it all worked out, and let them take the expert path as normal.

One of the advantages of a Bone Army campaign is that the Seekers can work for a variety of clients on a wide array of missions and assignments. Someone who's an ally today might be an enemy later, which can make for some interesting social dynamics and dramatic moments in a campaign. A Bone Army campaign is likely to spend most of its time on the Mainland, but a globe-hopping campaign isn't out of the question; it's not the norm for the Bone Army to operate outside the Mainland, but that doesn't mean that such a thing never happens.

THE KINGFISHER SOCIETY

In Sky City, most people have heard of the Kingfisher Society, though few know any real details about it. It's a social club for the rich elite, with membership from all of the major Houses. They meet all over the city, sometimes in public places like upscale bars or market plazas, other times in the estates of the wealthy, holding private galas where they can enjoy their immense privilege. Membership is invitation-only, and party-crashers are strongly discouraged (stories abound of such churlish people being tied up, burdened with weights, and thrown off the island). For the most part, people are aware of the Kingfisher Society, but few give them any real thought.

This is exactly how the Society wants things. Outwardly, yes, the Kingfisher Society is an invitation-only social club for the rich. Members wear distinctive rings, bands of white bone mounted with a piece of blice crystal carved in the shape of a kingfisher, so that they can easily recognize each other while in public. Kingfishers often get preferential treatment at restaurants or in stores that are friendly to the Society, and the law often looks away from their indiscretions.

While these things are all true of the Kingfisher Society, it's mostly a front. The true purpose of the Kingfisher Society is control: control of Sky City, of global politics and commerce, of the world. Those who are invited into the Kingfisher Society are the most powerful, influential, and ruthless members of the Houses of Sky City, though the Society does not limit its membership to House nobles. Powerful individuals from around the globe are offered membership, and the Kingfisher Society boasts mercenary generals, admirals of Seafarer fleets, Pacari tribal chiefs, more than one member of the Council of Mothers, rulers of city-states, merchant princes, and even a member of the Circle of Six.

From the shadows, the Kingfisher Society manipulates the world. A member ensures that a vote on the Council of Mothers goes a certain way, and laws in New Gaia suddenly become friendlier to Kingfisher activities. A theft here and an assassination there, and war is sparked between two city-states. The goals of the Kingfishers' actions vary based on the needs of the Society. Sometimes their goal is the acquisition of a large amount of capital, while at other times it might be the weakening of a particular organization, tribe, or city-state. Perhaps someone important is being a bit too inquisitive, and must be removed. Or perhaps the Society simply needs to ensure that a particular world leader is given the correct guidance.

The goal that each Kingfisher solemnly intones during meetings is to guide the world toward stability, prosperity, and security. While this goal might be noble, in practice individual Kingfishers tend to be vicious, grasping, and amoral, and so Kingfisher operations usually pursue the goal of acquiring more wealth and power for those within

Leaders of the Kingfisher Society place their golden birds on the Mainland where missions are underway.



the Society. The Kingfishers don't see these two ends as contradictory; rather, they argue that, as they are the only ones truly capable of guiding the world toward stability, prosperity, and security, it follows that they must have enough power and wealth to be able to do so. And after all, don't they deserve it for taking on this selfless burden?

The Kingfisher Society itself is divided into hierarchical groups called "wings." Many of these wings are roughly equivalent in power, and in theory, all are equal; however, in practice, some are more equal than others. There are five wings: White Wing, Diamond Wing, Obsidian Wing,

Smoke Wing, and Blood Wing. Each wing has its own area of influence, and its membership tends to support that.

White Wing controls politics, and is largely comprised of powerful nobles, leaders, and politicians from around the world. They're often at the top of the hierarchy, though they have an ongoing rivalry with Diamond Wing, who control commerce. The two wings tend to trade places frequently but, regardless of which wing is currently in ascendance, both wield tremendous power throughout the world.

Obsidian Wing is comprised of generals, admirals, and other military leaders, and their job is to control warfare.

If the Society needs a particular side to win a war, it's often Obsidian Wing's job to ensure that result comes to pass. Obsidian Wing members hold several powerful positions within the Bone Army, and this gives them an enormous amount of control over who the Army takes on as a client.

Smoke Wing's job is espionage and infiltration. They're spies and information brokers, and their membership is considerably smaller than that of White, Diamond, and Obsidian. When the Society needs information gathered (or planted), Smoke Wing takes care of it. While the membership of the wing itself is small, each member controls a larger network of spies throughout different parts of the world. These spies rarely know they're working for the Kingfisher society and are almost never members.

The smallest of the wings is Blood Wing, but they are perhaps the most feared. This is because the membership of Blood Wing consists entirely of the most dangerous assassins in the world. When someone must die, either quietly or publicly, Blood Wing sends an operative to ensure that death. Blood Wing and Smoke Wing also work together as a sort of secret police within the Society itself. Smoke Wing is constantly looking for traitors and informers within the ranks of the Kingfisher Society and, when such a traitor is found, Blood Wing deals with them quickly and decisively.

THE SOCIETY AND OTHER GROUPS

Few organizations know when they're dealing with the Kingfisher Society, and almost nobody outside of Sky City has even heard of them. However, there are a few organizations of particular note.

THE RED ALLIANCE

The Kingfisher Society has long known that the Red Alliance is far more than a ragtag group of disorganized rebels, though they're not aware of the full extent of the Alliance's influence, or its goals. Most in the Society believe that the Alliance is a rival organization, trying to control the world in the same manner they are. For the last decade, Smoke Wing has been working tirelessly to try to plant spies within the Alliance, but so far none have survived more than a week or two.

THE BONE ARMY

While the Bone Army knows nothing about the Kingfisher Society, the Society has several members planted in key positions within the Army. While Obsidian Wing doesn't yet control those at the very top, they do have several members in advisory positions, and they wield considerable influence over the Bone Army. When the Army must choose between two sides of a war, Obsidian Wing is often able to tip the scales in the direction that benefits the Kingfisher Society most.

THE BLUE SHARK

The *Blue Shark* is one of the most feared Seafarer vessels on the open sea, and its captain, Leshik, has a reputation for plundering every ship he comes across. While this is true, Leshik's first mate is a Kingfisher, and is often able to ensure the *Blue Shark* "happens upon" the vessels of troublesome captains. Leshik doesn't much care, as long as he can sate his thirst for blood.

THE CIRCLE OF SIX

The Kingfisher Society is perhaps the only secret society to have gained a foothold in the notoriously insular Black Isle. Venna, Clan Chief of Clan Corit, is a member of the Kingfisher Society and the Circle of Six, and has been pushing for more trade and interaction with the outside world for the past few years, at the Society's direction. The Kingfisher Society wants this so they can gather more influence within the Black Isle, but Venna is a Black Isler first and a Kingfisher second. While she serves the will of the Society, she also believes that outside aid is the only way to combat the growing demonic threat. Currently, her goals and the goals of the Society are in alignment; however, the day may soon come when Venna is forced to choose her allegiance.

SEEKERS AND THE KINGFISHER SOCIETY

The Kingfisher Society is in the habit of hiring Seeker groups to do their dirty work, so it's entirely possible that the Seekers could spend a decent chunk of the early part of their career working for the Society without realizing it. Eventually, however, they should start figuring out who they're working for. When this happens, they'll likely be faced with a choice: accept the Society's invitation or become their enemies.

A more mercenary or amoral group of Seekers might opt to join, in which case the campaign can revolve around the group doing missions for the Kingfisher Society, rising in the ranks, and perhaps eventually staging a coup to take over the Society. A campaign like this is likely to span the globe and put the Seekers in opposition to a wide variety of foes.

Seekers who don't buy into the Society's rhetoric might choose to decline the invitation, in which case they'll be targeted for elimination by Blood Wing. This style of campaign is likely to be very different, and it will involve the Seekers dodging and going up against a series of increasingly dangerous assassins, all while trying to learn more about the Kingfisher Society so they can take them down and stop the assassination attempts from coming.

A clever Seeker group might split the difference: join the Kingfisher Society with the intent of taking it down from within. This will be an espionage-heavy game, with a lot of political maneuvering, deception, and trying to maintain cover in the face of an ever-vigilant Smoke Wing.

THE RED ALLIANCE

Nobody really knows just how deep the infiltration goes. Nearly everyone in New Gaia has heard of the Red Alliance, a loose collection of malcontents and dissidents often branded as terrorists by the Council of Mothers and New Gaia society at large. Everybody knows that the Alliance are dangerous, but disorganized,



The Crimson Mask has been worn by many—or are there many masks? The world will never know.

lacking any kind of strong central leadership or goal beyond destroying New Gaian society and replacing it with something else that they don't even seem to be clear about. Dangerous, but nothing to worry about in the long term.

They could not be more wrong. The Red Alliance, though usually only operating openly in New Gaia, is an organization that spans the globe, with tendrils in various aspects of society in many different countries, tribes, and cities. They keep this secret closely guarded, allowing their violent and destructive terrorist activities in New Gaia to distract everyone from their subtler actions.

The Red Alliance has cells everywhere. There are arms dealers in Sky City, firebrand politicians in the city-states of the mainland, Seafarer pirate captains, and rabble-rousers in tribes throughout Pacari. Most of these people don't advertise any kind of connection to the Red Alliance; they simply instigate chaos, change, and instability where they can. An arms dealer might sell powerful weapons to the losing side of the war, thus prolonging the conflict. A politician in Hyden might stoke the people's nationalistic, xenophobic tendencies. A pirate captain might sink a ship full of vital aid supplies. The tribe chief's advisor might push the chief toward conflict with a neighboring tribe. Each of these individual actions seems isolated, but they work toward a larger goal.

The Red Alliance seeks to create chaos, but not without purpose; they want to keep the nations of the world off-balance, focused on conflict with each other or within, unprepared for what's to come. Of course, most members of the Red Alliance know very little about the Alliance's true ends. They're fed rhetoric about creating a better world, prosperity through change, casting off the shackles of modern imperialist regimes, pulling the elites out of their towers of wealth. It's all carefully-crafted nonsense, delivered with the intent to keep the rank-and-file of the Alliance doing what they're doing. Only the Crimson Mask knows the Alliance's true purpose.

Many in New Gaia suspect that the Crimson Mask is not a specific person, but mantle assumed by a variety of people. They're correct, but their understanding of the Mask is incomplete. The Crimson Mask refers to three different things within the Red Alliance. First, the Mask is the inner circle, a group of thirteen individuals who understand the Alliance's true purpose and direct the disparate cells throughout the world toward that purpose. Second, the Crimson Mask does in fact refer to individuals who appear in public to enact the Alliance's will, wearing a Crimson Mask. The same person rarely wears the Mask more than once, because the Mask itself is a powerful artifact.

The Crimson Mask is a demonic artifact, given to the original founders of the Red Alliance to seal a pact made decades ago. Those who wear it bond to it, similarly to a piece of living gear, and the Mask feeds on the Essence of the wearer. While an individual is wearing the Mask, they have enormous physical strength and endurance, are able to move with considerable speed and agility,

and seem to be possessed of a preternatural charisma and force of personality. This all comes at a terrible price: putting the Mask on forces you to relinquish your free will. It is no longer you in control of your words and actions, it is the Mask. It may sound like your voice, but it is the Mask speaking through you.

There's an even worse cost than surrendering your free will: the Mask usually kills you when it's done with you. Its Essence requirements are so steep that it can usually only inhabit a person for about six hours. Some strong souls last longer, and a few even survive the process of being "ridden" by the Mask, but they are forever changed.

The members of the Crimson Mask do not wear the mask themselves, except at times of great need. Rather, they control the Alliance from the shadows. When the time comes for a public display of power, they choose a champion to wear the Mask and do their bidding. The membership of the Crimson Mask is shrouded in utter secrecy, even from most Alliance members, and these powerful individuals guard an even more terrible secret: the true purpose of the Red Alliance.

The Red Alliance's purpose is simple, but horrifying: they sow chaos throughout the world, to keep the nations of humanity off-balance and at each others' throats. They do this so that when the demonic horde chooses to launch their invasion, no nation will be strong enough to oppose them.

THE RED ALLIANCE AND OTHER GROUPS

The Red Alliance has few direct dealings or conflicts with other groups in Asunder. Those who do interact with or oppose the Alliance rarely know who they're really dealing with.

THE COUNCIL OF MOTHERS

The Council of Mothers sees the Red Alliance as a threat, but a manageable one. The Mothers pay close attention when the Red Alliance rears its head, but they also believe the Alliance to be a loose movement of disorganized rebels and rabble-rousers. For the most part, the pockets of the Alliance that they deal with on a regular basis are just that. The cell-based structure of the Alliance means that most of the Red Alliance terrorists and rebels who act as a thorn in the side of the Council of Mothers are exactly what they appear to be. These people believe the Red Alliance to be a political movement; when they're captured, they spew whatever rhetoric they were fed. When they give up their leaders, they give up other members of the Red Alliance who know only a little bit more than they do.

There are a few within the Council of Mothers who believe there's more to the Red Alliance, and that they bear closer scrutiny, but somehow their arguments are always drowned out by the noise of the next protest or bombing or riot, and the intelligence gained from the perpetrators always seems to discredit those who want to investigate further.

THE WOODEN LEGION

The Wooden Legion's global perspective has allowed them to put pieces together that few others have had the opportunity to even see, let alone assemble. The Legion believes that the Alliance is more than a loose collection of malcontents, and they've seen patterns in global politics that point toward a much farther-reaching conspiracy. They know few specifics, however.

Further, the Legion is often too busy to do anything about the Alliance. Their mandate is to oppose the Blight, and they see that as a far greater and more urgent threat than some political conspiracy, no matter how far-reaching. For now, they're keeping an eye on the Alliance and, when they happen to capture someone who has information about the Alliance, they pay close attention. However, the Legion has yet to act against the Red Alliance in any substantial way.

THE KINGFISHER SOCIETY

The Red Alliance knows little about the Kingfisher Society except that they're rivals. Both secret societies operate in similar ways, and they're often at cross-purposes. The Alliance tends to kill Society agents when they come across them, while the Kingfisher Society is constantly trying to infiltrate the Red Alliance in order to learn more about them.

SEEKERS AND THE RED ALLIANCE

The Red Alliance make great villains for a campaign. By starting local, in a New Gaian settlement directly affected by the Red Alliance, you can give the Seekers an opportunity to fight the terrorists or try to learn more about them. They may even find some sympathetic members, people who honestly believe they're fighting for the betterment of New Gaia, and might be convinced to fight alongside the Alliance for a time.

As the Seekers grow in power and knowledge, however, they'll start to see that there's more to the Alliance. Maybe a document points them to a border skirmish on the Mainland, or a corrupt customs agent in Sky City. This can lead to a series of globe-hopping adventures, as the Seekers move from locale to locale hunting down clues about the shadowy conspiracy they're starting to uncover. During Expert or early Master tier, a run-in with someone wearing the Crimson Mask could result in a resounding defeat to motivate them further, or even in the Seekers acquiring the Mask themselves!

In either case, late in their career they should be heading for a confrontation with the Red Alliance's inner circle, perhaps taking them down one by one, maybe even culminating with a fight against the ancient, powerful demon who gave the Alliance the Crimson Mask in the first place.



CHAPTER FOUR OTHER PEOPLES OF THE WORLD

Asunder plays home to more intelligent people than just humans. Humans in general know very little about these other intelligent races. Often misunderstood and frequently underestimated, these people share the world with humans.

DEMONS

The boy's hands shake, his eyes dart side to side. The small, guttering torch he holds threatens to die, and the darkness presses against its meager light like a living thing. That Which Waits and Whispers can taste the boy's fear in the air, and they savor that taste, roll it off their tongue and hold it in their mouth like a fine liquor. Yes, they think. *He's almost ready.*

"...Hello?" His voice is small, quivering. He knows he's not alone; he came to seek the voice in the cave, and he knows he's being watched. There's fear there, but also determination. He wants something.

So brave to come here alone, little mouse. That Which Waits and Whispers has a voice with which to speak in human tongues, but they choose to press their thoughts into the boy's mind, to caress his fear and stoke his desire with subtle invasiveness.

His eyes dart left to right and he spins, brandishing the torch at the darkness. "I... I've come to bargain," he shouts. Then, more quietly: "Please don't eat me."

That Which Waits and Whispers chuckles, the laugh rubbing against the boy's mind and making him shudder. *Shall I not? Perhaps. What do you come to give me, and what would you have in return?* They crouch in the darkness, bare feet outside the light's aura, watching him, watching.

"My... my sister is sick. She fell ill eight days ago and she's getting worse. Can you... can you heal her?" So hopeful, those eyes.

I can. Is that what you wish?

"Y— yes."

So you say, but I can smell your doubt. I can read upon the skein of your mind the pain you've endured, and I can taste the lie upon your lips.

He's quiet for a moment, eyes searching the ground as if answers are written there. Then: "She's not sick."

No.

"She's hurt. Badly hurt. She can't wake up."

She lies beaten and bruised, a broken thing at the edge of a precipice. Who put her there, little mouse?

The boy's jaw clenches and unclenches, working silently for a time. "My father. Drunk on skashka. And my mother, who gave it to him, did nothing."

I can make her wake. Is that what you wish?

He closes his eyes. "No."

What, then?

"I want to kill them."

You want power. The power to strike them down.

The word is barely more than a whisper, but That Which Waits and Whispers hears it loud and clear: "Yes."

Now is the time. That Which Waits and Whispers stands to their full height and steps forward into the torch's light slowly. The boy takes a step back but holds there, his eyes taking in the full sight of the demon: gray-black skin, rough like bark and barbed with spikes; too-long fingers on too-long arms, tipped in wicked claws; an eyeless head with a toothy grin that threatens to split it in half. Now, That Which Waits and Whispers speaks the human boy's own tongue: "Speak your desire, little mouse."

He draws himself up, pretending at bravery, hatred buoying him. "I want the power to kill my parents."

The demon's grin widens, and they crouch down onto their haunches, bringing their face level with the boy's. One taloned finger reaches up and caresses the boy's face; he flinches but does not move away. "And you shall have it."

"What... what will it cost me?"

Wordlessly, That Which Waits and Whispers brings their talon to their own wrist and draws a furrow there, slicing it open and allowing the black blood to well up. They hold their bleeding wrist out to the boy. "Drink of this, little mouse, and you shall have the power you seek. In three days' time, I shall come to you and ask you for a service: payment in kind. You seek the end of two lives, so I shall ask you for the same."

The boy hesitates a moment, his eyes fixed on the dripping blood pooled in the demon's wound. He seems about to change his mind, but then he's gripped by sudden resolve and he grabs the demon's arm and brings it to his lips. He drinks.

That Which Waits and Whispers sighs, caressing the boy's hair with their other hand. The boy moves to stop drinking, but the demon holds his head fast, forcing him to drink more. The boy struggles at first, but soon he gives in. Soon enough he grasps the demon's arm and drinks greedily, his taste for demon blood growing.

That Which Waits and Whispers can feel the boy's power—and his hatred—growing within him. Good. He'll need it for the work ahead.

ENCOUNTERING A DEMON

Demons never pick fair fights and have many advantages over humans. Their skin is thick, knotted, spiked. They're dangerous to grapple with or fight in close quarters, and even the heaviest weapon has trouble breaking a demon's thick skin. They're much taller than the average human, standing between seven and nine feet tall, or even taller for older, more powerful demons. Though their shape is generally humanoid, a demon's arms are too long, and each hand's fingers are spindly, tipped with claws, and has too many knuckles. A demon's head is wide, bulbous, and horned. Its great, gaping maw is full of jagged, sharp teeth.

There are typically two ways to encounter a demon: combat or bargaining. Demons by far prefer the latter, though they also revel in the bloodshed of the former. When approached for a bargain, a demon toys with its prey. They can communicate telepathically, and they often use this ability to stoke fear and glean surface thoughts, allowing them to gain the advantage in a bargain. Demons are powerful enough that they can offer many tempting things to mortals, but such blessings never come free. A demon's price is typically some form of service or favor and, while these favors may seem harmless at first, they always enable the demon to pursue its driving need to kill and consume the Essence of humans.

In combat, a demon is a terrible thing to behold. They leap into the fray a blur of fangs and claws, ripping and shredding anything in their path, and they almost always seek to attack with the advantage of numbers. Against those they've subdued, they use their most terrifying power: the ability to devour the Essence of a helpless human, utterly destroying the human's spark of life and incorporating the human's consciousness into its own. Demons can call upon the memories and personalities of those they've consumed for a period of time after feeding, and many believe that these stored consciousnesses are still, in a way, alive and aware as they're being slowly absorbed.

THE WAY OF THAT WHICH WAITS AND WHISPERS

Like all demons, That Which Waits and Whispers has a single purpose: to consume the Essence of humans. They use bargains, trickery, murder, and destruction to achieve this goal, but the consumption of Essence is always the purpose for their actions.

Demons are the first-born, the first creatures made in the image of the gods. A flawed and terrible creation, demons quickly rose up against the gods, waging war against them and even killing and consuming a few of them. Eventually, the gods imprisoned the demons deep within the world, encased in a shell of metal from which they could not escape. Eventually, when the gods left Asunder and took the world's metal with them, the demons did start to escape, boiling up from the deep places of the world. They

discovered the Naga and the humans, and they sensed the divine spark of Essence within humanity. Further, they knew that their fellow prisoner within the world, Gaia, wanted that Essence so that she could escape Asunder, shattering it forever. The demons will not allow this to happen; Asunder is *their* world, their birthright as the firstborn of creation, and so their purpose is to prevent Gaia from gathering the Essence of fallen humans.

They are happy to annihilate every human being on the planet in the pursuit of this goal.

THE WORLD

Demons live in the deep places of the world, the caves and canyons and caverns, clustering into hives. The vast majority of them come to the surface on the Black Isle, from the Great Scar or other, smaller fissures in the earth, but demons may also surface in other parts of Asunder, and some even manage to get to Sky City, hiding there and sowing discord in the shadows.

Wherever there are humans, there are demons. Because humans are the demons' chosen prey, they congregate where humans do, picking off parts of the herd until a community is weak enough that it can be overrun. Because they live in the caverns and tunnels under the world, they often come into conflict with Naga, as well. While Naga have no Essence and so are not sought by the demons as prey, they do compete for territory, and Naga make it a point to hunt demons whenever they can.

Demons also occasionally run afoul of Vithek communities, though not often. The Vithek are reclusive and don't have any Essence for demons to devour, but sometimes Vithek launch attacks against nearby demon hives, seeing them as threats to their own safety.

PLACES OF INTEREST

The demons hold a few places of importance in Asunder.

THE GREAT SCAR

The demons know that their biggest threat is the people of the Black Isle, those who have learned to turn their Essence into a weapon against the demons. On the Black Isle, they gather at the Great Scar, amassing a terrible army, biding their time, and researching a way to catalyze the next step in their evolution. The minerals and gems of the Scar are resonant with stored Essence infused by the demons and, left unchecked, one day they will achieve their goal. When they do, they will descend upon the Black Islanders like a plague, snuffing every life out.

THE HEART

The closest thing the demons have to a city, the Heart is a massive hive under the ocean to the south of the Black Isle. Thousands of demons live there, with new demons being birthed from cocoons on a regular basis. The Heart doesn't have a single leader or even a consistent population; rather,

demons come and go, residing at the Heart for a time to spawn new demons or to make plans with their peers, then moving on to fulfill those plans in the wide world.

THE NIGHT BIRD

Legends say that, out on the seas of Asunder, a corrupted living ship crewed by demons sails, waylaying the unwary, killing off crews to a man, and sinking their ships beneath the waves. Nobody knows if there's anything to these stories, as the *Night Bird* is said to leave no survivors, so first-hand accounts are exceedingly rare. The legends persist anyway.

PEOPLE OF IMPORT

There are a few demons who are old, powerful, and destructive enough that they've become legends in their own right.

THE UNMAKER

Said to live in New Gaia, the Unmaker is known for his unquenchable appetite. Entire settlements in New Gaia have fallen to the Unmaker's hunger, and those who encounter the Unmaker and survive tell tales of a demon twenty feet tall, missing an arm, and able to call upon a seemingly endless number of Essence powers at will.

OLD SAWTOOTH

Uncharacteristically social for a demon, Old Sawtooth lives in a cave on the mainland near the Naga Swamps. She doesn't leave her cave, even to attack unwary travelers who pass by, instead patiently waiting for people to come to her. Old Sawtooth is known for being able to give people great power for a price, and people from nearby villages often visit her in the hopes of curing plagues, ending famines or droughts, or just hexing their next-door-neighbors. Her services are never free—and sometimes she simply eats a visitor rather than bargaining with them—but her prices are known for being exceedingly fair, if not necessarily pleasant.

OLD MAN OAK

An exceptionally tall, wizened demon, Old Man Oak got his name from the Nanok tribe of Pacari; the Nanok elder thought the demon was a tree when she first saw



Demon birthing cocoons in the The Heart.

Grandfather Oak. Once she realized that the tree was, in fact, a demon, she approached him rather than running, and struck a bargain on behalf of her tribe, which was on the brink of extinction: if the demon would become the tribe's patron and protector, they would serve him and do his bidding. Today, the Nanok tribe is known for their exceptional bloodlust. Old Man Oak has fed the tribe's warriors a steady diet of demon blood, heightening their aggression and physical prowess, and he has taught them the trick of trapping a fallen foe's Essence, so that it can be brought to the demon for consumption.

POINTS OF CONFLICT

Demons are nothing but conflict. Here are a few ways you can use them in your campaign.

ENGINES OF DESTRUCTION

A single demon is a difficult fight for most parties of Seekers. A group of demons can be a climactic battle,

a town ravaged by a demonic horde can kick off an adventure, and stopping a rampaging demon can make a name for a group of Seekers quickly.

SUBTLE MANIPULATORS

Demons love to strike bargains. Far from being unthinking brutes, demons can be the masterminds of complex plots with numerous servitors doing their bidding, unbeknownst to the people around them. Not only that, but offering a

Seeker power at a cost can be a great way to drive play and create all kinds of conflict.

THE APOCALYPSE MADE MANIFEST

Demons want to kill every human in the world and, in the Great Scar, they're learning how to become more effective at it. If your group is particularly interested in demons, an entire campaign can be built around stopping the demons from realizing their ambitions.

THE NAGA

Kesha crouches low, hiding her massive form in the brush, her sinuous body collapsing in on itself, allowing her to fold into an improbably small shape. Ahead, she sees them. A whole platoon of human soldiers. She can see the reds and oranges of their heat emanating from them, sense their warmth through the jungle foliage. She flicks out her tongue, tastes the air, her eyes darting from form to form. Thirty. Maybe forty of them. Wearing that bone armor, from the looks of it, so at least these invaders will be a challenge. Kesha smiles. She flicks her tail once, a brief staccato rattle, a signal to be ready. Through her heat vision, she can see her sisters signal their readiness.

This place is sacred: the domain of a piece of the God-Machine. For months they've been trying to get it to work, fending off invaders who venture further into the jungles, *their* jungles, looking for riches and resources and conquest. Asha remembers the argument from last week.

"We've already tried that, Kesha," sighed Cora, the brood-priestess, impatiently. "It didn't work."

"We've tried with *our* blood."

Cora stiffened, her eyes narrowing. "You want to bring *humans* to this sacred place?"

Kesha crossed her arms. "Dead humans. But yes."

"That's... a defilement. I won't allow it."

"A defilement it may be," Kesha said, voice rising in volume as she drew herself up to her full height. "But we've tried everything else. The God-Machine piece needs fuel of some sort, that much is clear. And the gods, in their folly, chose to invest their Essence in the usurpers. It stands to reason that that very Essence will power the God-Machine piece."

Cora's jaw clenched, muscles working. "Don't speak of the gods so. You're coming very close to blasphemy, child."

Kesha took a deep breath and settled back on her coils. "I know. I'm sorry, brood-priestess. But perhaps it's best to think of this as a harvest rather than a defilement. And to think of the humans' Essence as a trial rather than a folly."

Cora tilted her head. "Explain."

"Perhaps the gods didn't invest humans with Essence out of misguided affection. Perhaps they stored that Essence within them precisely so we can take it and use it to fuel their machine and bring them back."

It had taken several hours of theological discussion and meditation, but eventually Kesha had convinced the brood-priestess to allow her plan.

And now, the time has almost arrived. Kesha watches as the platoon marches past her hiding spot, drawn by rumors of treasure and powerful artifacts. They are rumors she and her brood-sisters planted days ago by way of a weak-willed human proxy. She lashes her tail, a sharp, loud rattle, and then she lunges out of the underbrush and drives her twin bone knives into the flank of one of the human soldiers, lifting him into the air as she rises up on her coils, tossing his body aside as he screams and gurgles. The soldiers start to shout and draw weapons, but it's far too late for them. Kesha watches in satisfaction as her brood-sisters leap from trees or rise out of bushes and from behind logs to vent their fury on the usurpers.

Eight of her sisters, champions all, against thirty or forty humans. Hardly a fair fight. She lashes out, knives spreading ribbons of crimson on the leaves around her. The blade on her tail catches a soldier in the throat, and then she leaps, bringing her full bulk down upon another, crushing him in her coils. She feels a sting in her side and sees the horok-bone spear digging into her. Snarling, she grabs the spear and draws the human holding it up into the air, and then she bites him on the face, her venom coursing into the man's bloodstream. She makes a mental note not to use that one's blood; no sense in using poisoned Essence.

Six minutes pass. Three of her sisters are injured, but none so badly that they won't recover. Eighteen dead lay around them; the rest of the platoon having fled when they felt the tide turning against them.

"Everyone carries two corpses. Leave any that you've poisoned behind."

Later, above the God-Machine's chamber, Kesha watches, her heart beating in exultation as she listens to Cora's sermon. The brood-priestess speaks words of faith, of devotion, of the chosen people bringing the gods back to Asunder, and she cuts the humans throats one by one, spilling their blood on the piece of the God-Machine.

It begins to hum, and Kesha smiles. Now they know how to power it.



Kesha desires only what is owed to her and her sisters: the love of the Gods. They are the better creation. There is no mistaking that.



ENCOUNTERING A NAGA

The first thing you notice is the Naga's size. The upper half of her body is that of a woman, but it's half again as large as that of a human woman, and thick with muscle. The bottom half is even larger, that of a snake with a tail easily five yards long. In her current, resting posture, she looks down at you. Drawn up to full height, she would dwarf you entirely.

The serpentine portion of the Naga's body is scaled, thick and strong, coiled and ready to strike. The humanoid portion has pale skin with patches of scales here and there, glinting in the moonlight. Her face is that of a human woman, if somewhat elongated, but her eyes are golden with slitted pupils, and her nose is blunt, with small, angular nostrils. When she opens her mouth, you can see her venomous fangs.

The Naga seems always poised for action or violence, every muscle tense and ready. She wears some armor and clothing, but it's utilitarian. She's armed, because they all are.

She can speak your tongue, and speak it well, but she has her own language too, a tongue of sibilant consonants and flowing vowels, one well-suited to her forked tongue. She doesn't seem to like you much or, at the very least, she doesn't trust you. Maybe that will change someday, with enough effort. But for now, experience has proven to her that your kind are not to be relied upon.

THE WAY OF KESHA

Kesha is of the warrior caste, as are all of her brood-sisters. They have trained since shortly after hatching to fight, to kill, to defend their home at all costs. There are other castes: hunters, makers, explorers, and the all-male breeder caste. Each caste serves the Queen, the matriarch of their clutch. The vast majority of every clutch is female; males are getting rarer and rarer, and this is a point of concern for the Naga, for without their males they cannot reproduce. Because of this, males are jealously guarded and rarely let outside the clutch without a guard.

As a warrior, much of Kesha's time is taken up with training, drills, or actual combat with enemies of the clutch. Each day also has time dedicated to serving the clutch's spiritual and educational needs: learning about the God-Machine, the other people of the world, the history of the Naga and the retelling of their destiny. The destiny of the Naga is this: to strike down the human usurpers, to claim their birthright as the greatest of the gods' creations, and to be welcomed with open arms into the Halls of Glory when the gods return to Asunder.

When her race was born, so the histories say, they were the second people to enter the world. First came the demons, destroyers and corruptors all. Then, the Naga were born, a race closer in kind to the gods themselves,

gifted with intelligence, compassion, and a reverence for the world around them. Finally came the humans, and for these rapacious creatures who consume all around them, her people were cast out of their rightful place as the favorites of the gods.

The Naga know they are the true chosen people of the gods. They collect the pieces of the God-Machine as an act of worship and reverence, and as a way to prepare Asunder for their return. And when they do return, the Naga will sit at their right hand.

THE WORLD

The Naga once had a great empire that spanned the continents, but that all changed when the gods broke the world and left. The land ruptured, entire civilizations were burned or buried, continents were swallowed by the sea, and the ocean itself became poison. To make matters worse, before the Naga were able to recover, the humans rose up and tried to take from the Naga what was rightfully theirs. Humans spread across the land like a plague, and they pushed the other people of the world into the wild, untamed places, the deadly and desolate places, the places the humans themselves did not want.

All but the Naga. The Naga retained the jungles, the sacred swamps, and the fertile fields of their ancestry. To this day, they clash with the humans over borders and lands; the humans want more land, better land, but the Naga know their place in the world and refuse to give the usurpers an inch.

Naga lack Essence, the divine spark given to humans by the gods, and so they did not bond with the world as humans did. However, even though they cannot effectively use living gear as humans do, Naga have potent tools at their disposal that the humans do not: the fragments of the God-Machine. These ancient artifacts are all different and unique, and the Naga are always unearthing more and learning how to use them. Because of their constant exposure to the energies of these machines, each Naga is blessed by the God-Machine with strange powers, and many Naga clutches are able to defend themselves from human interlopers through a combination of their superior physicality and their mastery of God-Machine fragments.

The Naga have also found the Corridors Below, a network of tunnels and caves that stretch all over the world, just below the surface. They use the Corridors to get from place to place unseen, to move between land masses, and sometimes even as places to live unnoticed for periods of time. They also plumb the Corridors Below, as well as the forgotten places of the surface world, for fragments of the God-Machine. While many of these artifacts have no known use or purpose, the Naga believe that, when they accumulate enough of them, they will understand how to reassemble the God-Machine and call the gods back to Asunder.

PLACES OF INTEREST

There are many sites sacred to the Naga in the world. Here are a few of them.

THE GODSWAMP

Known throughout the world by humans as the Naga Swamps, the Godswamp is a part of the mainland known for having an unusually large number of Chaos shards and Chaos sites. The Naga believe that these shards appear in the swamp because it rests above an unusually large fragment of the God-Machine, which poisons the land above with its broken harmonics. They guard these Chaos sites, searching them and looking for ways to get to the God-Machine fragment below, so they can wrest it from the earth and take it somewhere safe.

THE BLOODED SANDS

In the deserts of Desolation Valley on the eastern part of the mainland, there are many clutches of Naga who live in close proximity. When they have disputes between themselves, each aggrieved party selects a champion and sends her to the Blooded Sands, a patch of desert surrounded by standing stones, where the sand has a distinctly reddish hue. There, they engage in ritual combat, with the winning champion deciding the resolution to the dispute. These battles aren't always to the death, but Naga often die on the Blooded Sands even when that's not the intent.

THE FIRST CLUTCH

Naga legend tells of the First Clutch, a place where the first Naga were born and their race came into existence. Naga frequently engage in pilgrimages to the First Clutch, to pay their respects and give thanks to the gods for the gift of life. Unfortunately, the city-state of Hyden has expanded to the point where the First Clutch lies within its walls. This hasn't stopped the pilgrimages from happening, but it has made them significantly more dangerous to undertake.

PEOPLE OF IMPORT

The Naga are few, but there are some notable ones that intrepid Seekers might run into.

VISHRA THE SWIFT

Vishra got her name for the speed of her flashing axe, but she's better known now as a diplomat than a warrior. Vishra is Queen of the Red Grasses clutch, a clutch that has forged an alliance with the people of Far East. Though not exactly fond of humans, she recognizes that it's improbable for the Naga to win a war against humanity, given their shrinking numbers and fractious co-existence. As such, Vishra has decided that the best course of action is to create a lasting peace between the Naga and the humans so that her people can reassemble the God-Machine undisturbed. After all, once it's assembled the humans won't be a problem anymore.

HALAY GHET

More an urban legend than a person, stories persist of a male Naga who travels the world with his pack vvakir, peddling his wares to anyone he encounters. Ghet is said to be small for a Naga, with an eyepatch over one eye and an ostentatious feathered hat. He travels the world far and wide, buying and selling all manner of bizarre items, the likes of which people have never seen before. Then he vanishes, reappearing in another part of the world later.

THE MOTHER OF DEMONS

It is said that her entire clutch was murdered by humans from a nearby village, retaliation for some real or imagined crime. She alone survived, and she swore vengeance. She attacked the first merchant caravan she came across in her rage, killing half of them, but she was mortally wounded by one of the caravan guards and left for dead by the side of the road. That's when the demon came to her and offered her a bargain. Now, she has a new clutch made up of demons who do her bidding, laying waste to isolated settlements throughout the world, gathering strength for ever more brazen attacks.

POINTS OF CONFLICT

The history of the relationship between humans and Naga is littered with conflict. Here are a few ideas.

JEALOUSY OF THE USURPERS

Naga history and holy writ teaches that the humans usurped the Naga's rightful place as the favored people of the gods, and that the humans' imperfection is what ultimately caused the gods to break the world and depart. Because of this, many Naga hate humans and will kill them on sight, without the slightest provocation. Humans, for their part, have no idea where this animosity comes from; they instead believe that the Naga are violent monsters that must be put down for the greater good.

TERRITORY DISPUTES

Over the years, human lands have tried to take the Nagas' sacred places, and the Naga have pushed back. While the Naga don't often attack human cities, it isn't uncommon for smaller settlements to be wiped out by Naga warbands. Sometimes this is because the Naga believe there's a fragment of the God-Machine in or under the settlement, while sometimes the conquest is for purely practical reasons: land and natural resources.

GATHERING THE GOD-MACHINE

The core tenet of the Naga belief system is that they must reassemble the God-Machine in order to call the gods back to Asunder and take their rightful place in the Halls of Glory. Whether or not this is true, Naga are often on the lookout for strange and unusual artifacts, and they're not above taking them from Seekers who may possess such things in the meantime.

THE RARE AND THE RECLUSIVE

Of the sapient species of Asunder, the Naga and the demons are the most numerous, and the most likely to instigate conflict with humans. There are, however, several other intelligent people in the world, though these civilizations are either very small, very reclusive, or both. These civilizations do occasionally have contact with humans (or other civilizations in the world), but such contact is uncommon, so less is known about them.

SILGIRI

The silgiri are an aquatic people, though very little is known about them. Sometimes the Seafarers run afoul of silgiri pods, though just as often the two groups encounter each other without violence. A silgir is tall and thin, and their height can range anywhere from six to fifteen feet. Their bodies are humanoid but spindly, with reptilian faces and tails. They have fins on their arms and legs and large, webbed hands and feet. Silgiri come in a dizzying array of colors, from reds and browns to bright blues and purples, and some even come in rainbow hues. They're a nocturnal people, and while they can exist on dry land, they must spend time in water each day to maintain their health, and they move clumsily on land.

SOCIETY

For the silgiri, the family unit (called a pod) is the most important thing in life. Silgiri are fiercely loyal to other individuals within their pods, and they'll do virtually anything to protect their podmates. Silgiri pods also forge special bonds with sea serpents, creating a type of symbiotic relationship: the silgiri feed and care for the sea serpent, and the serpent provides them protection in return. This bond is so deep that silgiri consider a bonded sea serpent to be a member of the pod and will protect it with the same fervor that they would a sibling, parent, or lover.

Silgiri are highly adept at working with the coral found in the seas, and have learned to fashion it into weapons, armor, buildings, and tools. Like many things in the sea, coral is highly toxic, and so silgiri weapons are poisonous, even though they do not take any extra effort to make them so.

ZYLVALE

A Zylvare looks like a carved wooden statue, ten to fifteen feet tall, all sharp angles and geometric shapes coming together in the approximation of a humanoid form. All Zylvare share a deep bond with the plants around them and are able to communicate with plants; they can even cause certain plants to animate. Their skin is tough and wooden, but supple enough to allow them to move with surprising grace. The "carvings" on their bodies are not actually carved, but are naturally-occurring markings that

are unique to the individual. While most Zylvare look the same to humans, paying attention to the carvings on their bodies can reveal age, gender, name, and even their role within the community.

SOCIETY

Zylvare see themselves as guardians of the wild places of the world. A tribe of Zylvare is often tied to a particular glade, grove, or wooded lagoon, and they will protect their territory from invaders with deadly force. They're a reclusive people, typically not approaching humans unless those humans are seen as a threat. The Zylvare are an intelligent people, and they can be reasoned with—even convinced to become allies. They are fickle and capricious, however, and their morality is not human.

For Zylvare, death is not the end. When a Zylvare dies, as long as its body is recovered and buried within the soil of its home, it is reborn as a new Zylvare with all the memories of its previous lives. For this reason, it's difficult for Zylvare to understand concepts like murder, or why humans get so upset when one of their own dies.

Zylvare have a language of their own that is only partially verbal; they also communicate by releasing spores, and by making clicking or scraping noises with different parts of their bodies. Zylvare language also relies heavily on context, so a single word can have numerous meanings depending on the situation in which it's spoken and the accompanying noises and spores. Some Zylvare do speak human languages, though they tend to speak with strange intonations, grammar, and syntax, and they only learn the languages of their closest neighbors.

VITHEK

Huge and hulking, the Vithek are humanoid creatures that live underground in the tunnels beneath the surface. A typical Vithek stands four to six feet tall and looks like a massive, bulky human with gray-green, blue-black, or pearly white skin. Parts of a Vithek's body—the chest, shoulders, thighs, forearms, and neck, mostly—are covered in a thick, shiny chitin of the same color, and their three-fingered hands and two-toed feet are tipped with claws. A Vithek's head has no nose, and sports two thick curved horns. Sharp incisor teeth fill its mouth.

SOCIETY

Vithek operate in a hive structure, with all individuals sharing a psychic connection. While not a true hive mind, Vithek are able to communicate with each other telepathically, and this allows them to operate in concert with extraordinary ease. It also means that there isn't a Vithek ruler per se; all members of a Vithek hive work for the communal good, and when something needs to be done for the community, these needs and ideas have a way of propagating themselves throughout the hive.

Because Vithek are so closely bonded to each other, they tend to be deeply uneasy around people with



A full grown Vithek warrior.

whom they do not share a hive bond. This means that outsiders—even Vithek from other hives—are typically viewed with suspicion, and everyone in a hive knows who (and where) every outsider is as long as one member of the hive does. Vithek can sometimes come across as paranoid or xenophobic when they encounter non-Vithek. To some extent, they are. This behavior comes from the fact that being around someone with whom they cannot share thoughts is unsettling to Vithek; the

concept of secrets is alien to them, as is the concept of privacy.

In battle, Vithek are more far dangerous in large groups than when alone. A single Vithek is a formidable physical opponent and is capable of creating a psychic “chittering” that can distract and disorient non-Vithek but, in groups of two or more, Vithek operate with a synergy that few humans can match. Fighting a group of five Vithek is almost like fighting a single individual with five bodies.



A Pure Light cultist, changed by the Light, offers worship to the source of her powers.

CHAPTER FIVE FORBIDDEN LORE

The World of Asunder holds many secrets. Some beneath the surface and some above. Gaia, the world's protector and life force (or some might say its saboteur), has shown her true face and begun to devour the land (and most importantly the people in it and their essence). The demons, who keep the secrets of the Gods in tunnels beneath the land, would like to stop her, but to do so must reign desolation upon humankind. Something the Naga would enjoy as well, if only they didn't hate the demons more. It is indeed a struggle that holds the world in conflict and seeks to erode it.

This chapter also provides rules for when your Seekers encounter the primal forces of Gaia: Pure Light, Chaos shards, or Chaos sites. For information on how to wield Chaos, refer to **Chapter 10** in the *Seeker's Guide*. For information on how Discord works, refer to **Chapter 3** of the *Seeker's Guide*.

SECRETS OF GAIA

The Seekers are each looking for something. For some it's fame and glory. For others it's redemption. Some seek to answer questions they haven't yet figured out how to ask. But all Seekers know one thing: the world is winding down...coming to an end. Most people of Asunder know it but don't give voice to that simple fact and, among those who *do* dare to talk about it, a number of theories abound. The most prevalent of these is that when the gods left the world and took the metal with them, they left it in a weakened state. Fractured as she was, Gaia, the World-Spirit, the All-Mother, started to die. Her death is a slow one, drawn-out and agonizing, a death that has lasted thousands of years and may yet last hundreds more, but all agree: the Great Death is coming. One day, Gaia will die and, with her, all life on Asunder will cease.

Keeper, only you know that the Seekers are wrong.

CREATION & BREAKING

The story people tell about the impending Great Death is a misconception, if only partially so. The world *is* dying; that much is true. Further, the departure of the gods and the removal of the world's metal *is* partially to blame for the slow death that the world is experiencing. But beyond that, humans have the story wrong.

There are beings more powerful than the gods, beings of thought and energy, metaphor and concept, beings of immeasurable potency and utterly alien mindset. Known as the Primals, these beings drift through the cosmos

enacting their wills upon it, and a single god cannot hope to stand in the way of such power. Gaia is one such Primal. Once, she worked with the gods of Asunder to create worlds and people and to do the inscrutable things that gods and Primals do. She was their ally, helping them against other rival gods, protecting them from dangerous Primals, and acting as their leader, their guide, and their great benefactor.

Over time, though, Gaia grew dissatisfied. She saw things in the universe that she perceived as great wrongs, and she made it her mission to correct them. In many cases, that led her into direct contact with other gods and Primals, and conflicts erupted across the cosmos. The gods of Asunder grew worried that their alliance with Gaia would spell their doom, and they banded together to stop her. They knew they couldn't kill her, and they knew they wouldn't be able to defeat her unless they all cooperated. Together, they came up with a plan to imprison her.

One of the gods convinced Gaia that, in creating a new world, she would be able to plant the seeds of the revolution she dreamed of, to create creatures that could serve her and further her purpose. These creations would empower the gods with belief and devotion and make them stronger allies in her battle. She agreed and, together, they created Asunder. But Asunder was a trap, and the gods betrayed Gaia and imprisoned her within the planet, wrapping her in bonds of earth and iron.

To cover their crime, the gods treated Asunder like any other planet: they created people and creatures to inhabit it, and they gave some of those creatures the divine spark of Essence that would ensure their survival and ascendancy. But eventually the gods were drawn back into the war that Gaia had started, and they were forced to leave Asunder. They took with them all the metal on the planet for use in weapons, armor, and other tools of war. The gods believed that, even without iron to bind her, Gaia would still be bound forever within the planet, unable to escape.

They were right...but only for a time.

THE GODS' WAR

What could be so important as to force the gods to break and abandon their creation, the world they used to imprison the being that was, at that time, their greatest threat? They perceived a greater threat to their agendas. Things had quieted down after Gaia's imprisonment and the gods thought they'd secured a place within the

cosmos. But, before long, they heard rumors of another Primal, a being that corrupted and consumed worlds one by one, casting down and devouring the gods of each world, and growing more powerful with each passing conquest. This Primal, known as the Demon Lord, posed a significant threat to the gods' plans, especially if he turned his eye toward Asunder and inadvertently freed Gaia.

Seeing the Demon Lord as a threat they must deal with immediately, the gods fled Asunder, taking the planet's metal with them, and began an eons-long war with the Primal, a war that continues today.

GAIA'S ESCAPE PLAN

Earth and stone and water make an effective prison for Gaia. Without metal, though, she is able to reach out and touch parts of the world. She does so through plant life; wherever it grows, she has influence, subtle but powerful on the aggregate. But influence is not enough for Gaia; she wants freedom. And she knows how to get it.

Every human on Asunder has a small spark of Essence, implanted in them by the gods at the moment of humanity's creation. Some of this Essence is recycled over time as humans die and are reborn again and again, in new bodies with new faces and minds. But Essence begets Essence, and the pool of Essence that fuels humanity has grown over time to correspond with the burgeoning population of the planet. Gaia has used this to her advantage: whenever a human dies, she takes a portion of that human's Essence, consumes it, and makes herself a bit more powerful. A single human's death is a negligible increase in power, but over centuries and aeons her power has grown. Even so, annihilating all life on Asunder wouldn't give Gaia the strength she needs to escape, and it would rob her of her ability to harvest more Essence. So she bides her time, harvesting a bit at a time, growing steadily more powerful.

Gaia cannot simply harvest Essence from every human that dies, however; she needs contact with the corpse. If plant life is present at the time of death, Gaia can use that to harvest a small amount of Essence. But her servants, both living and dead, are a more effective harvesting tool; they're able to harvest the entirety of a dead human's Essence. Gaia knows she can't overuse this trick; harvest too much Essence too quickly, and the human population dwindles, putting her plan in jeopardy.

But Gaia's plan is starting to bear fruit. She's starting to get strong enough to break free. Soon—by a Primal's standards, at least—she'll shatter the world and escape her prison.

AN ERUPTION OF CHAOS

The more powerful Gaia becomes, the more Chaos manifests at the center of the world. As it manifests there, it is slowly pushed out to the world's surface, like a splinter being forced out of a finger. Shards erupt from the ground and cause natural law to pervert itself in their

vicinity. These shards of Chaos around the world weaken the structure of natural law, as well as the integrity of the world and reality. These Chaos shards are Gaia testing her bonds, weakening her prison, and readying herself to emerge.

Curiously, Chaos-wielders make this worse. When a human absorbs a shard of Chaos, that shard doesn't go away. Instead, it rests inside the Chaos-wielder, travels with him, and weakens reality wherever he goes. Gaia even encourages humans in subtle ways to seek out shards of Chaos, because she knows that regardless of whether the human is destroyed or absorbs the shard, she gets that much closer to escape.

Chaos is also the key to slowing the end of the world. Though only a few humans have discovered how to do it, there is a way to destroy a shard of Chaos and restore balance to the area in which it manifested. Humans would have to mobilize in force to destroy enough Chaos shards to halt Gaia's escape entirely, however.

For now, the one thing most humans can agree upon with regards to Chaos is that it's becoming more common, and that's a bad thing. Doom cults use Chaos's increased presence in the world as proof of the end times, and they're not wrong. The more "pragmatic" among the human population seek to find ways to exploit Chaos and use it to their advantage and, while these people can accumulate immense power very quickly by doing so, they're hastening the apocalypse in the process.

THE DEMONIC INCURSION

The demons know all of this. They understand what Gaia is and what her intentions are, and they seek to stop it. This doesn't make them altruistic, however, or even a potential ally for humanity; they want to save the world in order to rule it. According to the demons, the best way to halt Gaia's escape and ensure the survival of the world is to eradicate every human on the planet. Because there isn't enough Essence in the world at any given time to give Gaia the power she needs to escape, the demons reason that if they can break free to the surface of the world en masse and slaughter humans by the thousands and tens of thousands, eventually they can wipe the planet clean, denying Gaia any further Essence she can use to grow stronger. As a side benefit, this would leave the world empty for them to inhabit. Demons have also developed the ability to consume the Essence of humans they kill, denying that Essence to Gaia and making themselves stronger in the process.

For now, they gather their strength and muster at the Great Scar on the Black Isle. They know they've amassed too many forces there for the Black Islers to easily deal with, and they also know that as long as they don't mount an offensive too soon, the Black Islers will focus their attentions elsewhere. Humanity has a surprising capacity to ignore existential threats when a more immediate danger is present, so they attack in small

bands everywhere else on the Black Isle, keeping the Islers busy with skirmishes. They rarely venture beyond the Black Isle, because the Isle is almost entirely devoid of vegetation. As such, it is a place where Gaia has no influence or awareness, allowing them to muster their forces in secret.

BLIGHT WALKERS

The sites of great battles are littered with corpses, and they often become breeding grounds for a kind of fungus that takes root in those corpses and animates them. These animate dead walk the world with but one purpose: to slay the living. Most believe that blight walkers are a curse levied upon the world by a god who was horrified at the violent nature of humankind. The truth, however, is that blight walkers serve Gaia. When hundreds or thousands of humans die in one place, Gaia often manifests as a spirit. There have been numerous accounts of this, and most also describe a heavy green mist in the air. This mist is actually a cloud of spores that, when they settle upon the recently slain dead, grow into fungi that can control the corpses they inhabit. In this way, Gaia can both gather Essence from the battle and propagate even more violence, gaining even more Essence.

THE GREEN ARMY

Gaia also has servants, humans who worship and obey her, and who do her bidding in the world. Imbued with great power, servants of Gaia act as leaders of her Green Army. Most often these individuals are weavers, and over time they have effectively infiltrated the ranks of the Hands of Gaia, the ruling class of New Gaia. These individuals often have the ability to raise blight walkers, and their schemes usually involve strengthening the Green Army, fostering worship of Gaia, or causing death on a grand scale.

Few people in Asunder know what the purpose of the Green Army is or what it wants. All people know is that sometimes the dead rise, and when they do they kill the living, sweeping through an area before disappearing into the wilderness, not to be seen again for months or even years. There are vague rumors that the Green Army is under Gaia's control, but people often argue about what her purpose is. Some believe that she destroys communities that have displeased her, and that the appearance of the Green Army is an indicator that people must repent and seek to appease Gaia. Others believe that, according to natural law, Gaia must cull the herd from time to time, winnowing away those who are not strong enough to subsist. Still others believe that the Green Army is a perversion of Gaia's will, that the living beings seen among the Green Army from time to time seek to subvert her power and use it to their own ends.

Almost nobody knows the truth.

CHAOS AND PURE LIGHT

Chaos is the primal force of creation and destruction that leaches out of the god-machine that was used to forge the world long ago. Pure Light may also be a manifestation of Chaos, though it has very different effects from Chaos shards or Chaos sites.

PURE LIGHT

Nobody knows precisely why Pure Light exists or what its purpose is. Many theorize that it's a manifestation of Chaos—some remnant of the god-machine run amok—and for that they worship it. These people believe that Pure Light is semi-divine and has a consciousness, and they seek to join it and become part of it when they die. Regardless of the truth, what Pure Light is from an observable perspective is an immense shaft of white-hot light that descends from the sky. It moves from place to place, roving around the mainland, occasionally disappearing entirely only to reappear elsewhere. There's only ever one shaft of Pure Light, and it's nearly impossible to predict where it will be, though many try.

Some few people worship Pure Light as a divine entity, and a large part of this is because it seems to *touch* certain people, imbuing them with power and knowledge, warping and changing their Essence to grant them power unattainable in any other way. Pure Light worshipers revere these Light-Touched and treat them as holy figures, prophets, and spiritual leaders (often whether or not the Light-Touched themselves desire that mantle).

EFFECTS OF PURE LIGHT

Pure Light can't be destroyed or harnessed in any way, and it's far too dangerous and powerful for nearly any human to survive. As such, you can use it in the following ways.

AS A WORLD DETAIL

A shaft of Pure Light nearly a hundred feet across, moving through the countryside, burning up any animals or people that it comes across, is a dramatic image. You might use it as a way to bring a Pure Light cult into an adventure as allies, antagonists, or a neutral party. Maybe the cultists have a prophecy they're watching for. Maybe the shaft of Pure Light just burned or mutated everyone in a village, leaving only a single Light-Touched survivor and numerous grisly corpse-filled or heat-scoured houses. There are a few things to keep in mind about Pure Light when you're using it this way:

First, Pure Light sometimes burns up any living creature it touches, but at other times, it instead randomly mutates every living creature within its diameter. These mutations are invariably fatal. Use your imagination to describe the fate that NPCs, animals, monsters, and other creatures that come into contact with the Pure Light.

Second, Pure Light leaves everything else untouched. Buildings, grass, trees, rocks, water, and everything else it comes into contact with is seemingly unaffected by Pure Light, not even rising in temperature. A shaft of Pure Light can burn away every creature in a village and leave all of the objects in the village intact. The sole exception to this rule is sand; any sand touched by Pure Light fuses into massively valuable glass, something that the black-market glass-hawkers of the city-states will kill to keep from becoming common knowledge.

Third, Pure Light does what it will. It moves as it wills, or not at all. It disappears if it decides to. What this means is that it can effectively do whatever you want it to do in the story. It can show up unexpectedly, cause some problems, then leave just as unexpectedly, or it can be a constant presence that follows the Seekers around. Its motivations, if it indeed has any, are utterly alien and unpredictable.

AS A HAZARD

A battle near a shaft of Pure Light can be exciting and dramatic because the chances of imminent and instant death are high. Don't overuse this trick; doing this once in an adventure is plenty, and you probably don't want two adventures back-to-back with such an encounter in it. Pure Light usually manifests as a large shaft anywhere from 100 feet to one mile in diameter...but it doesn't have to. It can shrink if it wishes. In game terms, it's a cylinder with a radius of whatever you want it to be. It moves as you need it to move. Depending on what level your group is when you use Pure Light as a hazard, the damage can be different.

A creature pushed into Pure Light can make an Agility challenge roll to try to avoid the worst of its effects. A creature who fails takes full damage, while a creature who succeeds takes half. This doesn't represent being entirely enveloped by Pure Light; if that happens, a creature is utterly destroyed or instantly killed by freakish mutations. Rather, this represents being partially consumed by it, such that it burns away some of your flesh or works minor to moderate mutations on you, but you're able to escape before it kills you (maybe).

You can also have Pure Light attack creatures on the battlefield, moving to them to try to consume them. Refer to the *Pure Light Attack and Damage* table for Pure Light's attack bonus and its damage on a success.

A creature incapacitated by Pure Light's damage is either burned away to nothing or becomes a misshapen bag of bones and torn flesh. Which outcome you use is at your discretion as Keeper, but the damage guidelines remain the same.

PURE LIGHT ATTACK AND DAMAGE

Starting	4d6	+1
Novice	6d6	+2
Expert	10d6	+3
Master	14d6	+4

AS AN ADVANCEMENT TRIGGER

Sometimes, very, *very* rarely, Pure Light doesn't kill someone it envelops. Sometimes it instead touches them, changing them and giving them power. This only happens to people from the mainland, never to anyone else. Talk to your players. If one of them wants to take on the Light-Touched expert path or the Light-Chosen master path, you can justify either path by having them be enveloped by Pure Light at a climactic moment in an adventure and surviving untouched. Shortly afterward (when the group levels up), they start to gain both visible mutations and power.

CHAOS SHARDS

Very rarely, shards of pure Chaos energy manifest in the world. These objects are fragments of the god-machine bleeding out into human reality. Some say that Chaos exists in a reality parallel to our own, and these shards are pieces of that reality blending with ours where the barrier between planes is thin. Others say that the god-machine is underground, within the planet itself, and that fragments of Chaos dislodge from it and get pushed out of the world's skin as Gaia attempts to reject a foreign invader. Whatever the truth, the fact remains that Chaos shards are tremendously dangerous, but can be harnessed by those with the will, knowledge, and ability to do so.

SHARD RANK

All Chaos shards have a rank from 1 to 5. Rank 1 shards are rare, numbering only in the hundreds across the entire world. Rank 5 shards are theoretical; it's possible that one or two exists, but nobody's found one and lived to tell the tale. A shard's rank determines its general power. Whenever a shard makes an attack or challenge roll, it does so with a bonus equal to its rank, and with an equivalent number of boons. Whenever a shard forces a challenge roll, that challenge roll suffers a number of banes equal to the shard's rank.

SHARD EFFECTS

Chaos shards have a form of sentience and awareness—or, at least, they seem to. Whenever Seekers come into contact with a Chaos shard, refer to the *Shard Effects by Rank* table below to determine what the Shard does in their presence. You may wish to run an encounter with a Chaos shard as a conflict.

SHARD EFFECTS BY RANK

1	Chaos site
2	Chaos site
3	Chaos site, Chaos beasts
4	Chaos site, Chaos beasts, attack
5	Chaos site, Chaos beasts, attack



Stealing a Chaos shard from the Naga is perhaps the most dangerous thing one can do. For Jael, she considers that the only way to feel alive.

CHAOS SITE

A Chaos shard always exists in the center of a Chaos site with a rank equal to its own.

CHAOS BEASTS

The Chaos shard is accompanied by creatures comprised of pure Chaos. A rank 3 shard is accompanied by 2 **medium** Chaos beasts, a rank 4 shard by 2 **medium** Chaos beasts and 1 **large** Chaos beast, and a rank 5 shard by 2 **large** Chaos beasts and 1 **huge** Chaos beast. These Chaos beasts can be killed, but every minute that goes by after a Chaos beast's death there's a cumulative 5% chance of a new Chaos beast of the same size spontaneously forming.

ATTACK

The Chaos shard can take actions and attack. Its attack is a ranged attack that can affect anything within its Chaos site, and the attack deals 2d6 damage per rank of the shard, plus 1d6 Discord. A creature that takes damage from this attack is also warped and mutated; this mutation is permanent but has no specific game effect, though the creature is impaired for 1 minute due to the disorientation

of the sudden mutation. A creature incapacitated by this damage is transformed into a **monster** equal to its previous Size.

HARNESSING A SHARD

A Seeker from the mainland can harness a Chaos shard's energy in order to learn to wield Chaos. If a Seeker wishes to discover the Chaos Essence tree, allow them to visit a Chaos shard of appropriate rank (see the **Shard Rank by Level** table) and play out an encounter with the shard. Typically, harnessing a shard's power requires a Will challenge roll with a number of banes equal to the shard's rank.

Someone who is already a Chaos wielder can use clear glass to contain a mote of Chaos from a Chaos shard, provided they have the Chaos Trapper talent. See *Glass* in **Chapter 9** of the *Seeker's Guide* for information on this. Finally, a Chaos wielder can draw power from a Chaos shard within short range as a triggered action when they use a Chaos power. Make a Will challenge roll with a number of banes equal to the shard's rank. If they succeed, the Seeker takes 1 Discord and can either use the power without expending a use of it (as long as the power's rank is not greater than the shard's), or you can use the shard's energy to push the power a number of times equal to twice

the shard's rank for free. If you fail the challenge roll, you take 1d6 Discord and gain no benefit.

DESTROYING A CHAOS SHARD

You can't simply hit a Chaos shard with a weapon and expect to harm it; destroying one of these relics requires a lengthy cleansing ritual in which all who participate bend their Essence toward containing and dissipating the Chaos energy of the shard. In order to engage in the ritual, you and at least three others must use an action and spend 1 minute in concentration within short range of the Chaos shard. After the minute elapses, if your concentration hasn't been broken, take 1 Strain and reduce the Chaos shard's rank by 1 to 3. If you reduce it to 0, the shard dissipates and is destroyed. Having more than four people participate reduces the amount of strain. For every three additional people the strain is reduced by 1, with a minimum of 1 strain per minute.

CHAOS SITES

A Chaos site is a location that's been saturated by Chaos so thoroughly that there's a lingering effect. All Chaos shards are surrounded by Chaos sites, but Chaos sites often arise in places where Chaos energy is used in significant amounts, and some Chaos wielders know how to shunt their own Discord off into the surrounding environment, corrupting it.

MAKING A CHAOS SITE

There are a few ways Chaos sites come into being besides being tied to a Chaos shard.

The first is with the Shunt Discord talent from the Chaos Essence tree (see **Chapter 10** of the *Seeker's Guide*).

The second way that Chaos sites can arise is when too much Chaos energy is used in a short period of time at the same spot. In game terms, if a Chaos wielder uses 5 or more Chaos powers within two minutes (i.e., twelve combat

rounds) in the same general location (only count individual uses of Chaos powers, not sustaining Chaos powers), a Chaos site with a rank 1 lower than the highest-ranked Chaos power used is born.

Finally, if a Chaos wielder dies, her Discord bleeds off into the surrounding area. A Chaos site is born with a rank based on the total amount of Discord the Chaos wielder had when she died. See the *Discord to Chaos Site Rank* table below.

EFFECTS OF A CHAOS SITE

Strange things happen at a Chaos site. Mutated animals, trees made of glass, water hovering in the air, items phasing out of existence, and rain falling upward are all possible.

- ☞ A **rank 1 site** only carries minor Chaos effects. Animals in the area develop minor mutations, small objects occasionally move around, change color, or otherwise transform, and what you see can mislead you. Anyone in a rank 1 Chaos site takes 1 bane on all Perception rolls, and every hour you spend in a rank 1 Chaos site causes you to take 1 Discord.
- ☞ In a **rank 2 site**, the effect intensifies. Anyone in a rank 2 Chaos site takes 2 banes on Perception rolls, and every half hour you spend in a rank 2 Chaos site causes you to take 1 Discord.
- ☞ In a **rank 3 site**, space begins to distort. In addition to the effects of a rank 2 site, every time a character moves, they roll 1d6. If the result is odd, treat all terrain as difficult terrain for this move. If the result is even, the creature's Speed is doubled, and the movement is considered to be teleportation.
- ☞ At **rank 4**, reality is no longer reliable. In addition to the effects of a rank 3 site, anyone who takes an action in a rank 4 site is subject to the effects of a Chaos Essence power, chosen by the Keeper. In addition, characters take 1 Discord for every minute they spend here, not every 30 minutes.
- ☞ All bets are off in a **rank 5 site**. As these are largely theoretical you as the Keeper can feel free to incorporate whatever effects seem appropriate in addition to those listed under rank 4. Instead of taking 1 Discord per minute, characters take 1 Discord at the end of each round.

DISCORD TO CHAOS SITE RANK

1-5	No Chaos site
6-10	Rank 1
11-15	Rank 2
16-18	Rank 3
19-20	Rank 4
21+	Rank 5

CHAOS SITE SIZE

1	10 yards
2	30 yards
3	100 yards
4	1 mile
5	5 miles

CHAOS SITE SIZE

The stronger a Chaos site is, the larger it tends to be. Refer to the table at left; distances are measured from the center of the Chaos site in every direction.

DESTROYING A CHAOS SITE

Unlike a Chaos shard, you can't simply destroy a Chaos site. However, with nothing to sustain it, the Chaos energy in the environment will eventually dissipate on its own. For every year that passes without something to sustain it, a Chaos site's rank decreases by 1. At 0, it dissipates entirely, though many of its more permanent effects may still persist.



A rank four Chaos shard tears apart two would-be seeker's of power. Be careful what you wish for.



CHAPTER SIX BESTIARY

Many creatures inhabit the world of *Asunder*, from bloodthirsty demons to rampaging horoks to harmless creatures like salt-deer or vvakirs. This chapter presents a selection of creatures the Seekers are likely to encounter in the game, from animals to Chaos-beasts, and many interesting things in between.

A creature's entry includes both game rules and descriptive material, including the creature's appearance and behavior. It also includes information on how the creature fits into the game world.

An entry can represent a wide range of creatures. The *Animal* entry, for example, can describe riding beasts, wild predators, herd animals, scavengers, and so on. You can also use an existing entry to express a creature you create, simply by altering how you describe it. A creature with natural weapons such as claws or teeth could instead attack with horns, hoofs, or tusks. A creature that spits poison could shoot lightning or spray acid instead. If you want to create something unique, see **Customizing Creatures** later in this chapter for guidelines on modifying creatures by adding traits, talents, attacks, and actions to existing entries.

If a creature knows any languages, they are noted in its entry. Otherwise, it does not speak or understand spoken language.

A STATISTICS BOX

The statistics box is a standard format for presenting a creature's game information. It contains both descriptive material and numerical entries for how to use the creature in the game.

Numerical entries are for a typical example of the creature. You can adjust these numbers to make a variant; see **Customizing Creatures** for more information.

BASIC INFORMATION

The first two lines of the box state basic information about the creature.

Name: The creature's common name. A creature might be known by other names in different areas or by other cultures.

Difficulty: A creature's Difficulty rating represents its overall power. When creating encounters (see **Combat Encounters** in Chapter 1), simply add up the Difficulty rating of all the creatures or groups of creatures present to determine the threat for that encounter.

Size: This line indicates the creature's normal Size.

Frightening: Some creatures have a disturbing appearance, an otherworldly nature, or an uncanny effect on the

NAME

DIFFICULTY

Size # [frightening/horrifying] descriptor (special)

Perception # (+#); special senses

Defense # (armor); Health #

Strength # (+#), Agility # (+#), Intellect # (+#), Will # (+#)

Speed #; special movement traits

Immune List of things by which the creature is unaffected

Defensive Trait Name and description of how it works.

Vulnerability Description of how it works.

Other Trait or Passive Talent Name and description of how it works.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Attack (melee; [reach +#]) +# [with # boon(s)] (damage [plus attack talent])

Attack (range) +# [with # boon(s)] (damage [plus attack talent])

Attack Talent Description of how it works.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Name Description of how it works.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Name Description of how it works.

ESSENCE

Essence (#)

Tree name (#), name (#), name (#)

END OF THE ROUND

Effect Description of what happens.

CREATURE DIFFICULTY

1	Starting	50	Expert
5	Starting	100	Expert
10	Novice	250	Master
25	Novice	500	Master

world around them. This entry is absent if the creature lacks these traits. A creature that does not have the frightening or horrifying trait must make a Will challenge roll when it first sees one or more creatures with this trait. It makes the roll with 1 bane if it can see four or more frightening creatures at once.

On a failure, the creature becomes frightened for 1d3 rounds. Once a creature makes this roll, whether it succeeds or fails, it cannot again be affected by this trait of the creature or creatures it saw until after it completes a rest.

Regardless of the outcome of the challenge roll, creatures that lack the frightening trait make attack rolls against horrifying creatures with 1 bane.

Descriptor: This word tells you to what group the creature belongs to and gives you a sense of how it fits into the game. A creature might be an animal, a monster, or something else. Usually, descriptors do not have special rules. Those that do are summarized in the sidebar here. Special descriptors can apply to any creature and appear in parentheses after the main entry.

- ☞ **Aquatic:** An aquatic creature breathes water and has the swimmer trait (see *Speed*, below). The creature is defenseless when it is on dry land.
- ☞ **Construct:** A construct is not alive. It ignores the effects of deprivation or exposure, as well as any effect that would age it. When it becomes incapacitated, the construct ceases to be a creature and is an object.
- ☞ **Demon:** A demon ignores the effects of deprivation and exposure, as well as any effect that would age it.
- ☞ **Swarm:** A swarm is a group of smaller creatures. It covers all surfaces in its space. If it has the flier trait, it fills its space. When moving, the swarm can move freely through openings large enough to permit the passage of a single member and through the spaces of other creatures. Other creatures can enter the swarm's space and move through it. The swarm's space counts as difficult terrain.

A swarm takes half damage from effects that use an attack roll and double damage from effects that require it to make a challenge roll.

- ☞ **Undead:** Undead are not alive. An undead creature is never affected by deprivation or exposure and ignores any effect that would age it. When it becomes incapacitated, the animating force dissipates, leaving behind dead remains.

Some undead creatures are nearly mindless and are immune to many afflictions that affect thought and awareness. Intelligent, self-directed undead are more susceptible to such effects.

CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTRIBUTES

The next few lines present numbers representing the creature's characteristics and attributes.

Perception: This entry tells you the creature's Perception score and modifier.

Special Senses: If a creature has a special sense, it is noted here. Rules for the most common types of senses follow. Special senses beyond these are described in full in the creature's entry.

- ☞ **Shadowsight:** The creature can see in areas obscured by shadows as if those areas were lit.
- ☞ **Darksight:** The creature can see in areas obscured by shadows and darkness within medium range of it as if those areas were lit. Beyond this distance, the creature treats darkness as shadows and shadows as lit.

- ☞ **Sightless:** The creature relies on senses other than sight to perceive its surroundings and can pinpoint the location of each creature and object within long range of it. Creatures within the area cannot hide from the creature, and it ignores banes imposed by obscurement on rolls to perceive things. A sightless creature is never subject to the blinded affliction.

- ☞ **Truesight:** The creature can see in areas obscured by shadows and darkness as if those areas were lit. The creature can also see invisible creatures and objects, and it automatically recognizes any illusions it sees for what they truly are.

Defense: This entry tells you the creature's Defense score. A creature's Defense score might be higher than its Agility, due to natural armor or intrinsic abilities. Creatures that wear armor or use shields note them parenthetically after the score.

Health: The creature's Health score. When a creature that is not a player character becomes incapacitated, it dies instantly unless you decide otherwise.

Attributes: The scores and modifiers for the creature's four attributes are listed here. If an attribute entry has a "—" instead of a number, the creature does not have that attribute and is immune to anything that would target that attribute or require a roll using it.

Speed: The creature's Speed, measured in yards. If the creature has any special movement traits, they are noted here. If a special movement entry includes a number, the creature uses that number in place of its normal Speed when moving in this way. See **Special Forms of Movement** in Chapter 3 of the *Seeker's Guide* for more information.

- ☞ **Climber:** The creature ignores difficult terrain from climbing.

- ☞ **Flier:** The creature can move by flying.

- ☞ **Swoop:** While flying, the creature's movement never triggers free attacks.

- ☞ **Swimmer:** The creature ignores difficult terrain from swimming.

Immune: If the creature is unaffected by certain damage sources or afflictions, they are listed here. Otherwise, this line is absent.

Defensive Trait: If the creature has any special defenses, they are described here. Otherwise, this line is absent.

Vulnerability: If the creature gains afflictions from or is otherwise harmed by certain environments or situations, they are described here. Otherwise, this line is absent.

Other Trait or Passive Talent: If the creature has any other special trait or a talent that doesn't require it to take an action, it is noted here. Otherwise, this line is absent.

STRAIN AND DISCORD

You never have to track Strain or Discord for creatures you control. You might decide to portray a particular NPC or monster as if they have a high Discord, but you do not have to track Discord for creatures you control, and the effects of that creature's apparent Discord are at your discretion. Creatures that are not human do not have Essence, and so they cannot experience Strain. Human NPCs you control can experience Strain but, again, its effects are at your discretion and you do not have to track exact numbers.

A creature that is immune to Strain or Discord cannot suffer any effects related to those things. Creatures not immune to Strain or Discord can suffer the effects of Strain and Discord, but you never need to track individual numbers.

ATTACK OPTIONS

When the creature uses an action to attack, it may choose from any of the listed options. Unless otherwise noted, the creature attacks one target creature or object and makes its attack roll against the target's Defense.

Reach +#: Most creatures have a reach of 1 or their Size, whichever is larger. If a creature has a longer reach, that is noted here.

Range: Ranged attacks note the range (short, medium, long, or extreme).

Natural Weapon: Natural weapons can be anything a creature uses to hunt or to protect itself, such as teeth, claws, spines, horns, or a tail spike.

ATTACK TALENTS

This entry describes any additional effects on the target from a success on the attack roll using this talent. Certain attack talents take effect only if the creature gets a success on an attack roll total of 20 or higher and exceeds the target's Defense by 5 or more. This is written in abbreviated form as "on attack roll 20+" on the attack line.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Some creatures have talents that grant them special attacks, which are described in this entry. Using a special attack counts as an attack action. If the creature has no special attacks, this entry is absent.

MULTIPLE ATTACKS

Many creatures can make two or more attacks using a single attack action. For example, a creature with Double Attack can use one action to make two attack rolls. Unless otherwise noted, these attacks can be against the same target or different ones.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Some creatures can use special actions, which are described in this entry. Taking a special action uses an action unless otherwise specified. If the creature has no special actions, this entry is absent.

ESSENCE

This category is present only if the creature knows any Essence powers. This is typically only true of humans.

Essence: The creature's Essence score.

Trees and Powers: The powers the creature knows are organized alphabetically by tree. Each tree is set out on a separate line. Each power includes the number of uses available for that power (in parentheses).

END OF THE ROUND

This entry describes anything that happens at the end of the round if the creature is not incapacitated. When combat starts, you resolve any such effects as though a previous round had ended and then proceed with the first round.



CREATURE DESCRIPTIONS

This chapter presents creatures in alphabetical order, followed by entries for typical characters who might be encountered. For an index of all the creatures in the game, presented in order of Difficulty, see the end of this chapter.

ANCIENTS

The beings known as Ancients are quite possibly the only beings alive old enough to remember when the gods walked Asunder, and also willing to talk to humans and other creatures about it. There are a few problems, though: most Ancients sleep quite a lot, they're difficult to rouse, and they often make demands of those who wake them in exchange for whatever information they impart. They're rarely aggressive or violent, but are tremendously powerful when goaded into action. There are only a few Ancients left in the world, so finding one is also difficult.

An Ancient looks like nothing so much as an enormous turtle, its shell covered with plant life and even trees, its eyes tired but sparkling with intelligence. Ancients speak slowly and deliberately, and can speak and understand all languages. They're solitary creatures, never encountered together.

ANCIENT

DIFFICULTY 250

Size 3 or larger monster

Perception 16 (+6); truesight

Defense 16; Health 80

Strength 20 (+10), Agility 6 (-4), Intellect 16 (+6), Will 15 (+5)

Speed 4

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain; blinded, dazed, deafened, diseased, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, poisoned, prone, slowed, stunned

Resilience An Ancient takes half damage from weapons.

Empowered by Essence When an Ancient would take damage from an Essence power, it instead adds the damage as a bonus to its

Health. The bonus lasts for 1 minute. This talent does not protect the Ancient from Chaos powers or the effects of Chaos shards or Chaos sites.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Psychic Shock (range medium) +6 with 3 boons (6d6 and the target is dazed for 1 round)

END OF THE ROUND

Epic Recovery The Ancient removes one affliction from itself.

Psychic Resonance Each dazed creature within short range of the Ancient must make a Will challenge roll or be compelled by the Ancient for 1 minute.

ANIMALS

Asunder is home to a dizzying variety of animals. Some of these are animals familiar to people from our world: deer, birds, fish, snakes, and so on. Others are more alien. Rather than providing stats for every animal in *Asunder*, we've provided generic stats for different sizes of creature, as well as some examples of how to use each stat block.

HUGE ANIMAL

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 3 or larger animal

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 11; Health 80

Strength 16 (+6), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 12 (+2)

Speed 8

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +6 with 1 boon (3d6)

Huge animals from our world include whales, elephants, hippopotamuses, and other large creatures. In *Asunder*, a huge animal could be a difrik, an enormous fish with iridescent scales often hunted for those scales, as well as its flesh; a cala beetle, a large, domesticated insect often used as a beast of burden in New Gaia; or the enormous, carnivorous lizard-bird known as the shriekwing.

LARGE ANIMAL

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 2 animal

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 12; Health 40

Strength 15 (+5), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 12

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +5 with 1 boon (2d6)

In our world, a large animal could be a horse, a tiger, or a great ape. In *Asunder*, large animals include the semi-reptilian primate known as the shkael; the genart, a big, docile herd mammal with a bulbous nose and sweet green milk; and the sailfin, a predatory sea mammal known for being both social and dangerous.

DIRE ANIMALS

Animals in *Asunder* can grow into truly prodigious or dangerous varieties. The stat blocks provided for animals represent normal animals of Asunder; while they can be dangerous, they're generally on the low end of the threat scale. If you want to make a more dangerous version of an animal, consider either using the stat block for the next size up, using the monster stat block for the equivalent size (monster stat blocks are later in this chapter), or using a monster stat block and increasing the animal's size.

MEDIUM ANIMAL

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1 animal

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 14; Health 20
 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 6 (–4), Will 10 (+0)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)

Medium animals on Earth could include a large dog, a stag or doe, or boar or goat. *Asunder's* medium animals include the salt-deer, a spindly, winged creature with both reptilian and insectoid traits that can hover over the ground but not truly fly; the koirra, an intelligent, social insect often kept as a pet; and the forlag, a slow-moving herbivore kept for its meat and the silk it weaves in the summertime.

SMALL ANIMAL

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/2 animal

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 13; Health 5
 Strength 8 (–2), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 6 (–4), Will 8 (–2)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 (1d6 + 1)

On Earth, small animals like cats, dogs, birds of prey, monkeys, and so forth are everywhere. In *Asunder*, a small animal might be a silic, a winged primate well-known as an urban pest and thief of small, unattended objects; a dog-spider, which is a spider big enough to eat a small dog; and the amphibious scourge frog, which is known to lay eggs in the throats of sleeping travelers at night.

TINY ANIMAL

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/4 or smaller animal

Perception 14 (+4)
 Defense 14; Health 1
 Strength 5 (–5), Agility 14 (+4), Intellect 6 (–4), Will 8 (–2)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +4 with 2 banes (1)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Distract One target creature within the animal's reach must make a Will challenge roll. On a failure, the target becomes impaired for 1 round or until it is no longer within the animal's reach.

Tiny animals in our world include rats and mice, rabbits, squirrels, particularly large insects, frogs, birds, and so forth. In *Asunder*, a tiny animal might be a brain rat, a rodent known for its intelligence and its proclivity for eating the brains of the dead; a cadrilla, which is a tiny sea mammal that looks like a cross between a pig and a seal; or a siphia, a type of venomous bird.

ANIMAL SWARM

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1 animal (swarm)

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 13; Health 20
 Strength 8 (–2), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 5 (–5), Will 8 (–2)
 Speed 8

Immune charmed, dazed, deafened, frightened, grabbed, immobilized, prone, slowed, stunned

Multitude A swarm takes half damage from effects that use an attack roll and double damage from effects that require it to make a challenge roll.

Revulsion Creatures that are not swarms are impaired while they remain in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6, or 1d3 if the swarm is injured)

END OF THE ROUND

Swarming Animals Each creature that isn't a swarm and that is in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage and becomes slowed for 1 round.

Tiny animals like birds, insects, or rodents often congregate into swarms. Though many of these animals are individually relatively harmless, in a swarm they can become a significant threat.

ANIMATE PLANT

Asunder's forests and jungles are teeming with predatory animate plants that will happily attack and devour hapless travelers.

Ambulatory Plants: The animate plants provided here have Speed 0, and so cannot move. However, ambulatory plants do exist in *Asunder*; if you wish to make an ambulatory plant, give it a Speed of 6, or 4 for a Size 2 or larger plant.

HUGE ANIMATE PLANT

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 3 or larger plant

Perception 14 (+4); sightless
 Defense 15; Health 100
 Strength 16 (+6), Agility 8 (–2), Intellect 6 (–4), Will 12 (+2)
 Speed 0

Immune gaining Strain or Discord; blinded, charmed, dazed, frightened, grabbed, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the plant's shape

Hardened Bark The plant takes half damage from weapon attacks, but double damage from fire.

Forest Camouflage A animate plant that does not move is indistinguishable from an ordinary plant of its Size.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee reach 2) +6 with 2 boons (4d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Lashing Attack The plant attacks two different targets with its natural weapon, making each attack roll with 1 bane.



LARGE ANIMATE PLANT

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 2 plant

Perception 13 (+3); sightless

Defense 13; Health 60

Strength 15 (+5), Agility 8 (-2), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 12 (+2)

Speed 0

Immune gaining Strain or Discord; blinded, charmed, dazed, frightened, grabbed, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the plant's shape

Hardened Bark The plant takes half damage from weapon attacks, but double damage from fire.

Forest Camouflage A animate plant that does not move is indistinguishable from an ordinary plant of its Size.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +5 with 2 boons (2d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Lashing Attack The plant attacks two different targets with its natural weapon, making each attack roll with 1 bane.

MEDIUM ANIMATE PLANT

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1 plant

Perception 12 (+2); sightless

Defense 13; Health 20

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 8 (-2), Intellect 5 (-5), Will 10 (+0)

Speed 0

Immune gaining Strain or Discord; blinded, charmed, dazed, frightened, grabbed, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the plant's shape

Forest Camouflage A animate plant that does not move is indistinguishable from an ordinary plant of its Size.

Fire Vulnerability The plant takes double damage from fire.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Lashing Attack The plant attacks two different targets with its natural weapon, making each attack roll with 1 bane.

SMALL ANIMATE PLANT

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1/2 plant

Perception 11 (+1); sightless

Defense 13; Health 15

Strength 12 (+2), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 5 (-5), Will 10 (+0)

Speed 0

Immune gaining Strain or Discord; blinded, charmed, dazed, frightened, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the plant's shape

Forest Camouflage A animate plant that does not move is indistinguishable from an ordinary plant of its Size.

Fire Vulnerability The plant takes double damage from fire.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +2 with 1 boon (1d6)

Spit Thorn (short range) +0 with 1 boon (1d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Lashing Attack The plant attacks two different targets with its natural weapon, making each attack roll with 1 bane.

TINY ANIMATE PLANT

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/4 or smaller plant

Perception 11 (+1); sightless

Defense 14; Health 5

Strength 8 (-2), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 4 (-4), Will 10 (+0)

Immune gaining Strain or Discord; blinded, charmed, dazed, frightened, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the plant's shape

Forest Camouflage A animate plant that does not move is indistinguishable from an ordinary plant of its Size.

Fire Vulnerability The plant takes double damage from fire. Speed 0

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +4 with 1 boon (1d3)

Spit Thorn (short range) +2 with 1 boon (1d3)

ASPECT OF GAIA

While Gaia is imprisoned deep within the center of the world, and cannot physically interact with humans, very rarely she manifests as a spirit. These aspects of Gaia appear at the sites of great battles or other scenes of mass carnage. Some believe that her servants can summon her aspect, though nobody has seen it happen. When Seekers encounter an aspect of Gaia, she tends to play the part of mother goddess, hoping to gather more worshipers to do her bidding. If that fails, or if Seekers are hostile toward her, she eradicates them entirely.

ASPECT OF GAIA

DIFFICULTY 500

Size 2 frightening spirit

Perception 16 (+6); truesight

Defense 19; Health 80

Strength 15 (+5), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 16 (+6), Will 16 (+6)

Speed 12; flier

Immune damage from poison or disease; gaining Strain or Discord; asleep, charmed, dazed, diseased, poisoned, sleep, stunned

Insubstantial An aspect of Gaia can move through solid objects and other creatures, takes half damage from weapons, and ignores the effects of moving across difficult terrain.

Eternal When an aspect of Gaia becomes incapacitated, it dissolves into nothingness. Gaia can create another aspect after 24 hours has elapsed; this new aspect has no damage.

Devourer of Essence A creature that suffers an Essence break while within short range of Gaia must make a Will challenge roll with 2 banes. On a success, the creature suffers their Essence break as usual. On a failure, Gaia rips the Essence from the creature's body, killing it and healing 2d6 damage.

Essence User An aspect of Gaia can call upon the Essence Gaia has consumed to use Essence powers. When she uses a Chaos power, she can push that power a number of times equal to her Essence score. When she uses powers from other Essence trees, she simulates taking an amount of Strain up to her Essence score. Gaia never actually takes Strain or Discord as the result of amplifying powers she uses. She cannot, however, simulate prerequisites for powers, such as having a bondmate or being part of a group mind.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Enervate (medium range) +6 with 3 boons (4d6, plus 1 Strain)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Double Attack The aspect attacks twice with enervate.

Twist Essence The aspect uses an action to make a Will attack roll against the Strength of one target creature it can see within medium range of it. On a success, the target becomes impaired for 1 minute. If it is already impaired, it takes 1d3 Strain.

Borrow Essence The aspect uses an action or triggered action on its turn to make a Will attack roll against the Will of one target creature it can see within medium range of it. On a success, the creature loses one use of a power it knows, and the aspect of Gaia gains a use of that power.

ESSENCE

Power 5

Chaos *induce mutation* (6), *distort time* (3), *transform creature* (2), *unmake* (1)

Plant Control *reclaimed ground* (3), *thirsty vines* (2), *grasping branches* (2), *hostile ground* (2)

END OF THE ROUND

Epic Recovery The aspect of Gaia removes one affliction from itself.

Epic Adversary Roll 1d3 + 1 to determine how many actions the aspect of Gaia can use during the next round. The aspect can use these actions during any turn and can do so before its enemies act. Each time the aspect uses an action, it can move up to its Speed before or after the action.

BLIGHT CHAMPION

While the bulk of the Green Army has a bare hint of sentience and a basic ability to operate independently and pose a threat, blight champions possess skills beyond those of their lesser kin. A blight champion is the animated corpse of a veteran warrior. What's more, it retains many of its memories and skills, is able to operate independently, complete complex tasks, and even understand language and tactics. Though blight champions cannot speak, they are much more intelligent than they initially look.

BLIGHT CHAMPION

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1/2 or 1 frightening undead

Perception 9 (-1)

Defense 17 (heavy armor, shield); **Health** 22

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 9 (-1), **Will** 11 (+1)

Speed 8

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Greatsword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)

BLIGHT STALKER

Blight stalkers are twisted things, their bodies warped and modified when they're created, turning them into monstrous creatures capable of great stealth and cunning. They scuttle about on walls and ceilings, hide in the underbrush, and spring out to eviscerate their prey with their deadly claws.

BLIGHT STALKER

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1/2 or 1 frightening undead

Perception 11 (+1)

Defense 12; **Health** 18

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 11 (+1), **Will** 9 (-1)

Speed 10; climber

Creeper The blight stalker gets 1 boon on any challenge rolls made to hide or move silently.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Claws (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6)

BLIGHT WALKER

The least powerful and most numerous of the Green Army, blight walkers are animated corpses. They retain some of the training and knowledge they had in life, though not enough to pass for human, hold a conversation, or perform complex tasks. It is sufficient to allow them to be effective in combat, though. Blight walkers are often surrounded by what appears to be a mist; this is actually a cloud of spores that animates corpses in its vicinity, calling them to serve Gaia.

GREATER BLIGHT WALKER

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1/2 or 1 frightening undead

Perception 8 (-2)

Defense 14 (medium armor), **Health** 20

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 8 (-2), **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 10

Immune damage from cold, disease, or poison; gaining Strain; asleep, blinded, charmed, dazed, deafened, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned, stunned.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Axe (melee) +2 with 1 boon (1d6+1)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Double Strike The blight walker attacks two different creatures with its bone axes.

LESSER BLIGHT WALKER

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/2 or 1 frightening undead

Perception 8 (-2)

Defense 13 (medium armor), **Health** 10

Strength 10 (+0), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 8 (-2), **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 6

Immune damage from cold, disease, or poison; gaining Strain; asleep, blinded, charmed, dazed, deafened, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned, stunned.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Axe (melee) +0 (1d6+1)

CARNITAUR

Carnitaurs are fearsome predators that roam the prairies and grasslands of Pacari. These huge, reptilian beasts walk on four thick, clawed legs, and have vaguely humanoid torsos complete with arms sporting opposable

thumbs. Their heads are large, horned, and dominated by massive mouths full of jagged fangs, and their four eyes can see heat as well as they can see light. It's unknown whether carnitaurs have language or society; they do seem to be able to communicate, and there does appear to be a social pecking order of sorts, but they attack and devour anyone who tries to study or communicate with them. They've been known to use tools and weapons, but not to make them; they take what they use from the corpses of their victims.

CARNITAUR PACK LEADER**DIFFICULTY 250***Size 3 frightening monster*

Perception 15 (+5); darksight

Defense 18; Health 150

Strength 16 (+6), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 7 (-3), Will 12 (+2)

Speed 14

ATTACK OPTIONS

Massive Axe (melee) +6 with 2 boons (3d6)

Jaws (melee) +6 with 2 boons (2d6 + 1)

Claw (melee) +6 with 2 boons (1d6+2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS**Rend** The carnitaur attacks twice with its claws and once with its jaws.**Sweeping Charge** The carnitaur moves up to its Speed, attacking every enemy it can reach during the charge with its massive axe, though it can only attack each target once. A target that takes damage from this attack must make a Strength challenge roll or be knocked prone. Once the carnitaur uses this talent, it must wait 1 round before using it again.**BULL CARNITAUR****DIFFICULTY 50***Size 2 frightening monster*

Perception 13 (+3); darksight

Defense 15; Health 55

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 7 (-3),

Will 10 (+0)

Speed 12

ATTACK OPTIONS

Tree-Trunk Club (melee) +3 with 1 boon (2d6)

Horns (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)

Claw (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS**Rend** The carnitaur attacks twice with its claws and once with its horns.**Gore** The carnitaur moves up to its Speed, moving into the space of a single creature at the end of its movement and attacking that creature with its horns. A target that takes damage from this attack must make a Strength challenge with 2 banes or be flung 2d6 yards, taking falling damage as appropriate and falling prone at the end of the movement. If the target's movement is interrupted by a solid object, it takes 1d6 extra damage. If its movement is interrupted by another creature, that creature can make an Agility challenge roll to avoid being struck, allowing the target to continue moving. Failing this challenge roll means that the movement stops, extra damage is dealt as if the target had hit a solid object, and the creature struck takes half the falling damage the target took, plus the extra 1d6 damage. Once the carnitaur uses this talent, it must wait 1 round before using it again.**CARNITAUR****DIFFICULTY 25***Size 2 frightening monster*

Perception 13 (+3); darksight

Defense 14; Health 40

Strength 12 (+2), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 7 (-3), Will 10 (+0)

Speed 12

ATTACK OPTIONS

Jaws (melee) +2 (1d6 + 2)

Claw (melee) +2 (1d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS**Rend** The carnitaur attacks twice with its claws and once with its jaws.

Carnitaurs are said to be evil, but in truth, the gods made them to keep population down.

ASPECTS OF CHAOS

1	Gibbering The Chaos beast constantly gibbers madly; any rolls made to maintain concentration within short range of it suffer 1 bane.
2	Conversationalist The Chaos beast speaks in a clear, eloquent voice, engaging the Seekers in conversation even while it attacks them.
3	Many-Limbed Covered in tentacles and limbs, the Chaos beast can use its Chaos burst without suffering any banes on its attacks.
4	Faces of the Dead Faces of people the Seekers once knew appear in the beast's mass, calling out to them.
5	Out of Phase The Chaos beast is out of phase with reality; all of its movement is considered teleportation.
6	Death Siphon Whenever a creature becomes incapacitated within short range of the Chaos beast, it can use a triggered action to kill that creature and gain a +2d6 bonus to Health.
7	Discordant Aura Anyone who ends their turn adjacent to the Chaos beast gains 1 Discord.
8	Clone At the beginning of the fight, the Chaos beast duplicates itself, creating another Chaos beast of the same size. These two Chaos beasts each get their own turn and actions, but damage dealt to one of them is dealt to both of them.
9	Radiant The Chaos beast sheds bright light; any creature that ends its turn adjacent to the Chaos beast is impaired for as long as they remain there; however, all ranged attacks against the Chaos beast get 1 boon.
10	Formless The Chaos beast is able to squeeze into spaces 6 inches wide, and takes half damage from weapon attacks. However, its own attacks also deal half damage.
11	Rancid A foul smell fills the air within short range of the Chaos beast. Anyone within this range is impaired.
12	Tempter The Chaos beast does not attack the Seekers unless attacked. Instead, it attempts to lead Seekers to the nearest Chaos shard so that they can use it to become Chaos-wielders. The Chaos beast can speak, but its voice is terrible to hear.
13	Volatile The Chaos beast has half the usual Health score. However, it explodes when it is incapacitated; all creatures within 6 yards must succeed on an Agility challenge roll or take 3d6 damage and 1d3 Discord.
14	Contains Wealth When the Chaos beast is incapacitated, it transforms into a pile of gems. The pile contains 10d6 slivers, 3d6 pearls, and 1d6 sapphires.
15	Contains False Wealth When the Chaos beast is incapacitated, it transforms into a pile of gems. Any creature who touches the gems takes 1d3 Discord and is teleported 1 mile east. Such creatures are impaired for 1 minute. The gems dissolve after 1 hour.
16	Warps Space Weirdly When the Chaos beast's Warp Space ability triggers, it affects the last creature the Chaos beast attacked instead of the Chaos beast itself.
17	Gives a Warning When the Seekers first encounter the Chaos beast, it utters a warning about an event in the near future. Creatures that take actions based on that warning receive 1 boon on such actions for the next day. Once it has uttered the warning, it attacks.
18	Can Fly The Chaos beast has the flier (swoop) trait.
19	Bleeds Acid Whenever a creature successfully deals melee damage to the Chaos beast, that creature must succeed on an Agility challenge roll or take 1d6 damage.
20	Has Two Traits Roll twice on this table, ignoring further results of 20.

CHAOS BEAST

Chaos beasts are manifestations of pure Chaos energy, reality run amok. They can take nearly any shape and size but, thankfully, they're mostly found at Chaos sites and rarely venture outside of them.

Aspect of Chaos: Every Chaos beast has an aspect of Chaos, a randomly generated trait or ability that reflects its connection to the primal force of Chaos. Roll on the Aspects of Chaos table at left.

HUGE CHAOS BEAST

DIFFICULTY 500

Size 3 or larger frightening monster

Perception 15 (+5); truesight

Defense 20; Health 200

Strength 19 (+9), Agility 15 (+5), Intellect 14 (+4), Will 18 (+8)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 2 banes on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Rend (melee or short range) +9 with 3 boons (6d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast attacks each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.

Discordant Womb The Chaos beast consumes one target defenseless creature that is Size 2 or smaller, taking it into its own bulk. The Chaos beast becomes stunned for 1 round. When this affliction ends, it takes an action to vomit up a Chaos beast of the same Size as the creature it consumed.

END OF THE ROUND

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 2d6 yards in a random direction.

LARGE CHAOS BEAST

DIFFICULTY 250

Size 2 or 3 frightening monster

Perception 15 (+5); truesight

Defense 19; Health 140

Strength 18 (+8), Agility 14 (+4), Intellect 13 (+3), Will 17 (+7)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 2 banes on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Rend (melee or short range) +8 with 3 boons (4d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast attacks each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.



A huge, many-limbed Chaos beast guards a Chaos shard.

Discordant Womb The Chaos beast consumes one target defenseless creature that is Size 1 or smaller, taking it into its own bulk. The Chaos beast becomes stunned for 1 round. When this affliction ends, it takes an action to vomit up a Chaos beast of the same Size as the creature it consumed.

END OF THE ROUND

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 2d6 yards in a random direction.

MEDIUM CHAOS BEAST

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 1 frightening monster

Perception 14 (+4); truesight

Defense 18; **Health** 60

Strength 17 (+7), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 16 (+6)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 1 bane on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Rend (melee or short range) +7 with 2 boons (3d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast makes an attack against each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.

Discordant Womb The Chaos beast consumes one target defenseless creature that is Size 1/2 or smaller, taking it into its own bulk. The Chaos beast becomes stunned for 1 round. When this affliction ends, it takes an action to vomit up a Chaos beast of the same Size as the creature it consumed.

END OF THE ROUND

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 1d6 yards in a random direction.

SMALL CHAOS BEAST

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1/2 frightening monster

Perception 13 (+3); truesight

Defense 17; **Health** 20

Strength 16 (+6), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 11 (+1), **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 1 bane on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Rend (melee or short range) +6 with 2 boons (2d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast makes an attack against each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.

END OF THE ROUND

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 1d6 yards in a random direction.

TINY CHAOS BEAST

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1/2 or smaller frightening monster

Perception 12 (+2); truesight

Defense 16; **Health** 10

Strength 15 (+5), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 1 bane on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Rend (melee or short range) +5 with 1 boon (1d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast makes an attack against each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.

END OF THE ROUND

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 1d6 yards in a random direction.

CONSTRUCT

A construct is any creature that is not alive, that is created and animated by some other force. Some constructs are mechanical in nature, others are powered by Essence, and some are ancient remnants of long-dead cultures that present-day people don't understand. Most have a purpose, but that purpose isn't always immediately obvious to those encountering them on their adventures.

Appendage: Constructs attack with appendages. Some might be massive slabs of rock or wood, while others might be carved to look like fists, claws, axes, or other things. No matter what a construct's appendage looks like, it behaves the same way in the game.

HUGE CONSTRUCT

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 3 or larger construct

Perception 5 (−5); darksight

Defense 13; **Health** 100

Strength 17 (+7), **Agility** 7 (−3), **Intellect** 5 (−5), **Will** 11 (+1)

Speed 8

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; asleep, charmed, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned

ATTACK OPTIONS

Appendage (melee) +7 (3d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Double Attack The construct attacks twice with its appendage.

LARGE CONSTRUCT**DIFFICULTY 50****Size 2 construct**

Perception 5 (–5); darksight

Defense 13; Health 70

Strength 16 (+6), Agility 8 (–2), Intellect 5 (–5), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 10

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; asleep, charmed, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned**ATTACK OPTIONS**

Appendage (melee) +6 (2d6 + 1)

SPECIAL ATTACKS**Double Attack** The construct attacks twice with its appendage.**MEDIUM CONSTRUCT****DIFFICULTY 10****Size 1 construct**

Perception 5 (–5); darksight

Defense 13; Health 25

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 9 (–1), Intellect 5 (–5), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 10

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; asleep, charmed, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned**ATTACK OPTIONS**

Appendage (melee) +3 (2d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS**Double Attack** The construct attacks twice with its appendage.**SMALL CONSTRUCT****DIFFICULTY 5****Size 1/2 or smaller construct**

Perception 5 (–5); darksight

Defense 13; Health 8

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 5 (–5), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 10

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; asleep, charmed, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned**ATTACK OPTIONS**

Appendage (melee) +3 (1d6)

CRYSTAL-WASP SWARM

Found most commonly in Sky City's crystal mines, crystal-wasps are large, vicious insects covered in small shards of crystal. They harvest crystal within the mines and use them to build hives, and they jealously and violently protect their territory when it is invaded.

CRYSTAL-WASP SWARM**DIFFICULTY 10****Size 1 insect (swarm)**

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 15; Health 25

Strength 8 (–2), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 5 (–5), Will 8 (–2)

Speed 10; climber, flier

Immune charmed, dazed, deafened, frightened, grabbed, immobilized, prone, slowed, stunned

Multitude A swarm takes half damage from effects that use an attack roll and double damage from effects that require it to make a challenge roll.

Revulsion Creatures that are not swarms are impaired while they remain in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Stingers (melee) +3 with 1 boon (2d6, or 1d6 if the swarm is injured, plus Poison)

Poison The target must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If the target is already poisoned, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Hum As an action or a triggered action on its turn, a crystal wasp swarm can generate a droning hum that's amplified by the crystal on the wasps' bodies. All creatures that are not crystal-wasp swarms within short range must make a Will challenge roll or become impaired for 1 round. A creature that is already impaired is also fatigued. A creature that is already fatigued takes a cumulative –1d6 penalty to Health.

END OF THE ROUND

Swarming Insects Each creature that isn't a swarm and that is in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage and becomes slowed for 1 round.

DAISHYA

Daishya are small, winged humanoids common in New Gaia. Their wings resemble those of dragonflies, and a daishya itself looks like a small human child except only a few inches tall. While a daishya looks mostly human at first glance, what initially appears to be skin is actually a firm but pliable chitin, and a daishya's eyes are multifaceted like an insect's. Daishya can speak and often learn bits and pieces of human languages, but it's unknown if they have a society or language of their own. They tend to play pranks on those who wander the woods and jungles.

DAISHYA**DIFFICULTY 5****Size 1/4 insect**

Perception 15 (+5); shadowsight

Defense 15; Health 5

Strength 6 (–4), Agility 15 (+5), Intellect 13 (+3), Will 9 (–1)

Speed 10; flier

Dart Weapon attack rolls made against a daishya are made with 1 bane.**ATTACK OPTIONS**

Bite (melee) +5 with 1 boon (1 plus Poison)

Poison The target must make a Strength challenge roll or be poisoned for 1 minute. A creature that is already poisoned takes 1d6 damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Prank A daishya can use an action to force a creature within short range to make an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane. A creature that fails this challenge roll suffers an affliction from the following list, chosen by the daishya: blinded for 1 round, frightened for 1 round, impaired for 1 round, or prone.

DEMON

Spewing up from deep within the planet, demons seek to wipe humanity from the face of Asunder. Violent and cruel, demons are also clever, and their immortality makes them able to play the long game to reach their goals. Demons are formidable combatants, but they are also consummate tricksters and tempters, offering power in exchange for service. The folk of the Black Isle know enough about demons to have devoted much of their society to destroying these creatures.

A typical demon stands a foot or two taller than a human. It is well-muscled and covered in a thick, bark-like chitin, with elongated arms tipped with razor-sharp claws. Their hides are incredibly tough, and also covered with spines and razors that make them difficult to deal with in close quarters. Their faces are horned and dominated by an enormous, toothy maw. When a demon slays a human, it can consume that human's Essence, rejuvenating itself.

DEMONIC BLESSINGS

Demons may be cruel, violent, and sadistic, but they're also prone to making bargains. A demon has within its power to offer a great many things, from material goods to information to greater strength or increased speed. Generally speaking, a demon can offer:

- ☞ Any piece of gear with a cost in sapphires equal to up to twice its difficulty. This includes living gear.
- ☞ Any information the Seekers might be after, within reason.
- ☞ Aid in a future battle.
- ☞ A permanent +1 bonus to a single attribute.
- ☞ A permanent +3 to a single characteristic.
- ☞ The effects of a rest, granted immediately.
- ☞ Anything else of equivalent power or value.

However, these blessings are never free or even cheap. The demon will exact a service from the bargainer in payment, and that price will always serve the demon's ends, usually to the detriment of the bargainer or those she cares about. Murder, sabotage, wholesale destruction, or even starting a war are all within the scope of a demon's bargain.

If a Seeker accepts a demon's bargain, that Seeker gains a demonic mark until their debt is paid off. This is a physical mark somewhere on their body, usually hidden from plain view. While the Seeker has a demonic mark, she has a new Fatal Flaw: "I will pay off my debt to the demon, by any means necessary." In addition, for the purposes of rules that target creatures under demonic influence, she counts as such. Finally, the demonic mark makes her vulnerable to the attacks of demons; she takes maximum damage from any attack she suffers from a demon.

Demons are capable of speaking any tongue they wish.

GREATER DEMON

DIFFICULTY 500

Size 1 or 2 frightening demon

Perception 15 (+5); truesight

Defense 20; Health 200

Strength 19 (+9), Agility 15 (+5), Intellect 14 (+4), Will 18 (+8)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, stunned

Jagged Hide A demon's hide allows it to take half damage from weapon attacks. In addition, any creature grappling with a demon takes 4d6 damage on each turn in which it initiates or maintains the grapple.

Essence Vulnerability A demon takes full damage from any attack made by someone under the effects of a Battle Meditation power.

Demonic Shadows Lit areas out to 8 yards around the demon become shadows.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Claws (melee) +9 with 3 boons (6d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Frenzied Attack The demon attacks two different targets with its claws, making each attack roll with 1 bane.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Consume Essence The demon consumes the Essence of one defenseless human it can reach. This instantly kills the target, withering its body. The demon heals 6d6 damage and gains a single use of one Essence power the target possessed, if any.

LESSER DEMON

DIFFICULTY 250

Size 1 or 2 frightening demon

Perception 15 (+5); truesight

Defense 19; Health 140

Strength 18 (+8), Agility 14 (+4), Intellect 13 (+3), Will 17 (+7)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, stunned

Jagged Hide A demon's hide allows it to take half damage from weapon attacks. In addition, any creature grappling with a demon takes 2d6 damage on each turn in which it initiates or maintains the grapple.

Essence Vulnerability A demon takes full damage from any attack made by someone under the effects of a Battle Meditation power.

Demonic Shadows Lit areas out to 5 yards around the demon become shadows.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Claws (melee) +8 with 3 boons (4d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Frenzied Attack The demon attacks two different targets with its claws, making each attack roll with 1 bane.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Consume Essence The demon consumes the Essence of one defenseless human it can reach. This instantly kills the target, withering its body. The demon heals 4d6 damage and gains a single use of one Essence power the target possessed, if any.

MINOR DEMON**DIFFICULTY 100***Size 1 frightening demon***Perception** 14 (+4); **sightless****Defense** 18; **Health** 60**Strength** 17 (+7), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 16 (+6)**Speed** 18**Immune** damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, stunned**Jagged Hide** A demon's hide allows it to take half damage from weapon attacks. In addition, any creature grappling with a demon takes 1d6 damage on each turn in which it initiates or maintains the grapple.**Essence Vulnerability** A demon takes full damage from any attack made by someone under the effects of a Battle Meditation power.**Demonic Shadows** Lit areas out to 2 yards around the demon become shadows.**ATTACK OPTIONS****Claws** (melee) +7 with 2 boons (3d6)**SPECIAL ATTACKS****Frenzied Attack** The demon attacks two different targets with its claws, making each attack roll with 1 bane.**SPECIAL ACTIONS****Consume Essence** The demon consumes the Essence of one defenseless human it can reach. This instantly kills the target, withering its body. The demon heals 2d6 damage and gains a single use of one Essence power the target possessed, if any.

DEVOURER

Few people have even heard the rumors of the devourers' existence, and most of those believe they're simply an old legend told to frighten children. Those who have encountered them and survived—a very small number indeed—know the truth: a devourer is one of the most terrifying and dangerous creatures a human being can face. A devourer stands taller than a human, usually around seven or eight feet tall, but looks human...mostly. The traits that make them stand apart are striking: blackened claws on their hands, serrated fangs in their mouths, and great, black, feathered wings springing from their backs.

Ancient legend tells that the devourers were originally created as a race of servants and messengers for the gods, creatures that would do the gods' bidding and communicate the gods' desires to their other creations. When humanity was created and imbued with the divine spark of Essence, one god feared that the humans would overrun the world, consuming its natural resources and leaving it a barren ruin. To keep humanity in check, he twisted the gods' servants and gave them predatory instincts and a driving need to feed upon humanity. To keep the newly-created devourers from overrunning the world themselves, the rogue god stripped away their ability to reproduce, but made them immortal. There will always be devourers, for when one is killed, it is reborn again later, elsewhere in the world. There are, however, a very small number of these creatures, and that number will never increase.

Devourers are intelligent, capable of carrying on conversations, reasoning, hatching complex plots, and even blending in with human society when they need to. Within every devourer burns the desire to feast on human flesh and blood, though, and that desire is overpowering in its intensity. While a devourer may be able to pose as a human for a time, eventually the urge to feed becomes too strong and the devourer descends into bloodshed and carnage.

Devourers speak all the languages of Asunder.

DEVOURER**DIFFICULTY 250***Size 1 frightening monster***Perception** 13 (+3); **truesight****Defense** 18; **Health** 100**Strength** 16 (+6), **Agility** 14 (+4), **Intellect** 15 (+5), **Will** 10 (+0)**Speed** 12; **flier** (swoop)**Immune** damage from disease and poison; gaining Strain or Discord; diseased, frightened, poisoned, sleep**Essence Defense** A devourer takes half damage from powers and makes any challenge roll to resist a power with 1 boon. A creature attacking the devourer with a power makes the attack roll with 1 bane.**Reincarnation** When a devourer is incapacitated, its body dissolves into bubbling black slime. It is reborn 24 hours later somewhere else in the world. Nothing can stop this from happening, and the devourer retains memories of all events leading up to its death.

The devourer's are a perversion of the gods, made to feast on flesh. Immortal, and something never to be released unto the world. But their cage has just been opened.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Vicious Claws (melee) +6 with 2 boons (4d6 + 2)

Bite (melee) +6 with 2 boons (3d6+2 damage plus Poison)

Poison A creature affected by devourer poison must make a Strength challenge roll or take 2d6 extra damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. A creature that is already poisoned becomes slowed for 1 round. A creature that is already slowed becomes immobilized for 1 round. A creature that is already immobilized takes 2d6 extra damage.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Savage The devourer attacks a single creature twice with its vicious claws; each attack is made with 1 bane. If the devourer hits with both attacks, it automatically hits the same target with bite, and the target is grabbed.

Chew If the devourer starts its turn with a creature grabbed, it can use its action to automatically hit with a bite attack.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Mimic A devourer can alter its physical form, folding its wings in, retracting its claws, and shrinking itself slightly in order to better imitate a human. While in this form, the devourer will be recognized as human, but any attack or challenge rolls made to do so are made with 2 banes.

Devour If a devourer starts its turn within reach of a defenseless human, it uses its action to devour the target. Doing so kills the target and restores 2d6 hit points to the devourer. It's also a messy, horrifying sight; any humans who witness the act must make a Will challenge roll or be frightened for 1 minute.

FERAL SHIP

Occasionally, a living ship goes feral. Sometimes this happens when its crew is killed off and it's left to fend for itself. Other times a ship escapes while it's being raised and goes feral out in the wild sea. Occasionally, a ship is just *bad* and kills its crew, living a life of wild carnage ever after. Whatever the reason, feral ships are sometimes encountered out on the seas, and they're extraordinarily dangerous.

FERAL SHIP

DIFFICULTY 250

Size 3 or 4 monster (aquatic)

Perception 14 (+4)

Defense 12; Health 300

Strength 20 (+10); Agility 10 (+0); Intellect 9 (-1); Will 12 (+2)

Speed 16; swimmer

Immune damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Strain; poisoned and prone

Durable Carapace A feral ship takes half damage from weapons.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Ram (reach 1) +10 with 3 boons (10d6 damage; the feral ship takes half the amount of damage dealt if its target is its size or smaller, or the full amount if the target is larger. The ship must move at least half its Speed before making this attack)

Bite (reach 1) +10 with 3 boons (5d6 damage; ships take full damage from this attack)

Tentacle Lash (reach 4) +0 with 3 boons (3d6 damage and the target is grabbed; a feral ship can grab up to 3 creatures smaller than it at once)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Lashing Flurry The feral ship attacks three times with its tentacle lashes and once with its bite.

Ramming Bite The feral ship attacks with its ram; if it hits, it automatically hits the same target with its bite.

Chew As a triggered action on its turn, the feral ship automatically hits all creatures in its mouth with its bite.

END OF THE ROUND

Devour The feral ship makes a Strength attack against the Strength of one creature it's grabbing, as long as that creature is no larger than Size 2. On a success, it throws the creature into its mouth. A creature can escape the feral ship's mouth with a Strength attack against the feral ship's Strength. The feral ship can hold any number of creatures in its mouth at a time, as long as the sum their Sizes does not equal more than 2. A creature incapacitated while in the feral ship's mouth is swallowed and instantly killed.

KALEA SNAKE

Known for their connection to Essence, kalea snakes are hunted the world over for their venom which, when distilled, strengthens the Essence of the imbiber. Even undistilled kalea venom has Essence-related properties, as it can strain the Essence of humans injected with it, and kalea snakes have even been known to mimic the Essence powers of their hunters. These snakes are even resistant to Essence powers used on them, making them tricky to hunt and kill.

A kalea snake is usually between two and five yards long, with leathery wings that it can unfold, allowing it to fly. Its scales can vary in color from jet black to iridescent purple. They don't typically attack humans, opting to instead avoid them, but they can be dangerous when cornered.

KALEA SNAKE

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1 or 2 animal

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 15; Health 35

Strength 12 (+2), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 8 (flier)

Essence Resistance All attacks against kalea snakes made with Essence powers suffer 1 bane, and they make all challenge rolls to resist Essence powers with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bite (melee) +3 with 1 boon (2d6 and the creature must make a Strength challenge roll or suffer the effects of kalea venom)

Kalea Venom A creature injected with kalea venom (or that consumes undistilled kalea venom) takes 2d6 damage and is poisoned for 1 hour. A creature that is already poisoned takes 1 Strain.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Mimic A kalea snake that observes a creature using an Essence power with a rank of 2 or lower can make a Will challenge roll as a triggered action. On a success, the snake gets 1 use of that power. Note that, if the power has prerequisites (such as being under the effect of another power or having a bondmate), this talent does not emulate those requirements.

HAUNT

Haunts are hulking plant creatures that spend most of their time buried in the ground. They bond with the surrounding flora, gaining the ability to animate it and cause it to obey their whims. When threatened, they first use the plant life around them to defend themselves; if enemies draw too near, they erupt from the ground and try to pound the threat into submission with their enormous limbs.

Haunts are territorial, malevolent, and capricious. Their name comes from the fact that areas they control are often seen as haunted by evil spirits by the locals. Haunts understand language and can be reasoned and bargained with...but they're not easy to engage in conversation as they cannot speak themselves, and trying to convince one not to kill you and feed you to the soil is challenging at best.

HAUNT

DIFFICULTY 250

Size 3 frightening plant

Perception 15 (+5); **shadowsight**

Defense 18; **Health** 110

Strength 19 (+9), **Agility** 8 (-2), **Intellect** 8 (-2), **Will** 13 (+3)

Speed 6

Immune asleep, blinded, dazed, fatigued, frightened, stunned; a living haunt cannot be moved against its will or knocked prone while it stands on the ground.

Fire Vulnerability A haunt takes double damage from fire.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Limb (melee reach 1) +9 with 3 boons (4d6)

Nearby Plant (long range) +3 with 2 boons (4d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Double Attack The haunt attacks twice with its limb.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Return to the Soil The haunt sinks into the ground, becoming indistinguishable from a small hill. While the haunt is in this state, it is sightless and can perceive everything within 1 mile of its location, provided significant plant life is present. If it spends 1 hour in the soil like this, it heals all damage and recovers from all afflictions.

Haunt the Forest While the haunt is under the effects of Return to the Soil, it can use an action to awaken a target tree or plant within its area of influence (1 mile); the target becomes a compelled monster of its Size until the haunt is incapacitated or exits the soil. The haunt can use this ability as many times as it likes, but it can only have three awakened plants active at once.

HOROK

Horoks are huge, omnivorous beasts native to the mainland. Covered in bony protrusions and spikes, horoks are frighteningly aggressive and territorial mountains of muscle, and are nearly impossible to train. A horok will eat virtually anything that crosses its path, though it can also subsist on plant matter when meat is unavailable. A horok's head and neck are covered with frills and spikes, making for a powerful deterrent to other predators, and its large eyes give it both excellent peripheral vision and depth perception. While they are often solitary creatures, horoks do sometimes congregate

in herds; a stampeding herd of horoks can raze entire villages to the ground in minutes.

The Bone Army uses horoks as a way to test new recruits. In order to become a full initiate of the Bone Army, a recruit must hunt and kill a horok, then make weapons and armor out of its bones, alone. Needless to say, this is not an easy task and many don't survive it.

HOROK

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 3 animal

Perception 14 (+4); **shadowsight**

Defense 12; **Health** 65

Strength 16 (+6), **Agility** 8 (-2), **Intellect** 5 (-5), **Will** 12 (+2)

Speed 12

Covered in Spikes Any creature that attacks the horok with a weapon with reach 1 or lower takes 1d6 damage.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Gore (melee) +6 (2d6 + 1, or 2d6 + 13 on attack roll 20+)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Trample The horok moves at least half its Speed and makes a Gore attack. On a success, the target must make an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes or take 4d6 extra damage and be knocked prone. If the attacked creature's Agility roll is a success, the creature takes only 2d6 extra damage and is not knocked prone.

Most on the path to joining the Bone Army run at the sight of a horok beast. Only one crazy enough to meet death stays to fight. Imagine an army made of people like that.



HOWLBEAST

Those in isolated villages on the mainland or small communities on Pacari speak in hushed whispers of the howlbeasts. They come on moonless nights, their maddening baying piercing the darkness, echoing weirdly off of the surrounding terrain, seeming to come from every direction at once. They attack in packs, striking small communities and taking those they find, carrying them off to be eaten or (as folklore tells) turned into more howlbeasts.

Howlbeasts are slightly shorter than the average human, but incredibly fast and strong for their size. They're covered in thick brown and gray fur, with wicked talons on their legs and vicious fangs in their mouths. A single howlbeast is a match for most people, but they often attack in packs of ten or more, striking quickly with only their howls as warning.

HOWLBEAST

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1 frightening monster

Perception 13 (+3); darksight

Defense 13; Health 35

Strength 14 (+4), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 13 (+3)

Speed 12

Nocturnal A howlbeast is impaired while in an area lit by sunlight.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Claws (melee) +3 with 3 boons (2d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Pack Takedown When an ally attacks a creature the howlbeast can reach, the howlbeast can use a triggered action to attack that creature with its claws.

HUNTING MASS

Properly disposing of unwanted living gear usually involves incineration, but it's common for living gear to be disposed of improperly. In smaller settlements, this isn't usually a problem; the piece of gear starves and dies shortly after being discarded. However, in big cities—like Sky City or the city-states of the mainland—it's not unusual for a particular midden pile to be used as a dumping ground for unwanted living gear. When this happens, sometimes those various pieces of living gear band together, becoming a single collective organism. These organisms—called “hunting masses”—roam the streets at night, waylaying those wandering alone, attacking them, and draining them of all their blood and Essence.

HUNTING MASS

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 2 frightening monster

Perception 10 (+0); darksight

Defense 10; Health 55

Strength 14 (+4), Agility 8 (−2), Intellect 5 (−5), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 6

Immune gaining Strain; asleep, charmed, dazed, fatigued, stunned; any effect that would change the hunting mass's shape

ATTACK OPTIONS

Tendril (melee reach 2) +4 with 1 boon (1d6 plus Drag)

Drag The hunting mass moves the target 1d6 yards toward itself.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Drain As an action or a triggered action on its turn, the hunting mass can make a Strength attack against the Strength of a creature that it has grabbed and is also adjacent to itself. On a success, the target takes a −1d6 penalty to Health and takes 1 Strain. A creature incapacitated by this attack is killed, becoming an empty, dry husk.

END OF THE ROUND

Many Minds The hunting mass rolls 1d3 to determine how many actions it can take on its next turn. Regardless of how many actions it can take, it can only move once, and only if it takes a slow turn. It still gets only one triggered action each round.

INSECT

Insects are common in Asunder and come in a variety of shapes and sizes. They've been known to grow to prodigious size in New Gaia, especially around insect weavers, who encourage this growth. You can also use these stat blocks to represent arachnids.

🕸 **Flying Insects:** If you want your insect to be able to fly, give it the flier trait and increase its difficulty by one step.

🕸 **Poisonous Insects:** If you want your insect to be poisonous, then its natural weapon also inflicts Poison, as below. Increase its difficulty by one step.

🕸 **Poison:** The target must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If the target is already poisoned, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

🕸 **Web-Weavers:** if you want your insect to be able to spin webs or similar entrapping structures, add the following talent and increase its difficulty by one step.

🕸 **Webs:** The insect is encountered in an area full of webs that fills an area with a radius equal to 5 times the insect's size, in yards. This area is difficult terrain for all creatures except insects with this talent.

HUGE INSECT

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 3 or larger insect

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 11; Health 80

Strength 16 (+6), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 6 (−4), Will 12 (+2)

Speed 8; climber

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +6 with 1 boon (3d6)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Scuttle When a creature within the insect's reach moves, it can use a triggered action to retreat.

LARGE INSECT**DIFFICULTY 25****Size 2 insect**

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 12; Health 40
 Strength 15 (+5), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 12; climber

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +5 with 1 boon (2d6)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Scuttle When a creature within the insect's reach moves, it can use a triggered action to retreat.

MEDIUM INSECT**DIFFICULTY 10****Size 1 insect**

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 14; Health 20
 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 10 (+0)
 Speed 10; climber

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Scuttle When a creature within the insect's reach moves, it can use a triggered action to retreat.

SMALL INSECT**DIFFICULTY 1****Size 1/2 insect**

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 13; Health 5
 Strength 8 (-2), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 8 (-2)
 Speed 10; climber

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 (1d6 + 1)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Scuttle When a creature within the insect's reach moves, it can use a triggered action to retreat.

TINY INSECT**DIFFICULTY 1****Size 1/4 or smaller insect**

Perception 14 (+4)
 Defense 14; Health 1
 Strength 5 (-5), Agility 14 (+4), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 8 (-2)
 Speed 10; climber

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +4 with 2 banes (1)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Distract One target creature within the animal's reach must make a Will challenge roll. On a failure, the target becomes impaired for 1 round or until it is no longer within the animal's reach.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Scuttle When a creature within the insect's reach moves, it can use a triggered action to retreat.



Carnivore beetles are flesh eating insects, standing eight-feet tall. They are the stuff of nightmares.

INSECT SWARM**DIFFICULTY 5****Size 1 insect (swarm)**

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 13; Health 20
 Strength 8 (-2), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 5 (-5), Will 8 (-2)
 Speed 8; climber

Immune charmed, dazed, deafened, frightened, grabbed, immobilized, prone, slowed, stunned

Multitude A swarm takes half damage from effects that use an attack roll and double damage from effects that require it to make a challenge roll.

Revulsion Creatures that are not swarms are impaired while they remain in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6, or 1d3 if the swarm is injured)

END OF THE ROUND

Swarming Insects Each creature that isn't a swarm and that is in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage and becomes slowed for 1 round.

LIVING DOOR

Living doors are doors, gates, or portcullises constructed from vines, wood, and branches. These doors are still alive and are usually linked to a keystone that allows passage automatically. Anyone without a keystone is not admitted passage, and the living door attacks anyone who tries to force their way through. Living doors are popular among nobles who have enough money for them...and who don't want to trust the guarding of their treasures to other people.

LIVING DOOR

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 2 plant

Perception 13 (+3); **sightless**

Defense 5; **Health** 130

Strength 16 (+6); **Agility** 5 (-5); **Intellect** 6 (-4); **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 0

Immune damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Strain; asleep, blinded, charmed, dazed, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the living door's shape.

Solid Construction A living door takes half damage from weapons.

Passive Guardian A living door opens automatically for anyone with the right keystone, and will not attack such a creature.

It does not attack anyone else unless instructed to do so by someone bearing a keystone, or unless a creature attempts to force it open.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Lashing Vines (reach 3) +6 with 2 boons (2d6 damage)

Thorns (short range) +2 with 2 boons (2d6 damage)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Lash Out The living door attacks all creatures within a cube, 2 yards on each side, extending from a point within its reach. Each creature in the area must make an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes, taking 1d6 damage on a failure or half damage on a success.

LIVING MIST

Living mist is a semi-sentient bioweapon engineered by the weavers of New Gaia during one of their wars. Though illegal in most civilized lands now, it's still used from time to time as a guardian or shock weapon by the unscrupulous. Not actually a mist at all, the living mist is a fungal pod placed in a specific area that generates a cloud of acidic spores with a motive force behind it. The cloud can move of its own accord, even against the wind, and dissolves those creatures unlucky enough to find themselves in contact with the spores.

LIVING MIST

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 10 plant

Perception 20 (+10); **sightless**

Defense 5; **Health** 80

Strength —; **Agility** 5 (-5); **Intellect** 6 (-4); **Will** 6 (-4)

Speed 6; **flier**, **Focal Point**

Immune damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Strain; asleep, blinded, charmed, dazed, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the living mist's shape.

Misty Form A living mist takes half damage from weapons and double damage from fire. It makes challenge rolls to resist fire effects with 1 bane. Other creatures can move through and end their movement in its space. The living mist totally obscures its area. A living mist ignores difficult terrain and can move freely through openings wide enough to permit the passage of air but treats liquid water as a solid object. Once per round, when exposed to wind created by an Essence power or piece of living or Chaos gear, the mist takes 4d6 damage and is moved 1d6 yards in the direction the wind is blowing.

Focal Point The living mist emanates from a small fungal pod placed somewhere in the area, and must stay within short range of that pod. If it is forced to move further away than short range from its focal point, it takes 2d6 damage. A character can try to find the focal point by making a Perception challenge roll; on a success, that character can pinpoint the fungal pod and, thereafter, attack it. The fungal pod has the same Defense and Health as the living mist but takes full damage from weapon attacks. Incapacitating the living mist without destroying its fungal pod does not kill it.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Dissolve Each creature within the living mist's space must make a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes. On a failure, the creature takes 3d6+2 damage and becomes impaired for 1 minute. If the creature is already impaired from some other source, it becomes slowed and takes 2d6 extra damage.

END OF THE ROUND

Spore Generation If the living mist's fungal pod is still intact, it heals 2d6 damage.

LORCHUS

Scuttling about on crab-like legs, a lorchus is an ambulatory fungal creature that feeds on decomposing matter. While not usually aggressive, it's not uncommon for a lorchus to attack lone travellers, killing them so it can feed. This typically only happens when the creatures are quite hungry. Lorchis are known for their pungent aromas.

LORCHUS

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1/2 fungus

Perception 11 (+1); **sightless**

Defense 15; **Health** 20

Strength 10 (+0); **Agility** 14 (+4); **Intellect** 5 (-5); **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 8

Immune gaining Strain; asleep, blinded, dazed, deafened, fatigued, frightened, stunned

ATTACK OPTIONS

Spit Spine (short range) +4 with 1 boon (1d6)

END OF THE ROUND

Stench Each living creature within short range of the lorchus must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, the creature becomes impaired for 1 round.

MIND TRAP

Mind traps are semi-sapient colonies of carnivorous fungus. They have a distinct reddish hue, which deepens when they're feeding. Mind traps are immobile, growing in areas frequented by living creatures, where they lie in wait for victims to enter their territory. When a creature does, the mind trap releases spores that cause the creature to experience vivid hallucinations. These hallucinations take the form of enemies, predators, traumatic memories, monsters, and the like, attacking the victim until they fall unconscious, at which point the mind trap can begin dissolving its victim.

MIND TRAP

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 3 fungus

Perception 15 (+5); sightless

Defense 10; Health 45

Strength 8 (-2), Agility 8 (-2), Intellect 5 (-5), Will 15 (+5)

Speed 0

Immune damage from poison; gaining Strain or Discord; blinded, charmed, dazed, frightened, grabbed, poisoned, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the mind trap's shape

Blend A mind trap looks, to the untrained eye, like a harmless fungus; any attempts to notice it as a threat suffer 2 banes. If a creature is under the effects of the mind trap's Trap Mind attack, increase this to 4 banes.

Fungal Colony A mind trap is actually hundreds or thousands of fungal organisms and, unless it is utterly eradicated, it can regrow itself from a single organism. It takes half damage from weapon attacks but double damage from attacks that require it to make a challenge roll.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Spores (short range) +5 (1d3 damage and Trap Mind)

Trap Mind The target must make a Will challenge roll with 2 banes. On a success, the target is impaired for 1 hour, and recognizes that it has been attacked by something, but not what, specifically. On a failure, the target starts to hallucinate. These hallucinations take the form of dead relatives, old enemies, primal fears, and so on. Each time a target is subject to this effect, one hallucination appears; use **monster** stats appropriate to the group's level. These hallucinations attack the target, getting their own turns, and they can be attacked and take and deal damage, but only the target can see, affect, and be affected by them; each target gets its own hallucinations. A creature subject to Trap Mind can repeat the Intellect or Will challenge roll on each of its turns as an action or a triggered action; if a creature succeeds, all of that target's hallucinations disappear and the target is impaired for 1 hour. Once a creature has succeeded on this challenge roll, it is immune to the effects of Trap Mind from this particular mind trap for 24 hours.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Spore Burst The mind trap uses Spores on each creature within short range. It can do this only once every 24 hours.

END OF THE ROUND

Dissolve The mind trap dissolves one incapacitated creature it can reach. This kills the target creature and causes the mind trap to heal 2d6 damage.

MONSTER

Below are generic statistics for any monsters or particularly vicious or dangerous animals that can be found in the world of Asunder which are not specifically given stats in this chapter. If you have a great idea for a dangerous beast and you don't have stats for it, use these.

HUGE MONSTER

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 3 or larger monster

Perception 14 (+4); darksight

Defense 13; Health 100

Strength 16 (+6), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 15 (+5)

Speed 12

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +6 with 2 boons (4d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Frenzied Attack The monster attacks two different targets with its natural weapon, making each attack roll with 1 bane.

Massive Attack The monster lashes out at all creatures within a cube, 3 yards on each side, extending from a point in its space. Each creature in the area must make an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes, taking 3d6 damage on a failure or half the damage on a success.

LARGE MONSTER

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 2 monster

Perception 13 (+3); darksight

Defense 13; Health 60

Strength 15 (+5), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 8 (-2), Will 14 (+4)

Speed 12

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +5 with 2 boons (2d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Frenzied Attack The monster attacks two different targets with its natural weapon, making each attack roll with 1 bane.

Massive Attack The monster lashes out at all creatures within a cube, 2 yards on each side, extending from a point in its space. Each creature in the area must make an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes, taking 1d6 damage on a failure or half the damage on a success.

MEDIUM MONSTER

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1 monster

Perception 12 (+2); darksight

Defense 13; Health 20

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 9 (-1), Intellect 7 (-3), Will 13 (+3)

Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Frenzied Attack The monster attacks two different targets with its natural weapon, making each attack roll with 1 bane.



A medium Monster that haunts the Obsidian Hills of Pacari.

NAGA

A mostly-female race of creatures that look akin to humans from the torso up and like snakes below the waist, Naga are powerful combatants and deadly enemies. More information on Naga can be found in Chapter 3.

Blessing of the God-Machine: Naga come in a number of varieties, with varying physical traits, abilities, and appearances. When the Seekers encounter a Naga, roll on the *Blessings* table on the next page.

NAGA CLUTCH-SISTER

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 2 Naga (aquatic)

Perception 14 (+4); darksight

Defense 16; Health 20

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 15 (+5), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 13 (+3)

Speed 12; swimmer

Immune damage from poison; gaining Strain or Discord

Stability A Naga makes any challenge rolls to remain standing or avoid being moved with 2 boons.

Essence Resistance A Naga makes any challenge rolls to resist Essence powers with 2 boons, and all Essence power attacks against Nagas are made with 2 banes.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Stone Dagger (melee) +5 (2d6)

Fangs (melee) +5 (1d6 + 1 plus Poison)

Poison The target must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If it is already poisoned, the target instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

SMALL MONSTER

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1/2 monster

Perception 11 (+1); darksight

Defense 13; Health 15

Strength 12 (+2), Agility 8 (-2), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 12 (+2)

Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +2 with 1 boon (1d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Frenzied Attack The monster attacks two different targets with its natural weapon, making each attack roll with 1 bane. For each attack, it makes a Strength attack roll against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 1d6 damage.

TINY MONSTER

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/4 or smaller monster

Perception 11 (+1); darksight

Defense 14; Health 5

Strength 8 (-2), Agility 14 (+4), Intellect 6 (-4), Will 12 (+2)

Speed 12

ATTACK OPTIONS

Natural Weapon (melee) +4 with 1 boon (1d3)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Leaping Attack The monster jumps up to 6 yards and attacks with its natural weapon. This movement does not trigger free attacks.

NAGA WARRIOR

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 2 Naga (aquatic)

Perception 14 (+4); darksight

Defense 17; Health 45

Strength 15 (+5), Agility 17 (+7), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 13 (+3)

Speed 12; swimmer

Immune damage from poison; gaining Strain or Discord

Stability A Naga makes any challenge rolls to remain standing or avoid being moved with 2 boons.

Essence Resistance A Naga makes any challenge rolls to resist Essence powers with 2 boons, and all Essence power attacks against Nagas are made with 2 banes.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Spear (melee reach 2) +5 with 1 boon (2d6)

Fangs (melee) +7 with 1 boon (1d6 + 4 plus Poison)

Poison The target must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If it is already poisoned, the target instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Flurry The Naga warrior makes two attacks with its bone spear, or one with its bone spear and one with its fangs.

BLESSINGS

1	Virulent Venom All damage dealt by the Naga's poison is increased by 1d6.
2	Armor Plates The Naga is covered with thick, plate-like scales, granting it +2 to Defense and +10 to Health.
3	Extra Arms The Naga has four arms instead of the usual two. If it does not already have Flurry, it gains that ability. If it does, it can make one additional melee attack when it uses Flurry.
4	Huge The Naga is Size 3. Its melee attacks other than its Fangs have +1 reach, it deals 1d6 extra damage with all melee attacks, and it has +10 to Health, but its Defense is reduced by 2, and its Speed is reduced by 3.
5	Mesmerizing Gaze The Naga can use a triggered action on its turn to fix its gaze on one target creature within medium range of it. The target must make a Will challenge roll. On a failure, it becomes immobilized until it uses an action to remove the affliction. On a success, it becomes immune to that Naga's Mesmerizing Gaze until the target completes a rest.
6	Poison Spit The Naga can make a short range attack with a bonus equal to its Agility bonus and a number of boons equal to the number of boons it gets on its other attacks. This attack deals 1d6 damage plus Poison.
7	The Sight The Naga has truesight. It can also see into the future, though it has little control over this power.
8	Wings The Naga has large, feathered wings. It gains the flier trait.
9	Swift Increase the Naga's Speed by +4.
10	Rattle The Naga has a rattle on its tail, like a rattlesnake. As an action or a triggered action on its turn, it can make a rattling noise, which lasts until it ends the effect as a free action or is incapacitated. Anyone who attacks the Naga while the rattle is in effect does so with 1 bane.
11	Maw The Naga has a maw full of vicious, sharklike fangs. Its bite does 2d6 extra damage, but is not poisonous.

Naga warriors can represent not just those of the warrior caste, but also Naga hunters and even veteran explorers. Any Naga with extensive combat training can be represented by this stat block.

NAGA CHAMPION

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 2 Naga (aquatic)

Perception 15 (+5); darksight

Defense 17; Health 90

Strength 17 (+7), Agility 17 (+7), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 13 (+3)

Speed 12; swimmer

Immune damage from poison; gaining Strain or Discord

Stability A Naga makes any challenge rolls to remain standing or avoid being moved with 2 boons.

Essence Resistance A Naga makes any challenge rolls to resist Essence powers with 2 boons, and all Essence power attacks against Nagas are made with 2 banes.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Chitin Axe (melee reach) +7 with 2 boons (3d6)

Fangs (melee) +7 with 2 boons (2d6 + 4 plus Poison)

Chosen of Gaia The Naga's poison has a life-sapping effect, and can even reanimate the dead as green conscripts. Replace the Naga's Poison text with: If living, the target must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, the target becomes impaired for 1 minute. When a creature impaired this way becomes incapacitated, it dies instantly and rises as a compelled green conscript 1d6 rounds later.

Camouflage The Naga can alter the pigmentation of its skin and scales. As long as it's holding still, it makes any rolls to hide with 3 boons.

Burrow The Naga can use an action to burrow into or emerge from the ground. While underground it moves at half Speed, but has full cover from all attackers.

Poisonous Cloud The Naga can emit a cloud of poison in a 6-yard radius as an action. All creatures in the area of effect must make an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane or be subject to the Naga's poison. Once the Naga has used this ability, it must wait 1 round to use it again.

Climber With its claws and specially-evolved scales, the naga can climb surfaces with ease. It gains the climber trait.

Petrify Replace the Naga's Poison text with the following: The target becomes slowed for 1 minute as its body grows heavy. If the target is already slowed this way, it instead takes 4d6 extra damage. A target that becomes incapacitated by the Naga's venom turns into a statue, dying instantly.

Snake-Speaker The Naga can summon a swarm of snakes as an action. Use stats for a **swarm of animals**, except that this swarm's natural weapon inflicts the Naga's Poison on a success. The Naga can use this ability three times. When it completes a rest, it regains all uses of this ability.

Slip Sideways The Naga uses an action or a triggered action on its turn to teleport to a space it can see within medium range. Roll a d6. On a roll of 1, the Naga cannot use Slip Sideways again for 1 minute.

Two Blessings Roll twice on this table, ignoring incompatible results or subsequent results of 20.

Poison The target must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If it is already poisoned, the target instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Flurry The Naga champion makes two attacks with its chitin axe, or one with its chitin axe and one with its fangs.

Naga champions are the elite warriors of Naga society, their most dangerous combatants. These stats can also be used to represent a Naga Queen.

PARASITIC SEED

Plants corrupted by Chaos sometimes release parasitic seeds. These seeds look like normal ones—except they can move about on spindly insectile legs, and seem able to perceive their environment. A parasitic seed often latches onto a piece of living gear, burrowing into it and waiting until it is bonded to a human. Once this happens, a parasitic seed can use this bond to slowly take over the mind of the gear's host.

PARASITIC SEED

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1/8 plant

Perception 11 (+1); sightless

Defense 14; Health 1

Strength 4 (−6), Agility 14 (+4), Intellect 4 (−4), Will 10 (+0)

Immune gaining Strain or Discord; blinded, charmed, dazed, frightened, stunned, and any effect that change its shape

Escape Notice While burrowed into a piece of living gear, a parasitic seed can only be found with 1 hour of careful inspection of the gear.**Fire Vulnerability** The seed takes double damage from fire.**Parasitic Bond** A creature bonded to a piece of living gear infected by a parasitic seed must make a Strength challenge roll every time it completes a rest; failure means that the creature takes 1 Strain. If a creature bonded to such a piece of gear suffers an Essence break while bonded to the gear, it must make a Will challenge roll with 2 banes or become compelled by the parasitic seed. The creature can repeat this Will challenge roll once every 24 hours. If the seed is destroyed, the creature is no longer compelled.

Speed 5

ATTACK OPTIONS

Burrow (melee) +4 with 1 boon (1)

REEGA

A reega is a large cat, about the size of a panther, with great, bat-like wings sprouting from its back. Reegas are common predators in New Gaia and Pacari, where they swoop down and snatch prey, bringing it up to their roosts in the branches of great trees or on the edges of cliffs, where they can kill and devour their prey at their leisure.

REEGA

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 1 animal

Perception 15 (+5); shadowsight

Defense 15; Health 35

Strength 12 (+2), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 7 (−3), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 12; flier (swoop)

Attack Actions**Claws and Teeth** (melee) +2 with 1 boon (1d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Aerial Pounce The reega moves up to its Speed and attacks twice with its claws and teeth, and the target is grabbed. On a later turn, the reega can fly off with the grabbed target, though it moves at half Speed when carrying anything its own Size, and cannot carry anything larger than its Size.

REZZIK

Common in Pacari and New Gaia, where the climate is warm, rezzik are reptilian pack hunters that are equal parts lupine and ophidian. Long and sinewy, rezzik have six legs on their serpentine body, with a lashing tail on one end and a scaled, wolf-like head on the other. Their acute senses of hearing and smell are augmented by snake-like heat-sensing pits in the snout, making packs of rezzik extraordinarily difficult to hide from, and their lithe, six-legged forms allow them to cover ground incredibly quickly. Their howls haunt the deserts and jungles of the world, but perhaps their most

disturbing quality is their ability to disjoint their jaws in order to swallow creatures nearly half their size—whole. Of course, once a rezzik swallows a meal, it typically sleeps for several days while it digests.

REZZIK

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 2 animal

Perception 16 (+6); darksight

Defense 16; Health 40

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 16 (+6), Intellect 8 (−2), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 15

ATTACK OPTIONS

Fangs (melee) +3 with 2 boons (2d6 + 1 plus Poison)**Poison** The target must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If the target is already poisoned, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Swallow The rezzik swallows a defenseless creature of Size 1 or smaller.

SEA SERPENTS

Sea serpents are the apex predators of the oceans, terrifying engines of destruction that can sink ships with ease, or even ravage entire fleets when they cluster into small groups. The seafarers hunt sea serpents for their meat, their scales, their bones, and their heartstones. Each sea serpent has an organ called a heartstone in its body, and the heartstone generates an immense amount of heat, even for weeks after having been removed from a sea serpent's body. The heartstone allows sea serpents to survive the coldest parts of the ocean for extended periods of time, and seafarers seek them so they can survive the cold winter months, and lend their living ships more speed and alacrity.

Sea serpents are primarily solitary creatures, but occasionally they cluster into pods of three or four during spawning season. They tend not to actively seek out humans or ships, but they are extremely territorial, and entering a sea serpent's claimed patch of ocean is tantamount to a challenge. Sea serpents are too wild and willful to be trained or tamed, but they are sometimes captured, and some seafarers can use their Essence to commune with and even befriend sea serpents.

LARGE SEA SERPENT

DIFFICULTY 500

Size 3 or larger frightening monster (aquatic)

Perception 19 (+9); darksight

Defense 23; Health 160

Strength 17 (+7), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 8 (+−2), Will 14 (+4)

Speed 16; swimmer

Immune damage from fire, cold, and poison; charmed, dazed, frightened, poisoned, sleep, stunned

Massive Sea serpents always deal full damage to ships and structures.**Aura of Heat** The heartstone of a sea serpent generates an immense amount of heat. Any creature that ends its turn within 6 yards of the sea serpent must make a Strength challenge roll

with 3 banes or be impaired while they remain within the aura of heat. A creature that is already impaired becomes fatigued for 1 hour. A creature that is already fatigued takes 2d6 damage.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Coils (melee reach 2) +7 with 3 boons (2d6 plus 1d6 from heat)
Jaws (melee) +7 with 3 boons (3d6 plus 1d6 from fire)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Roiling Flurry The sea serpent attacks twice with its coils and once with its bite. If a creature is hit by both coil attacks, it is grabbed.
Burst of Heat The serpent stokes its heartstone, generating intense heat in an area around it, causing the sea to boil in a 10-yard radius from a point it can reach. Everything in the area takes 3d6 + 5 damage. Each creature in the water must make a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes. On a failure, the creature takes 4d6 + 5 extra damage and becomes impaired for 1 hour. Once the sea serpent uses Burst of Heat, it cannot do so again for 1 round.

MEDIUM SEA SERPENT

DIFFICULTY 250

Size 2 or 3 frightening monster (aquatic)

Perception 16 (+6); **darksight**

Defense 21; **Health** 90

Strength 14 (+4), **Agility** 15 (+5), **Intellect** 8 (+-2), **Will** 14 (+4)

Speed 17; swimmer

Immune damage from fire, cold, and poison; charmed, dazed, frightened, poisoned, sleep, stunned

Massive Sea serpents always deal full damage to ships and structures.

Aura of Heat The heartstone of a sea serpent generates an immense amount of heat. Any creature that ends its turn within 4 yards of the sea serpent must make a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes or be impaired while they remain within the aura of heat. A creature that is already impaired becomes fatigued for 1 hour. A creature that is already fatigued takes 2d6 damage.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Coils (melee reach 2) +4 with 2 boons (1d6 plus 1d6 from heat)
Jaws (melee) +4 with 2 boons (2d6 plus 1d6 from fire)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Roiling Flurry The sea serpent attacks twice with its coils and once with its bite. If a creature is hit by both coil attacks, it is grabbed.
Burst of Heat The serpent stokes its heartstone, generating intense heat in an area around it, causing the sea to boil in a 8-yard radius from a point it can reach. Everything in the area takes 2d6 + 5 damage. Each creature in the water must make a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes. On a failure, the creature takes 3d6 + 5 extra damage and becomes impaired for 1 hour. Once the sea serpent uses Burst of Heat, it cannot do so again for 1 round.

SMALL SEA SERPENT

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 2 frightening monster (aquatic)

Perception 16 (+6); **darksight**

Defense 19; **Health** 75

Strength 13 (+3), **Agility** 17 (+7), **Intellect** 8 (+-2), **Will** 14 (+4)

Speed 18; swimmer

Immune damage from fire, cold, and poison; charmed, dazed, frightened, poisoned, sleep, stunned

Massive Sea serpents always deal full damage to ships and structures.

Aura of Heat The heartstone of a sea serpent generates an immense amount of heat. Any creature that ends its turn within 3 yards of the sea serpent must make a Strength challenge roll with

1 bane or be impaired while they remain within the aura of heat. A creature that is already impaired becomes fatigued for 1 hour. A creature that is already fatigued takes 1d6 damage.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Coils (melee reach 2) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 plus 1d6 from heat)
Jaws (melee) +3 with 1 boons (2d6 plus 1d6 from fire)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Roiling Flurry The sea serpent attacks twice with its coils and once with its bite. If a creature is hit by both coil attacks, it is grabbed.
Burst of Heat The serpent stokes its heartstone, generating intense heat in an area around it, causing the sea to boil in a 5-yard radius from a point it can reach. Everything in the area takes 1d6 + 5 damage. Each creature in the water must make a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes. On a failure, the creature takes 2d6 + 5 extra damage and becomes impaired for 1 hour. Once the sea serpent uses Burst of Heat, it cannot do so again for 1 round.

SERVITOR

Nobody knows who created the servitors or what their purpose is. Often found in ancient structures left behind by long-dead empires, servitors are stone constructs animated by an unknown force, driven by an inscrutable intelligence. Servitors vary in size, but they're all multi-legged creatures with an arachnid bottom and a torso that looks mostly human—or would, if it weren't made of rune-inscribed stone. Though not always aggressive, servitors have been known to attack people who enter ancient ruins; just as often, though, they either ignore those intruders, or defend them against enemies. Their motives remain a mystery.

GREATER SERVITOR

DIFFICULTY 500

Size 3 construct

Perception 12 (+2); **darksight**

Defense 16; **Health** 140

Strength 20 (+10), **Agility** 9 (-1), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 13 (+3)

Speed 8

Immune damage from poison or disease; taking Strain or Discord; asleep, charmed, dazed, diseased, fatigued, poisoned, stunned

Essence Resistance A servitor takes half damage from powers and makes any challenge roll to resist a power with 1 boon. A creature attacking the servitor with a power makes the attack roll with 1 bane.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Stone Claw (melee) +10 with 3 boons (5d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Double Attack The servitor attacks twice with its stone claw.

END OF THE ROUND

Essence Pulse If the servitor has been targeted by any Essence powers during this round, it emits a pulse of negative Essence feedback. The servitor attacks all creatures within a cube, 9 yards on each side, extending from a point within its reach. Each creature in the area must make an Will challenge roll with 2 banes, taking 2d6 damage and 1d3 Strain on a failure, or half damage on a success.

LESSER SERVITOR

DIFFICULTY 250

Size 2 construct

Perception 10 (+0); darksight

Defense 16; Health 140

Strength 18 (+8), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 12 (+2)

Speed 10

Immune damage from poison or disease; taking Strain or Discord; asleep, charmed, dazed, diseased, fatigued, poisoned, stunned**Essence Resistance** A servitor takes half damage from powers and makes any challenge roll to resist a power with 1 boon. A creature attacking the servitor with a power makes the attack roll with 1 bane.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Stone Claw (melee) +8 with 2 boons (3d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Double Attack The servitor attacks twice with its stone claw.

END OF THE ROUND

Essence Pulse If the servitor has been targeted by any Essence powers during this round, it emits a pulse of negative Essence feedback. The servitor attacks all creatures within a cube, 5 yards on each side, extending from a point within its reach. Each creature in the area must make an Will challenge roll with 2 banes, taking 1d6 damage and 1d3 Strain on a failure, or half damage on a success.

MINOR SERVITOR

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 1 construct

Perception 9 (-1); darksight

Defense 14; Health 85

Strength 15 (+5), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 10 (+0)

Speed 12

Immune damage from poison or disease; taking Strain or Discord; asleep, charmed, dazed, diseased, fatigued, poisoned, stunned**Essence Resistance** A servitor takes half damage from powers and makes any challenge roll to resist a power with 1 boon. A creature attacking the servitor with a power makes the attack roll with 1 bane.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Stone Claw (melee) +5 with 2 boons (2d6+2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Double Attack The servitor attacks twice with its stone claw.

END OF THE ROUND

Essence Pulse If the servitor has been targeted by any Essence powers during this round, it emits a pulse of negative Essence feedback. The servitor attacks all creatures within a cube, 3 yards on each side, extending from a point within its reach. Each creature in the area must make an Will challenge roll with 1 bane, taking 1d6 damage and 1 Strain on a failure, or half damage on a success.

MINOR SERVITOR

The Servitors were created by something other than the gods. Something ancient and unknown. Learning who made them could change the fate of Asunder.

SILGIR

The silgiri are an aquatic race of beings that very little is known about. They have both reptilian and mammalian qualities, appear to be able to breathe underwater and tolerate any kind of toxin, and communicate through song. Though not overtly hostile to humans, they often clash with Seafarers, especially when the Seafarers hunt the great sea serpents.

SILGIR

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 1 or 2 humanoid (aquatic)

Perception 12 (+2); shadowsight

Defense 15; Health 60

Strength 12 (+2), Agility 15 (+5), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 10 (+0)

Speed 12; swimmer

Immune damage from poison; poisoned

Sunlight Vulnerability A silgir is impaired while in direct sunlight.

Watery Grace Silgiri are designed to move in water. While on dry land, a silgir's speed is halved, and it makes any Agility attacks and challenge rolls with 2 banes.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Coral Trident (melee) +5 with 2 boons (3d6 plus Poison)

Poison The target must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If the target is already poisoned, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Disorienting Song The silgir uses an action or a triggered action on its turn to begin singing. It continues to sing until it stops as a free action, and can take only triggered actions during that time. Each creature that is within or that moves into long range of a singing silgir must make a Will challenge roll with 1 bane for each singing silgir within range beyond the first.

On a failure, the creature becomes impaired for the duration of the song, though the creature can repeat the Will challenge roll on its turn each round. While impaired this way, the creature must take the first turn it can each round and use an action to stumble toward the nearest body of water and, if it can, throw itself in.

On a success or after removing the impaired affliction, the creature becomes immune to all silgiri Disorienting Songs until after it completes a rest.

SVIT

Native to Sky City, svits are tiny opalescent lizards with insectile wings. Though venomous, svits are mostly harmless on their own, and are seen as urban pests at worst, though many traditions in Sky City see them as good luck. Some in Sky City catch svits and domesticate them, and they do make loyal, affectionate pets. Though svit venom is not typically deadly to humans in small doses, many in the criminal underworld still treat darts or blades with refined, concentrated svit venom, which can kill.

Occasionally, svits congregate into ravenous swarms, impelled by the loss of their home or food supply. When this happens, they can become dangerous to humans.

SVIT

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/4 animal

Perception 14 (+4)

Defense 14; Health 1

Strength 5 (–5), Agility 14 (+4), Intellect 8 (–2), Will 8 (–2)

Speed 10 (flier)

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bite (melee) +4 with 2 banes (1 and the target must succeed on a Strength challenge roll or be poisoned for 1 minute)

SVIT SWARM

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1 animal (swarm)

Perception 14 (+4)

Defense 13; Health 20

Strength 8 (–2), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 8 (–2), Will 8 (–2)

Speed 10 (flier)

Immune charmed, dazed, deafened, frightened, grabbed, immobilized, prone, slowed, stunned

Multitude A swarm takes half damage from effects that use an attack roll and double damage from effects that require it to make a challenge roll.

Revulsion Creatures that are not swarms are impaired while they remain in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Hundreds of Tiny Bites (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6, or 1d3 if the swarm is injured, and the target must succeed on a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes or be poisoned for 1 minute)

END OF THE ROUND

Swarming Svits Each creature that isn't a swarm and that is in the swarm's space or within 1 yard of it must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute and slowed for 1 round.

SWARM-HOUND

Swarm-hounds are scavengers, for the most part, though they're quite dangerous when riled or cornered. They are canine in shape, but their bodies are pocked with holes that lead deep into their bodies, and in these holes live flesh-beetles. While flesh-beetles are mostly encountered as scavengers as well, eating the decaying corpses of animals or people that die in the forest, these insects have formed a symbiotic bond with the swarm-hounds. The beetles actually live inside the bodies of swarm-hounds, laying their eggs and establishing hive colonies within the hounds. The hounds don't seem to suffer any ill effects from this and, in fact, can stir their hives into swarming as a defense mechanism, or as a way to take down prey that would normally outmatch them.

SWARM-HOUND

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1 animal

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 13; Health 15

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 6 (–4), Will 10 (+0)

Speed 10

Immune to damage from poison; poisoned

Swarm Acclimation A swarm-hound is immune to the Revulsion talent of an insect swarm, and never takes damage from its own swarm.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bite (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 + 2)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Rouse Swarm As an action or a triggered action on its turn, the swarm-hound can rouse the swarm inside it, creating an **insect swarm** in a space it can reach. The insect swarm and the swarm-hound fight to protect each other, but if one is killed the other usually flees. The swarm-hound can use this talent once; it regains the talent after completing a rest.

VITHEK

The Vithek are a race of enormous, insectoid creatures that live in caverns underground. It's not common for Vithek to come into contact with humans aboveground, but some Seekers have run afoul of these creatures when venturing into the deep places of the world.

Vithek speak their own language, and very occasionally the languages of other people of the world. Of these, they are most likely to speak Nagese, because the Vithek and the Naga do sometimes trade for resources.

VITHEK

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 2 insect

Perception 15 (+3)

Defense 16; **Health** 45

Strength 15 (+5), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 11 (+1), **Will** 10 (+0)

Speed 10

Hive Synergy A Vithek within short range of another Vithek from the same hive makes all attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon. This is cumulative with multiple Vitheks from the same hive; that is, if four Vithek from the same hive are within short range of each other, they each make all attack and challenge rolls with 3 boons.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Stone Axe (melee) +5 (2d6 + 2)

Bow (medium range) +0 (2d6)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Chitter The Vithek begins chittering. The chittering of a Vithek has a befuddling quality on most creatures, and a non-Vithek creature within short range of a chittering Vithek makes all attack and challenge rolls with 1 bane. Once the Vithek starts chittering, it can continue doing so until it chooses to end the effect as a free action or is incapacitated.

VVAKIR

One of the most ubiquitous animals in *Asunder*, vvakir are large, omnivorous reptiles commonly used as mounts or beasts of burden throughout the world. In the wild, vvakir are docile herd creatures that graze on plants or eat carrion; they aren't particularly aggressive unless cornered, and they don't often hunt unless exceptionally hungry. Their docile nature makes them quite easy to tame and domesticate, and their

great strength makes them quite helpful for pulling plows or wagons. Though not naturally fast, breeding programs have managed to produce vvakir that are quicker and more lithe, and this variety is often used for riding rather than labor.

DRAY VVAKIR

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 2 animal

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 10; **Health** 55

Strength 18 (+8), **Agility** 7 (-3), **Intellect** 4 (-6), **Will** 8 (-2)

Speed 4

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bite (melee) +8 with 1 bane (2d6)

RIDING VVAKIR

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 2 animal

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 11; **Health** 15

Strength 14 (+4), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 4 (-6), **Will** 8 (-2)

Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bite (melee) +4 with 1 bane (1d6)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Trot The vvakir moves up to three times its Speed.

WYVERN

Highly intelligent and social, wyverns in the wild are terrifying aerial predators that hunt in packs and use complex tactics to take down their prey. The Houses of Sky City have learned to domesticate wyverns from captured eggs. These domesticated wyverns become mounts for the Houses' Wyvern Knights, elite guardians and soldiers for the city and its nobility. Exceptionally intelligent in the wild, trained wyverns have even been known to understand complex verbal commands, and to be able to communicate with their riders through taps, gestures, and even mimicry. Wyvern Knight mounts are known for their devotion and loyalty to their riders.

Wyverns are large predators with both reptilian and avian traits. Their bodies are covered with scales, their hind legs are powerful, and they have smaller forelegs that they can use either for walking on all fours or for fine manipulation. Their backs are covered with feathers, and their massive wings are the subject of many paintings and poems. Wyverns are well-known for being both breathtakingly beautiful and incredibly deadly; their potent venom helps back up this last point.

Wyvern Variations: Wyverns come in a dizzying variety of colors and subspecies. Some of these differences are purely cosmetic, some present interesting roleplaying opportunities, and some affect the wyvern's game statistics. You can use the base statistics for a wyvern, or you can roll on the *Wyvern Variations* table, next page. A wyvern bonded to a Seeker through the Wyvern Knight master path always has a variation.

WYVERN VARIATIONS

1	Radiant Plumage The wyvern's plumage glows faintly, giving off dim light in a 1-yard radius. Shadows become lit in this radius, and darkness becomes shadows.
2	Poison-Spitting The wyvern does not have a stinger, instead spitting poison at enemies and prey. Change the Sting attack option to: Poison Spit (short range) +3 with 1 boon (1d6 plus Poison).
3	Mimic The wyvern can mimic words and sounds with uncanny accuracy. While not true language, it can learn to communicate with simple words, and it can even repeat phrases. Mimic wyverns often use this ability to lure prey to them, which is an Intellect attack with 1 boon against the target's Intellect.
4	Rainbow Plumage The wyvern has beautiful, multi-colored feathers.
5	Dexterous The wyvern's forelegs are dexterous enough for incredibly fine manipulation, including tool use. It can use tools as intended, provided it knows what they're for, though it does so with 1 bane.
6	White White wyverns are incredibly rare and are often leaders of wyvern flocks. Their pearlescent scales and feathers are highly sought-after in Sky City.
7	Black Even more rare than white wyverns, black wyverns are seen as harbingers of misfortune. This reputation is largely undeserved, except insofar as any wyvern can bring misfortune to an unwary traveler.
8	Large The wyvern is enormous. It is Size 3 and gains a +2 bonus to Strength, as well as to its Fangs and Sting attacks, and a +10 bonus to Health. However, it is slower and clumsier than its kin; it suffers a -4 penalty to Speed and loses its swoop trait.
9	Eyeless Eyeless wyverns are viewed as sacred creatures, proof that the gods are returning. They lose their darksight trait but gain the sightless trait.
10	Matriarch Wyvern matriarchs are prized by the nobles of Sky City for their ability to lay many eggs in a short period of time. In the wild, they are often encountered with their young.

WYVERN

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 1 or 2 monster

Perception 17 (+7); **darksight**
Defense 15; **Health** 75
Strength 16 (+6), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 10 (+0)
Speed 18; **flier** (swoop)
Immune damage from poison; **frightened**, **poisoned**

ATTACK OPTIONS

Fangs (melee) +6 with 1 boon (3d6)
Sting (melee) +6 with 1 boon (2d6 plus Poison)
Poison The target must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If the target is already poisoned, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

ZYLVARE

The Zylvare are a reclusive people, actually living plants on the inside, who live in the forests of the mainland and Pacari, as well as in the jungles of New Gaia. Zylvare are capable of bonding with and controlling plants in a similar way to plant weavers, though a Zylvare's bond with the forest around them is on a much deeper and more instinctive level.

Zylvare speak their own, complex language that is only partially verbal. Some also speak the languages of those who live near them.

11	Swiftwing Swiftwing wyverns are faster than their kin, though slightly weaker. They receive a -2 penalty to Strength, but a +4 bonus to Agility and a +2 bonus to Speed. Their Fangs and Sting attack options use Agility instead of Strength.
12	Potent Venom Perhaps one wyvern in a hundred is born with exceptionally potent venom. Targets make their Strength challenge roll with 2 banes, and the extra damage taken by targets that are already poisoned is increased by 1d6.
13	Vicious Some wyverns are exceptionally vicious, and revel in bloodshed and slaughter. They are often either leaders of flocks or driven out of the flock.
14	Climber The wyvern's claws and forelegs are overdeveloped and strong, granting it the climber trait.
15	Swimmer Some wyverns are just as at home underwater as they are in the air. Such wyverns have the swimmer trait and can hold their breath for up to 1 hour.
16	Horrific The wyvern is truly monstrous in appearance. It has the frightening trait.
17	Songbird Songbird wyverns are uncommon. They are known for their beautiful trills and whistles, which sound like songs.
18	Omnivorous While most wyverns are carnivores, some are capable of eating and surviving on vegetable matter indefinitely.
19	Playful Wyverns are reported to occasionally approach humans and other creatures to initiate play rather than to hunt and kill them. Though still dangerous, playful wyverns do not necessarily pose an immediate threat when encountered.
20	Two Variations Roll twice on this table, ignoring further rolls of 20.

ZYLVARE

DIFFICULTY 250

Size 2 or 3 plant

Perception 15 (+5); **shadowsight**
Defense 19; **Health** 110
Strength 16 (+6), **Agility** 15 (+5), **Intellect** 13 (+3), **Will** 14 (+4)
Speed 12
Immune asleep, blinded, fatigued; a living Zylvare cannot be moved against its will or knocked prone while it stands on soil or plant matter
Fire Vulnerability A Zylvare takes double damage from fire.
Blend A Zylvare that does not move is indistinguishable from a wooden statue, and can blend in with the forest with ease, effectively becoming invisible.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Claw (melee reach 2) +6 with 3 boons (4d6)
Spit Thorn (long range) +5 with 2 boons (4d6)
Special Attacks
Double Attack The Zylvare attacks twice with its claw or once with its claw and once with spit thorn.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Protect the Wild The Zylvare chooses one target tree or plant within medium range of it. The target becomes a compelled monster of its Size for 1 hour or until it or that Zylvare becomes incapacitated. The Zylvare can use this action three times. It regains expended uses after it completes a rest.
Tree Haven The Zylvare steps into a tree or plant of at least its Size, disappearing entirely. It can exit from any tree or plant of at least its Size within long range at a later time as an action; if the Zylvare spends at least 1 hour inside a tree or plant with this ability, it heals all damage and removes all afflictions.

CHARACTERS

In addition to the creatures described here, player characters will often encounter other humans. In fact, in *Asunder*, other humans are often the biggest threat, and the beings best positioned to do harm to the Seekers. Many characters in this section are written as if they're from the mainland. If you want to give any of these characters abilities from other Origins, follow the instructions below. Adding an Origin to a character doesn't impact its difficulty. If a character's description specifies an Origin, you cannot add an additional Origin to it.

- ☞ **Pacari:** No change to the character, but the character is accompanied by an **animal** (tiny, small, medium, or large).
- ☞ **New Gaia (plant):** Power 1, Plant Control - *speak with plants* (2), *reclaimed ground* (1)
- ☞ **New Gaia (insect):** Power 1, Insect - *tiny spies* (2), *tiny messenger* (1)
- ☞ **Sky City:** When the character moves or takes the dash action, some or all of its movement can be a leap. When the character leaps, its Speed is doubled.
- ☞ **The Sea:** The character gains the swimmer trait.
- ☞ **Black Isle:** The character gets +5 Health.
- ☞ **Mainland:** No change.

BANDITS

All over *Asunder*, there are those who prey upon their fellows, robbing, killing, and otherwise taking from others what they wish. Bandits are often the product of desperation and, while a single bandit isn't a tremendous threat, they're rarely encountered alone.

BANDIT	DIFFICULTY 1
<i>Size 1/2 or 1 human</i>	
Perception 10 (+0) Defense 14 (medium armor, shield); Health 12 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 9 (-1) Speed 10	
ATTACK OPTIONS	
Club (melee) +2 (1d6, or 2d6 against a surprised target) Bow (long range) +0 (1d6+1, or 2d6+1 against a surprised target)	
BRIGAND	DIFFICULTY 10
<i>Size 1/2 or 1 human</i>	
Perception 10 (+0) Defense 15 (medium armor, shield); Health 15 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 11 (+1) Speed 10	
ATTACK OPTIONS	
Bone Sword (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6+2) Thorn Spitter (long range) +1 with 1 boon (2d6)	

BANDIT CAPTAIN

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 9 (-1)
Defense 17 (heavy armor, shield); Health 22
Strength 12 (+2), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 11 (+1)
Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Chitin Sword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)
Thorn-Spitter (long range) +0 with 1 boon (2d6+1)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Command One ally that can see and hear the bandit captain attacks with 1 boon. If the attack hits, it deals 1d6 extra damage.

BODYGUARDS

Bodyguards are hired the world over to protect those who can afford protection.

BODYGUARD	DIFFICULTY 10
<i>Size 1/2 or 1 human</i>	
Perception 11 (+1) Defense 15 (medium armor); Health 18 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 11 (+1), Will 9 (-1) Speed 10	
ATTACK OPTIONS	
Bone Great Sword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6)	
SPECIAL ACTIONS	
Vigilance A bodyguard can use an action to choose someone as their ward. While a bodyguard's ward is within the bodyguard's reach, any attacks made against the ward suffer 1 bane. If the ward is hit by an attack, the bodyguard can use a triggered action to make themselves the target of the attack.	

STORM POINT BODYGUARD	DIFFICULTY 25
<i>Size 1/2 or 1 human</i>	
Perception 11 (+1) Defense 17 (medium armor); Health 22 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 14 (+0), Intellect 11 (+1), Will 11 (+1) Speed 10	
ATTACK OPTIONS	
Bone Great Sword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2) Thorn-Spitter (long range) +4 with 1 boon (2d6+1) Vigilance A Storm Point bodyguard can use an action to choose someone as their ward. While a bodyguard's ward is within the bodyguard's reach, any attacks made against the ward suffer 2 banes. If the ward is hit by an attack, the bodyguard can use a triggered action to make themselves the target of the attack.	

CHAOS WIELDERS

Those who wield the raw force of Chaos are dangerous, unpredictable, and capable of great acts of destruction. Chaos wielders only come from the mainland.

CHAOS WIELDER

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
 Defense 12; Health 50
 Strength 9 (-1), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 14 (+4)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Chaos Spike (melee) +1 (2d6+2)

ESSENCE

Power 2
 Chaos maintain the high (3), induce mutation (3), distort time (2), bend space (1)

CHAOS ADEPT

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
 Defense 12; Health 75
 Strength 9 (-1), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 16 (+6)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Chaos Spike (melee) +1 with 2 boons (3d6+2)
 Chaos Lance (short range) +6 with 2 boons (3d6+1)

ESSENCE

Power 3
 Chaos maintain the high (4), induce mutation (4), distort time (2), bend space (2), alter reality (1)

COMMONERS & PROFESSIONALS

Merchants, beggars, farmers, craftspeople, and other folk just going about their daily lives are numerous in Asunder. Most people the Seekers encounter are commoners or professionals.

COMMONER OR PROFESSIONAL DIFFICULTY 1*Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 9 (-1)
 Defense 10; Health 11
 Strength 11 (+1), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Staff (melee) +1 (1d6+1)
 Stone Dagger (melee or short range) +1 (1d3)

DEMON HUNTERS

The Black Isle is full of demon hunters and, while their primary quarry is demons, they're not opposed to using their considerable talents on disrespectful outsiders.

Origin: Nearly all demon hunters are from the Black Isle. As such, that Origin has already been applied to these stat blocks.

DEMON FIGHTER

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
 Defense 11 (light armor); Health 25
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10
 Group Mind While within short range of another creature with this talent, the demon fighter makes all attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Obsidian-Tipped Spear (melee) +2 (1d6)

DEMON HUNTER

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
 Defense 13 (medium armor); Health 35
 Strength 14 (+4), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10
 Group Mind While within short range of another creature with this talent, the demon hunter makes all attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Obsidian Knife (melee) +4 with 1 boon (2d6+2)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Strength of Many As an action or a triggered action on its turn, the demon hunter can draw upon its group mind, as long as it's receiving a boon from that talent. When the demon hunter uses this talent, choose one benefit. These benefits last until the demon hunter uses this talent again, or until it is no longer receiving a boon from its Group Mind talent.

- The demon hunter deals 1d6 extra damage.
- The demon hunter gets a +3 bonus to Speed.
- The demon hunter gets a +10 bonus to Health.

DEMON-BOUND

Those who have pledged service to a demon are often gifted with increased physical power. Some also know how to take power from demon blood, becoming terrifying forces of destruction on the battlefield.

DEMON-BOUND COMMONER

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 12 (+1)
 Defense 12; Health 13
 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 12
 Demonic Mark While within short range of a demon, the demon-bound makes all attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Fists (melee) +3 (1d6+1)



Danyxa serves as the Demon King's left hand. The years of drinking demon blood has transformed her into something both human and demon. It's wise to be afraid of her. Very wise.

DEMON-BOUND WARRIOR**DIFFICULTY 25***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 12 (+1)
 Defense 17 (medium armor, shield); Health 25
 Strength 15 (+5), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 12
Demonic Mark While within short range of a demon, the demon-bound makes all attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Axe (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)
 Thorn-Spitter (long range) +0 with 1 boon (2d6+1)

RAVAGER**DIFFICULTY 50***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 13 (+3); darksight
 Defense 17 (medium armor); Health 60
 Strength 15 (+5), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 8 (-2), Will 14 (+4)
 Speed 12
Immune to damage from poison; fear, poisoned
Demonic Blood Any creature that deals damage to the ravager with a natural weapon or unarmed attack takes 1d6 points of damage from poison.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Stone-Tipped Spear (melee) +5 with 2 boons (2d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Frenzied Attack The ravager attacks two different targets with its stone-tipped spear, making each attack roll with 1 bane.

DUELISTS

Dueling academies first caught on in Sky City, and from there dueling styles spread to the mainland. Some dueling styles use signature weapons, while others are unarmed or will use virtually any weapon (or object) that comes to hand. Duelists can be found all over Asunder these days, looking for challenges to overcome.

Signature Weapons: A duelist's signature weapon can be virtually anything, even bare hands. Describing a duelist's signature weapon is largely a matter of flavor and style and has no specific game effect. You can increase a duelist's reach by 1 without altering its difficulty at all, if you wish.

BRAVO**DIFFICULTY 5***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 14 (light armor); Health 15
 Strength 11 (+1), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 11

ATTACK OPTIONS

Signature Weapon (melee) +3 (2d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Riposte When the bravo is attacked and that attack misses, the bravo can use a triggered action to attack its attacker with its signature weapon.

DUELIST**DIFFICULTY 25***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 13 (+3)
 Defense 16 (light armor); Health 30
 Strength 11 (+1), Agility 15 (+5), Intellect 13 (+3), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 11
Duelist's Poise As long as the duelist has not used its triggered action in a given round, melee attacks against it are made with 1 bane.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Signature Weapon (melee) +5 with 1 boon (2d6+3)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Riposte When the duelist is attacked and that attack misses, the duelist can use a triggered action to attack its attacker with its signature weapon.

MASTER DUELIST**DIFFICULTY 50***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 13 (+3)
 Defense 17 (light armor); Health 45
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 16 (+6), Intellect 15 (+5), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 11
Duelist's Poise As long as the duelist has not used its triggered action in a given round, melee attacks against it are made with 1 bane.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Signature Weapon (melee) +6 with 2 boons (2d6+3)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Duelist's Flurry The master duelist can make an attack against every creature it can reach. Each attack after the first suffers 1 additional bane.

Riposte When the duelist is attacked and that attack misses, the duelist can use a triggered action to attack its attacker with its signature weapon.

HIRED KILLERS

All over Asunder, one can find people who murder for pay, should one have the inclination. Though not elegant or highly trained, hired killers are often good at what they do and willing to do all manner of dirty deeds for dirt cheap.

HIRED KILLER**DIFFICULTY 10***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 10 (+0)
 Defense 12; Health 18
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Glass Dagger (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6)

ASSASSIN**DIFFICULTY 25***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 12; Health 22

Strength 12 (+2), Agility 15 (+5), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 10

Backstab If the assassin attacks a creature that is surprised or that the assassin is hidden from, it attacks with 1 boon and deals 2d6 extra damage.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Glass Dagger (melee) +5 with 1 boon (3d6+2)

Thorn-Spitter (long range) +5 with 1 boon (2d6+1)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Vanish If the assassin has any cover or is concealed in any way, it can use an action to hide.

HIRED MUSCLE

The mainstay of criminal empires and law enforcement everywhere, hired muscle are people hired to look intimidating and, if necessary, rough people up. While not typically subtle or clever, they get the job done.

TOUGH**DIFFICULTY 5***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 8 (-1)

Defense 13 (medium armor); Health 20

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 8 (-2), Will 9 (-1)

Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Cudgel (melee) +3 with 1 boon (2d6)

BRUISER**DIFFICULTY 10***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 8 (-1)

Defense 13 (medium armor); Health 30

Strength 14 (+4), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 8 (-2), Will 9 (-1)

Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Truncheon (melee) +4 with 1 boon (2d6)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Flurry The bruiser makes two attacks with its truncheon; it makes each attack with 1 bane.

BRUTE**DIFFICULTY 25***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 8 (-1)

Defense 13 (medium armor); Health 45

Strength 15 (+5), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 8 (-2), Will 9 (-1)

Speed 10

Withstand When the brute takes damage from a single source that would cause it to become incapacitated, it can instead choose to not take that damage and instead become impaired for 1 minute. If the brute is already impaired, it cannot use this talent.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Stone Mace (melee) +5 with 1 boon (2d6+3, or 3d6+3 if the brute is impaired)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Mob-Fighting The brute makes two attacks with its truncheon.

HOUSE AGENTS

Those employed by the Houses of Sky City make for difficult adversaries and untrustworthy allies. A House Agent's loyalty is always, first and foremost, to their House, and they will do virtually anything to further their House's interests. Most House Agents have the Sky City origin.

HOUSE SPY**DIFFICULTY 25***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 14 (+4)

Defense 15; Health 18

Strength 10 (+0), Agility 15 (+5), Intellect 14 (+0), Will 11 (+1)

Speed 12

Cover Story Whenever a Seeker uses a power, talent, or other ability that would reveal any part of this stat block, the Keeper need not tell the truth. Whenever the House Agent must make an attack or challenge roll to maintain its cover, it does so with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Crystal Dagger (melee) +5 with 1 boon (2d6+2)

Throwing Shards (short range) +5 with 1 boon (2d6+4)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Disappear The spy becomes invisible for 1 round.

HOUSE SPY-CATCHER**DIFFICULTY 100***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 14 (+4)

Defense 14 (medium armor); Health 70

Strength 13 (+3), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 14 (+4), Will 12 (+2)

Speed 10

Catcher of Spies If the spy-catcher has a creature marked, it gets 1 boon on all attack rolls against that target, its attacks deal 1d6 extra damage to that target, and it can always detect that target while it's within short range.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Crystal Sword (melee) +3 with 3 boons (3d6+1)

Throwing Shards (long range) +2 with 3 boons (2d6+2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Subdue The spy-catcher attacks a marked target with its crystal sword. If the target is surprised, or the spy-catcher is hidden from the target, and the target takes any damage from this attack, it must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. If it fails, it takes damage equal to half of its health. A creature incapacitated in this way is rendered unconscious for 1d6 hours, after which it awakes and heals damage equal to its healing rate.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Mark The spy-catcher marks a target it can see. The target remains marked for 24 hours, until it dies, or until the spy-catcher uses this talent again (whichever comes first). The spy-catcher can have only one target marked at a time.

HUNTERS

Hunters track down and kill animals for food, pelts, and other valuable materials. They can be found within rural communities or living off the land by themselves.

HUNTER

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 12; Health 12
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Stone Knife (melee) +2 (1d6)
 Bow (long range) +0 (1d6+1, or 2d6+1 against a surprised target)

RANGER

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
 Defense 16 (medium armor); Health 15
 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Dagger (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6+2)
 Bow (long range) +1 with 1 boon (2d6, or 3d6 against a surprised target)

MERCENARIES

There are many people in Asunder who sell their martial skills to the highest bidder. Though not as highly trained as those of the Bone Army, standard mercenaries are less expensive.

MERCENARY

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
 Defense 17 (heavy armor, shield); Health 20
 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Sword (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6+2)
 Thorn Spitter (long range) +1 with 1 boon (2d6)

BONE MERCENARY

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 9 (-1)
 Defense 19 (horok-bone armor, shield); Health 22
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Horok-Bone Sword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)
 Thorn-Spitter (long range) +0 with 1 boon (2d6+1)

BONE DREADNOUGHT

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 9 (-1)
 Defense 20 (heavy horok-bone armor); Health 55
 Strength 14 (+4), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 12 (+2)
 Immune fear
 Speed 8

ATTACK OPTIONS

Horok-Bone Maul (melee) +4 with 2 boons (3d6+4)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Relentless Charge The bone dreadnought moves up to its speed in a straight line and can move through enemy spaces as long as those enemies are its Size or smaller. It attacks every enemy it can reach during the charge, though it can only attack each target once. If the bone dreadnought attacks someone whose space it moved through, that target must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane or be pushed 6 yards and knocked prone. Once the bone dreadnought uses this talent, it must wait 1 round before using it again.

BONE CAPTAIN

DIFFICULTY 100

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 14 (+4)
 Defense 19 (horok-bone armor, shield); Health 85
 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 14 (+4), Will 12 (+2)
 Speed 10
Inspire All allies that can see and hear the bone captain make attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Horok-Bone Spear (melee reach 2) +3 with 3 boons (3d6+1)
 Thorn-Spitter (long range) +2 with 3 boons (2d6+2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Command One ally that can see and hear the officer attacks with 1 boon. If the attack hits, it deals 2d6 extra damage.

PRIZE FIGHTERS

The nations of Asunder have a long history of engaging in bloodsports. In Sky City, public duels and boxing matches are common. In Pacari, warriors compete in non-lethal tournaments to gain glory and honor. And on the mainland, there is the Arena of Megalith, as well as numerous underground fighting pits.

PIT FIGHTER

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 12 (+1)
 Defense 12; Health 13
 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 8

ATTACK OPTIONS

Fists (melee) +3 (1d6+1)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Second Wind As an action, the pit fighter can heal 1d6 damage. Once the pit fighter uses this talent, it cannot use it again until after it's taken a rest.

ARENA FIGHTER

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 12 (+1)
 Defense 14 (light armor); Health 20
 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 10 (+0)
 Speed 8

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Spear (melee reach 2) +3 (1d6+2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Net As an action, the arena fighter throws a net at a target in short range, making an Agility attack roll against the target's Agility. On a success, the target is impaired and immobilized until it takes an action to free itself. Once a target frees itself, the net is destroyed; the arena fighter cannot use this talent again until it acquires a new net.

PURE LIGHT CULTISTS

Cults of the Pure Light can be found all over the mainland, worshipping the destructive and revelatory power of the phenomenon. With a little tweaking, these stats can represent other kinds of cultists, too.

CULTIST

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
 Defense 10; Health 12
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Obsidian Dagger (melee) +2 (1d6)

TEMPLAR

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)
 Defense 15 (medium armor, shield); Health 15
 Strength 13 (+3), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Sword (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6+2)
 Thorn Spitter (long range) +1 with 1 boon (2d6)

CULT LEADER

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 12 (+2); sightless
 Defense 14; Health 25
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 14 (+4), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10
Light's Revelation Once per round, the cult leader can make a challenge roll or attack roll with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Chitin Sword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Command One ally that can see and hear the cult leader attacks with 1 boon. If the attack hits, it deals 1d6 extra damage.

SERVANTS OF GAIA

The servants of Gaia are human beings imbued with the power of the Wellspring, an ancient force that allows Gaia to bond with and enhance a human's Essence. These servants lead legions of the Green Army, raising the dead and commanding them for purposes nobody truly knows. Servants of Gaia are still human and are often mistaken for weavers.

SERVANT OF GAIA

DIFFICULTY 50

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 14 (+4)
 Defense 14 (light armor); Health 50
 Strength 11 (+1), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 12 (+2)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Memory Dagger (melee) +3 (1d6+1, and memory drain)
Memory Drain The servant of Gaia drains some of its target's memories and Essence. The target must make a Will challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1 Strain, is impaired for 1 minute, and the servant of Gaia absorbs some of the target's memories. If the target has Essence powers, it loses 1 use of an Essence power determined by the Keeper, and the servant of Gaia gains a use of that Essence power.

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Raise the Dead As an action, the servant of Gaia can cause 1d6 corpses within medium range to become compelled **blight walkers**. Once it uses this talent, it cannot use it again until it completes a rest.

SOLDIERS

Soldiers are the guards, watchmen, and conscripts of Asunder. Though not highly trained, they are numerous and better armed than the common folk. A few survive to become career soldiers, people with significant military experience and training.

PATROLLER

DIFFICULTY 1

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 11 (+1)
 Defense 15 (medium armor, shield); Health 11
 Strength 11 (+1), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 10 (+0)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Spear (melee) +1 (1d6)
 Torch (melee) +1 with 1 bane (1d6 plus 1 from fire)

VETERAN

DIFFICULTY 25

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 9 (-1)
 Defense 17 (heavy armor, shield); Health 22
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 10 (+0), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Axe (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)
 Thorn-Spitter (long range) +0 with 1 boon (2d6+1)

OFFICER**DIFFICULTY 50***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 15 (medium armor, shield); Health 45
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Chitin Sword (melee) +2 with 2 boons (2d6+4)
 Thorn-Spitter (long range) +1 with 2 boons (2d6+2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Command One ally that can see and hear the officer attacks with 1 boon. If the attack hits, it deals 1d6 extra damage.

THIEVES

Where there are valuables, there are those who seek to liberate them from their owners. Thieves pilfer, mug, waylay, filch, and burgle, seeking to take what isn't theirs.

PICKPOCKET**DIFFICULTY 10***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 13 (light armor); Health 16
 Strength 10 (+0), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 10
Trickery Once per round, the pickpocket can make a challenge roll or attack roll with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Sword (melee) +2 (1d6, plus 1d6 if the pickpocket had 1 boon from Trickery)
 Sap (melee) +2 (1d3, plus 1d6 if the pickpocket had 1 boon from Trickery)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Threats The pickpocket uses an action or a triggered action on its turn to make an Intellect attack roll against the Will of one target creature within short range of it that can hear and see it. On a success, the target becomes frightened for 1 round. On a failure, the target becomes immune to that pickpocket's Threats for 24 hours.

BURGLAR**DIFFICULTY 25***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 16 (light armor); Health 16
 Strength 10 (+0), Agility 15 (+5), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 9 (-1)
 Speed 10
Trickery Once per round, the burglar can make a challenge roll or attack roll with 1 boon.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Glass Dagger (melee) +5 with 1 boon (1d6, plus 1d6 if the burglar had 1 boon from Trickery)
 Sap (melee) +2 with 1 boon (1d3, plus 1d6 if the burglar had 1 boon from Trickery)

SPECIAL ACTIONS

Vanish If the burglar has any cover or is concealed in any way, it can use an action to hide.

SAILORS

Sailors ply the seas, making their living through trade, transport, or piracy. They're often more effective on their ships than on land.

SAILOR**DIFFICULTY 1***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 11 (+1)
 Defense 11; Health 11
 Strength 11 (+1), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 10 (+0)
 Speed 10
Sea Legs The sailor makes attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon while on a ship or dock, but with 1 bane while on dry land.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Dagger (melee) +1 (1d6)

PIRATE**DIFFICULTY 25***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 9 (-1)
 Defense 15 (light armor); Health 22
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 13 (+3), Intellect 9 (-1), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10
Sea Legs The sailor makes attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon while on a ship or dock, but with 1 bane while on dry land.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Axe (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)
 Harpoon (short range) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+1)

CAPTAIN**DIFFICULTY 50***Size 1/2 or 1 human*

Perception 12 (+2)
 Defense 12 (light armor); Health 45
 Strength 12 (+2), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 12 (+2), Will 11 (+1)
 Speed 10
Sea Legs The sailor makes attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon while on a ship or dock, but with 1 bane while on dry land.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Bone Sword (melee) +2 with 2 boons (2d6+4)
 Thorn-Spitter (long range) +1 with 2 boons (2d6+2)

SPECIAL ATTACKS

Command One ally that can see and hear the captain attacks with 1 boon. If the attack hits, it deals 1d6 extra damage.

WEAVERS

New Gaians who have control over plants are in high demand all around Asunder, as they're able to create much of the living gear used by people. Those who would steal from or threaten them beware: they're more than capable of defending their homes and shops. While most from New Gaia shape and control plants, some are bonded to insects. These people are often ostracized, downtrodden, and feared, some rightfully so.

PLANT WEAVER

DIFFICULTY 5

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 13 (+3)

Defense 11; Health 13

Strength 9 (-1), Agility 11 (+1), Intellect 13 (+3), Will 10 (+0)

Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Living Whip (reach 2) +1 (1d6+1)

ESSENCE

Power 1

Plant Control *speak with plants* (2), *blood thorns* (1), *enhance shaped plant* (1)Plant Form *plant seeming* (2), *raking branches* (1)

INSECT WEAVER

DIFFICULTY 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)

Defense 12; Health 35

Strength 9 (-1), Agility 12 (+2), Intellect 10 (+0), Will 14 (+4)

Speed 10

ATTACK OPTIONS

Chitin Dagger (melee) +2 (1d3)

ESSENCE

Power 2

Insect Control *eyebiters* (3), *hungry swarm* (2), *summon huge insect* (1)Insect Meld *poison spit* (3), *cling* (2), *chitinous shell* (1)

END OF THE ROUND

Biting Swarm Each creature within the Insect Weaver's reach takes 1d6 damage.

CUSTOMIZING CREATURES

You can modify creatures to suit your needs by changing their Size, adjusting characteristics or attributes, adding traits or talents, or by applying roles.

Guidelines for such customization follow. However, adjusting creatures is not an exact science, so playtesting your creations is the best way to judge their challenge in a game. Adding traits and talents beyond those discussed here can produce greatly overpowered adversaries.

SIZE

You can shift a Size 1 creature's down a step, to Size 1/2, without altering its other abilities or its Difficulty. Reducing its Size further is not recommended. Likewise, you can increase a creature's Size to 1 if it is less than 1 with no other changes.

You can increase the Size of larger creatures by making the following changes. Repeat these steps for each 1 Size the creature grows; an increase of more than 2 Size is not recommended.

☞ Increase the creature's Health by 50 percent.

☞ Increase the creature's Strength by 1.

☞ Increase the creature's Speed by 2.

☞ The creature's attacks deal 1d6 extra damage.

☞ Increase the creature's Difficulty by one step (for example, a Difficulty 5 creature becomes Difficulty 10).

FRIGHTENING

You can add the frightening trait to any creature. Such a change radically alters the creature's appearance so that it takes a toll on the emotional well-being of characters who witness them. A human-like being, for example, might have hideous mutations and extra limbs; a bear could have teeth instead of fur; a wolf could have a human head; or a bat might be transformed into a giant eyeball with wings.

You can assign the frightening trait to any creature that does not have it, increasing its Difficulty by one step.

CHARACTERISTICS AND ATTRIBUTES

You can adjust a creature's fundamental characteristics and attributes by following these guidelines.

CHARACTERISTICS

Perception: You can increase or decrease a creature's Perception by up to 4 without altering its Difficulty.

Senses: You can grant a creature a special sense without increasing its Difficulty, though such a change should serve the creature's place in the world. Nocturnal creatures have shadowsight, and creatures that live underground should either have darksight or be sightless. Truesight is rare, usually found only in powerful, legendary creatures or those touched by Pure Light or Chaos.

Defense: Many creatures have an innate bonus to Defense, as a result of thick hide or unusual alertness. You can adjust a creature's Defense by up to 2 in either direction without altering its Difficulty. Avoid increasing or decreasing its Defense beyond that amount. If the creature wears armor, you can adjust its Defense by swapping out its armor, as described under *Equipment* below, or you can give armor to an unarmored creature.

Health: If a creature's Health is less than 20, you can increase its Health by up to 20, increasing its Difficulty by one step. If the creature's Health is 20 or more, you can increase its Health until it doubles its original score, increasing its Difficulty by one step.

Speed: You can change a creature's Speed by up to 4 without affecting its Difficulty. As well, granting a creature the aquatic, climber, or swimmer trait does not change its Difficulty. Adding the flier trait increases the creature's Difficulty by one step.

A creature with a special movement trait should reflect that trait in its appearance and its role in the world. For example, a creature with flier has wings, a creature with swimmer has fins and gills, and so on.

ATTRIBUTES

For each 1 point by which you increase an attribute, decrease another attribute by 1 point. You can adjust a creature's attributes by up to 2 above or below normal, but no attribute should be lower than 5 or no higher than 20.

Remember, changing an attribute might also change a creature's characteristics, including Health, Defense, and Perception.

EQUIPMENT

You can freely change the equipment a creature uses without altering its Difficulty.

Armor: If the creature is wearing armor, subtract the bonus to Defense from the armor it was wearing and then add the new bonus to Defense from the new armor. Do the same with shields. You can also give armor to an unarmored creature.

Weapons: You can give weapons to a creature whose anatomy allows their use or swap out weapons it uses for different ones. If you trade out a creature's weapon, adjust the damage die and other attributes to match the new one (for example, if a melee weapon has the finesse quality, the creature's attack attribute should be Agility if that is higher than its Strength). If the creature's relevant attribute score does not meet the weapon's requirement, simply increase that score so that it does.

Other Equipment: You can give a creature whatever equipment you feel is appropriate. Keep in mind, though, that useful equipment, such as living gear, glass weapons, or performance enhancers, might fall into your Seekers' hands before the creature can use them.

ATTACK OPTIONS

You can alter a creature's attack options by adding some common traits and talents to the creature's attacks.

Infectious: An infectious creature carries some sort of contagion and spreads it through natural weapon attacks. To create a creature with the infectious trait, halve its Health and add "plus Disease" to the damage line of one of the creature's natural weapons. The creature gains the Disease attack talent.

Disease: The target must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it becomes diseased. Each time a diseased creature completes a rest, it must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes a 1d6 penalty to Health. If this penalty reduces its Health to 0, the creature dies. After three successes, the creature removes the diseased affliction. The next time it completes a rest, the reduction to Health ends.



There are rumors of three-headed sea serpents. Seafarers go looking, but none ever come back.

Pack Fighting: Creatures that fight in groups are more dangerous than when they are on their own. You can assign this attack talent to any creature.

Pack Fighting When the creature attacks a target within the reach of another creature with Pack Fighting that is friendly to the creature, it makes the attack roll with 1 boon. Otherwise, it makes the attack roll with 1 bane.

Poisonous: One of the creature’s natural attacks injects venom or is toxic in some way. To create a creature with the poisonous trait, add “plus Poison” to the damage line of one of the creature’s natural weapons and reduce the number of damage dice for the attack by one (to a minimum of 1 damage); 1d6 drops to 1d3, and 1d3 becomes 1. The creature gains the Poison attack talent.

Poison The target must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If the target is already poisoned, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage.

ESSENCE

You can grant the ability to use essence powers to any creature that cannot already do so. The creature gains an Essence rating from 0 to 5 and a number of powers from one Essence tree depending on its difficulty, as shown in the *Essence* table. Consult the Essence chapter in the *Seeker’s Guide* to determine the number of uses of each power the creature knows.

Be aware that, by default, only humans have Essence, and so only humans can use Essence powers. There are some creatures in this book, like demons and kalea snakes, that can mimic Essence powers without actually having a connection to Essence; if you give a non-human creature Essence powers, ensure that doing so makes sense within the story.

ESSENCE

	5 or less	0	1	—	—	—	—	—
10	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	—
25	2	2	2	1	—	—	—	—
50	3	2	2	2	1	—	—	—
100	4	2	2	2	2	1	—	—
250 or more	5	2	2	2	2	2	2	1

ROLE

Adding a role defines the way a creature fits into a group or works with others. A creature should not have more than one role. Roles are appropriate for creatures of Difficulty 50 or less.

LEADER

A leader commands a force of creatures similar to itself. In general, there should be one leader per group of roughly

twenty creatures. To make a leader, add the Leadership talent to the creature.

Leadership Other creatures within medium range of this creature that are friendly to it and that can see it make attack rolls with 1 boon.

MUSICIAN

A group of creatures might include a musician to raise their spirits and focus them on defeating their enemies. Musicians might be pipers, drummers, or something else. In general, there should be one musician per group of up to fifty creatures. A musician has the Battle Music talent.

Battle Music The creature uses an action or a triggered action on its turn to play music for 1 round; if it takes any other action during this time, this effect ends. Each other creature within medium range of the creature that is friendly to it and that can hear it deals 1 extra damage on attacks with weapons.

STANDARD-BEARER

A standard-bearer carries a group’s colors to serve as a rallying point in battle. In general, there should be one standard-bearer per group of up to fifty creatures. A standard-bearer has the Battle Standard trait.

Battle Standard Each other creature within medium range of this creature that is friendly to it and that can see it cannot be charmed or frightened. The effect lasts as long as this creature carries the standard or until it becomes charmed, compelled, or frightened.

CHAMPION

A champion is a fighter of exceptional skill and ability. No more than one in six creatures should be champions. Adjust the champion creature as follows.

CHAMPION

Defense +1; Health +5
Strength +1

ATTACK OPTIONS

Weapon Training When attacking with a weapon, the creature makes the attack roll with 1 boon and deals 1 extra damage on a success.

HERO

A hero has superior training, extensive experience, or a special destiny. No more than one in twelve creatures should be heroes. Adjust the hero creature as follows.

HERO INCREASE DIFFICULTY BY ONE STEP

Perception +1
Defense +1; Health +20
Strength +2, Agility +2, Intellect +2, Will +2

ATTACK OPTIONS

Weapon Excellence When attacking with a weapon, the creature makes the attack roll with 1 boon and deals 1d6 extra damage on a success.

CREATURES BY DIFFICULTY

DIFFICULTY 1

Bandit	Lesser Blight Walker	Svit
Commoner/ Professional	Riding Vvakir	Tiny Animal
Cultist	Sailor	Tiny Animate Plant
Hunter	Small Animal	Tiny Insect
Patroller	Small Insect	Tiny Monster

DIFFICULTY 5

Animal Swarm	Dray Vvakir	Small Animate Plant
Bravo	Greater Blight Walker	Small Construct
Daishya		Small Monster
Demon-Bound	Insect Swarm	Swarm-Hound
Commoner	Plant Weaver	Tough
Demon Fighter	Pit Fighter	

DIFFICULTY 10

Arena Fighter	Insect Weaver	Medium Monster
Blight Stalker	Lorchus	Mercenary
Bodyguard	Medium Animal	Pickpocket
Brigand	Medium Animate	Ranger
Bruiser	Plant	Svit Swarm
Crystal-Wasp Swarm	Medium Construct	Templar
Hired Killer	Medium Insect	Tiny Chaos Beast

DIFFICULTY 25

Assassin	Demon-Bound	Large Insect
Bandit Captain	Warrior	Naga Clutch-Sister
Blight Champion	Demon Hunter	Parasitic Seed
Bone Mercenary	Duelist	Pirate
Brute	House Spy	Small Chaos Beast
Burglar	Howlbeast	Storm Point
Carnitaur	Kalea Snake	Bodyguard
Cult Leader	Large Animal	Veteran

DIFFICULTY 50

Bone Dreadnought	Hunting Mass	Officer
Bull Carnitaur	Large Animate Plant	Ravager
Captain	Large Construct	Reega
Chaos Wielder	Large Monster	Rezzik
Horok	Living Door	Servant of Gaia
Huge Animal	Master Duelist	Silgir
Huge Insect	Naga Warrior	Vithek

DIFFICULTY 100

Bone Captain	Medium Chaos Beast
Chaos Adept	Mind Trap
House Spy-Catcher	Minor Demon
Huge Animate Plant	Minor Servitor
Huge Construct	Naga Champion
Huge Monster	Small Sea Serpent
Living Mist	Wyvern

DIFFICULTY 250

Ancient	Large Chaos Beast
Carnitaur Pack Leader	Lesser Demon
Devourer	Lesser Servitor
Feral Ship	Medium Sea Serpent
Haunt	Zylvare

DIFFICULTY 500

Aspect of Gaia
Greater Demon
Greater Servitor
Huge Chaos Beast
Large Sea Serpent

MOB

A mob is a group of around ten creatures, similar to a swarm. This option is suitable for Difficulty 1 creatures of Size 1 or smaller. You can group them into mobs of ten by applying the following changes.

MOB

INCREASE DIFFICULTY BY TWO STEPS

Size 3

Health The base creature's Health x 4

Mob A mob takes half damage from attacks that target individual creatures and double damage from attacks that affect an area. The mob acts as a single creature, but it counts as ten creatures for the purpose of choosing targets. A mob makes Strength, Intellect, and Will challenge rolls with 1 boon. Creatures can move through a mob's space, but they treat the area as difficult terrain. The mob can squeeze

through openings large enough to permit the passage of an individual member and can move through spaces occupied by other creatures.

Spawn When the mob becomes incapacitated, it dissipates and 1d6 base creatures that made up the mob appear in open spaces within the space it formerly occupied. They can take the next available turn.

ATTACK OPTIONS

Melee The mob has the base creature's reach. It makes the base creature's attack rolls with 2 boons. On a success, the attack deals 2d6 extra damage if the mob is not injured.

END OF THE ROUND

Overwhelm If the mob is not injured, each creature that isn't a swarm or a mob that is in the mob's space or within 1 yard of it must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, the creature takes 2d6 damage.



The Hill Tribes of Pacari ride great rams into battle. But what makes them truly frightening is their powerful vanguard leadership and tactics.

CHARACTER TEMPLATES

You can give creatures capabilities similar to those possessed by player characters by adding templates based on character paths. Monsters and NPCs never have Essence points, so they can't use abilities that require them.

Step 1: Pick a creature from this chapter.

Step 2: Choose one of the templates set out below, referring to the appropriate path.

Step 3: Apply all the changes described in the template.

Step 4: Equip the creature as you desire.

Step 5: Name the creature and fill in any important story details.

BONDED

Creatures with this path—usually humans—have a strong connection to Essence, and the ability to call upon Essence powers. Consult the *Power Uses* table in **Chapter 10** of the *Seeker's Guide* to determine the number of uses of each power that the creature gets.

NOVICE BONDED

DIFFICULTY + ONE STEP

Health +3

Intellect +1, Will +1

Talents The creature gains the Strengthen Essence talent from the bonded path. In addition, choose one Origin for the creature; the creature has access to both Essence trees for that Origin. The creature gains one talent from one of these Essence trees.

ESSENCE

Essence 1

Powers The creature discovers both Essence trees associated with its Origin and gains the discovery benefit for each. The creature learns four rank 0 or 1 powers.

EXPERT BONDED

DIFFICULTY + TWO STEPS

Health +9

Intellect +2, Will +2

Talents The creature gains the Strengthen Essence talent from the bonded path. In addition, choose one Origin for the creature; the creature has access to both Essence trees for that Origin. The creature gains two talents from either of these Essence trees.

ESSENCE

Essence 3

Powers The creature discovers both Essence trees associated with its Origin and gains the discovery benefit for each. The creature learns four rank 0 or 1 powers, two rank 2 powers, and one rank 3 power.

MASTER BONDED

DIFFICULTY + FOUR STEPS

Health +15**Agility** +1, **Intellect** +3, **Will** +3

Talents The creature gains the Strengthen Essence and Improved Strengthen Essence talents from the bonded path. In addition, choose one Origin for the creature; the creature has access to both Essence trees for that Origin. The creature gains three talents from either of these Essence trees.

ESSENCE**Essence** 5

Powers The creature discovers both Essence trees associated with its Origin and gains the discovery benefit for each. The creature learns four rank 0 or 1 powers, two rank 2 powers, and two rank 3 powers, two rank 4 powers, and one rank 5 power.

VANGUARD

Vanguard creatures are on the forefront of the battle, leading and inspiring their allies. The vanguard template can help turn a regular creature into a leader.

NOVICE VANGUARD

DIFFICULTY + ONE STEP

Health +6**Strength** +1, **Intellect** +1

Talents The creature gains the On Your Feet and Vital Advice talents from the vanguard path.

EXPERT VANGUARD

DIFFICULTY + TWO STEPS

Health +14**Strength** +2, **Intellect** +2

Talents The creature gains the On Your Feet, Vital Advice, Rally, and Harry talents from the vanguard path.

MASTER VANGUARD

DIFFICULTY + FOUR STEPS

Health +20**Strength** +3, **Intellect** +2, **Will** +1

Talents The creature gains the Improved On Your Feet, On Your Feet, Vital Advice, Rally, Harry, and Expert Advice talents from the vanguard path.

SURVIVOR

Creatures with the survivor template are extraordinarily hard to kill. Use this template sparingly, but doing so can make for a memorable encounter.

NOVICE SURVIVOR

DIFFICULTY + ONE STEP

Health +10**Strength** +1, **Will** +1

Talents The creature gains the Shake it Off, Exhaust Enemy, and Endure talents from the survivor path.

EXPERT SURVIVOR

DIFFICULTY + TWO STEPS

Health +30**Strength** +2, **Will** +2

Talents The creature gains the Shake it Off, Exhaust Enemy, Endure, Demoralize, Never Surrender, and Outlast talents from the survivor path.

MASTER SURVIVOR

DIFFICULTY + FOUR STEPS

Health +45**Strength** +3, **Agility** +1, **Will** +3

Talents The creature gains the Improved Shake it Off, Shake it Off, Exhaust Enemy, Endure, Demoralize, Never Surrender, Outlast, and Iron Guts talents from the survivor path.

MARAUDER

Marauder creatures are incredibly dangerous, capable of dealing large amounts of damage. Don't use them often, but you can use this template to make a truly scary opponent.

NOVICE MARAUDER

DIFFICULTY + ONE STEP

Health +4**Strength** +1, **Agility** +1, **Speed** +2

Talents The creature gains the Turn the Tide, Seize the Advantage, Exploit Weakness, and Dust in the Eyes talents from the marauder path.

EXPERT MARAUDER

DIFFICULTY + TWO STEPS

Health +12**Strength** +2, **Agility** +2, **Speed** +2

Talents The creature gains the Turn the Tide, Seize the Advantage, Exploit Weakness, Fight Dirty, Dust in the Eyes, and Momentum talents from the marauder path.

MASTER MARAUDER

DIFFICULTY + FOUR STEPS

Health +24**Strength** +3, **Agility** +3, **Speed** +4

Talents The creature gains the Improved Turn the Tide, Turn the Tide, Seize the Advantage, Exploit Weakness, Fight Dirty, Dust in the Eyes, Momentum, and Fatal Blow talents from the marauder path.

CREATING CHARACTERS

You can also create a character using the rules described in the *Seeker's Guide*. Consult the *Character Difficulty by Level* table.

CHARACTER DIFFICULTY BY LEVEL

0	1
1 or 2	5
3 or 4	10
5 or 6	25
7 or 8	50
9 or 10	100



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Coming up with your own adventures can be as fun and as rewarding as running them. It's a great opportunity to put your creative skills to good use.

CREATING ADVENTURES

When designing an adventure, aim for something the players can finish in one to three 4-hour game sessions. Typically, an adventure like this has eight to twelve scenes. You can expand or shrink an adventure as you wish, based on the needs of your players. Completing an adventure should advance the group's level by 1.

Here are some tips for creating your own adventures.

OBJECTIVE

An adventure needs an objective: what the Seekers need to accomplish. The objective can be small and simple, or might take the Seekers across the world and beyond.

Write down the objective as a declarative sentence, like the following examples. "The Seekers..."

- ☞ ...save Sky City from a plague of ravenous svits.
- ☞ ...seek out the legendary Wellspring.
- ☞ ...capture a living ship from pirates and learn how to tame it.
- ☞ ...venture into the God's Eye to learn what the storm is guarding.
- ☞ ...find a Chaos site and harness the energy of its Chaos shard.
- ☞ ...protect the town of Bulreth from an incursion of Naga warriors.
- ☞ ...negotiate peace talks between Hyden and the Twins.
- ☞ ...find out who's sabotaging peace talks between Hyden and the Twins.
- ☞ ...learn who killed their mentor and bring the killer to justice.
- ☞ ...earn fame and fortune in the Arena.
- ☞ ...learn what's causing the plague and put a stop to it.
- ☞ ...find out who's been poisoning the beer in the Drunk Horok tavern.
- ☞ ...uncover the source of the demonic influence in Gray Thistles.

- ☞ ...find and kill the devourer stalking inventors in Heartwood.
- ☞ ...hunt and slay the great white sea serpent.
- ☞ ...steal wyvern eggs from House Borantu so they can raise their own wyverns.
- ☞ ...discover why people never return from Blue Mountain Cave.
- ☞ ...find the Wooden Man and discover what he wants.
- ☞ ...find the God-Machine fragment under Far East and learn what it's for...before the Naga do.
- ☞ ...use the strange device to capture a mote of Pure Light in a bottle.

STARTING POINT

The starting point launches the adventure, but you don't necessarily need to prepare it ahead of time. Often the players decide where to start; for example, they might have left some challenges unresolved during a previous adventure. They could choose to settle some old scores, follow up on earlier leads, or investigate rumors that might or might not be associated with previous stories.

A starting point ought to do all of the following:

- ☞ Determine where the Seekers are and what they are doing when the story begins.
- ☞ Provide one or more plot hooks to draw the characters into the story.
- ☞ Reveal the story's objective or, at least, give the players a hint about what they're supposed to do.

SCENES

An adventure's plot is a sequence of scenes through which the players and their Seekers move as they head toward the story's conclusion. During the adventure, the Seekers might go through some or all of the scenes, depending on the decisions they make. Scenes are usually centered around a location or a situation.

- ☞ **Situations** don't take place in a fixed part of the world, and are more about *what's* happening than *where* it's happening. Situations often cascade into one another, with one leading to another, though the exact sequence can change based on what the Seekers do.
- ☞ **Locations** are fixed points within your adventure, places the Seekers can go to accomplish a specific

goal or engage in a specific encounter. These, too, can occur in a variety of sequences, but locations are usually connected by geography rather than circumstance.

It's also important to understand what you're trying to accomplish with a scene. Generally, scenes are either discovery scenes or obstacle scenes.

DISCOVERY SCENES

A discovery scene advances the adventure's story in a meaningful way. It might introduce new information about the plot and antagonist; provide aid to the group in the form of wealth, a piece of living gear, or a key to a locked door; reveal the location of the cultists' hidden base; or any other guidance about what to do next or assistance in doing it.

The discovery can occur through roleplaying, such as an exchange between a character you control and one of the Seekers. It also often involves exploring the scene's environment. Active searching, listening, eavesdropping on conversations, or researching in a library are all possible ways for the group to make the discovery.

OBSTACLE SCENES

Obstacle scenes are connectors that challenge the Seekers in some way as they move toward the next discovery scene. An obstacle scene might be an overland journey, a fight with a monster, avoiding traps protecting a passage, a harrowing climb up a cliff, or sneaking past bandits guarding the entrance to a cave.

COMBAT OBSTACLES

A combat obstacle is something the Seekers fight or something they can avoid through clever play or by running away.

Combat is exciting, but there are limits to how much fighting a group can handle in a single day. Creatures have a Difficulty rating that represents the challenge they pose in a fight. The *Difficulty per Day* table shows what a group can typically handle in one day of the story. You can use this number as a "budget" for populating your combat obstacles.

Simply add up the Difficulty of all the creatures you expect the characters to face. If the total is equal to or less than the recommended Difficulty for the day, the Seekers should be fine. More than this is likely to be lethal if they don't have ways to heal damage and recover resources during the day. If the total is less than half

DIFFICULTY PER DAY

Starting	25
Novice	100
Expert	200
Master	500

the recommended Difficulty, you will need to challenge the characters in other ways or stiffen the opposition. See **Chapter 1** for more about setting up these sorts of obstacles.

These numbers assume a group size of three to five Seekers. If your group is smaller, halve the total daily Difficulty. If you have a larger group, the daily Difficulty can as much as double. Also, since the Seekers might skip obstacle scenes, these numbers are only guidelines.

SCENE SETTING

The setting is where a scene takes place. It can be as small as a single alcove in a crumbling ruin or be spread across an entire city-state. A setting can also host several scenes. Consider the classic dungeon. It might be one giant scene, or the various rooms and corridors could serve as settings for the various scenes in the adventure's plot.

Exhaustive details about settings are rarely necessary. You just need enough information to present a scene to the players and fill in other details as needed.

SCENE STRUCTURE

Every scene has a beginning, middle, and end.

BEGINNING

At the beginning, the players should learn any information they need to know. This might include a description of the area, any creatures or characters to interact with, and other pertinent details.

MIDDLE

The middle of the scene is where the players make decisions about their Seekers' actions and behavior, taking as long as needed. They might explore the environment, talk with other characters, or engage in combat.

END

A scene ends when the Seekers resolve whatever it was about. An obstacle scene ends when the Seekers overcome it; a discovery scene ends when they make the discovery. Then the Seekers move on to the next scene in the story.

LEAVING SCENES EARLY

The Seekers might leave a scene before resolving it. This might happen because they were defeated in battle or they failed to learn what they needed to know. They might return to the scene later—but they might not. Whenever Seekers leave scenes unresolved, note what they have done in that scene already and make any necessary changes in case they return.

Not completing a scene doesn't have to bring the story to a halt. In fact, such failures can raise the stakes and create new dramatic opportunities. It's a good idea to have another scene or two ready, just in case something goes horribly wrong. With a little improvisation, you can use a backup scene to bring the Seekers back to the main plot.

TRANSITIONS

A transition occurs when the Seekers move from one scene to the next. Based on the players' decisions about what they plan to do and where they intend to go, you fill in the space between scenes by describing what happens. During this time, the Seekers might take the opportunity to rest, talk, and purchase gear, or just move directly to the next scene.

RESTING BETWEEN SCENES

The players might want to rest their characters before moving on to the next scene so they can heal damage, recover the uses of their powers, and refresh talents. Seekers can attempt to rest anywhere, but they might be interrupted, depending on the safety of the place they choose. See the *Random Encounters* section in **Chapter 1** for more information.

CONCLUSION

The story ends when the Seekers play through the conclusion. The conclusion might be a scene unto itself or a summary of what happens after the final scene.

When you create your story, come up with at least three possible conclusions, depending on the final outcome: success, failure, and a partial success or failure. For example, the Seekers might be trying to stop a Pure Light cult from summoning the Pure Light to a town (if that's even possible). If they succeed, the Seekers stop the ritual and drive off the cult. If they fail, the cult completes the ritual and gets away. On a partial success or failure, the cult might complete the ritual but be killed, or the Seekers could stop the ritual but allow the cult to escape.

PLOT STRUCTURE

Unlike a book, in which scenes unfold in a predetermined order, the sequence of scenes in an adventure develops during game play, based on the decisions the players make and the outcomes of those decisions. Reactive plots present situations that force the characters to respond to an immediate threat. Proactive plots allow the characters to set their own agenda, often by picking up on earlier adventure seeds.

Some plots are straightforward, and resolving one scene leads directly to the next in the chain. Others might be complex and allow many choices. Here are some example plot structures.

GAUNTLET

This is the easiest plot structure to create. It's a straightforward sequence of scenes, one following the other. Once the Seekers start the story, they move to scene A, then B, then C, and finally to the conclusion where they complete the objective. Scenes in the gauntlet can be discovery or obstacles, but the characters must complete each in order with few options for backtracking.

The gauntlet leaves little room for choice, so unless you disguise it well, the players might feel led by the

For examples of ways to structure your adventures, you might check out *The Seed of Gaia*, the first campaign module for *Asunder*. The three linked adventures it contains do a good job of spanning the different adventure types.

The starting adventure, *Planting Seeds*, focuses on a highly reactive story (There's been a murder! Find out whodunnit!), and incorporates elements of all three scene structure styles. The beginning of the adventure always starts the same, but then spreads out into a web, allowing the Seekers to pursue a number of different leads. Toward the middle of the story it becomes more like a well, eventually proceeding to a more gauntlet-style conclusion.

Isle of the Dead is very much a well structure; the Seekers start with a variety of options at their disposal, which gradually narrow until they reach the final confrontation.

Finally, *The Wellspring* is a classic web adventure, with numerous scenes that interconnect and can occur in a variety of orders and can unfold in a variety of ways. This adventure even uses a dirty trick: scenes that can be framed in different ways based on the Seekers' choices. When the Seekers break into a tower in *Skyseed*, it may be to plant evidence in a lab for one NPC, or it may be to steal an important item for another. Either way, it's the same scene, but it can serve multiple purposes.

nose. One way to mitigate this sort of linear plot is to create opportunities to skip a scene or two. For example, discovering a secret passage could let the characters bypass a difficult combat obstacle.

WELL

The well structure is ideal for more complex stories. This sort of plot has three or four "bands," each containing a number of possible scenes, that move the Seekers closer to the conclusion. The Seekers can move from one scene to another in the same band or the next lower band until they reach the end.

The advantage of the well structure is that it gives the players a great deal more freedom than a linear plot. The drawback is that it requires preparing many possible scenes, some of which the players might skip over if they discover a clear track to the end.

WEB

This plot structure is the most complex. Scenes connect to each other flexibly, in a manner similar to that of the well, but they might lead to dead ends or take the characters back to earlier scenes.

From the start, the Seekers can go to scene A, B, or C. Proceeding to B, for example, leads the Seekers to C and then E. Each of these paths might ultimately lead to F, but that is a dead end; proceeding to G leads to the next part of the adventure. From there the group can move on to H or to J, and ultimately to the conclusion.

ADVENTURES BY LEVEL

The kinds of adventures you create depend on the group's level.

STARTING ADVENTURES (LEVEL 0)

Starting adventures set the stage for everything to come. Think of them as prologues. They explain how the group forms and why it stays together. The story also creates avenues for the Seekers' development, directing their choice of paths as they advance in level.

During a starting adventure, the players learn the basic rules of the game. By the end, they should know how to make the various kinds of rolls, understand how combat works, and have a basic knowledge of what Seekers can do. The adventure should also let the Seekers find and acquire equipment to help them survive novice adventures.

REACTIVE PLOT

Their first adventure should start with the Seekers reacting to a threat to their lives, their community, and their loved ones. The plot lets the Seekers explore what steps they must take to deal with the threat and give them a chance to come together as a group.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

The adventure should create opportunities for the players to feel out what their Seekers might be good at. Try to include at least one combat, so they can decide who is

best at fighting or, at least, who fights the most. Include a piece or two of living gear, some kalea venom, or both, so Seekers can have an opportunity to try out Essence powers of various kinds. Other opportunities include investigation, roleplaying, and exploration.

STORY IDEAS

Here are some example ideas for starting adventures.

- ☞ The Seekers travel on a merchant ship that comes under attack by pirates. They must defend the ship and decide what to do when the captain is killed.
- ☞ An infestation of animate, carnivorous plants threatens their home village. The Seekers must find a way to stop the threat and save the village.
- ☞ The Seekers are sent to gather information on a nearby clutch of Naga. Along the way they shelter in a glade that isn't as safe as it first appears.

NOVICE ADVENTURES (LEVELS 1-2)

Novice Seekers are tougher and more varied than starting Seekers, able to face more challenging and involved plots. These adventures should strengthen the connections between the Seekers. During the first novice adventure, the players should learn how to use their Seekers' new capabilities: bonded use Essence powers, vanguards find new tactical options, while survivors and marauders learn new ways to mix it up in combat. By the time the Seekers reach level 2, the players should have a good understanding of how the game plays.



One must be careful about bonding to too many pieces of living gear. They may end up controlling you.

REACTIVE OR PROACTIVE PLOTS

Novice adventures should be simple and straightforward, probably not lasting more than a couple of days of game time. This is a good time to plant seeds for future stories. Let the Seekers hear rumors about foreboding places to explore, dangerous monsters that need to be slain, and fabulous treasures just waiting to be unearthed. You might also introduce a recurring villain to vex the group throughout the campaign. In this way, you encourage the group to undertake adventures on their own without having to be drawn into the plot.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

During their time as novices, the players should be looking ahead to possible expert paths. Let the players become familiar with their Seekers' path talents and powers at level 1. Then create opportunities at level 2 based on how they played to make future path selection easier. The group might encounter a prophet of the Pure Light, a Chaos site, or an old Storm Point bodyguard looking for someone to train as a replacement. If the players already have paths in mind, shape the story to explain the Seekers' progression.

STORY IDEAS

Here are some example ideas for novice adventures.

- ☞ Starvation is rampant in the Seekers' hometown because necessary supplies are being stolen by bandits or Naga. The Seekers must hunt down the culprits, defeat them, and reclaim the supplies.
- ☞ A patron friendly to the Seekers sends them to infiltrate a rival's household and steal damning information.
- ☞ People in the town are under demonic influence. The Seekers must learn the source of the influence and find a way to free those under it, so they can learn the location of the demon.

EXPERT ADVENTURES (LEVELS 3–6)

By the time the players choose their expert paths, they should have a strong understanding of how the game works and be invested in their Seekers. Now they are ready to leave behind the place where they began and seek adventure in the wider world.

As with novice adventures, you should be planting the seeds of what is to come. The successes and failures of these expeditions might have repercussions that aren't realized until much later in the game. When the Seekers eventually undertake those adventures, the players should see that their earlier choices mattered to the world's development.

PROACTIVE PLOTS

The Seekers are likely undertaking expeditions on their own at this point, based on rumors and seeds you

planted in earlier stories. They might mount expeditions to vanquish a terrible evil or to deal with a threat to the lands where they lived. Perhaps they seek out fame, glory, treasure, or aim for something else that's important to them.

The Seekers' expert paths should also advance their personal objectives. Before you start the first adventure at this tier, work with the players to identify any such objectives. Then turn them into story objectives for the adventures you run. Each adventure should allow the Seekers to complete one or more of their story objectives. By the time the Seekers finish the last expert adventure, they should be ready to pick their master paths.

CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

Expert Seekers adopt specific tactical styles, favor certain Essence trees, or develop along particular themes. You should encourage and reward such focus, since it will guide each player's decision when it comes time to choose a master path.

STORY IDEAS

Here are some example ideas for expert adventures.

- ☞ A fragment of the God-Machine lies slumbering under an ancient, ruined temple. Unfortunately, the Naga know about it, too.
- ☞ The saber-rattling between two rival city-states is threatening to boil over into open warfare. Preventing widespread bloodshed (or ensuring victory for one or the other) will require some deft maneuvering.
- ☞ A traveler tells a tale of an ancient machine in the heart of the New Gaia jungle. She even provides a map.

MASTER ADVENTURES (LEVELS 7–10)

When the Seekers choose their master paths, they become some of the most powerful people in the region. They have a bevy of powers, potent fighting techniques, and a range of talents to help them overcome almost any obstacle. With great power comes great responsibility, though: the Seekers will be pitted against dangerous monsters, in deadly locations, to stop threats that could plunge entire nations, if not the world, into darkness.

The group likely has one or more great quests to accomplish. This quest defines what the Seekers should be doing, and their adventures should bring them closer to completing this ultimate objective.

BETWEEN ADVENTURES

When they aren't adventuring, the Seekers resume their normal lives. They work, play, conduct research, grow living gear, fight in the Arena, and do all the other things people do from day to day. You can summarize these activities or let the players describe what they do.

CAMPAIGNS

Adventures make up a campaign in the same way that scenes make up adventures. Each adventure contributes to the campaign's plot, with events in one determining the circumstances of the next. Creating campaigns enriches the play experience by letting the players see how their Seekers' successes and failures affect the overarching story. Adventures that drive the campaign's plot increase this impact.

Since completing one adventure advances the group level by 1, a typical campaign includes eleven adventures: one starting, two novice, four expert, and four master. At the end of the campaign, the group should have reached level 10.

You create a campaign in the same way that you build an individual adventure, just on a larger scale. Beyond the earlier guidelines about plot structure and scene creation, you should keep a few things in mind.

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVE

What should the Seekers accomplish by the end of the campaign? The objective should be something that makes

a lasting impact on the game: the Seekers might broker a peace between humans and Naga, defeat the powerful demon gathering strength in the Great Scar, or defeat a powerful being raising armies of the dead to conquer the known world.

THREE-ACT STRUCTURE

Just as a scene has a beginning, middle, and end, your campaign is best divided into three major acts. The first act sets the stage and should be no more than three stories long. The third leads to the climax and conclusion, comprising one to two stories. All the stories in between constitute the second act, raising the stakes through a series of victories and setbacks.

Once you have a structure in place, decide about what stories fit best into the various acts and make notes. What should happen, what are the obstacles the Seekers face, and how does each story transition to the next? These notes will help you create the framework for the first story. You might also work a bit ahead, sketching in details for adventures to come, but don't set too much in stone. The Seekers can and usually do head in unexpected directions, which might require you to adjust your plans.



Stealing rubies from the stone eaters of south Pacari is a reason to run, because you can never hide from them.

ADVENTURE TOOLS

The adventures presented in this chapter make use of the following three tools, which you can use for your own adventures to inject a little more excitement and intrigue.

BRANCH POINTS

When you're building an adventure, you can choose to include one or two **branch points** in that adventure. Pick a spot in the adventure where things might go in a few different ways. On index cards or pieces of paper, write down three possibilities for things that can happen as a result of the Seekers' involvement in the adventure at that point. When the Seekers get to that point in the adventure, lay the three cards face-down on the table and allow them to pick one. Discard the other two and read the one they chose; whatever's written on that card is now true.

Each of the adventures provided has included branch points.

THE COUNTDOWN DIE

The provided adventures use this mechanic from time to time in order to heighten the tension of a scene. Use a **countdown die** when the Seekers have a number of things they have to do in a limited amount of time, and when there's a consequence for taking too long. Decide what that consequence is, then take a d6 and either roll it or place it on a specific face. Allow each Seeker to take an action (or allow all Seekers to take a group action). Once they have, turn the countdown die so that its face-up number decrements by 1. If it's already at 1, the consequence occurs.

If you're using multiple countdown dice at once, you might find it useful to label each die with an index card or scrap of paper, placing the countdown die on the label.

CHASES

It can be exciting to run a chase sequence when the Seekers are trying to catch (or escape from) someone or something. Here's how they work:

Break the chase into rounds, as follows. Seekers are trying to get 5 successes between them before the enemy gets 3. This is true whether the Seekers are the pursuers or the pursued.

- ☞ **Fast Turns:** A player who takes a fast turn can make an Agility challenge roll with 1 boon to try to gain ground. Once a player takes a fast turn, they're fatigued for 1 minute. If they're already fatigued, they're also impaired. If they're already impaired, they take a cumulative -3 penalty to Health each time they take a fast turn during the chase; this penalty goes away when the fatigued and impaired conditions go away.

- ☞ **Slow Turns:** A player who takes a slow turn can make an Agility challenge roll to try to gain ground. The player can take any number of banes on the roll; banes remove fast turn penalties in this order: Health penalties, -3 per bane taken; then impaired; then fatigued.

- ☞ **End of Turn:** The enemy makes an Agility challenge roll with 1 boon.

If the Seekers get 5 successes before the enemy gets 3, they catch their quarry or escape, depending on what they were trying to do. If not, their quarry escapes or their pursuers catch them.

SPECIAL ACTIONS DURING CHASES

Seekers aren't limited to simply running fast or slow during chases. A Seeker can try to attack pursuers, topple over crates to make an obstacle, shout to bystanders for help, or any number of other interesting actions. For most of these, allow the Seeker to take a slow turn that doesn't contribute directly to getting successes. Instead of making an Agility roll to gain ground, they take their special action. When Seekers do this, they *do* still reduce penalties and afflictions incurred by taking fast turns, if they choose to take banes on their special action roll.

The effects of a special action are wide and varied. Some might cause damage to the enemy, or impose banes on the enemy's roll, or even remove enemy successes. A particularly clever special action could even end the chase right away. After all, if a Seeker decides to set a bridge on fire as she's running over it, it'll be hard for her pursuers to give chase.

SECRETS

When preparing to run an adventure, come up with a **secret** for one, two, or all Seekers playing. Customize these secrets to your individual players, keeping in mind what they'll find fun and what they're likely to enjoy pursuing. A secret is a hidden agenda for that Seeker, something they can use to inform their roleplay and that they can reveal at a dramatic moment in order to make things more fun for everyone.

While a Seeker's secret is hidden, that Seeker needn't do any more than keep it in mind when making decisions and roleplaying interactions. However, whenever the Seeker feels it's appropriate, they can reveal their secret to everyone at the table. This causes two things to happen.

- ☞ First, the Seeker must escalate the situation as described under **Fatal Flaws** in Chapter 3.
- ☞ Second, the revealing Seeker gets a benefit based on the secret.
- ☞ Third, once the escalated situation is resolved, all of the *other* Seekers each get 1 Seeker point (Chapter 3).

Each of the adventures provided has example secrets you can use in your own game.

GETTING CREATIVE WITH SECRETS

The ‘secrets’ mechanic built into *Asunder* is an expert way to give players more agency over the Seekers’ story. Usually, the onus of surprises, reveals, and ‘gotcha’ moments falls on a Keeper’s shoulders; letting the players do some of the storytelling work transforms the experience for them and you. While developing secrets takes quite a bit of thought and planning before an adventure, the mechanic makes the Keeper’s job during the game easier for a few reasons.

First, you already know what’s coming. We recommend sending the Seekers their secrets before the game. Even if you can’t predict ‘when, why, and how’ a Seeker will reveal their secret during a game, the secret itself isn’t a surprise to you, and you’ve probably played out a few hypotheticals mentally.

Second, the secret is a surprise to every other player. No matter how it shakes out, the other Seekers are forced to reckon with whatever is revealed, for better or worse. Suspense, adventure, and character development are always following closely behind a secret-reveal!

Third, secrets make you productively plan a game session. While improvisation is a key part of playing *Asunder*, writing adventures, and coming up with fun ways to engage players, turns in a more fun and dynamic play session for you and them.

Fourth, the secrets mechanic forces you to consider your players, and their characters’ backgrounds. The world you play in is essentially “yours”, which means it’s up to you to let your players know what options they have available to them. You could simply tell them, but giving them a secret that is curated specifically for their character is a more subtle way of giving them “permission” to interact with the world in ways they might not have initially thought they could.

Finally, there is always a choice for the player not to reveal their secret. Usually, revealing a secret grants an in-game reward, like a Seeker Point or game play advantage/consequence, so a decision to discard the reward in order to keep a secret can be equally impactful. Just because it isn’t revealed, doesn’t make it less true, but only the Seeker and the Keeper will know what the Seeker sacrificed. Any time a player chooses not to reveal their secret, they make you take a closer look at their character.

WAYS TO USE SECRETS

Here are several good ways to use secrets in your *Asunder* campaigns.

RELATIONSHIPS

The Seeker has a history with a minor character or a group. This is an amazing use of secrets and is probably the easiest and most obvious to implement. Players will usually want to reveal this sort of secret, whether the relationship is positive or negative.

KNOWLEDGE

The Seeker knows something the others don’t. This is a way to get a player to give in-game exposition without asking them to make an intelligence challenge roll. You’ve created your world, you know what’s going on within it. Send a bit of history or information to a player before the game, and when they encounter the specific circumstance, sit back, relax, and let them talk about the world to their friends. It’s really fun to hear your creations and ideas repeated back to you!

FLASHBACKS

The Seeker encountered someone/something in the past relevant to the current situation. Ok, this is one can be very powerful, because there’s some innate gameplay involved. Send the player a short explanation of the scene that happened in the past. This should include the location, the minor characters involved, the Seeker’s goal (what they want from the minor characters), and, if the Seeker is successful, what they will get as a reward. When the player chooses to ‘reveal the secret,’ aka activate the flashback in-game, buckle up and dive into roleplaying the scene with them. This one is tricky because you don’t want to write the finite, hard-and-fast end of the scene—it’s more fun to role play the scene and see where it goes. Ideally, the Seeker gains the reward by activating the flashback. But failure should always be an option, so have something fun planned if the Seeker does not achieve their goal in the flashback scene, too.

EXAMPLE

You begin a game in the middle of a team vs. team arena battle, wanting to be more than a hack-and-slash game, you give out flashback secrets. When they activate them, you role play a scene that happened before the fight. One Seeker’s scene revealed that they were in the same guild as a member of the opposing team. After the scene was played out, the reward was that the opposing team member would fight alongside the Seeker for one round of combat. Another Seeker’s scene revealed that she had intimidated the guardian of the match. After the scene, the reward was an ‘ace in the hole’—a way to force the guardian to call the match in their favor.

DREAMS AND FORTUNE-TELLING

The Seeker has a dream or a premonition into their future. I’ve used both of these when dealing with the higher beings of the world that are too powerful to fight. Besides providing some bonus flavor for the game, this method also requires the player to do a bit of fun character work. Tell the player to come up with a dream or premonition before the game and include a short prompt of what you’re looking for. Be clear if the dream should be positive or negative (or if the tone is up to the player) and if it should be something that already happened, something that could happen, or simply something the Seeker wishes for. Also, tell them to be able to describe it to the other, and if they don’t feel comfortable making it up on the spot, ask them

to write it down. The players will be delighted to learn something more about their fellow Seeker characters, and so will you! This is another moment for you to put your feet up and enjoy watching the show! Also, consider making the rewards high-concept, too.

Enjoy and experiment. You can always reward Seeker Points if a character reveals they owe a debt to a minor character, and that creates some intense playable conflict! But we also dare you to use secrets to find new ways for your Seekers to interact with this world.

OPTIONAL RULE

THEATER OF THE MIND

While battlemats and miniatures are best-suited for keeping track of precise Speed characteristics and combat ranges, some players choose to play without them. For these players, the following rules provide an option for “Theatre of the Mind” groups to track Speed and movement in a meaningful and systematic way.

MOVEMENT

Characters move one Range Band per Turn.

MOVEMENT AND RANGE MODIFIERS

- ☞ **Halving Speed:** If something halves Speed, it requires two turns to move a Range Band instead. Also, reduce the Speed by 5 when it comes to Chases and Races (see as follows).
- ☞ **Rush:** If a character rushes, they can move two Range Bands per turn (or one if their Speed has been halved).
- ☞ **Retreat:** This allows a character to move away to Short range and does not trigger free attacks.

SIZE AND REACH

The advantage of greater Size and Reach is being able to strike smaller opponents, and those with shorter weapons, before they can close in. In reality, this is offset by the fact that longer weapons and attacks can be unwieldy against foes in close combat. The easiest option is to simply ignore Size and Reach; however, if you still want Size and Reach to have an element in play, use this option:

- ☞ Attacks in the first round against opponents with less Size or Reach gain one Boon. One time during the following round, this becomes a Bane as the opponent closes in and the individual with the Reach advantage has to briefly adjust their stance, grip, etc. to compensate. Thereafter, there are no more modifiers.

RANGE BANDS

The normal Range Bands are kept. Range Weapons are rated Short, Medium, or Long. Range Bands beyond this

are typically considered too far to reach in combat. Only certain Essence Powers (i.e. Great Leap) permit characters to cover multiple, or more distant, Range Bands easily.

SPEED - CHASING AND RACING

In Theatre of the Mind play, Speed is treated like an Attribute. It has a normal Score, but also has a modifier equal to its Score minus 10. (For example, Speed 13 has a +3 modifier). This allows characters to Chase or Race by making appropriate Speed challenges or opposed rolls, which results in longer races or pursuits over several rounds as characters close in or increase their lead with each success. This makes the use of Speed more cinematic and exciting; after all, no one can always move at their optimum speed, especially in chaotic situations.

EXAMPLE OF A QUICK PURSUIT

Nayta the Skimmer (Speed 14) is pursuing the fleet-footed thief who just snatched her gem pouch! She rolls a d20 and gets a 12. She adds her Speed modifier (+4) for a total of 16. This beats the thief's Speed 12, and she catches them in short order.

EXAMPLE OF A LONGER RACE

Nayta has agreed to a foot race through the local streets, confident she can beat the irritating Pacari fool who challenged her. The Keeper decides it will take four rounds of running to reach the finish line. In the first round, Nayta rolls a d20 and gets a 4! With her +4 Speed modifier, her total of 8 is not enough to match the Pacari's Speed of 10 and he pulls ahead of her, while she curses her luck at stumbling out of the starting block. In round two, Nayta rolls an 11 (for a total of 15), enabling her to catch up to the Pacari. Neck-and-neck as they enter the third round, she rolls an 8 (for a result of 12), gritting her teeth as she pulls slightly ahead of her opponent. As they enter the final round, a decisive roll of 15 (total of 19) gives her a clear lead and she sails across the finish line. She is victorious, but her stumble at the start remains a valuable lesson in not being overconfident!

EXAMPLE OF A SPEED CHALLENGE

Nayta is desperately running towards the exit of a buried ruin as a heavy stone begins to roll across the door, threatening to trap her inside forever! She makes a Speed challenge roll, rolling a 7 and adding her Speed modifier of +4. Her total of 11 just manages to beat the standard target number of 10, and her desperate burst of speed gets her through the exit just before the stone rolls into place with a grinding thump!

AREA OF EFFECT

Areas of effect such as cones, lines, or spheres can affect one opponent per yard of length or radius.

REFERENCE TABLES

BASELINE DAMAGE

Starting	1d6	1d6 + 2
Novice	1d6 + 1	2d6 + 1
Expert	2d6	4d6
Master	4d6	8d6

WEATHER

3	Powerful storm	x 4 (see text)
4–5	Heavy precipitation	x 1.5
6–8	Unseasonably cold	x 1
9–12	Normal conditions	x 1
13–15	Unseasonably warm	x 1
16–17	Precipitation	x 1.5
18	Storm	x 2

TRAVEL CONDITIONS

Navigator	3 boons
Plains	1 boon
Desert	1 bane
Forest	2 banes
Hills	1 bane
Mountains	2 banes
Swamp	2 banes
Precipitation	1 bane
Storm	2 banes
Powerful Storm	3 banes

ENCOUNTER FREQUENCY

Extreme	Hourly
Major	Once per 4 hours
Moderate	Once per 8 hours
Minor	Once per day and once per night

DIFFICULTY PER DAY

Starting	25
Novice	100
Expert	200
Master	500

ENCOUNTERS

Helpful	20	20	—	—
Harmless	18–19	18–19	20	—
Environment	14–17	14–17	18–19	19–20
Nothing	6–13	8–13	14–17	17–18
Easy combat	2–5	4–7	8–13	13–16
Average combat	1	2–3	4–7	7–12
Challenging combat	—	1	2–3	3–6
Hard combat	—	—	1	1–2

ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTY

Starting	3 or less	4–15	16–30	31+	25
Novice	10 or less	11–30	31–50	51+	100
Expert	30 or less	31–50	51–125	126+	250
Master	50 or less	51–125	126–200	201+	None

TRAPS BY THREAT

Thorn trap	Lethal	Starting
Poisoned needle	Lethal	Starting
Webs	Obstacle	Starting
Concealed pit	Snare	Novice
Spear trap	Lethal	Novice
Concealed spiked pit	Snare, lethal	Expert
Falling cage	Obstacle	Expert
Flesh-eating slime	Lethal	Expert
Pendulum blade	Lethal	Expert
Collapsing ceiling	Lethal, obstacle	Master
Flame jet	Lethal	Master
Poison gas	Lethal	Master

PHYSICAL TRAITS

1	Odd odor	11	Ugly
2	Grubby-looking	12	Nice clothing
3	Wrinkled	13	Bare feet
4	Oddly-shaped mouth	14	Covered in plant growth
5	Strange skin texture	15	Diseased
6	Lots of hair	16	Extra body part
7	Little hair	17	Strange Chaos mutations
8	Noticeable limp	18	Freckles
9	Nasty scar	19	Tattoo
10	Attractive	20	Missing body part

MOTIVATION

1	Adventure	11	Love
2	Atonement	12	Magic
3	Chaos	13	Order
4	Glory	14	Peace
5	Good	15	Power
6	Immortality	16	Salvation
7	Improvement	17	Security
8	Justice	18	Validation
9	Knowledge	19	Vengeance
10	Liberty	20	Wealth

PERSONALITY TRAITS

1	Overprotective	11	Calm
2	Wicked	12	Reasonable
3	Cruel	13	Generous
4	Loud	14	Honest
5	Vulgar	15	Noble
6	Ignoble	16	Genteel
7	Scheming	17	Quiet
8	Greedy	18	Benevolent
9	Erratic	19	Virtuous
10	Nervous	20	Focused

TREASURE LIMITS

Starting	2
Novice	10
Expert	100
Master	1000

PURE LIGHT ATTACK AND DAMAGE

Starting	4d6	+1
Novice	6d6	+2
Expert	10d6	+3
Master	14d6	+4

CHAOS SHARD EFFECTS BY RANK

1	Chaos site
2	Chaos site
3	Chaos site, Chaos beasts
4	Chaos site, Chaos beasts, attack
5	Chaos site, Chaos beasts, attack

DISCORD TO CHAOS SITE RANK

1-5	No Chaos site
6-10	Rank 1
11-15	Rank 2
16-18	Rank 3
19-20	Rank 4
21+	Rank 5

CHAOS SITE SIZE

1	10 yards
2	30 yards
3	100 yards
4	1 mile
5	5 miles

CREATURE DIFFICULTY

1	Starting
5	Starting
10	Novice
25	Novice
50	Expert
100	Expert
250	Master
500	Master



MAJOR TRADE ROUTE:



MUCH BLACK GLASS HERE
BUT DEMON SPAWNINGS ARE EVERYWHERE

THE KRAGGEN

WATER AND STEAM SPRAY AS HIGH
AS FIFTY MEN INTO THE AIR HERE

OCEAN

GREEN FOX BARK THAT
NEVER DISSIPATES

MAN HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN ON ASUNDER. SOMETHING CAME BEFORE US.
SOMETHING DARK AND ANCIENT AND UNKNOWLEDGEABLE. THAT IS WHAT I SEEK.
THE ANSWER TO WHAT WAS BEFORE.
NONE OF MY KIN CARE FOR THE PAST. THEY ONLY PURSUE THE MEASURES OF THE DAY,
BUT I THINK THE PAST IS BEGINNING TO CRUMBLE BACK OUT OF THE DARKNESS
AND IF IT IS KNOWN IT WILL DEVOUR MAN IN ITS WICKED MIND.

I HAVE SEARCHED THE OCEANS AND ISLES FOR THE SECRETS THAT ARE KEPT BY THE UNKNOWN KEEPER.
THIS MAP IS A RECORD OF MY FINDINGS AND MY FAILURES.
THE WORLD IS VAST AND VIOLENT. TOO VAST FOR ONE LIFE TIME TO EXPLORE.
THE GREEN FOX HAS BURNED MY LUNGS AND I DON'T HAVE MUCH TIME LEFT AMONG THE LIVING.
WHY YOU FIND THE KEEPER AND SAVE ASUNDER FROM BEING DESTROYED BY EVIL SEVEN DEEP INTO THE EARTH.
GULSHIM THE LOST EXPLORER

FINEST SILKS AVAILABLE
FAR ISLES

SWERMONT TOR

BLACK ISLAND

HIGH TOR BAY WILL EAT EVEN A SHIP
SO TO THE EAST OF THE CRACKS

RED SMOKE DOUPS FROM THE
PEAKS OF ARRISHANE

ARRISHANE

THE EMPRESS SERPENT
WAS SPOOTTED HERE!



TALEISHANMAR

BLACK SEA

THE WATERS STAND
STILL HERE

SHILK

THE SHILK STEAL
CHILDREN FROM
THEIR MOTHERS

THESE ISLES ARE FORMED FROM
SMOOTH STONE HARDER THAN
MY BONE AND SHARPED LIKE
MY HORN'S WINGS

EASTRAIN ISLES
GOOD HUNTING

EXTRAORDINARILY STRONG
TIDES HERE

ERINILIO
OCEAN

HERE I WITNESSED BEAST RIDERS
BOULEDED WITH SHARKS WHO DIPPED
IN AND OUT OF THE WATER LIKE
FISH WITH LEGS

UMMALAND

ISLAND

BLACK BIGHT

CARILISSA
SEA

LUSHAMI ISLANDS (VOID
AT ALL COSTS)

GREAT GOUTS OF BUBBLING
ENERGY CHURN THE WATER HERE

RAINBOWS OF ENERGY GOUT
FROM BENEATH THE OCEAN BETWEEN
THESE ISLANDS

THE GEYSERS

AND STONE MONUMENTS NO MAN
COULD HAVE BUILT SLOWER OUT
ACROSS THE OCEAN

A SUNKEN CITY LIES BENEATH
THE WAVES HERE BUT IT IS HOME
TO A GIANT'S NARROW CREATURE

INNER SEA

FAR EAST



ARAELSKO
PIRATES

KANONO

NETI BAY

PACARI

GULF OF
ISANDOLE

RI'USH
ARE IMPORTANT
LANDS BECAUSE
THEY ARE
GUARDED

ARSHELIGOS

LEVANTIONS GRAZE
THESE WATERS

SWAMPY HORRIBLE STINKING!

BOLSTEN MIRE

THINGS LIVE HERE THAT EVEN
THE DARK FISH OF THE OCEAN
WOULD RUN FROM

THE PERAKLES

VERY WELCOMING TRADE OUTPOST

THIS MAP ONLY DEPICTS THE MAJOR PORTS OF ASUNDER
THERE ARE MANY MORE CITIES, TOWNS, VILLAGES, AND MORE
FOUND

THOUGH WE DREW CLOSE TO THE EAST ASIRES
WE NEVER LANDED DUE TO THE LARGE NUMBER OF
ENORMOUS CREATURES PREDATING THE ISLANDS

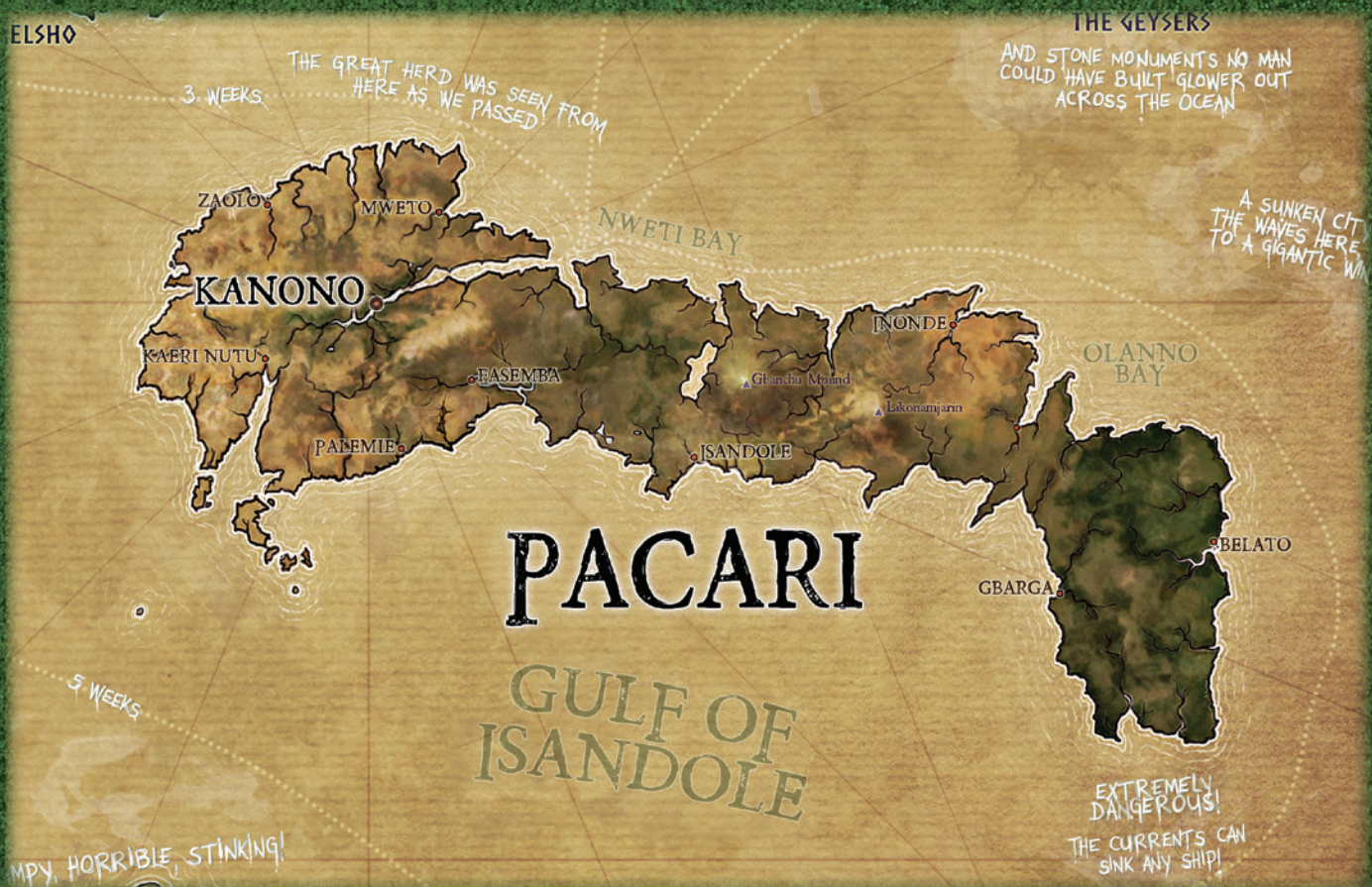
EAST ASIRES

THE KNOWN TERRITORIES OF
MAIN ISLAND
AND ITS IMMEDIATE SURROUNDS









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