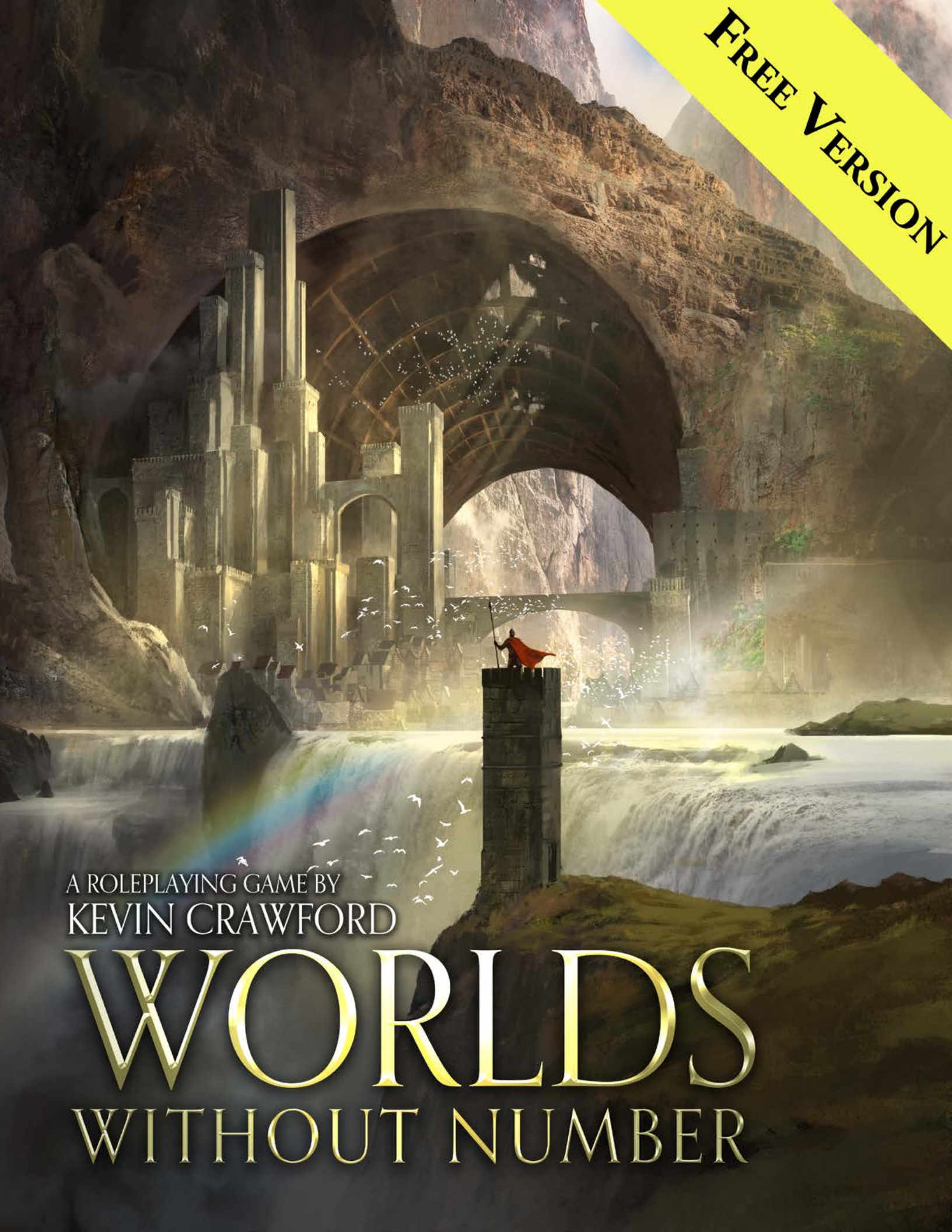
FREE VERSION
A ROLEPLAYING GAME BY
KEVIN CRAWFORD
WORLDS
WITHOUT NUMBER

WORLDS WITHOUT NUMBER

FREE VERSION

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TALES OF THE LATTER EARTH

The stars gutter and the skies fade and the earth grows weary with years. Ages of men and of Outsiders have ascended and been forgotten, and only the bones of their cities and the dust of their dreams remain upon this tired world. The Legacy of their laws is woven deep now, the edicts of dead gods and fallen sorcerer-kings made to trace patterns of power we no longer understand. We are heirs to their unseen empires.

Yet our kings are beggar-princes at best, and our sages but stumbling children. So deep is the past of Latter Earth that no one truly understands what has gone before or can lay sure hands on the Legacy we have inherited. We wield strange powers we no longer comprehend and summon forces that were never meant for our petty purposes. We live in a world haunted by those who came before us, and we suffer for the sins of their dead.

Our kingdoms struggle to survive in this mis-made world. We toil with muscle and the work of beasts rather than the strange devices of sorcery our ancestors wielded, and our lives are ones of simple labor. Sages have preserved inscriptions of the ancient mechanisms, but their subtle arts no longer work in this decayed age and the Legacy has changed from the days when they were still of use. Nothing is sure any longer save for the strength in a human arm and the sharpness of an iron blade. Our armies grip spears where our ancestors wielded suns.

Humanity has not always been the master of the Latter Earth. In former ages Outsiders came from the skies to be lords over us, changing our world to better suit their purposes. We were forced below, into the earth to dwell within the Deeps, and the world was made hollow with our delving. Only after long ages were our sorcerers and heroes able to drive out the interlopers. The remnants of their rule remain on the surface, *arratus* of strange plants and terrible beasts and wastes that choke a man with their noxious vapors. Sometimes these Outsider lands still hold a scattering of the old lords, bitter and hateful against their usurping slaves, and sometimes they come out to punish our lands.

We, too, have changed with the eons. Both the Outsiders and ancient sorcerer-kings worked changes on humanity, forming some among us into other beings more suitable to their ends. Some of these changed ones remain allies to their human cousins, while others nurse only the fury of ancient instinct or present bitterness. Some have their own kingdoms and domains in distant parts of the world, and some hide in nighted places where they can better prey on us. They are the hands of the past, the living relics that often work us woe.

Yet we are not content to struggle with the past and its changed children. We must also war against each other in the present, princes and lords vying over rulership of some miserable spit of land or patch of blood-soaked earth. Some fight over the rich tombs of the ancients, while others bloody each other out of pride, ambition, or the simple pleasure of conquest. A strong king brings peace to his people, but his neighbors will ever be jealous of that strength. Heroes are needed to fight in defense of their homes and their lords.

We have heroes still. Men and women graced with no more than courage and resolve may yet rise to light a new age with the fire of their example. Some may yet even rise to become Legates, blessed with a direct link with the Legacy and the gift of its superhuman powers. A Legate may be wicked or just, selfish or compassionate, but they all bear the strength of the ancients. The warriors among them strike like the fury of the storm and Legate-sorcerers invoke marvels out of a forgotten age. The greatest among them might cleave armies with their naked blades or call up cities from a barren waste.

Yet one need not be a Legate to be a hero, nor wield the powers of the ancients to give precious help to the present. Throughout the Latter Earth there are countless lands and people in need of help. Defense against the depredations of monstrous beasts, protection from the anger of the Outsiders, wisdom to defeat wicked lords and mend bloody quarrels… a brave heart and a strong arm can never be useless in this world.

Even those who care little for the troubles of others will find profit in daring the black delvings of the Deeps and bringing up the treasures of the past from the grip of the once-men who yet hold them. Terrible wildernesses of alien beasts and strange flora still shroud the ruined cities of the Outsiders, and brave explorers can weight their horses with gold if they can find safe paths through these desolations. The world is wide, and strange wonders await over each new horizon.

This is the Latter Earth but it is not the end of days. Our ancestors rose and fell ten thousand times, and we can rise yet again. Our lands are impoverished and our people are hard-pressed by their own folly and the shadows of a bottomless past, but we have courage still. There have been ages of darkness worse than this, and dawn came again when they passed. The stars gutter and the skies fade and the earth grows weary with years, but it has not ended yet. There is time enough for new heroes to rise from the ashes we have inherited.

Will you be among them?

Heroes of a Twilight Age

Worlds Without Number is a fantasy role-playing game set in the far future of the Latter Earth, after innumerable eons of human history, alien rule, and unfathomable arcane evolution. The players take up the role of adventurers in this fading age, raising sword and sorcery against the foes of humanity and the obstacles that hinder their own ambitious aims. Many will perish on the spears of bitter rivals, be rent by the talons of monstrous beasts, or fall prey to their own reckless daring. Others, however, may yet live to obtain a name more glorious than kings.

What Do You Do In This Game?

The characters in ***Worlds Without Number*** are assumed to be budding adventurers, men and women who have particular talents suitable to a life of daring exploration, bloody battles, or ruthless intrigue. They are skilled and capable practitioners of their particular specialties, but all of them are acutely mortal, and a too-ready recourse to their blades is likely to get them killed early in their career.

More experienced and skilled heroes have less to fear from an unlucky spear-thrust, but even the most hardened hero must be wary of a quick death when facing numerous foes. A gritty life of swords and sorcery awaits them.

Every hero in the game has some sort of goal or ambition. It may be an honest and simple desire for wealth beyond their dreams of avarice, or it might be a quest to avenge himself on a tyrannical lord, or it could be a dream of establishing a new nation for her exiled people. A hero may never live to see their ambition become real, but every PC has *some* sort of goal to drive them, even if that goal may change over time.

Some heroes pursue their goals through scavenging the remnants of a more glorious past. The ancient sorcerer-kings raised mighty cities and wrought wondrous marvels, many of which are still functional enough to be precious to modern humanity. Adventurers willing to plumb their ruined cities or search their ancient strongholds can come out bearing a king's ransom on their backs, or discover artifacts that could shift the balance of power among nations. Given the perils awaiting in such places, however, there are always far more who go in than ever emerge again.

Others delve into the depths, exploring the ancient subterranean Deeps that once incarcerated humanity during the age of the Outsider lords, the aliens who once ruled the Latter Earth. Many of these Deeps were never opened after the sorcerer-kings overthrew their masters, and the bones of their inhabitants now lie tangled with the common trinkets and tools that have become precious to their heirs. Monstrous Outsider beasts and maddened automatons still lurk in the darkness, as well as the degenerate and crazed remnants of the original human prisoners.

A few heroes are even bold enough to venture into the howling wastelands of the *arratus*, the desolate xenoformed territories poisoned by the Outsiders to make them more homely to the aliens. The hideous flora and fauna that infest these places are lethal to humans, but the treasures there are often richest from the difficulty of reaching them. Ancient human cities or Outsider strongholds are sometimes buried in the heart of an ancient *arratu*, their wealth preserved for the heroes brave enough to dare their poisoned streets.

Yet ruin exploration and expeditions into the wilderness are not the only adventures to be had. The lands of the Latter Earth are a patchwork of young kingdoms, savage tribes, and sullen empires, all of them with their own quarrels and ambitions. Adventurers often find themselves enlisted by the powerful to carry out their more dangerous tasks, and can easily be drawn into the intrigue between rival powers. A hero who dreams of forging their own empire can hope to achieve it with enough coin, enough friends, and enough luck. Nations are always rising and fading away in the roil of the present day, and there are less likely kings to be found than a cunning and successful hero.

Exploration and intrigue are paths for pursuing a hero's ambitions, but an accomplished adventurer must also deal with the simple human challenges of life in a hard and half-tamed world. There will always be petitioners seeking the help of the strong, injustices to pique a hero's ire, and calamities that threaten people and places they care about. The Latter Earth is old and careless of its inhabitants, and many terrible things come to pass for want of brave souls capable of forestalling them.

How Does This Game Play?

Worlds Without Number is based on an "Old School Renaissance" rules chassis strongly inspired by the classic gaming books of Gary Gygax, Dave Arneson, Tom Moldvay, and Zeb Cook. The roots of this system date back to the very earliest days of the hobby. There are millions of people worldwide who understand the basic outline of the system, and this enormous well of familiarity is one of the main reasons it was chosen as a base.

The system in ***Worlds Without Number*** has received years of effective use and playtesting in the form of its compatible sci-fi sister game, ***Stars Without Number***, and I'm confident that the great majority of readers will find it a perfectly solid, playable, effective framework for their sword and sorcery adventures. Even so, I understand that a good many readers will have their own preferences in game systems, and may have a different rule system in mind for running their campaigns.

This is perfectly reasonable, because ultimately, ***Worlds Without Number*** is more about supporting a *style* of gaming than a particular system. This game is built from the ground up to support the GM in running

a "sandbox" style of campaign, one where the thrust of the action is entirely dependent on the ambitions and goals of the players. The tools in this book are built to support this play style no matter what game system is being used.

Modern gamers may be unfamiliar with sandbox-style tabletop gaming, as it's a style that has fallen partially out of use since the early days of the hobby. The earliest campaigns were almost all sandbox-style, with rotating troupes of PCs venturing around a shared campaign landscape and plunging into whichever adventurous opportunities seemed most appealing. Contemporary gaming tends to favor "story arc" style campaigns, where the PCs are faced with a preordained series of challenges and plot points that they must negotiate as best they can. These story arcs can come to very different conclusions based on the actions and choices of the PCs, but the campaign is fundamentally about a single, particular plot and the PCs' engagement with it. It's a style of gaming that allows for precise story beats, unified themes, and a lot of other qualities that many gamers enjoy a great deal.

Sandbox gaming offers pleasures of its own, however, and some of them are harder to find in modern story arc campaigns. A sandbox campaign focuses around the goals and ambitions of the PCs rather than a pre-existing story. The GM provides the PCs with interesting situations and opportunities, but it's up to the PCs to decide which of them they want to engage with and what hooks they want to pursue. At the end of every session, the GM asks the players what their goal for the next session will be, and the preparation they make for the next evening's game will be based on that goal.

Sandbox campaigns offer endless surprises and freshness to the GM. Even they don't know what's going to happen in each session, because there's no plot they need to follow and no need to worry about the PCs doing the "right thing" to "move the adventure forward". Each session is simply an opportunity or a situation; it's up to the PCs to make the most of it, and if they fail, well, they can try something else next time. The campaign is about the things they want it to be about, when they want it. They're never locked into a particular story arc and never compelled to stick around a tedious situation, so there's much less chance of the GM finding the party bored with a campaign thread that's overstayed its welcome.

Some GMs are intimidated by this style of campaigning because they don't feel confident in their own preparations. If the players can go anywhere and seek anything, they reason, don't they have to build an entire world out before the first session? Isn't that a crushing amount of creative work, the vast majority of which will never become relevant to the players?

Worlds Without Number is designed to allay this concern and give the GM the tools, methods, and procedures for reducing the preparation to a manageable amount of work. This book will show you how to build out the bare skeleton of your campaign setting, establish only the parts that actually matter in play, and handle the session-by-session administration and prep work necessary for actually running the game. You'll never have to build more than a single game session ahead of your players, a prospect that can make sandbox gaming even easier on a GM than story arc gaming. After all, you'll never flesh out a five-session plot only to find the players getting bored halfway through the arc.

Now that you understand both what heroes are intended to do in ***Worlds Without Number*** and what a GM can expect to find in this book, it's time to start your hero's career. With luck, discretion, and the right amount of boldness, it may yet prove to be a long and glorious one. Lacking these qualities… well, there's a reason that character creation is at the front of the book.

CHARACTER CREATION

The first step in playing ***Worlds Without Number*** is to roll up each player's character, or "PC". While it's possible to play the game with just a single player and a game master, or "GM", it works best with a group of three to five players and a GM. A solitary hero is hard-pressed to survive the myriad perils of Latter Earth, and a number of trustworthy companions are needed if a hero is to have much chance of victory.

It's generally best to make characters together with the others in your group, so as to make sure everyone's hero is the sort to play well together. PCs don't always have to *like* each other, but if they can't trust each other to watch their backs, their adventures are apt to end in swift and unhappy ways.

The character creation below assumes your heroes will be adventuring in the world of Latter Earth, as described in the chapter starting on page 94. Readers who have an interest in the setting's particulars can page forward and look it over before continuing. Those who just want to get started creating their adventurer can continue on below.

What Players Need To Know

Your character is an adventurer in the ruins of the Latter Earth, a world set unfathomably far in the future. Untold eons of human and alien development have come and gone, and you and your companions are natives of a now-savage and primitive world built on the grave of the past.

Magic exists in the form of ancient relics, enigmatic powers that respond to the correct rituals, and creatures fashioned by inexplicable sciences. Sorcerers cultivate the scraps of understanding that they have preserved in order to wield these powers, and the occasional eruptions of ancient, twisted magic are a hazard in many places still.

Most nations on Latter Earth are feudal or monarchic, ruled over by some tyrant with the strength to maintain order or some military elite capable of protecting their charges from the perils of monstrous foes and jealous neighbors. Some dynasties are ancient bloodlines of magically-blessed nobles, while others are no more than this season's bandit king and his henchmen. The common folk survive as best they can, making the bargains they must with their lords in exchange for protection and some semblance of law.

Technology is primitive, with brute force and the occasional windmill or water mill powering the little industry that exists. The natural laws of physics have been so corrupted by prior eons of meddling and the accrued changes known as the Legacy that more advanced technology is unreliable at best. This capriciousness has all but extinguished scientific curiosity or technological advancement among the people of Latter Earth, as what use are such studies when the subtler laws of nature are always changing?

In this world, your hero seeks adventure. Whether fighting against the constant peril of monstrous creatures, defending communities from the depredations of their neighbors, delving into the ancient Deeps that humanity once occupied, or exploring the trackless wilderness of an Outsider-altered Latter Earth, there is treasure, glory, and terrible death to be found by the brave.

Your hero may have had a very mundane past. Perhaps they were no more than a peasant girl who tired of her little village, or a young sailor who wants better pay for his courage than a sea captain can offer. Yet your hero has some sort of knack or capability that marks them out as being fit for adventure, whether that's a gift for violence, exceptional talent at a skill, or some modicum of magical prowess.

Your hero must, however, have a purpose. They must have some goal or direction for their ambitions, because ***Worlds Without Number*** is a sandbox-style game where the PCs will be the ones to decide what kind of adventures are sought. If you don't have a goal, you won't be able to contribute to that direction.

And not least of all, your hero must be able to cooperate with the rest of the group. Loners and troublemakers work well in novels but terribly at the table; be good to the other players, and make someone who will actually participate usefully with everyone else. Adventuring is dangerous, and going it alone is a recipe for swift death.

With these things said, it's time to start making your character.

Legates

The rules in this section describe the creation of normal PC heroes. They might be gifted swordsmen, capable young wizards, or talented thieves and explorers, but they are fundamentally normal human beings. They lack the link with the Legacy that makes for the superhuman powers of a Legate.

In the example campaign world of the Latter Earth, a heroic PC can hope to become a Legate only after reaching the peak of their potential. Only after exhausting the limits of normal human capacity can they gain the recognition of the Legacy and inherit its gifts.

In other campaign settings, superhuman heroes such as Legates may not exist at all. In a sword & sorcery pulp setting, it might be entirely inappropriate for heroes to ever become so personally mighty, while a high fantasy setting might make such divine strength more available to PCs.

Assuming Legates exist in your campaign, the rules for advancing in their powers appear in the deluxe version of ***Worlds Without Number***, as given in the table of contents.

A Summary of Character Creation

For your convenience, here's a quick summary of the character creation process. Experienced players can simply go down the list to generate their next bold adventurer, while those new to the game can use it as a guide as they go through the steps detailed on the following pages. A blank character sheet suitable for printing can be found toward the end of this chapter.

Note that some steps indicate that you should roll or pick skills from those listed on page 10. The first time you roll or pick a skill, it starts at level-0. The second time, it becomes level-1. The third time, you can instead pick any other skill of your choice that's less than level-1. No novice hero's skills can exceed level-1.

1. Roll your six ***attributes*** in order or assign them from an array, using Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. Attributes reflect the basic potential of your hero. Roll 3d6 six times and assign them in order, or use an array of 14, 12, 11, 10, 9, 7 assigned as you wish. If you randomly roll your scores you may then pick one attribute to change to a score of 14.

2. Mark down your ***attribute modifiers*** for each score. When rolling dice that are affected by an attribute, you don't apply the whole score; instead, you apply the attribute modifier. A score of 3 is a -2, 4–7 is a -1, 8–13 is no modifier, 14–17 is +1, and 18 is +2.

3. Pick a ***background*** from the list on page 11, and note down any particular details you decide for it. You gain the free skill listed under the background name at level-0, which equates to an ordinary professional knowledge of it.

4. Decide whether to roll for additional skills or pick them. If you pick skills, you can choose two more skills from the Learning table for your background, with the exception of entries that say "Any Skill", which you may not pick. You cannot pick entries from the Growth table. If you're not sure what to pick, just take the "Quick Skills" listed for your background at level-0.

5. If you choose to roll for your skills, you can roll up to three times, dividing up your rolls between the Growth and Learning tables as you wish. When you roll on the Growth table, some results may say "+2 Physical" or "+2 Mental". In the former case, you can add two points to either Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution, or one point to two different stats. In the latter case, you can add two points to either Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma, or divide the bonus between two of them.

6. Choose your ***class*** from those starting on page 18, representing those talents you have that are most relevant to an adventurer's lifestyle. If your hero isn't well-described by Warrior, Expert, or Mage, you can choose Adventurer and mix classes.

7. Choose your ***Foci***, representing the side talents or particular specializations of your hero. You can pick one level of a Focus of your choice. Characters with the Expert class or the Partial Expert feature of the Adventurer class get one level of a non-combat Focus for free in addition to this. They can spend both levels on the same Focus, starting with level 2 in it if they wish. Characters with the Warrior class or Partial Warrior feature of the Adventurer class can do the same in choosing one level of a combat-related Focus.

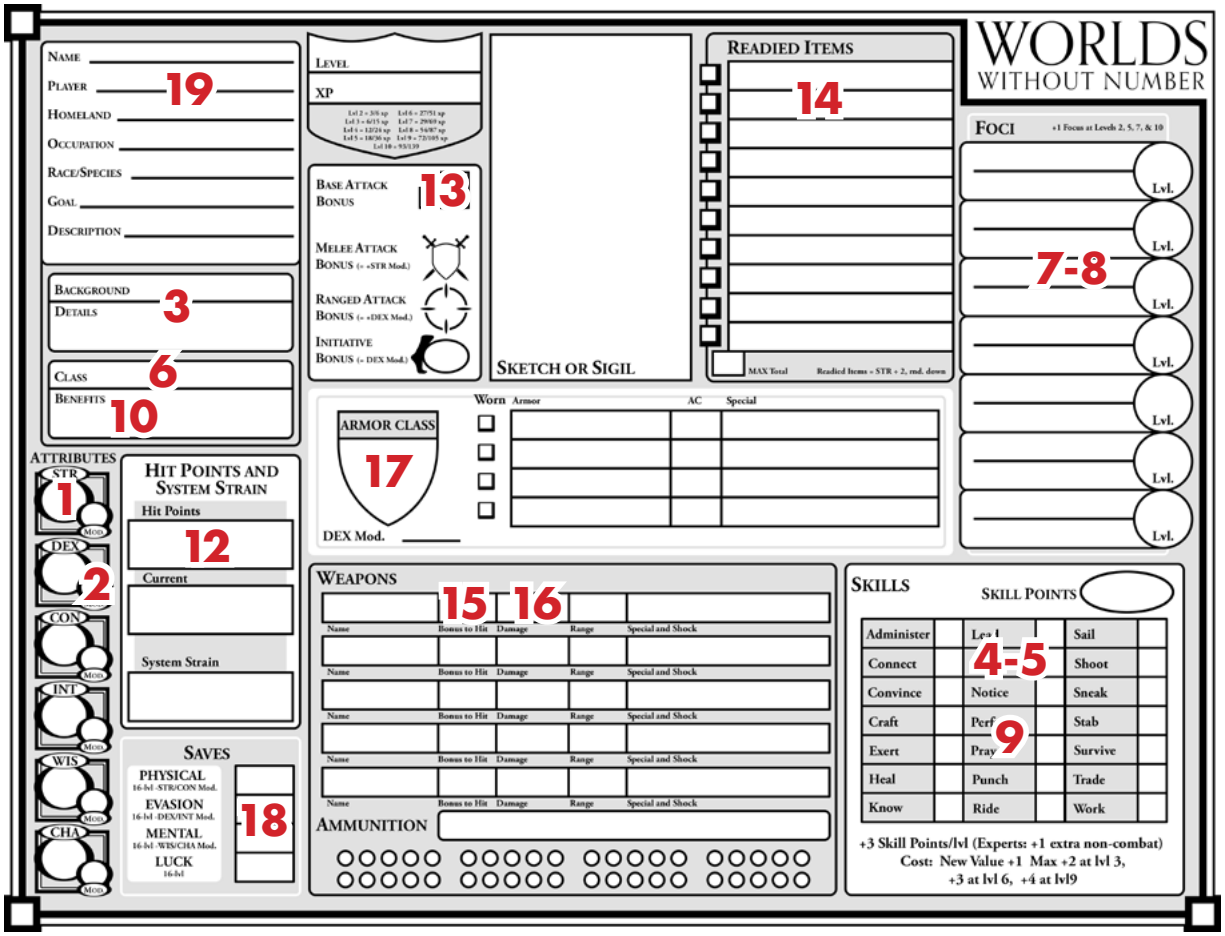
8. Optionally, if your GM is allowing non-human PCs, you can make your character into one such creature by spending a Focus pick on the appropriate origin Focus. Nonhumans are described in the bestiary chapter, starting on page 280. Note that not all campaigns allow non-human PCs, even if they exist in the campaign world. They may not fit the particular tone of your GM's game.

9. Now ***pick one skill*** of your choice to reflect your hero's outside interests, natural talents, hobby expertise, or other personal focus.

10. If you've chosen the Mage class or chosen to be an Adventurer with the Partial Mage class, you need to pick a tradition for your sorcerer. These are listed in the Magic chapter starting on page 60. You may be a full-fledged High Mage, Necromancer, or Elementalist, or you may be an Adventurer with only a partial class in these arcane arts, or expertise in the magically-gifted partial classes of Healer or Vowed.

11. If you're a full High Mage, Elementalist, or Necromancer, or a Partial in two of these, choose four starting spells from your class' first level spell list. Partial Mages of these classes pick only two. Record these on the back of your sheet.

12. Roll your maximum ***hit points*** and add your Constitution modifier, to a minimum of 1 hit point. The die you roll depends on the class you chose. Warriors roll 1d6+2, Experts roll 1d6, and Mages roll 1d6-1. Adventurers use the tables on page 21, depending on which partial classes they took. If you lose all your hit points, your PC will be mortally wounded or slain outright.



13. Note down any ***base attack bonus*** you may have. This will vary based on your class; you can check the class tables starting on page 18 to see what your hero's basic martial aptitude might be.

14. Choose one of the ***equipment packages*** on page 29 or roll 3d6 x 10 to find out how many starting silver pieces you have with which to buy gear.

15. Mark down your total hit bonus with your weaponry. This is equal to your base attack bonus, plus either your Punch, Stab, or Shoot skill depending on the kind of weapon it is, plus your relevant attribute modifier. The weapon table on page 37 will tell you what attribute is used for a particular weapon. If two attributes are listed, use the best one for your hero. If you haven't even got level-0 skill at combat, take a -2 penalty on the hit roll.

16. Note down the damage done by your weapons. This is equal to its base damage dice plus its attribute modifier. If it's a Punch weapon, you can add your Punch skill to the damage as well.

17. Record your ***Armor Class***, the measure of how hard it is to hurt your hero in a fight. The armor table on page 35 gives the score for a given harness. Different suits of armor grant different Armor Classes; if you aren't wearing any armor at all, your base AC is 10. Add your Dexterity modifier to this AC. In order to hurt your PC, an enemy has to roll an attack roll on a d20, adding their attack bonus and equaling or exceeding your AC.

18. Note down your beginning ***saving throw*** scores for your Physical, Evasion, Mental, and Luck saving throws. Physical saves against poison, disease, or exhaustion are 15 minus the best of your Strength or Constitution modifiers. Evasion saves to dodge sudden perils or dive away from explosives are 15 minus the best of your Intelligence and Dexterity modifiers. Mental saves to resist psychic influence or mind-bending sorceries are 15 minus the best of your Wisdom or Charisma modifiers. Your Luck saving throw is a flat score of 15, and rolled when pure chance is your only hope of avoiding some random disaster. To make a save, you need to roll equal or better than it on a d20 roll.

19. Lastly, wrap up your PC with a ***name and a goal***. Every hero needs to have a goal when they set out adventuring. This goal might change, but your PC should always have some reason to go out and interact with the world before them. Stay-at-home PCs, aloof loners, excessively prudent heroes, and those unwilling to dare greatly for their aims are rarely fun to play.

Attributes

A hero's native capacities are their ***attributes***, each measured on a scale from 3 to 18. A score of 3 is as deficient as it's possible to be while still being functional as an adventurer, while an 18 reflects a degree of development that's close to a human's peak potential.

To generate a hero's scores, roll 3d6 six times, assigning them in order to the character's Strength, Dexterity, Constitution, Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma. You may then change one attribute of your choice to 14, because your adventurer has to be unusually good at *something* to have made it this far in life.

Clement GMs may optionally allow players to put their rolled scores in any attribute they wish. Other groups may prefer to let the rolls stand in order, to encourage players to try out unexpected character concepts.

If you dislike random generation of your hero's scores, you may instead put the following scores wherever you wish: 14, 12, 11, 10, 9, and 7. If you assign scores, you cannot replace one of them with a 14.

Once you've generated your ability scores, record the modifier for each of them. Thus, a score of 5 would have a -1 modifier and a score of 18 would have a +2. If your attribute changes later in the game through rolls on your background's Growth table or development as you advance in experience, remember to change the modifier if necessary.

Attribute	Affects...
Strength	Lifting heavy weights, breaking things, melee combat, carrying gear
Dexterity	Speed, evasion, manual dexterity, reaction time, combat initiative
Constitution	Hardiness, enduring injury, resisting poisons, going without food or rest
Intelligence	Memory, reasoning, intellectual skills, general education
Wisdom	Noticing things, making judgments, reading situations, intuition
Charisma	Force of character, charming others, attracting attention, winning loyalty

Attribute Score	Attribute Modifier
3	-2
4—7	-1
8—13	No Modifier
14—17	+1
18	+2

Attributes and Abilities in Play

Attributes matter in ***Worlds Without Number***, but not nearly as much as the choices you make and the risks you choose to run. A good Strength roll can give your PC an aptitude for swordplay, but poor judgment or reckless overconfidence will kill them long before an extra +1 bonus on a hit roll can save them.

With that in mind, don't be disheartened if your attribute rolls are low. The free score of 14 ensures that your character will be gifted in some way, and low scores or penalties in other fields can help to focus your creativity in other directions.

It's the custom in many modern RPGs to use a character's abilities and powers to directly resolve challenges in play. If you face a fight, you look up your fighting scores. If you've got a negotiation to manage, you check your sheet for your social skills. If the world throws you an odd situation, you look for the powers your PC has that might resolve the obstacle. Skillful play lies in making good choices in acquiring the right abilities and using them in an efficient way.

Worlds Without Number is built on a somewhat different philosophy, because the abilities a PC has don't always map well to the problems they face. A PC Warrior is a good combatant, but there are a lot of foes they can't reasonably defeat. A PC Expert is superb at their chosen skills, but there's no guarantee that those skills will be particularly relevant to the adventure's challenges. Even the multifarious sorceries of the PC Mage are often awkward or unrelated to a problem.

Instead, players are encouraged to think of ways *around* problems instead of going straight through them. If the tools your attributes and powers give you aren't what the problem asks for, the players need to think of ways to *make* them what the problem needs. They need to change the terms of the situation to ones they can better handle, pull back to find a different route to their goal, or make a bet that what they've got will be enough in the end.

While this style of play can be challenging for many players, with solutions so often reliant on their own creativity and ability to shift the situation, it also has its special rewards. In ***Worlds Without Number***, if your hero wins through to their goal, it wasn't because you picked the right combination of classes or efficiently optimized your character build. It was because you, the player, made the right choices at the right times. You ran when you needed to run, fought when you had to fight, and trusted to your luck no more than you had to. Your victory is *yours*, and that's a pleasure no dice-luck or forum build can grant.

Skills

Your hero's particular proficiencies are called ***skills***. Every hero can at least *attempt* to do almost anything, whether or not they're particularly expert at it, but a hero with the right skill will have a much easier time finding success with their efforts. Of course, some particularly esoteric challenges, such as magic theory or advanced mathematics, might be impossible to attempt without the right skill.

Skills are measured on a ranking from level-0 for ordinary practitioners up to level-4 for the best of the best. Novice adventurers will begin play with skills of level-0 or level-1 as determined in the next section, where you pick or roll your hero's background.

Skill Levels

Level-0	An ordinary competence at the skill as might be had by a common practitioner
Level-1	A veteran professional at the skill, one noticeably better than most
Level-2	One of the best in the city at the skill, a veteran and talented master of it.
Level-3	One of the best in the kingdom, an inspirational master at the skill
Level-4	One of the best in the world, able to push the skill to its physical limits

Skill Checks

When a hero attempts to pull off some feat of exceptional expertise, they must make a ***skill check***. The player rolls 2d6 and adds their relevant skill level to it and the modifier of their most pertinent attribute score. If they have no relevant skill at all, they subtract 1 from their roll.

If the total is equal or higher than the check's difficulty the attempt is a success. If less, then either they fail, they succeed in a way that doesn't help them, or cruel fate intervenes to spoil their effort.

The particular attribute used with a skill check will vary with the situation. Lifting a heavy rock might be a Str/Exert skill check, while running a marathon might be more a Con/Exert check. The GM decides when the case is ambiguous. In the same fashion, if two different skills might be applicable to a check the player can choose which of the skills to use.

Some skills can't even be attempted without at least level-0 skill, if they're particularly obscure or specialized undertakings. Any hero can climb a cliff or try to fashion a good wooden spear, but only someone skilled in Craft could hope to forge a complex suit of armor.

Skill checks are only meant for unusual or exceptional challenges to a hero. Tasks that are common to their background never require a skill check.

The Skill List

Administer: Keep an organization running smoothly, scribe things well, plan out logistics, identify incompetent or treacherous workers, analyze records or archives, or otherwise do things that an executive or middle-manager would need to do.

Connect: Find or know people who are useful to your purposes, make friendships or social acquaintances, know who to talk to get favors or services, and call on the help or resources of organizations you belong to. Connect covers your PC's ability to find the people you need, though convincing them to help may require more than this.

Convince: Persuade a listener that something you are saying is true. Naturally, the more implausible the claim or more emotionally repugnant it is to them, the more difficult it is to persuade them. Furthermore, how they act on their newfound conviction is up to them and their motivations, and may not be perfectly predictable.

Craft: Craft or repair goods and technology appropriate to the PC's background and society. The Craft skill can be used for a wide range of artisan pursuits, though a GM is within their rights to keep the PC from building complex things that are too far away from their past background and experience.

Exert: Run, swim, climb, jump, labor for long periods, throw things, or otherwise exert your physical strength, stamina, and coordination. Even a PC with poor physical attributes might have a good Exert skill reflecting athletic training and expertise in making the most of their available talents.

Heal: Treat wounds, cure diseases, neutralize poisons, diagnose psychological health issues, and otherwise tend to the wounds of body and mind. The Heal skill cannot cure lost hit points directly, but it's a vital skill in stabilizing Mortally Wounded allies or ensuring clean recovery from grievous injuries.

Know: Know matters of history, geography, natural science, zoology, and other academic fields appropriate to a sage or scholar. While some sages might specialize in particular fields, most learned men and women in this age have a broad range of understanding, and will rarely be unable to even attempt to answer a question relevant to this skill.

Lead: Inspire others to follow your lead and believe in your plans and goals. Manage subordinates and keep them focused, loyal, and motivated in the face of danger or failure. A successful leader will keep their subordinate's faith and confidence even when reason might make the leader's plan appear questionable at best.

Magic: Cast or analyze magic and know things about famous mages or notable magical events. Classes that can't cast spells obtain only intellectual and scholarly benefits from this skill.

Notice: Notice small details, impending ambushes, hidden features, or concealed objects. Detect subtle smells, sounds, or other sensory input. Notice cannot be used simply to detect a lie, but keen attention can often discern a subject's emotional state.

Perform: Sing, act, dance, orate, or otherwise perform impressively for an audience. Compose music, plays, writings, or other works of performance art. Most performers will have a particular field they excel at, though polymaths might exist if the PC's background is appropriate for such versatility.

Pray: Perform the clerical rites of your religion, and be familiar with the gods, demons, and taboos of major and minor faiths, and identify iconography and persons of religious importance. Pray also helps you know the state of local faiths and the important persons in their hierarchies.

Punch: Fight unarmed or with natural body weaponry. Punch, kick, grapple, or otherwise brawl without the benefit of man-made tools. This mode of fighting is inefficient at best without some special Focus to improve it, but it's reliably non-lethal.

Ride: Ride an animal, drive a cart or carriage, or otherwise deal with land transportation. This skill also includes competence at mount care and tending, basic cart or carriage repair, judging good horseflesh, and other skills appropriate to a beast-rider of whatever society the PC comes from.

Sail: Sail or repair a ship, build small craft, navigate by the stars, read sea weather, manage sailors, and otherwise conduct the business of a professional mariner. This skill may apply to more esoteric means of vehicular travel in some societies.

Shoot: Fire a bow or crossbow or throw a hurled weapon. Maintain ranged weaponry and fletch arrows.

Sneak: Move silently, hide in shadows, avoid notice, pick pockets, disguise yourself, pick locks, defeat traps, or otherwise overcome security measures.

Stab: Fight with melee weapons or throw a hurled weapon. Maintain and identify weaponry.

Survive: Hunt, fish, navigate by the stars, mitigate environmental hazards, identify plants and wildlife, and craft basic survival tools and shelter. A PC's Survive skill is most pertinent to the environments in their background, but the basic principles can be applied in all but the most alien environments.

Trade: Buy and sell at a profit, identify the worth of goods or treasures, deal with merchants and traders, find black-market goods and services, and know laws regarding smuggling and contraband.

Work: This skill is a catch-all for any profession that might not otherwise merit its own skill, such as a painter, lawyer, farmer, or herdsman. The precise skill it represents will vary with the PC's background.

Backgrounds

Every hero comes from somewhere, and the particular past of your PC is their ***background***. Very few heroes come immediately to their ultimate calling of sorcery or swordplay, and even the most resolute hero is likely to have had some more mundane place in life before taking up their grand ambitions. In this section, you'll determine what this past might have been.

A background is simply a thumbnail description of the kind of life your hero led before becoming an adventurer. Each entry on the table below offers a different possibility, and you can either roll or pick from the list. Within these categories you should feel free to decide how exactly they relate to your hero.

For example, someone who rolls or picks a "Scholar" background might decide that they were an unsuccessful apprentice mage, frustrated with their uselessness until they took up a sword. The specific details of your past background are up to you, provided the GM finds them reasonable.

The specific interpretations of your background will depend on the campaign setting you're using. If you're playing in a desolate desert kingdom, a Sailor background might not make much sense. Talk with your GM about such details when you make up your hero's past.

If you want a background not listed here, work with your GM to choose Growth and Learning tables that fit your concept and use those as you would a listed background.

Backgrounds and Skills

Once you've rolled or chosen your background, you get the free skill associated with it at level-0 proficiency. After that, pick one of the three options below and continue on to choosing a character class.

- Gain the background's listed quick skills. Choose this if you just want the common skills of the role and don't want to bother more with it. *Or…*
- Pick two skills from the background's Learning table, except for the "Any Skill" choice. Choose this if you have specific preferences for your PC's skills. *Or…*
- Roll three times, splitting the rolls as you wish between the Growth and Learning tables for your background. Choose this if you don't mind accepting the dice's decision in exchange for an extra skill or a chance at improved attributes.

The "Any Combat" pick can be used to choose either Stab, Shoot, or Punch, while an "Any Skill" roll lets you chose any skill you wish. All new skills are gained at level-0, but if you pick or roll the same one more than once, they can be improved.

Gaining Skills and Attributes

When you roll or pick a skill, you gain it at level-0, reflecting a basic, ordinary proficiency at the skill. Level-0 is sufficient to earn a living with a skill or be counted a normal practitioner of it, but it's no particularly remarkable talent.

If you roll or pick the same skill again, it becomes level-1. Such skills are well-honed and mark you out as a veteran with noticeably superior talent to the ordinary run of those who use the skill.

You cannot pick a skill a third time. If you roll it a third time or are forced to take it by some Focus or other trait, you may instead pick any other skill you wish, gaining it at level-0 or improving it from level-0 to level-1 if you already have it.

No novice hero can have a skill above level-1. Only experienced adventurers can develop such mastery.

If you roll randomly on the Growth table and get an attribute bonus, you may use it to raise an attribute and potentially improve its modifier. Bonuses to Physical attributes may be applied to Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution, and bonuses to Mental attributes can be added to Intelligence, Wisdom, or Charisma. No attribute can be raised above 18, but a +2 bonus can be split between two different attributes.

d20	Background
1	**Artisan**, blacksmith, tanner, carpenter
2	**Barbarian**, savage hermit, wild man
3	**Carter**, hauling goods or riding post
4	**Courtesan**, harlot, artful companion
5	**Criminal**, thief, con man, burglar
6	**Hunter**, trapper, lone hermit, or recluse
7	**Laborer**, skilled or unskilled urban worker
8	**Merchant**, trader, peddler, or shopkeeper
9	**Noble**, spare son, exile, black sheep
10	**Nomad**, raider, tribal wanderer
11	**Peasant**, farmer, rural laborer, serf
12	**Performer**, bard, dancer, singer
13	**Physician**, village healer, healer-monk
14	**Priest**, monk, nun, holy hermit
15	**Sailor**, bargeman, fisherman, pirate
16	**Scholar**, sage, apprentice mage
17	**Slave**, indentured laborer, runaway prentice
18	**Soldier**, bandit, mercenary, guardsman
19	**Thug**, ruffian, gang member, village bully
20	**Wanderer**, exile, explorer, traveler

Artisan

Your hero was a crafter of some variety, whether a blacksmith, carpenter, shipwright, weaver, or a maker of more exotic goods. In humble villages an artisan is most likely to make the bulk of their living by the same subsistence farming as their neighbors, but in towns and cities they might be full-time professionals, perhaps belonging to some guild or brotherhood specific to their craft. While an artisan's Craft skill is chiefly applicable to those works related to their background, they often know enough or can improvise sufficiently to make competent efforts at other types of work.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Craft-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Connect
	2	+2 Physical	2	Convince
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Craft
Trade-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Craft
Connect-0	5	Exert	5	Exert
	6	Any Skill	6	Know
			7	Notice
			8	Trade

Barbarian

Your people or past were counted savage even in a world as brutal as this one. Primitive hill tribes, hard-pressed jungle clans, or simple frontiersmen too long out of contact with a more sophisticated civilization might all qualify for this background. You know how to live without the comforts a softer and more pacified people might require and you have a ready acceptance of violence that can keep you alive where others might perish. Still, the material privation of your life does not mean you are necessarily stupid or unadaptable, nor that you lack your own forms of culture.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Survive-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Connect
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Exert
Any Combat-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Lead
Notice-0	5	Exert	5	Notice
	6	Any Skill	6	Punch
			7	Sneak
			8	Survive

Carter

Overland transport is hard and dangerous, and it requires an equally hard breed of men and women to carry it out. Carters might be caravan workers hauling precious goods over hundreds of miles, or independent shippers running a cart between isolated hamlets, or they might be messenger riders risking grave peril to deliver small packages. A carter may be a low-born peasant, but he might end up seeing more of the world than the gentry of his homeland. These far-traveled haulers commonly learn quickly how to handle themselves in perilous circumstances.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Ride-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Connect
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Craft
Connect-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Exert
Any Combat-0	5	Connect	5	Notice
	6	Any Skill	6	Ride
			7	Survive
			8	Trade

Courtesan

Your hero made a profession of companionship, whether carnal or otherwise. Common street harlots or rented boys are by no means unknown among adventurers, but there are also exquisitely polished courtesans and graciously platonic artists of song, dance, and cultured companionship. Some have wearied of the particular strains of their work, while others mean to take advantage of their special talents in smoothing the social interactions of an adventuring party with an often-suspicious world.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Perform-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Mental	2	Connect
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Convince
Notice-0	4	+2 Physical	4	Exert
Connect-0	5	Connect	5	Notice
	6	Any Skill	6	Perform
			7	Survive
			8	Trade

Criminal

Some would argue that all adventurers are criminals sooner or later, but your hero made it their profession from an early age. Con men, charlatans, fraudulent merchants, pickpockets, sneak thieves, impostors, footpads, and ne'er-do-wells of every description often filter into the adventuring lifestyle, if only to ensure that their travels take them well away from the sites of their former activity. Given the general unscrupulousness, quick wits, and daring required of a successful criminal, many make excellent adventurers. Other less gifted examples make excellent corpses.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Sneak-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Administer
	2	+2 Mental	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Connect
Connect-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Convince
Convince-0	5	Connect	5	Exert
	6	Any Skill	6	Notice
			7	Sneak
			8	Trade

Hunter

Both primitive tribals and bored nobles require hunts for their table and their pleasures, and such efforts often require professional hunters to help in the work. Hunger or greed has also been known to send poor peasants into the game preserves of their lords or deep into dangerous wilderness. A few hunters are actual gamekeepers employed to ward off poachers, while others are simply hermits who have no love for any company but their own. The marksmanship and stealth of a well-practiced hunter tend to be useful skills in an adventurer's line of work.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Shoot-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Exert
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Heal
Survive-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Notice
Sneak-0	5	Exert	5	Ride
	6	Any Skill	6	Shoot
			7	Sneak
			8	Survive

Laborer

In the villages and rural regions of the world, the vast majority of the populace are simple peasants. In the cities, the great mass of unskilled workers are laborers instead, day-workers and unskilled help employed by the artisans and craftsmen of the town. Their lives are hard, precarious, and unpromising, but the chance to live in a city and the opportunities for wealth and status it offers are enough to beguile many poor village lads and lasses. In the absence of a lucky break or fortuitous apprenticeship, some laborers find themselves willing to risk the life of an adventurer rather than endure their poverty meekly.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Work-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Administer
	2	+1 Any Stat	2	Any Skill
Quick Skills	3	+1 Any Stat	3	Connect
Connect-0	4	+1 Any Stat	4	Convince
Exert-0	5	Exert	5	Craft
	6	Any Skill	6	Exert
			7	Ride
			8	Work

Merchant

Merchants range from the gilded merchant-princes of the great trading cities to the humble peddlers who roam between villages with packs full of sewing needles, tin pans, belt knives, and other household needs. Trade is a dangerous thing in this world, constantly subject to the rapacious demands of lords or the brutal exaction of bandits, and few cowards take up the work. Merchants with a particular fund of courage and an exceptional appetite for gold might even become adventurers, the better to obtain capital and contacts for their work.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Trade-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Administer
	2	+2 Mental	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Connect
Convince-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Convince
Connect-0	5	Connect	5	Craft
	6	Any Skill	6	Know
			7	Notice
			8	Trade

Noble

Nobility is a quality that varies from culture to culture, some bestowing it for personal virtue, others to particular bloodlines, and some to those who fulfill specific roles in the culture. Whatever the particulars, your hero was of the noble caste of their home, one of the elites who governed and ruled. Alas, some circumstance has driven you out of your former place, forcing you to seek companions in adventure and make your own way in the world. You may no longer have the dignities and advantages of your former rank, but you at least have the benefit of its education.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Lead-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Administer
	2	+2 Mental	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Connect
Connect-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Convince
Administer-0	5	Connect	5	Know
	6	Any Skill	6	Lead
			7	Notice
			8	Ride

Nomad

Some peoples are forced to travel far to find their sustenance, whether they are beast-riders, drivers of great wagons, or simple masses of people walking from one waystation to another. Their native land may not be rich enough to support them and their herds for long at any one place, or some shifting peril might require them to be constantly on the move. Nomads are often mistrusted by settled folk, as it's all too easy for them to commit some depredation before moving out of reach of reprisal, but their skills at riding and surviving harsh environments are of use to any adventurer.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Ride-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Connect
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Exert
Survive-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Lead
Any Combat-0	5	Exert	5	Notice
	6	Any Skill	6	Ride
			7	Survive
			8	Trade

Peasant

A peasant's life is never easy, though in some lands it's a kinder fate than others. Even in the richest states, however, a peasant's life is often marked by hunger, poverty, and a constant struggle to obtain the very minimal necessities for life. Most are accustomed to a world in which anything they can't personally grow, make, scavenge, or steal is something they won't have. Such ruthless resourcefulness and tolerance of pain and toil are useful qualities to any adventurer… and there are enough of them that a few who perish in some trackless waste are no grievous loss to their lords.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Exert-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Connect
	2	+2 Physical	2	Exert
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Craft
Sneak-0	4	+2 Physical	4	Notice
Survive-0	5	Exert	5	Sneak
	6	Any Skill	6	Survive
			7	Trade
			8	Work

Performer

Singers, dancers, musicians, actors, poets, orators, and all other entertainers and edifiers might be found in this background. In a world such as this one, there are precious few who can earn more than the barest living off their art, and those who prosper are inevitably the ones who can cozen and beguile some rich patron into favoring their efforts. Even a wandering bard reliant on the generosity of taphouse keepers and bored yeomen must have a way with people, and this skill at managing their affections is often useful for an adventurer.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Perform-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Mental	2	Connect
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Exert
Convince-0	4	+2 Physical	4	Notice
Connect-0	5	Connect	5	Perform
	6	Any Skill	6	Perform
			7	Sneak
			8	Convince

Physician

Healers are needed in any society, and your hero was one such physician. In a town or city, they might have been a classically-trained professional, versed in subtle arts of medical horoscopes, therapeutic gemstones, and the imbibing of precious metals, while a village healer might simply know the proper use of herbs, sutures, and splints. Adventuring bands always prize the help of a trained healer, whatever their background, and many consider it an essential to have someone in the party capable of patching up a bleeding ally or treating a fevered friend.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Heal-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Administer
	2	+2 Physical	2	Connect
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Craft
Know-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Heal
Notice-0	5	Connect	5	Know
	6	Any Skill	6	Notice
			7	Convince
			8	Trade

Priest

Priests run a wide gamut in this world. Some live as moral exemplars for their flock, teaching them of the ethical demands of their religion and encouraging them in their faith. Others are simple spiritual technicians, performing rituals to propitiate and coax their god with no concern for anything but the correct execution of the rite and the timely receipt of payment. Adventuring priests often tend more toward the latter, assisting their companions with their prayers and expertise in handling people. A few priests even have magical powers, either given to them by their deity or learned as part of their youthful training.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Pray-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Administer
	2	+2 Mental	2	Connect
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Know
Convince-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Lead
Know-0	5	Connect	5	Heal
	6	Any Skill	6	Convince
			7	Pray
			8	Pray

Sailor

Your hero was a sailor, a voyager on the salt tides or deep rivers of their home. They might have been captain of a ship of their own, or a bargeman on the great rivers, or a simple seaman willing to take ship with any craft that would have him. Some nations might even have ships of a more than nautical nature, aircraft or stranger things in need of a trained crew. Whatever their usual berth, sailors are accustomed to lives of sudden peril and hard labor, and the self-sufficiency forced by a life on the waves is often useful to an adventurer.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Sail-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Connect
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Craft
Exert-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Exert
Notice-0	5	Exert	5	Heal
	6	Any Skill	6	Notice
			7	Perform
			8	Sail

Scholar

Dedicated scholars are few and far between in this world, but your hero is one of those rarities. Either through noble birth, a wealthy background, or dedication to some institution of knowledge, your hero has had the opportunity to become immersed in a life of study. You may have a particular field of focus, but scholarship in this age is a broad undertaking, and every scholar is expected to know something of the natural sciences and the nations surrounding their home. Given this education, those scholars with the daring to become adventurers can find themselves called upon to perform highly perilous field research.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Know-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Administer
	2	+2 Mental	2	Heal
Quick Skills	3	+2 Mental	3	Craft
Heal-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Know
Administer-0	5	Connect	5	Notice
	6	Any Skill	6	Perform
			7	Pray
			8	Convince

Slave

Slavery in this world varies from the pampered life of some favored house slave to a short, brutal existence in the mines and manufactories. It's not unknown for the same slave to experience both ends of the spectrum as their charm fades or financial need forces a slimming of the household staff. In some lands a former slave can have hope of attaining honor and status, while in others they might expect an even worse state, without even the assurance of sufficient bread for their labor. Runaways, rebels, and ex-slaves are all well-represented among the desperate class of adventurers.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Sneak-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Administer
	2	+2 Physical	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Any Skill
Survive-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Convince
Exert-0	5	Exert	5	Exert
	6	Any Skill	6	Sneak
			7	Survive
			8	Work

Soldier

Mercenary, regular soldier, temple knight, monastic defender, village militiaman, or savage raider; whatever the specifics, your hero made their living by war. You may have wearied of the endless killing, or lost your former employer, or simply became dissatisfied with the meagre rewards offered for your shed blood, but whatever the cause you have decided to take up an adventurer's life instead. Every group values the help of a strong sword arm, even if you may have developed skills far different from that in pursuit of your trade.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Any Combat-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Exert
Exert-0	4	+2 Physical	4	Lead
Survive-0	5	Exert	5	Notice
	6	Any Skill	6	Ride
			7	Sneak
			8	Survive

Thug

A soldier belongs to some larger organization, whereas you were simply a thug. Whether a village bully, street ruffian, assassin, bandit, outlaw, or neighborhood enforcer, you got what you wanted through the strength of your right arm. Not every ruffian is a simple criminal, however, and it may be you were a protector to your family or gang, or a defender of your neighborhood against hostile outsiders or an oppressive lord. Necessity or ambition has turned you to an adventurer's life, however, and your combination of raw violence and calculated social expertise is likely to be useful in the trade.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Any Combat-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Mental	2	Any Combat
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Connect
Convince-0	4	+2 Physical	4	Convince
Connect-0	5	Connect	5	Exert
	6	Any Skill	6	Notice
			7	Sneak
			8	Survive

Wanderer

Some people simply have no home, and your hero is one such unfortunate. You may have been driven into exile by hostile neighbors, or a turn of political fortune, or a crime you may or may not have committed. Your former home might have been destroyed by enemies or transformed by events until it no longer had a place for you. Whatever the particulars, you journey for your own reasons and seek whatever it is you hope to find in this world. Adventurers often have a tolerance for such vagabonds that is not to be found in more settled society.

Free Skill	d6	Growth	d8	Learning
Survive-0	1	+1 Any Stat	1	Any Combat
	2	+2 Physical	2	Connect
Quick Skills	3	+2 Physical	3	Notice
Sneak-0	4	+2 Mental	4	Perform
Notice-0	5	Exert	5	Ride
	6	Any Skill	6	Sneak
			7	Survive
			8	Work

Choosing a Class

While a hero's background defines their upbringing and common profession, a ***class*** determines what special skills and abilities they use to succeed in their adventuring. Not everyone has a class; most people are just ordinary men and women who might be soldiers, thieves, nobles, or other ordinary professions. A PC is rare in that they have the seeds of true greatness within them, and the potential to vastly exceed the power of their ordinary peers.

There are four classes available in the game. You should pick the one that provides the kind of tools you want your hero to use while adventuring.

Experts are masters of non-combat skills, such as stealth, medicine, diplomacy, and other practical talents. While any hero can become quite skilled in such undertakings, an Expert learns these skills faster and can use them more effectively than other classes, often succeeding where a different hero would surely fail.

Mages include not only classical wizards but also those heroes who rely on supernatural powers for their usefulness, such as magical healers, ascetic unarmed combatants, and supernaturally wise sages. Each Mage belongs to a specific magical tradition which defines their powers and indicates any special taboos they must respect. While their arts are powerful, mages tend to be frailer and less combat-capable than other heroes.

Warriors fight, using sword or bow or fist to overcome their enemies and survive the violence they might inflict. Combat is a dangerous undertaking in this game, and death comes easy to every hero. A Warrior has the tools to survive mistakes that would prove lethal to other classes and to overcome foes in combat that might otherwise prove too much for less martial heroes.

Adventurers are the class for those players who can't quite decide, or who have a concept that mixes elements of more than one class. An Adventurer can choose two of the other classes above and mix them together, gaining some of the benefits of both at the cost of never being quite so capable with either sphere as a full practitioner would be.

Each class comes with a table that indicates the class's hit dice, attack bonus, and which Focus picks they gain. Your novice hero will usually begin the game at first level, so you'd use the first line on these tables to mark down your hit points and attack bonus and to indicate how many Foci you can pick.

When picking a class, don't feel obliged to choose one that fits naturally with your background. Instead, choose one that suits how you want to play. You can always explain later how your hero came to a new trade or discovered some hidden talent.

The Expert

Your hero is an expert at some useful skill. Thieves, diplomats, healers, scholars, explorers, artisans, and other such heroes should pick the Expert class if they wish to focus on developing their special skills and performing tremendous feats of mastery with them. Experts gain the widest variety of non-combat skills and are the quickest to learn more of them.

An Expert has an uncanny knack for wielding their skills successfully at a crucial moment, whether or not it's a skill they've taken for their specialty. Once per scene, the Expert can reroll a failed non-combat skill check, gaining a second chance to yank victory from the jaws of otherwise certain failure. Their natural focus on personal development and determined refinement of their skills bleeds through even into those talents they don't make their special domain.

Level	Hit Dice	Attack Bonus	Focus Picks
1	1d6	+0	1 Any + 1 Expert
2	2d6	+1	+1 Any
3	3d6	+1	
4	4d6	+2	
5	5d6	+2	+1 Any
6	6d6	+3	
7	7d6	+3	+1 Any
8	8d6	+4	
9	9d6	+4	
10	10d6	+5	+1 Any

Experts are also capable combatants, fully able to hold their own in the midst of a murderous fray. It's not unknown for some Experts to specialize in professions related to martial pursuits, such as an assassin who relies heavily on their superb powers of stealth and deception to reach their unwary foes.

Class Ability: Masterful Expertise

Once per scene, the Expert may reroll any non-combat skill check as an Instant action. This allows the Expert to make a roll and then immediately use this ability if the resulting total isn't good enough to succeed. In cases where it matters, the better of the two rolls may be used.

Class Ability: Quick Learner

When you advance a character level, you gain an extra skill point which may only be spent on gaining or improving non-combat skills or raising attributes. You may save this point to spend later if you wish.

The Mage

Your hero wields arcane powers and otherworldly arts in the service of their ambitions. Some Mages are taught in formal sorcerous schools, while others gain their education from the careful instructions of a wizened master. A few who practice more primal traditions might even awaken spontaneously to their power, obtaining strange abilities without any formal education at all.

Every Mage belongs to a particular magical tradition, one which describes the nature of their powers and the breadth of their capabilities. The Magic chapter beginning on page 60 lists the various traditions described in this book, but more doubtless exist and several might be specific to the particular campaign world you are playing in. If playing a Mage, consult with your GM to find out which traditions exist in your campaign setting.

Not all magical traditions necessarily involve classical spell-flinging and conjury. Some traditions are much more physical in nature, granting the practitioners remarkable bodily prowess or unique magical gifts they can exercise. Some Mage traditions involve no spellcasting at all, restricting their focus entirely to the strange arcane gifts their forebears have developed.

While these spells and occult powers are impressive, they tend to come at a cost. A Mage must spend so much time focused on their studies and training that they have little time to master any other art. Most are notably weak combatants with little ability to survive hardships that would merely wound or weary a Warrior.

In addition to this, many traditions have their own specific limits on practitioners. Initiates of the High Mage tradition, for example, cannot cast their spells while wearing anything heavier than normal clothing, thus making it impossible for them to wear armor and still wield their spells. The hindrances of some traditions extend beyond physical limitations to social penalties or difficulties in dealing with mundane humanity; a necromancer may have impressive powers of magic, but they are often unwelcome in civilized lands and are sometimes subject to the panicked justice of frightened locals and their lords.

Level	Hit Dice	Attack Bonus	Focus Picks
1	1d6-1	+0	1 Any
2	2d6-2	+0	+1 Any
3	3d6-3	+0	
4	4d6-4	+0	
5	5d6-5	+1	+1 Any
6	6d6-6	+1	
7	7d6-7	+1	+1 Any
8	8d6-8	+1	
9	9d6-9	+1	
10	10d6-10	+2	+1 Any

The ways of magic tend to be specific to settings in a way that swordplay or skillful arts are not. Your GM may disallow certain Mage traditions or partial classes based on the particulars of their own campaign world or the specific sort of game they want to play. Some campaigns set in historical periods or very low-magic worlds might not include Mages at all, leaving heroes reliant on the strength of their own arms and the cunning of their own native wits.

Whatever the setting, Mage heroes need to rely on careful planning and a cooperative party to get the most from their abilities. While potent, the spells they wield are few in number and usually narrow in effect; even the mightiest sorcerer of the Latter Earth is just not going to be as effective as their Warrior peers in slaying fearsome enemies or their Expert companions in carrying out the mundane activities of stealth, persuasion, or investigation. Instead, Mages excel at providing carefully-planned impossibilities, those selective defiances of reality that allow their teammates to pull off incredible schemes or overcome otherwise insurmountable odds.

Class Ability: Arcane Tradition

The Mage may pick one magical tradition to represent their occult powers, as listed in the Magic chapter starting on page 60. This tradition may give them a number of additional benefits and restrictions.

The Warrior

The Warrior is a hero born to the blade, a man or woman gifted with a superb capacity for physical violence. Savage barbarians, hardened mercenaries, courageous young farm boys, and ordinary laborers who just happen to have an undiscovered capacity for massive bloodshed all might qualify as Warriors.

Warriors aren't all formal soldiers or recognized veterans of the blade. Any adventurer who excels in dealing with their problems through violence might qualify as a Warrior, however peaceful their background. It's possible that their very talent for killing was what forced them out of their old life after some terrible event or awful encounter compelled them to recognize their gifts.

Warriors have more hit points than heroes of other class, and are capable of surviving wounds and hardships that would kill an ordinary man. They're also gifted with a superior attack bonus, and a native ability to inflict more damage than other PCs. They even have the ability to ensure a hit or force a miss by an enemy once per scene, making them lethal foes to common combatants.

Class Ability: Killing Blow

Whenever a Warrior inflicts damage with any attack, spell, or special ability they may add half their character level, rounded up, to the damage done. This damage is also added to any Shock they may inflict.

Combined with Foci meant to improve Shock attacks such as ***Armsmaster***, ***Close Combatant***, or ***Shocking Assault***, this ability ensures that an experienced Warrior will almost always kill any ordinary human soldier or minor monster, regardless of their attack roll result.

Level	Hit Dice	Attack Bonus	Focus Picks
1	1d6+2	+1	1 Any + 1 Warrior
2	2d6+4	+2	+1 Any
3	3d6+6	+3	
4	4d6+8	+4	
5	5d6+10	+5	+1 Any
6	6d6+12	+6	
7	7d6+14	+7	+1 Any
8	8d6+16	+8	
9	9d6+18	+9	
10	10d6+20	+10	+1 Any

Class Ability: Veteran's Luck

Once per scene, as an Instant action, the Warrior may turn a missed attack they have made into a hit. Alternately, they may turn a successful attack against them into a miss, also as an Instant action. This ability is particularly lethal when used with the *Make a Snap Attack* action and leveled against weaker monsters or ordinary human warriors, as explained on page 44.

Only one exercise of this ability is possible in a scene, either to force a miss or ensure a hit on a foe; both options may not be employed in the same fight.

A Warrior may use this ability with crew-served weapons they are assisting in firing. This ability cannot be used to negate environmental damage or damage done to a vehicle or mount they are riding.

The Adventurer

Not every hero is perfectly reflected by one of the three main classes, even with the wide latitude of concepts each one allows. For those heroes that straddle the roles, there remains the class of Adventurer.

An Adventurer picks two of the three main classes to reflect their own particular talents. A spell-slinging swordsman might choose to be a Partial Mage/Partial Warrior, while a stealthy assassin might be a Partial Expert/Partial Warrior, and a grifting mountebank-wizard might be a Partial Expert/Partial Mage. The player should pick whichever pairing serves best.

The adjacent tables provide the hit dice, attack bonus, and Foci picks gained by each of the three possible pairings. Thus, a first level Partial Expert/Partial Warrior would roll 1d6+2 for their hit points, have a +1 attack bonus, and pick three Foci: one expert, one warrior, and one free pick.

Adventurers tend to have a wider range of abilities than a more focused PC, and the extra Focus pick can make a significant difference at low levels. The absence of the strongest class abilities of Experts and Warriors make a difference in the longer run, however, and a Partial Mage will never attain the same magical power in their tradition as a focused specialist.

Partial Expert

A Partial Expert is treated just as a full Expert, including gaining the benefits of the ***Quick Learner*** ability. They do not have the ***Masterful Expertise*** ability, however, as they lack the polymathic versatility of a full Expert.

Partial Mage

A Partial Mage is treated as a Mage, and gains the ***Arcane Tradition*** ability, allowing them to pick a magical tradition for their powers. That tradition's abilities will be more limited for Partial Mages, however, as described under each of the paths.

It's even possible for a PC to pick the Partial Mage class twice for two different magical traditions, gaining portions of both arcane powers. They then use the usual full Mage chart for hit dice, attack bonus, and Foci, and the spellcasting table on page 64 if both partial classes cast spells.

A Partial Mage must adhere to the restrictions and limits of their magical tradition in order to use its abilities, regardless of whatever other partial class they may have.

Partial Warrior

A Partial Warrior gains certain of the benefits of a full Warrior, including the improved hit die and a somewhat improved attack bonus. They do not have the ***Veteran's Luck*** special ability or the ***Killing Blow*** power, however, and must trust to their own talents to land blows and crush their enemies.

Partial Expert/Partial Warrior

Level	Hit Dice	Attack Bonus	Focus Picks
1	1d6+2	+1	1 Expert + 1 Warrior + 1 Any
2	2d6+4	+2	+1 Any
3	3d6+6	+2	
4	4d6+8	+3	
5	5d6+10	+4	+1 Any
6	6d6+12	+5	
7	7d6+14	+5	+1 Any
8	8d6+16	+6	
9	9d6+18	+6	
10	10d6+20	+7	+1 Any

Partial Expert/Partial Mage

Level	Hit Dice	Attack Bonus	Focus Picks
1	1d6	+0	1 Expert + 1 Any
2	2d6	+1	+1 Any
3	3d6	+1	
4	4d6	+2	
5	5d6	+2	+1 Any
6	6d6	+3	
7	7d6	+3	+1 Any
8	8d6	+4	
9	9d6	+4	
10	10d6	+5	+1 Any

Partial Mage/Partial Warrior

Level	Hit Dice	Attack Bonus	Focus Picks
1	1d6+2	+1	1 Warrior + 1 Any
2	2d6+4	+2	+1 Any
3	3d6+6	+2	
4	4d6+8	+3	
5	5d6+10	+4	+1 Any
6	6d6+12	+5	
7	7d6+14	+5	+1 Any
8	8d6+16	+6	
9	9d6+18	+6	
10	10d6+20	+7	+1 Any

Choose Foci

Once you know your hero's class, you can choose their ***Foci***, special knacks or talents that your hero has developed. Each Focus generally come in two levels; the first time you pick it you get the first level of the Focus, and the second time you choose it you gain its second level.

Once a Focus has been bought up to its maximum level, it generally can't be picked again. Sometimes the same Focus can be taken more than once to apply to different skills, such as taking ***Specialist*** twice to apply to both Sneak and Know skills.

Many Foci grant a bonus skill. You gain this skill at level-0 if you don't already have it, or level-1 if you already have it at level-0. If you already have it at level-1, pick any other skill except Magic. If you earn a Focus later in your adventuring career, after first level, you instead improve the skill as explained on page 11.

Every PC can pick one Focus of any kind representing past experiences or native talent. This free Focus doesn't necessarily have to have anything to do with your class; a Mage might actually be a vicious knife fighter with the ***Close Combatant*** Focus, or a Warrior might be exceptionally ***Cultured***.

Aside from this free Focus, a Warrior or Partial Warrior can pick one Focus related to their martial background, and an Expert or Partial Expert can pick one Focus related to something other than combat. In ambiguous cases, the GM decides if the Focus really does relate to their class; some Foci might be usable for both.

Alert

You are keenly aware of your surroundings and virtually impossible to take unaware.

Level 1: Gain Notice as a bonus skill. You cannot be surprised, nor can others use the Execution Attack option on you. If the GM rolls initiative by sides, you can add a +1 bonus to your side's initiative roll, though multiple ***Alert*** PCs don't stack this bonus. If you roll initiative individually, you can roll it twice and take the better result.

Level 2: You always act first in a combat round unless someone else involved is also this ***Alert***.

Armored Magic

Usable only by Mage heroes who would otherwise be prevented from casting spells or using arts while armored, this Focus reflects special training in channeling magic through the hindering materials of conventional armor.

Level 1: You can cast spells or use arts while wearing armor that has an Encumbrance value of no more than two. You can use a shield while casting, provided your other hand is empty for gesturing.

Level 2: You can cast spells while wearing armor of any Encumbrance. You've also learned to cast spells while both your hands are full, though not bound.

Armsmaster

You have an unusual competence with thrown weapons and melee attacks. This Focus' benefits do not apply to unarmed attacks or non-thrown projectile weapons. This Focus' bonuses also don't stack with ***Deadeye*** or other Foci that add a skill's level to your damage or Shock.

Level 1: Gain Stab as a bonus skill. You can Ready a Stowed melee or thrown weapon as an Instant action. You may add your Stab skill level to a melee or thrown weapon's damage roll or Shock damage, assuming it has any to begin with.

Level 2: The Shock from your melee attacks always treats the target as if they have AC 10. Gain a +1 bonus to hit with all thrown or melee attacks.

Artisan

You have remarkable gifts as a crafter and can often improvise techniques even in fields unrelated to your usual background. You are able to create mods for equipment even if you are not an Expert, as per the rules on page 56.

Level 1: Gain Craft as a bonus skill. Your Craft skill is treated as one level higher, up to a maximum of 5, for purposes of crafting and maintaining mods. Mods you build require one fewer unit of arcane salvage, down to a minimum of one. Your Craft skill is applicable to any normal crafting profession's work, allowing you to fashion their wares without penalty.

Level 2: The first mod you add to an item requires no Maintenance and only half the silver piece cost usually required. This benefit is in addition to the benefits of installing a mod in masterwork gear you build. You automatically succeed at any attempt to build masterwork gear, and once per month you can reduce a created mod's salvage cost by one further unit, down to a minimum of zero.

Assassin

You are practiced at sudden murder, and have certain advantages in carrying out an Execution Attack as described in the rules on page 44.

Level 1: Gain Sneak as a bonus skill. You can conceal an object no larger than a knife from anything less invasive than a strip search. You can draw or produce this object as an On Turn action, and your point-blank thrown or melee attacks made during a surprise round with it cannot miss the target.

Level 2: You can take a Move action on the same round as you make an Execution Attack, closing rapidly with a target before you attack. You may split this Move action when making an Execution Attack, taking part of it before you murder your target and part of it afterwards. This movement happens too quickly to alert a victim or to be hindered by bodyguards.

Authority

You have an uncanny kind of charisma about you, one that makes others instinctively follow your instructions and further your causes. At level 1, this is a knack of charm and personal magnetism, while level 2 might suggest latent magical powers or an ancient bloodline of sorcerous rule. Where this Focus refers to followers, it means NPCs who have voluntarily chosen to be in your service. PCs never count as followers.

Level 1: Gain Lead as a bonus skill. Once per day, you can make a request from an NPC who is not openly hostile to you, rolling a Cha/Lead skill check at a difficulty of the NPC's Morale score. If you succeed, they will comply with the request, provided it is not significantly harmful or extremely uncharacteristic.

Level 2: Those who follow you are fired with confidence. Any NPC being directly led by you gains a Morale and hit roll bonus equal to your Lead skill and a +1 bonus on all skill checks. Your followers and henchmen will not act against your interests unless under extreme pressure.

Close Combatant

You've had all too much practice at close-in fighting and desperate struggles with drawn blades. You're extremely skilled at avoiding injury in melee combat, and at level 2 you can dodge through a melee scrum without fear of being knifed in passing.

Level 1: Gain any combat skill as a bonus skill. You can use knife-sized thrown weapons in melee without suffering penalties for the proximity of melee attackers. You ignore Shock damage from melee assailants, even if you're unarmored at the time, but invoking this benefit disrupts any spellcasting you might do that round due to the need for violently active evasion.

Level 2: The Shock damage from your melee attacks treats all targets as if they were AC 10. The ***Fighting Withdrawal*** combat action is treated as an On Turn action for you and can be performed freely.

Connected

You're remarkably gifted at making friends and forging ties with the people around you. Wherever you go, you always seem to know somebody useful to your ends.

Level 1: Gain Connect as a bonus skill. If you've spent at least a week in a not-entirely-hostile location, you'll have built a web of contacts willing to do favors for you that are no more than mildly illegal. You can call on one favor per game day and the GM decides how far they'll go for you.

Level 2: Once per game session, if it's not entirely implausible, you meet someone you know who is willing to do modest favors for you. You can decide when and where you want to meet this person, but the GM decides who they are and what they can do for you.

Cultured

Through wide travel, careful observation, or extensive study, you've obtained a wide experience of the cultures of your region and an ability to navigate their customs, laws, and languages. You know what to do and say to impress others with the reasonableness of your wishes.

Level 1: Gain Connect as a bonus skill. You can fluently speak all the common languages of your native region and convey at least basic information in the uncommon or esoteric ones. You can learn a new language with only a week's practice with a native speaker. Once per game day, your polished ways automatically gain a minor favor from an NPC that would not put them to significant expense or risk, assuming the NPC isn't hostile to you.

Level 2: Once per game session, reroll a failed social skill check as you use your cultural knowledge to push your interlocutor toward the desired result.

Die Hard

You are surprisingly hard to kill. You can survive injuries or bear up under stresses that would incapacitate a less determined hero.

Level 1: You gain an extra 2 maximum hit points per level. This bonus applies retroactively if you take this Focus after first level. You automatically stabilize if Mortally Wounded, provided you have not been incinerated, dismembered, or otherwise torn apart.

Level 2: The first time each day that you are reduced to zero hit points by an injury, you instead survive with one hit point remaining. This ability can't save you from large-scale, instantly-lethal trauma.

Deadeye

You have a gift with ranged weapons. While this talent most commonly applies to bows, it is also applicable to thrown weapons or other ranged weapons that can be used with the Shoot skill. For thrown weapons, you can't use the benefits of the ***Armsmaster*** Focus at the same time as ***Deadeye***.

Level 1: Gain Shoot as a bonus skill. You can Ready a Stowed ranged weapon as an Instant action. You may use a bow or two-handed ranged weapon even when an enemy is within melee range, albeit at a -4 hit penalty. You may add your Shoot skill level to a ranged weapon's damage roll.

Level 2: You can reload crossbows or other slow-loading weapons as an On Turn action, provided they don't take more than a round to reload. You can use ranged weapons of any size in melee without penalty. Once per scene, as an On Turn action when target shooting at an inanimate, non-creature target, you automatically hit unless you roll a 2 on your Shoot skill check or the shot is physically impossible.

Dealmaker

You have an uncanny ability to sniff out traders and find good deals, licit or otherwise. Even those who might not normally be disposed to bargain with you can sometimes be persuaded to pause and negotiate, if you have something they want.

Level 1: Gain Trade as a bonus skill. With a half hour of effort you can find a buyer or seller for any good or service that can be traded in the community, legal or otherwise. Finding a marginally possible service, like an assassin willing and able to target a king, or some specific precious ancient artifact, may require an adventure if the GM allows it at all.

Level 2: Once per session, target a sentient who is not just then trying to kill you or your allies and make a request of it that it can comprehend. If it's at all plausible for it to make such terms, it will do so for a price or favor it thinks you can grant, though the price for significant favors might be dear.

Developed Attribute

Your hero has a remarkable degree of development to one or more of their attributes. This may be derived from an eldritch bloodline, native brilliance, or sheer, stubborn determination. This Focus cannot be taken by heroes with the Mage or Partial Mage classes.

Level 1: Choose an attribute; its modifier is increased by +1, up to a maximum of +3. The actual score does not change, but the modifier increases, and may increase again if later advancement improves the attribute enough. You can choose this Focus more than once to improve different attributes.

Diplomatic Grace

Your skill at personal negotiations is enormous and uncanny. Some might even think it supernatural in nature.

Level 1: Gain Convince as a bonus skill. You speak all the languages common to your region of the world and can learn new ones to a workable level in a week, becoming fluent in a month. Reroll 1s on any skill check dice related to negotiation or diplomacy.

Level 2: Once per day, silently consecrate a bargain; the target must make a Mental save to break the deal unless their life or something they love as much is imperiled by it. Most NPCs won't even try to break it. The deal must be for something specific and time-limited, and not an open-ended bargain.

Gifted Chirurgeon

You have an unusual gift for saving Mortally Wounded allies and quickening the natural recovery of the wounded in your care.

Level 1: Gain Heal as a bonus skill. You may attempt to stabilize one Mortally Wounded adjacent person per round as an On Turn action. When rolling Heal skill checks, roll 3d6 and drop the lowest die. You heal twice as many hit points as usual when applying first aid after a battle, as described on page 48.

Level 2: Your curative gifts count as magical healing. You can heal 1d6+Heal skill in damage to an adjacent wounded ally as a Main Action, potentially reviving them without any lingering Frailty. Each such application of healing adds 1 System Strain to the target, and the gift cannot be used on targets already at their maximum System Strain.

Henchkeeper

You have a distinct knack for picking up lost souls who willingly do your bidding. You might induce them with promises of money, power, excitement, sex, or some other prize that you may or may not eventually grant. A henchman obtained with this Focus will serve in loyal fashion until clearly betrayed or placed in unacceptable danger. Henchmen are not "important" people in their society, and are usually marginal sorts, outcasts, the desperate, or other persons with few options.

You can use more conventional pay or inducements to acquire additional henchmen, but these extra hirelings are no more loyal or competent than your pay and treatment can purchase.

Level 1: Gain Lead as a bonus skill. You can acquire henchmen within 24 hours of arriving in a community, assuming anyone is suitable hench material. These henchmen will not fight except to save their own lives, but will escort you on adventures and risk great danger to help you. Most henchmen from a civilized society will be treated as Peaceful Humans from the bestiary section of the book. You can have one henchmen at a time for every three character levels you have, rounded up. You can release henchmen with no hard feelings at any plausible time and pick them back up later should you be without a current henchman.

Level 2: Your henchmen are remarkably loyal and determined, and will fight for you against anything but clearly overwhelming odds. Whether through natural competence or their devotion to you, they're treated as Veteran Soldier from the bestiary section. You can make faithful henchmen out of skilled and highly-capable NPCs, but this requires that you actually have done them some favor or help that would reasonably earn such fierce loyalty.

Impervious Defense

Whether through uncanny reflexes, remarkable luck, supernatural heritage, or magical talent, you have natural defenses equivalent to high-quality armor. The benefits of this Focus don't stack with armor, though Dexterity or shield modifiers apply.

Level 1: You have an innate Armor Class of 15 plus half your character level, rounded up.

Level 2: Once per day, as an Instant action, you can shrug off any single weapon attack or physical trauma inflicted by a foe. Environmental damage, falling damage, or other harm that couldn't be forfended by strong armor cannot be resisted this way.

Impostor

You are exceedingly skilled at presenting yourself as something you are not, including disguises, voice mimicry, and lightning-fast wardrobe changes. Some impostors rely on the acting skills of Perform, while others lean more to the nefarious tricks of Sneak.

Level 1: Gain Perform or Sneak as a bonus skill. Once per scene, reroll any failed skill check or saving throw related to maintaining an imposture or disguise. Create one false identity of no great social importance; you can flawlessly pretend to be that person, such that only extremely persuasive proof can connect you with it. You can change this identity with a week's worth of effort in building a new one.

Level 2: You can alter your clothing and armor such that a single Main Action lets you swap between any of three chosen appearances. In addition to your original false identity, you can establish a new false identity in each city or significant community you spend at least a day in.

Lucky

Some fund of remarkable luck has preserved your life at least once in the past, and continues to give you an edge in otherwise hopeless situations. This luck does not favor the already-blessed; this Focus can only be taken by a PC with at least one attribute modifier of -1 or less.

Level 1: Once per week, a blow or effect that would otherwise have left you killed, mortally wounded, or rendered helpless somehow fails to connect or affect you. You make any rolls related to games of chance twice, taking the better roll.

Level 2: Once per session, in a situation of need or peril, you can trust to your luck and roll 1d6. On a 2 or more, something fortunate will happen to further your goal, provide an escape from immediate peril, or otherwise give you an advantage you need, if not immediate victory. On a 1, the situation will immediately grow much worse, as the GM sees fit.

Nullifier

Something about your hero interferes with easy use of magic on them. It may be a strangely powerful birth blessing, a particular supernatural bloodline, or simple occult incompatibility. This Focus cannot be taken by Mages or Partial Mages.

Level 1: You and all allies within twenty feet gain a +2 bonus to all saving throws against magical effects. As an On Turn action, you can feel the presence or use of magic within twenty feet of you, though you can't discern details about it or the specific source. The first failed saving throw against a magical effect you suffer in a day is turned into a success.

Level 2: Once per day, as an Instant action, you are simply not affected by an unwanted magical effect or supernatural monstrous ability, even if it wouldn't normally allow a saving throw. Immunity to a persistent effect lasts for the rest of the scene.

Poisoner

You are a skilled poisoner, capable of compounding toxins out of readily-available flora and minerals. It takes an hour to brew a poison, and you can keep as many doses fresh as you have levels. Blade venoms take a Main Action to apply and last for ten minutes or until a hit or Shock is inflicted, whichever comes first. Detecting poisoned food is a Wis/Notice skill check against 10, or 12 if the diner's not a noble or otherwise normally wary of poison. One dose can poison up to a half-dozen diners.

Level 1: Gain Heal as a bonus skill. Gain a reroll on any failed saving throw versus poison. Your toxins inflict 2d6 damage plus your level on a hit or Shock, with a Physical save for half. Your incapacitating or hallucinogenic toxins do the same, but those reduced to zero hit points are simply incapacitated for an hour.

Level 2: You are immune to poison and can apply a universal antidote to any poisoned ally as a Main Action. Any attempt to detect or save against your poisons takes a penalty equal to your Heal skill. Your ingested poisons count as an Execution Attack against unsuspecting targets, as per page 44, with Heal used for the Physical saving throw penalty and 1d6 damage per level done on a success. Such poisons can be non-lethal at your discretion.

Polymath

You have a passing acquaintance with a vast variety of practical skills and pastimes, and can make a modest attempt at almost any exercise of skill or artisanry. Note that the phantom skill levels granted by this Focus don't stack with normal skill levels or give a skill purchase discount. Only Experts or Partial Experts can take this Focus.

Level 1: Gain any one bonus skill. You treat all non-combat skills as if they were at least level-0 for purposes of skill checks, even if you lack them entirely.

Level 2: You treat all non-combat skills as if they were at least level-1 for purposes of skill checks.

Rider

Anyone with any level of Ride skill can fight competently on horseback or keep their mount healthy. You have an almost supernatural bond with your steeds, however, and can push them beyond normal limits.

Level 1: Gain Ride as a bonus skill. Your steeds all count as Morale 12 in battle, use your AC if it's higher than theirs, and can travel 50% further in a day than normal for their kind. You can intuitively communicate with riding beasts, gaining as much information from it as its intellect can convey.

Level 2: Once per scene, negate a successful attack against your steed as an Instant action. Once per scene, reroll any failed Ride skill check. You can telepathically send and receive simple warnings, thoughts, and commands to and from your steed so long as it's within two hundred feet. You can so bond with one steed at a time, taking an hour to do so.

Shocking Assault

You're extremely dangerous to enemies around you. The ferocity of your melee attacks stresses and distracts enemies even when your blows don't draw blood.

Level 1: Gain Punch or Stab as a bonus skill. The Shock damage of your weapon treats all targets as if they were AC 10, assuming your weapon is capable of harming the target in the first place and the target is not immune to Shock.

Level 2: In addition, you gain a +2 bonus to the Shock damage rating of all melee weapons and unarmed attacks that do Shock. As usual, regular hits never do less damage than this Shock would do on a miss.

Sniper's Eye

You are an expert at placing a thrown knife or arrow on an unsuspecting target. These special benefits only apply when making an Execution Attack with a bow, hurlant, or thrown weapon, as described on page 44.

Level 1: Gain Shoot as a bonus skill. When making a skill check for a ranged Execution Attack or target shooting, roll 3d6 and drop the lowest die.

Level 2: You don't miss ranged Execution Attacks. A target hit by one takes a -4 penalty on the Physical saving throw to avoid immediate mortal injury. Even if the save is successful, the target takes double the normal damage inflicted by the attack.

Special Origin

Heroes in ***Worlds Without Number*** are assumed to be human, or close enough as to make no real difference. PCs who want to belong to some more exotic species or demihuman kind can pick the origin Focus appropriate to their chosen species, such as those given in the bestiary chapter for different types of creatures.

The availability of these special origins will depend on the campaign and the GM's permission. Even if elves and dwarves do exist in the campaign world, the GM is not obliged to let players use them as PCs if that choice doesn't fit the tone or location being used.

Note also that a PC who just wants to be different without asking for any special mechanical benefits does not need to buy any special Focus. If their particular demihuman or alien has no real advantages over a human, then they can just proclaim their nature as such, assuming the GM allows such beings in their campaign.

Specialist

You are remarkably talented at a particular skill. Whether a marvelous cat burglar, a famed athlete, a brilliant scholar, or some other savant, your expertise is extremely reliable. You may take this Focus more than once for different skills.

Level 1: Gain any skill as a bonus, except for Magic, Stab, Shoot, or Punch. Roll 3d6 and drop the lowest die for all skill checks in this skill.

Level 2: Roll 4d6 and drop the two lowest dice for all skill checks in this skill.

Spirit Familiar

You have a minor spirit, devil, construct, magical beast, or other creature as a devoted companion. While its abilities are limited, it is absolutely loyal to you.

Level 1: Choose a form for your familiar no smaller than a cat nor larger than a human. It has the traits and abilities of an entity created by *Calculation of the Evoked Servitor* on page 68, but may be summoned or dismissed as a Main Action, appearing within melee range of its owner. It cannot carry objects with it during its vanishment aside from the clothing natural to its shape. It has no need for food, water, or sleep. If killed, it vanishes and cannot be re-summoned for 24 hours. Once per day, it can refresh one point of Committed Effort for you.

Level 2: Pick two benefits from the list below for your familiar. This level may be taken more than once, adding two additional options each time.

- It has hit points equal to three times your level
- It gains the ability to attack with a hit bonus equal to half your level, rounded up, doing 1d8 damage on a hit with no Shock
- It gains a +1 skill check bonus and can apply it to a range of situations equivalent to one normal human background
- It gains another shape of your choice which it can adopt or discard as an On Turn action
- It can hover or fly at its usual movement rate
- It can communicate freely with others in any language you know

Trapmaster

You have uncommon expertise in handling traps and snares, both mundane ones and the magical perils sometimes found in Deeps or the lairs of sorcerers. You know how to improvise traps with materials you easily carry.

Level 1: Gain Notice as a bonus skill. Once per scene, reroll any failed saving throw or skill check related to traps or snares. Given five minutes of work you can trap a portal, container, passageway, or other relatively narrow space with foot snares, caltrops, toxic needles, or other hazards. Non-lethal traps cause the first victim to trigger it to lose a round of actions while dangerous ones inflict 1d6 damage plus twice the character's level, with an appropriate saving throw for half. Only one such improvised trap can be maintained at a time. More fearsome traps may be laid with congenial circumstances and the GM's permission.

Level 2: You know secrets for unraveling even magical traps or arcane hazards that would normally require a wizard to dispel them. Once per scene, your efforts count as an ***Extirpate Arcana*** spell against the trap or hazard, cast as if a Mage of twice your level, with any relevant skill check being Int/Notice or Dex/Notice. This ability can be used against any stationary magical effect that's susceptible to being dispelled by ***Extirpate Arcana***.

Unarmed Combatant

Your empty hands are more dangerous than swords in the grip of the less gifted. Your unarmed attacks are counted as melee weapons when it comes to binding up opponents wielding bows and similar ranged long arms, though you need at least one hand free to do so.

Level 1: Gain Punch as a bonus skill. Your unarmed attacks become more dangerous as your Punch skill increases. At level-0, they do 1d6 damage. At level-1, they do 1d8 damage. At level-2 they do 1d10, level-3 does 1d12, and level-4 does 1d12+1. At Punch-1 or better, they have the Shock quality equal to your Punch skill against AC 15 or less. While you normally add your Punch skill level to any unarmed damage, don't add it twice to this Shock damage.

Level 2: Even on a miss with a Punch attack, you do an unmodified 1d6 damage, plus any Shock that the blow might inflict on the target.

Unique Gift

Your hero has some unusual ability or magical knack that can't be adequately described by an existing Focus. This choice is a catch-all meant to represent a special power that's in some way worth a Focus pick.

The exact effect of the ability should be defined by the player and the GM together, working out some result that seems fair and reasonable. This will vary from table to table and from campaign to campaign; an innate ability to breathe water is little more than a novelty in a desert setting, while a campaign based on piracy in an endless archipelago might make it far more significant.

As with any power, the group should be willing to reconsider the gift if it turns out to be exceptionally weak in play or a stronger power than was anticipated.

Valiant Defender

You are a bodyguard, shieldbearer, or other gifted defender of others, accustomed to the roil of bloody battle and desperate struggle. You have an exceptional ability to shield your allies from the attacks of those who would slay them.

Level 1: Gain Stab or Punch as a bonus skill. Gain a +2 on all skill checks for the ***Screen Ally*** combat action. You can screen against one more attacker per round than your skill would normally allow. Once per round, you can ***Screen Ally*** against even intangible spells or magical attacks or bodily shield them from an area-effect explosion or magic. Such attempts require the usual successful opposing skill check, with the assailant using their Magic skill.

Level 2: The first ***Screen Ally*** skill check you make in a round is always successful. Gain +2 AC while screening someone. You can screen against foes as large as ogres or oxen.

Well Met

You have a striking ability to charm and pacify people and creatures you've just met. Once they get to know you, however, their opinions are more likely to be based on experience; this Focus works only once on a target.

Level 1: Reaction rolls made by those the party meets are given a +1 bonus so long as you are present, whether or not you do the talking. Even hostile encountered beings will usually give the party a round to parley before attacking unless they're in ambush or have a clear reason for immediate violence.

Level 2: Once per game session, when a reaction roll is made, cause the subject to be as friendly and helpful to you and your party as it's plausibly possible for them to be. It's up to the GM to decide why the creature becomes so; it might be mistaken about your nature, or find you hilarious, or perhaps want a favor from you and your allies.

Whirlwind Assault

You are a frenzy of bloody havoc in melee combat, and can hack down numerous lesser foes in close combat… assuming you survive being surrounded.

Level 1: Gain Stab as a bonus skill. Once per scene, as an On Turn action, apply your Shock damage to all foes within melee range, assuming they're susceptible to your Shock.

Level 2: The first time you kill someone in a round with a normal attack, either with its rolled damage on a hit or with the Shock damage it inflicts, instantly gain a second attack on any target within range using any Ready weapon you have.

Xenoblooded

You have been both blessed and cursed by the Outsiders, gaining the ability to survive in alien environments that humans were never meant to tolerate. This may be from ancient modifications made to your lineage in order to make them better servants, or it could be that you're some sort of alien-human hybrid yourself. Those cursed with such a hated heritage usually have considerable physical variations from human normality, and usually try to pass themselves off as merely an unusual kind of demihuman or unfortunate human mutant.

Level 1: Choose one set of benefits from the list below to reflect your alien heritage. Other gifts may exist.

- You are immune to heat damage and can breathe and see through smoke without hindrance.
- You are water-adapted and can breathe water and see through it up to 120' regardless of light. You swim at double your normal Move rate.
- You were built to heavier or lighter gravity conditions; gain a +1 to either your Strength or Dexterity modifiers, to a maximum of +3, and a -1 penalty to the modifier of the other attribute.
- You are nourished by invisible radiations and need neither eat, sleep, nor breathe. You can see clearly even in the absence of any light.

Final Touches

The final stage of creating your hero involves noting down some numbers and particulars to round off their creation. You'll need to roll their starting hit points, pick a free skill, and do a little extra record-keeping to save time during play.

Roll Your Starting Hit Points

Roll to determine your initial maximum hit points; if you run out of them, your PC will be mortally wounded or killed outright. The die you roll depends on your class: Warriors roll 1d6+2, Experts roll 1d6, and Mages roll 1d6-1, with Adventurers using the tables on page 21 depending on which partial classes they picked. Add your Constitution modifier to this roll to get your initial maximum HP, with a minimum of 1 point even for heroes with a Constitution penalty.

Pick a Free Skill

Pick one skill of your choice to reflect your hero's past interests, talents, or professional work, gaining it at level-0 proficiency. If you already have this skill at level-0, it becomes level-1. You cannot use this free pick to improve a skill that's already at level-1.

Record Your Saving Throws

Note down your beginning saving throw scores for your Physical, Evasion, Mental and Luck saving throws. Physical saves against poison, disease, or exhaustion are 15 minus the best of your Strength or Constitution modifiers. Evasion saves to dodge sudden perils or dive away from explosives are 15 minus the best of your Intelligence and Dexterity modifiers. Mental saves to resist psychic influence or mind-bending sorceries are 15 minus the best of your Wisdom or Charisma modifiers. Your Luck save is a flat score of 15, and rolled against when only blind luck can save you.

Record Your Base Attack Bonus

Your hero has a certain minimal competence in combat, regardless of their combat skills or the weapon used. This base attack bonus varies with their class, and is noted on the class tables. Write it down on your sheet.

Mages Choose Starting Spells

Spellcasting full Mages begin play knowing four first-level spells and partial Mages begin play knowing two. Adventurers with two partial spellcasting Mage classes, such as a partial Necromancer/partial High Mage know four. These spells may be chosen from any spell list available to them. A novice High Mage, for example, would pick first-level spells from the High Magic spell list, while a new Elementalist could pick them from either the High Magic or Elementalist spells.

Record Starting Languages

Characters begin with the knowledge of their native language, Trade Cant, and fluency in additional ones based on their Connect and Know skill levels. Level-0 in either grants one more language and level-1 grants two. Thus, a PC with Connect-1 and Know-1 skills would start fluent in their native tongue, Trade Cant, and four additional languages of their choice. Increasing Connect or Know skills later can allow them to learn one more language for each level they gain, as can spending a few months immersed in a culture. On page 107 you'll find a list of the tongues common to the Gyre region of the Latter Earth.

Choose Starting Equipment

You can either pick a starting equipment package from the choices on the opposite page, or roll 3d6 x 10 to find out your starting silver pieces to spend on gear or keep in your pocket. The starting packages will generally give you more equipment than the random roll would, but items can be swapped at the GM's discretion.

Record Weapons and Armor

Now that you know what kind of weaponry or armor your hero has, take a moment to record the total hit bonus for your weaponry. This is equal to your base attack bonus plus your relevant Stab, Shoot, or Punch skill, and the relevant attribute modifier for the weapon given on the table on page 37. If two attributes are listed for a weapon, use whichever is better for you. If you lack even level-0 skill in the weapon, take a -2 hit penalty with it.

For each weapon's damage and Shock, note down the information from the table. You add your attribute modifier to both damage rolls and Shock. Punch weapons or unarmed attacks can also add your Punch skill.

For your PC's Armor Class, record the AC of the armor you usually wear. Unarmored humans have an AC of 10. Armor Class is modified by your Dexterity modifier, improving it on a bonus and worsening it on a penalty.

Pick a Name, Goal, and Ties

Lastly, crown your newly-minted hero with a suitable name, a goal in life, and a reason why they are willing to adventure with the other PCs.

It is crucial for every PC to have an active goal in the world, something they are willing to risk their life to pursue. This goal can and almost certainly will change as play goes on, but they need a reason to venture out into the world, risk terrible dangers, and seek great deeds. Make sure your goal is one that won't interfere with the fun of the rest of the group.

Aside from that, you also need a reason to trust and work with your comrades. You may not like each other very much, but you should have enough faith in each other to be willing to dare great adventures together.

Equipment Packages

To determine your hero's starting equipment you may pick a suitable package from the selections below. Optionally, you can roll 3d6 x 10 to find out your PC's starting silver and purchase items individually from the section starting on page 33. As a matter of simplicity, it's often easiest to simply pick a serviceable package and perhaps swap out an item if the GM thinks it's reasonable.

PCs are assumed to have an ordinary suit of clothing and such small personal effects as anyone would carry on their person. Such things do not count against the hero's Encumbrance, as explained on page 32, though a spare set of clothing kept in a backpack would do so.

The equipment packages include the Encumbrance cost of each item. Remember that armor must be worn Ready in order to do any good, and weapons that are kept Stowed will take an extra Main Action to get ready for use. Backpacks and other storage gear generally counts as Stowed unless the hero wants to tie it loosely and thus be ready to drop it at a moment's need… such as when they may need to outrun a slower compatriot.

Adventuring Peasant	Enc
War Shirt (AC 11)	0
Large Shield (AC 14 when held)	1
Light Spear (1d6 dmg, Shock 2/AC 13)	1
Dagger (1d4 dmg, Shock 1/AC 15)	1
Backpack	1
Rations, 1 week	4
Mule and small cart	-
Tinder box and 3 torches	1

Armored Warrior	Enc
Pieced Armor (AC 14)	2
Large Shield (+1 AC when wearing armor)	1
Short Sword (1d6 dmg, Shock 2/AC 15)	1
Dagger (1d4 dmg, Shock 1/AC 15)	1
Backpack	1
Tinder box and 3 torches	1

Gentry Wayfarer	Enc
Buff Coat (AC 12)	0
Small Shield (AC 13 when held)	1
Short Sword (1d6 dmg, Shock 2/AC 15)	1
Backpack	1
Rations, 1 week	4
Waterskin	1
Fine suit of clothing carried in the pack	1
Writing kit & 20 sheets of paper	1
20 silver coins in cash	-

Ranger or Archer	Enc
Buff Coat (AC 12)	0
Bow, Large (1d8 damage, no Shock)	2
20 arrows & quiver	1
Dagger (1d4 dmg, Shock 1/AC 15)	1
Hand Axe (1d6 dmg, Shock 1/AC 15)	1
Backpack	1
Cooking utensils and 1 week of rations	5 total
Waterskin	1
Tinder box and 3 torches	1
20 silver pieces in cash	-

Roguish Wanderer	Enc
Buff Coat (AC 12)	0
Small Shield (AC 13 when held)	1
Short Sword (1d6 dmg, Shock 2/AC 15)	1
Throwing Blades, 5 (1d4 dmg, no Shock)	1
Backpack	1
Rations, 1 week	4
Waterskin	1
Tinder box and 3 torches	1
Grappling hook and 50′ of rope	2 total

Mage, Healer, or Scholar	Enc
Daggers, 2 (1d4 dmg, Shock 1/AC 15)	2
Staff (1d6 dmg, Shock 1/AC 13)	1
Backpack	1
Lantern, tinder box, and 2 pint flasks of oil	3 total
Writing kit & 20 sheets of paper	1
Rations, 1 week	4
Waterskin	1
Healer's pouch	1
80 silver pieces in cash	-

Example Character Creation

At the start of a new campaign, Jack needs to roll up a fresh hero. He has no particular ideas about what to play, so he rolls 3d6 six times to find his PC's initial statistics, getting results of Strength 9, Dexterity 6, Constitution 10, Intelligence 12, Wisdom 12, and Charisma 9. His hero is a very ordinary person in the main, if perhaps a little slower and clumsier than most. His attribute modifiers are all +0, except for Dexterity, which is -1.

Because Jack chose to roll his attributes, he can swap one score out with a score of 14, giving it an attribute modifier of +1. Jack decides to hold off that decision for a moment until after he's picked his background and class, so he can become better at whatever will serve his hero best.

Trusting the dice for inspiration, Jack decides to roll randomly to find out what kind of background his hero possesses. The dice tell him that he was formerly a Peasant. The gods clearly have no special favor for this budding hero.

Jack's a little amused at how this hard-luck hero is shaping up, so he decides to continue with the random theme in rolling for skills. He gets a Peasant's automatic free skill of Exert-0 and then can roll three more times on either the Growth or Learning tables for the background. If he'd chosen his skills instead, he'd only be allowed to pick two more from the Learning table, and couldn't roll or pick from the Growth table at all.

Jack chooses to roll once on the Growth table and twice on the Learning table, for the results of "Any Skill", "Sneak", and "Work". Being a peasant, Jack decides that his "Work" result refers to his farming and husbandry skills, and "Sneak" suggests that he wasn't the most honest of men, which leaves Jack suspecting that his young peasant was a poacher. That means his "Any Skill" is probably best chosen as Shoot, for taking game in secret. As a result, Jack's hero now has skills of Exert-0, Work-0, Sneak-0, and Shoot-0.

If he's to be a hard-bitten peasant poacher, then he's going to need to be a better shot with his bow. Jack decides to put his free 14 score into Dexterity, improving its modifier from -1 to +1. He's now a much better bowman and stealthier sneak.

Jack needs to decide on his hero's class now. While there's no rule that the new PC couldn't have become a wizard after his youth as a peasant and poacher, Jack decides that he's really not a good fit for being a Mage. While he's a good archer, he's also not really a slayer of men by profession or inclination, so Warrior is out as well. Expert seems the most likely choice, with his focus being on his sneaking and woodsman skills.

Jack thinks a bit on whether to make him an Adventurer with partial Warrior and partial Expert classes. While that would make him considerably tougher and more dangerous with his bow, a pure Expert has a versatility in skill use that an Adventurer can't match. Jack decides that with a decent Shoot skill and an Expert's natural competence at fighting, he ought to be able to hold his own in battle without splitting his class.

Having decided on a background and class, Jack needs to pick two Foci for his hero: one non-combat one suitable for an Expert, and one of any kind he wishes. For the first, Jack decides that his hero is ***Alert***, his senses honed by a life of constant watchfulness and fear of the authorities. The Focus gives him Notice as a bonus skill, which Jack adds to the PC's sheet as Notice-0.

For the second, Jack decides it'd be fun to add a little bit of the uncanny to this poacher, and gives him the ***Spirit Familiar*** Focus. His faithful hunting-beagle Limper starved last winter when the game was too scarce and the warden too watchful, but the beast was too loyal to notice. Now Limper's spirit manifests as a perfectly ordinary-looking dog, yet one with an intuitive knowledge of the PC's wishes and a positively human sharpness of intellect.

Jack now looks at the hero's current list of skills: Shoot-0, Exert-0, Notice-0, Sneak-0, and Work-0. He may pick one skill of his choice as a free pick, and decides to round off his competence with Survive-0, to reflect the hero's experience in living rough and enduring privations.

With these choices, the hero is mostly finished. All that remains is some recording-work of writing down bonuses and totals as described on page 28 and rolling the hero's initial maximum hit points. As an Expert with a Constitution modifier of +0, Jack rolls 1d6 and gets 4. One good spear-thrust is likely to down the poacher, so Jack resolves to steer clear of combat whenever possible.

Jack also needs to pick equipment for the hero. Rather than spend the time and effort of sorting through the equipment lists, he just picks the "Ranger or Archer" equipment package as a good fit for his needs.

Yet the important task of choosing a name, a character goal, and a suitable tie to the rest of the group remains. A downtrodden peasant poacher could come from almost any quarter of the Gyre, but Jack decides that Llaigis is the best fit for his hero's history. That grim land doesn't lack for oppressive lords and harsh privation. If he's from Llaigis, Jack decides his hero is Ulf, a thin, scarred Khalan man who expects nothing good from life but is willing to be surprised. He ran away from his lord when brutal taxes led to Limper's starvation, and now his burning ambition is to be so rich and powerful that he will be able to avenge himself on his cruel former master.

Jack decides that when Ulf met the party out hunting, Limper took a liking to them. The poacher trusts the dog's judgment implicitly, so he'll gladly cooperate with the rest of the party. The young Khalan is willing to take any job that shows a prospect of paying well or striking at a corrupt noble, so the GM makes a note to use these goals as convenient adventure hooks. Ulf is now ready to go forth and adventure.

WORLDS WITHOUT NUMBER

NAME _____

PLAYER _____

HOMELAND _____

OCCUPATION _____

RACE/SPECIES _____

GOAL _____

DESCRIPTION _____

BACKGROUND

DETAILS

CLASS

BENEFITS

LEVEL

XP

Lvl 2 = 3/6 xp Lvl 6 = 27/51 xp
Lvl 3 = 6/15 xp Lvl 7 = 29/69 xp
Lvl 4 = 12/24 xp Lvl 8 = 54/87 xp
Lvl 5 = 18/36 xp Lvl 9 = 72/105 xp
Lvl 10 = 93/139

BASE ATTACK BONUS

MELEE ATTACK BONUS (= +STR Mod.)

RANGED ATTACK BONUS (= +DEX Mod.)

INITIATIVE BONUS (= DEX Mod.)

SKETCH OR SIGIL

READIED ITEMS

MAX Total Readied Items = STR ÷ 2, rnd. down

FOCI

+1 Focus at Levels 2, 5, 7, & 10

Lvl.
Lvl.
Lvl.
Lvl.
Lvl.
Lvl.
Lvl.

ATTRIBUTES

STR Mod.
DEX Mod.
CON Mod.
INT Mod.
WIS Mod.
CHA Mod.

HIT POINTS AND SYSTEM STRAIN

Hit Points

Current

System Strain

SAVES

PHYSICAL
16-lvl -STR/CON Mod.

EVASION
16-lvl -DEX/INT Mod.

MENTAL
16-lvl -WIS/CHA Mod.

LUCK
16-lvl

ARMOR CLASS

DEX Mod. _____

Worn	Armor	AC	Special
☐			
☐			
☐			
☐			

WEAPONS

Name	Bonus to Hit	Damage	Range	Special and Shock

AMMUNITION

SKILLS

SKILL POINTS

Administer		Lead		Sail	
Connect		Magic		Shoot	
Convince		Notice		Sneak	
Craft		Perform		Stab	
Exert		Pray		Survive	
Heal		Punch		Trade	
Know		Ride		Work	

+3 Skill Points/lvl (Experts: +1 extra non-combat)
Cost: New Value +1 Max +2 at lvl 3,
+3 at lvl 6, +4 at lvl9

Equipment, Armor, and Weaponry

There are countless different currencies in the Latter Earth, some familiar enough and others largely incomprehensible to outsiders. Some places use no recognizable "money" at all. In most regions, however, some variety of metal coinage is used. While it lacks the occult power of certain ancient magic-based currencies, it can be minted by any local lord with a furnace and a hammer. Many do, and the finer points of coin purity, weight, and value are of keen interest to merchants the world over.

For most adventurers, however, a coin is a coin. Copper coins are the daily-use money of urbanites, where village folk more often trade goods and services through a complex but well-understood balance of favors done and owed. Silver coins are for larger purchases, while golden coins are the currency of rich merchants, nobles, and others who deal with great affairs.

Silver is the usual currency of record, with the prices of most expensive goods given in silver pieces. Amounts in gold are often considered more honorable, and so a lord's income or a king's reward will often be phrased in terms of gold coins, even if ultimately paid in silver.

Common Exchange Rates

1 gold coin	is	10 silver coins
1 silver coin	is	10 copper coins

Buying Equipment and Services

The following tables give the common prices for assorted goods, weapons, armor, and services of interest to adventurers. These prices are usually significantly higher than those that would be paid by a reasonably well-connected local or native; adventurers and other wayfarers tend to pay a premium for their gear. A prudent, patient native might pay half as much for many of these things.

Most of the equipment listed can be acquired in any decent-sized market town or city. Truly costly items of several thousand silver pieces or more may require special contacts to purchase in a timely fashion, or else the patience to wait out the equipment's construction.

In villages and other rural areas, much of this gear will be unavailable at any price. The village guardians might have a few spare spears or battered buff coats to sell at a stiff mark-up, but hurlants, war-horses, chain hauberks, and other expensive, specialized gear is unlikely to be available save by pure luck and much silver.

Hirelings and other servants are most easily found in towns and cities as well, though a village may have a few strapping lads willing to risk their necks for more silver than they'll see in half a life. If those lives are cut short, however, don't expect replacements to step forward.

Encumbrance

There is a limit to the amount of gear that a hero can comfortably carry. While a GM is perfectly justified in deciding to handle the matter loosely, and to just eyeball a reasonable maximum for the party's allowed gear, some prefer a more organized system.

Encumbrance is measured in ***items***. Most ordinary objects that can be comfortably carried in one hand count as one item. Two-handed weapons, heavy objects, or unwieldy things count as two, or sometimes even more in the more extreme cases.

Very small objects do not count as items unless carried in unusual numbers. Normal clothing being worn does not count as an item. Gems, jewelry, and other small objects usually aren't tracked as items, though every full 100 coins counts as one item.

Bulk goods such as torches, empty waterskins, oil flasks, or the like can be bundled together, with three of them counting as one item. Such carefully-packed bundles require a Main Action to break open if the PC wants to get at the contents, however.

A hero can carry a number of ***Readied*** items equal to half their Strength attribute, rounded down. Readied items include worn armor, carried shields, weapons sheathed or at the ready, or anything else the PC wants immediate access to. PCs can use Readied items as part of whatever action they're doing without taking any extra time to draw them, dig them out of a pack, or get them ready for use. Thus, a hero with a sheathed sword that is Ready can draw it as part of the attack they're making, and a hero with a Readied magical potion can quaff it without spending any extra time finding it in his pack.

A hero can carry a number of ***Stowed*** items equal to their full Strength score. Stowed items are tucked away in packs, carefully organized in pouches, and otherwise stored so as to be as compact as possible. A hero who wants to use a Stowed item needs to spend a Main Action digging it out before they can employ it.

Characters can push their limits by carrying more than is comfortable. An extra two Readied or four Stowed items can be carried, but this slows them down; their Move action allows them to move only 20 feet instead of 30. A further two Readied or four Stowed items can be carried beyond that, but that slows them down to 15 feet per Move action.

It's assumed that the heroes have sufficient packs, sacks, pockets, and pouches to actually carry all of their gear. While a PC might have enough Strength to cart around a dozen pieces of adventuring gear, if they don't have a backpack or some other way of actually storing these things, the GM may not allow them to do it. In the same vein, some relatively light objects that are very bulky or awkward might count as several Encumbrance points.

Adventuring Gear

Most of the equipment listed below is largely self-explanatory. The prices given are average for adventurers in most urban areas, though acquiring some of the objects may be more costly in less prosperous surroundings.

Some groups prefer to have less fine-grained tracking of a party's resources and would rather not record each torch and flask of oil. Those who would prefer to be a little more general can instead use the adjacent gear bundle options, assuming the GM permits it.

Adventuring Gear

Item	Cost	Enc
Arrows, 20	2 sp	1
Backpack	2 sp	1§
Boots	2 sp	1§
Candle	1 cp	*
Cart, one-horse	50 sp	N/A
Clothes, common	25 sp	1§
Clothes, fine	100 sp	1§
Clothes, noble	500 sp	2§
Cooking utensils	4 sp	1
Crowbar	4 sp	1
Firewood, one night's fire	2 cp	4
Flask, metal, one pint	3 sp	1
Grappling hook	5 sp	1
Hammer or small tool	2 sp	1
Healer's pouch	5 sp	1
Hurlant bolts, 20	20 sp	1
Iron spikes, 10	1 sp	1
Lantern	10 sp	1
Mirror, hand	10 sp	*
Oil, one pint	1 sp	1#
Paper, 10 sheets	1 sp	*
Rations, one week	5 sp	4
Rope, 50'	2 sp	2
Sack	1 sp	1
Shovel, pick, or similar tool	4 sp	2
Tinder box	1 sp	*
Torch	2 cp	1#
Waterskin, one gallon	1 sp	1
Writing kit	3 sp	1

* the item is effectively weightless in modest numbers
§ the item doesn't count for encumbrance purposes while being worn
# can be bundled in units of three for the same encumbrance, with a Main Action to break open a bundle to get at the contents

Gear Bundles

Depending on the tastes of the group, some parties might enjoy tracking every torch and carefully weighing their resource expenditures on perilous expeditions. Others prefer to gloss over the details. The "gear bundle" options below cover all the non-weapon, non-armor gear expected of a particular role and the usual encumbrance weight of it all. The specific contents of each bundle are as broad as the GM finds reasonable for the role. A GM who prefers exact accounting can disallow bundles.

Gear Bundles

Item	Cost	Enc
Artisan's Equipment	50 sp	5
Criminal Tools	100 sp	3
Dungeoneering Kit	200 sp	6
Noble Courtier Outfit	1,000 sp	2
Performer's Implements	100 sp	3
Wilderness Travel Gear	100 sp	5

Beasts and Transport

The animals below are generally similar to those known in contemporary Earth, though subtle changes in behavior or physiology are common. Some nations have access to exceptionally swift flying beasts or remarkable airships surviving from former days, but the availability of such exotic modes of transport is at the GM's discretion.

Beasts and Transport

Item	Cost
Horse, riding	200 sp
Horse, draft	150 sp
Horse, battle-trained	2,000 sp
Mule	30 sp
Cow	10 sp
Ox, plow-trained	15 sp
Chicken	5 cp
Pig	3 sp
Dog, working	20 sp
Sheep or goat	5 sp
River ferry, per passenger	5 cp
Ship passage, per expected day	2 sp
Carriage travel, per mile	2 cp
Rowboat	30 sp
Small fishing boat	200 sp
Merchant ship	5,000 sp
War galleon	50,000 sp

Hirelings and Day Labor

The party may find it useful to employ temporary labor in their adventures, either for extra warm bodies in combat or for the special talents the hireling might bring.

Adventuring hirelings will demand at least a half-share of treasure in addition to their daily pay and will undertake no risks that their employers don't share. Their combat statistics will be as normal for their type, usually equal to a common human soldier for most. After a particularly dangerous adventure, the hireling must make a Morale check; on a failure, they decide the adventuring life is too risky, and will no longer accompany the party.

On the rare occasions that a competent mage can be found willing to hire out their services, they almost never have spellcasting abilities beyond that of a first or second level Mage.

Most communities have a limited number of men and women willing to risk an awful doom while adventuring. If the party makes a habit of returning without their employees, the GM may well decide that no further locals are willing to sign on.

Non-adventuring hirelings who are employed to guard the party's residence, haul their equipment on expeditions, work on their behalf, and otherwise conduct normal business will require no more than their daily wage. If they can't go home at the end of the day, food and fit lodgings must be provided as well.

Where it matters, common hirelings can be assumed to have a total +1 bonus on relevant skill checks.

Hirelings and Day Labor

Item	Cost/day
Bard of Small Repute	2 sp
Common Prostitute	2 sp
Dragoman or Skilled Interpreter	10 sp
Elite Courtesan	100 sp
Farmer	1 sp
Guard, ordinary	2 sp
Guard, sergeant, for every ten guards	10 sp
Lawyer or Pleader	10 sp
Mage of Minor Abilities	200 sp
Mundane Physician	10 sp
Porter willing to go into the wilds	5 sp
Porter only for relatively safe roads	1 sp
Navigator	5 sp
Sage, per question answered	200 sp
Sailor	1 sp
Scribe or Clerk	3 sp
Skilled Artisan	5 sp
Unskilled Laborer	1 sp
Veteran Sellsword	10 sp
Wilderness Guide	10 sp

Services and Living Expenses

Heroes who are sufficiently established as to have their own homes or businesses can live comfortably on their own resources. Other PCs, however, must pay for their keep when not out adventuring.

Impoverished lifestyle costs cover only the bare minimum of food and a mostly-dry squat to sleep in. Heroes who can afford nothing better suffer a -1 penalty to all social skill checks due to their unkempt state and must make a Physical saving throw each night to benefit from the usual nightly decrease in System Strain.

Common lifestyle fees for an adventurer usually cover adequate food and a shabby private inn room. No penalties or benefits are granted by living this way.

Rich lifestyle costs generally include a rented townhouse, a small staff of servants, and social entree into high society circles that are forgiving of the nouveau riche… at least, as long as their coin remains good.

Noble lifestyles provide the very best the community can offer in fine lodging, luxuriant food, sycophantic servants, and the provisional friendship of useful parasites. Once per game session, the PC can ask a favor of a hanger-on in their retinue, who will perform it if it is not more than mildly humiliating, dangerous or illegal.

Aside from these weekly lifestyle costs, some other services often required by adventurers are listed. Individual circumstances and the quality of the help hired may drastically increase these fees, and bribes are not always successful in buying forbearance.

Services and Living Expenses

Item	Cost
Impoverished lifestyle, per week	5 sp
Common lifestyle, per week	20 sp
Rich lifestyle, per week	200 sp
Noble lifestyle, per week	1,000 sp
Magical healing of wounds	10 sp/hp*
Magical curing of a disease	500 sp*
Lifting a curse or undoing magic	1,000 sp*
Casting a minor spell	250 sp*
Bribe to overlook a minor crime	10 sp
Bribe to overlook a major crime	500 sp
Bribe to overlook a capital crime	10,000 sp
Hire someone for a minor crime	50 sp
Hire someone for a major crime	1,000 sp
Hire someone for an infamous crime	25,000 sp

* These services are rarely available without personal connections or doing special favors, and many communities may lack them entirely.

Armor

While some martial adepts or tradition-bound sorcerers shun armor, most adventurers find it necessary to put something solid between them and their enemies.

Armor must be worn as a Readied item, counting against the hero's encumbrance limit. Each type of armor grants a different base Armor Class to the wearer, making it more difficult for enemies to land a telling blow. This Armor Class is modified by the wearer's Dexterity modifier and by any shield they might carry, as described below. Multiple suits of armor do not stack; only one can usefully benefit a wearer at any one time.

A hero wearing no armor at all has a base Armor Class of 10, modified by their Dexterity modifier. If they pick up a shield they can improve this to either AC 13 or AC 14, depending on the size of the shield.

Light armor may be decidedly heavy, but it is loose and flexible enough to offer minimal hindrance to the wearer's actions. Some varieties are also discreet enough to be worn politely in common society. ***Medium armor*** is significantly noisier and more overt; it cannot be worn discreetly and applies its encumbrance as a penalty to any physical Sneak rolls made by the wearer. ***Heavy armor*** is the thickest, toughest panoply available on the market, and its bulk and noise make its encumbrance apply as a penalty to Sneak or Exert checks made by the wearer.

The armors listed on the table are simply some of the most common harness to be found in the Latter Earth. Enchanted and exotic panoply can be found in many places, some of which is scarcely recognizable as armor.

Shields come in two general varieties. Small ones, often made of costlier metal, can be strapped to the wearer's arm and allow them to hold and manipulate objects with that hand, albeit not wield a weapon with it. Larger shields are of cheaper wood and require a good grip.

A small shield user has a base AC of 13, while a large shield user has a base AC of 14. Unlike other armor, however, if the user is already wearing equal or better armor the shield grants a +1 bonus to their AC. Shields allow the bearer to ignore the first instance of Shock they might otherwise suffer in a round.

War shirts are nothing more than blessed shirts, lucky cloaks, auspicious warpaint, or whatever tokens of martial victory are favored by the poor and humble of a given culture. While they may look like nothing but normal clothing, their war-luck is still sufficient to interfere with a spellcaster's abilities should they try to wear one.

Buff coats are long coats of thick, supple hide, sometimes worn to cushion the bite of heavier armor and sometimes sported as ornamented street clothing for the gentry who can afford such luxuries. ***Linothorax*** armor is a stiffer armor of glued, layered cloth, often as elaborately decorated as the arts of its maker allow.

A ***war robe*** is a catchall term for various outfits involving layers of reinforced cloth or leather. Bits of metal, layers of thick hide, or weaves of tough cordage might all go into the various layers of the suit, making it a very heavy, if effective, piece of equipment.

Armor

Light Armors	AC	Cost	Enc
No Armor	10	None	N/A
War Shirt	11	5 sp	0
Buff Coat	12	50 sp	0
Linothorax	13	20 sp	1
War Robe	14	50 sp	3
Pieced Armor	14	100 sp	2
Medium Armors			
Mail Shirt	14	250 sp	1
Cuirass and Greaves	15	250 sp	2
Scaled Armor	16	500 sp	3
Heavy Armors			
Mail Hauberk	16	750 sp	2
Plate Armor	17	1,000 sp	2
Great Armor	19	2,000 sp	3
Grand Plate	16	2,000 sp	3
Shields			
Small Shield	13	20 sp	1
Large Shield	14	10 sp	1

Pieced armor is assembled of a thicker or more durable chestpiece and piecework limb armor. While less effective than a proper cuirass and greaves, it's often the best that scavengers or poor adventurers can get.

Mail shirts are usually of iron or steel wire, though bronze and other more exotic materials are not unknown. Such shirts cover only the vitals of the wearer, but are much less burdensome than a full hauberk.

Cuirass and greave armor reflects those different designs that rely on solid metal plating over the wearer's vitals along with lighter limb armor. ***Scaled armor*** includes both armor of metal scales on a flexible backing, brigandine, jacks of plate, and other armor made up of small, connected plates that cover most of the wearer's body. Most are noisy, heavy suits, albeit flexible ones.

A ***mail hauberk*** in the listed style covers not only the wearer's chest, but also their arms, with a long skirt extended to the knee. ***Plate armor*** is an extremely expensive suit of tailored metal pieces that cover both the vitals and the limbs of the wearer. ***Great armor*** is less finely tailored, relying instead on stacking layer upon layer of mail, plates, hide, cloth, and other protective materials.

Grand plate is so finely-jointed that a weapon must either be very large or very armor-piercing to harm the wearer; they're immune to non-magical melee or thrown weapons unless the weapon is two-handed, has a Shock rating of AC 16 or more, or the wearer is currently grappled by someone as per the rules on page 43. This tight protection comes at the cost of the thick plating found in great armor or conventional plate.

Weapons

The tools of a bloody trade are familiar to most adventurers. While some Vowed or trained pugilists might scorn the use of material weapons, most sentient combatants must rely on something better than their natural gifts.

Each of the weapons on the adjacent page has a listed damage it inflicts on a successful hit, an amount of Shock inflicted on a miss to targets with an AC equal or less than that given, and a particular attribute relevant to the weapon's use. That attribute's modifier is applied to all hit rolls, damage rolls, and Shock inflicted by the weapon. If more than one attribute is listed, the wielder can use whichever one is better. Using a melee weapon without at least Stab-0 skill inflicts a -2 penalty on hit rolls, as does using ranged weapons without at least Shoot-0 skill. Thrown weapons can be used with either.

Ranged weapons have both short and long ranges listed in feet. Attacking a target within short range may be done at no penalty, while hitting a target at long range is done with a-2 penalty to the hit roll. Two-handed ranged weapons cannot be used while an enemy is locked in melee with the wielder, and even one-handed or thrown weapons suffer a -4 penalty to hit in such circumstances.

Some weapons have additional unique traits, perhaps being particularly slow to reload, or requiring two hands to wield correctly, or being easily hidden in common clothing. The GM might choose to apply these traits to improvised weapons snatched up by the PCs if any of them seem appropriate.

Axes given here are those fashioned for war; lighter and more agile than their working cousins, though still capable of hacking through a door or hewing a cable if needed. War axes are big enough to demand two hands for their use.

Blackjacks include not only obvious weapons loaded with sand or iron shot, but any small, stunning fist load. A blackjack or other small fist load is easily concealed as some ornamental component of ordinary clothing.

Bows cover everything from the small self bows of horse archers to the man-tall longbows wielded by foot archers. Larger bows are more cumbersome and impossible to shoot from horseback, but usually have superior strength. An archer with a Readied quiver can load a fresh arrow as a Move action each turn, or as an On Turn action if they have at least Shoot-1 skill.

Claw blades are the sharper kin of fist loads, being small blades or finger talons that are easily concealed or disguised as metal ornaments. While they are vicious weapons, they can't be usefully thrown.

Clubs, staves, and ***maces*** are of much the same genus, though the latter is usually made of metal. While fully capable of killing a man, a careful user can usually avoid inflicting lethal injury.

Crossbows come in heavier varieties than the one listed, but such slow, bulky arbalests are rarely in the hands of adventurers. Reloading a crossbow of this size takes a full Main Action, but due to the simplicity of their operation, someone without Shoot-0 can still use them at no unskilled hit penalty.

Daggers come in ten thousand varieties, but the listed kind is a common fighting dirk, big enough to push through light armor while remaining small enough to be discreetly hidden. ***Stilettos*** and similar armor-piercing daggers aren't usually effective as thrown weapons.

Halberds and other polearms can be somewhat awkward in narrow spaces, but remain popular military weapons in some armies. The statistics given here can also be used for fauchards, bills, voulges, spetums, bardiches, glaives, guisarmes, guisarme-glaives, glaive-guisarme-glaives, and similar weapons.

Hammers listed here are the fighting variety, narrow-headed and made for penetrating or shocking heavy plates of armor.

Hurlants are a wide range of ancient and modern projectile weapons that launch specially-prepared charges through various means, both sorcerous and semi-scientific. The tremendous accumulation of ancient Legacy manipulations intended to disarm subject populations and restrict advanced weaponry to a given age's ruling caste has made it very difficult to create firearms, as most conventional chemical or magical reactions are specifically disrupted by the Legacy.

Hand hurlants are usually pistol-sized, most often carried by the wealthy as a single-shot opener at the start of hostilities. Long hurlants are rifle-sized weapons favored by elite snipers and assassins who don't expect a need for a second shot. Great hurlants are usually eight feet long and a hundred pounds in weight, and launch tremendous bolts that can transfix even monstrous targets. Those able to afford their use generally mount them on ships, gun carriages, or on important fortifications.

Hurlants are too expensive and difficult to craft to be practical as widespread military weapons in most regions. In some areas, even hurlants fail to function correctly; a GM who prefers not to include them can simply disallow them in their own campaign region.

Spears, and their longer cousin the ***pike***, are common military weapons throughout the Latter Earth. Lighter spears are effective thrown weapons, while heavier two-handed versions penetrate armor well.

Shields can be an effective weapon when used to bash or pummel an enemy. If used as a weapon or as part of a dual-wielding attack, a shield grants no AC or Shock protection benefits until the wielder's next turn.

Swords are common sidearms throughout the Latter Earth. The expense of forging a large blade makes it a symbol of wealth and status in many cultures, and its convenience makes it a favored arm for street wear.

Throwing blades are small leaves or spikes of steel that are not terribly useful as melee weapons but are easy to carry discreetly in considerable numbers.

The ***unarmed attack*** given here is a common punch or kick, unimproved by a Vowed's arts or a Focus. Unarmed attacks add the assailant's Punch skill to the damage roll as well as the attack roll.

Weapon	Dmg	Shock	Attribute	Range in Feet	Traits	Cost	Enc
Axe, Hand	1d6	1/AC 15	Str/Dex	10/30	T	10 sp	1
Axe, War	1d10	3/AC 15	Str	-	2H	50 sp	2
Blackjack	1d4	None	Str/Dex	-	S, LL	1 sp	1
Bow, Large	1d8	None	Dex	100/600	2H, R, PM	20 sp	2
Bow, Small	1d6	None	Dex	50/300	2H, R, PM	20 sp	1
Claw Blades	1d6	2/AC 13	Str/Dex	-	S	10 sp	1
Club	1d4	None	Str/Dex	10/30	T, LL	-	1
Club, Great	1d10	2/AC 15	Str	-	2H	1 sp	2
Crossbow	1d10	None	Dex	100/300	2H, SR, PM	10 sp	1
Dagger	1d4	1/AC 15	Str/Dex	30/60	S, T, PM	3 sp	1
Halberd	1d10	2/AC 15	Str	-	2H, L	50 sp	2
Hammer, Great	1d10	2/AC 18	Str	-	2H	50 sp	2
Hammer, War	1d8	1/AC 18	Str	-		30 sp	1
Hurlant, Great	3d10	None	Dex	600/2,400	FX, SS, AP	10,000 sp	15
Hurlant, Hand	1d12	None	Dex	30/60	SS, AP	1,000 sp	1
Hurlant, Long	2d8	None	Dex	200/600	2H, SS, AP, PM	4,000 sp	2
Mace	1d6	1/AC 18	Str	-	LL	15 sp	1
Pike	1d8	1/AC 18	Str	-	2H, L	10 sp	2
Shield Bash, Large	1d6	1/AC 13	Str	-	LL	-	-
Shield Bash, Small	1d4	None	Str/Dex	-	LL	-	-
Spear, Heavy	1d10	2/AC 15	Str	-	2H	10 sp	2
Spear, Light	1d6	2/AC 13	Str/Dex	30/60	T	5 sp	1
Throwing Blade	1d4	None	Dex	30/60	S, T, N	3 sp	1
Staff	1d6	1/AC 13	Str/Dex	-	2H, LL	1 sp	1
Stiletto	1d4	1/AC 18	Dex	-	S, PM	10 sp	1
Sword, Great	1d12	2/AC 15	Str	-	2H	250 sp	2
Sword, Long	1d8	2/AC 13	Str/Dex	-		100 sp	1
Sword, Short	1d6	2/AC 15	Str/Dex	-		10 sp	1
Unarmed Attack	1d2+Skill	None	Str/Dex	-	LL	-	-

Weapon Traits

Some of the weapons listed above have certain specific traits that affect their use.

2H: *Two Handed.* The weapon requires two hands to use in combat. Ranged two-handed weapons cannot be fired effectively while an enemy is within melee range.

AP: *Armor Piercing.* This weapon ignores non-magical hides, armor and shields for purposes of its hit rolls.

FX: *Fixed.* The weapon is too heavy and clumsy to use without a fixed position and at least five minutes to entrench it.

L: *Long.* The weapon is unusually long, allowing melee attacks to be made at targets up to 10 feet distant, even if an ally is in the way. Even so, the wielder still needs to be within five feet of a foe to count as being in melee with them for purposes of forcing ***Fighting Withdrawals***, disrupting large ranged weapons, or similar maneuvers.

LL: *Less Lethal.* Foes brought to zero hit points by this weapon can always be left alive at the wielder's discretion.

N: *Numerous.* Five of these count as only one Readied item.

PM: *Precisely Murderous.* When used for an Execution Attack, the weapon applies an additional -1 penalty to the Physical save and does double damage even if it succeeds.

R: *Reload.* The weapon takes a Move action to reload. If the user has at least Shoot-1 skill, they can reload as an On Turn action instead.

S: *Subtle.* Can be easily hidden in ordinary clothing or concealed in jewelry.

SR: *Slow Reload.* It takes a Main Action to reload this weapon.

SS: *Single Shot.* This weapon takes ten rounds to reload, and the reloading effort is spoiled if an enemy melees the wielder.

T: *Throwable.* While the weapon can be used in melee, it may be thrown out to the listed range as well, albeit it does no Shock in that case. Throwing a weapon while a foe is in melee range applies a -4 penalty to the attack roll.

THE RULES OF THE GAME

Every hero must encounter situations in which the outcome is not a given. Whether putting steel to the lapdogs of some corrupt noble or leaping among the rooftops of an ancient city's slums, they will often attempt deeds that may not be so successful as they would wish. A GM needs fair and consistent systems by which to judge these efforts and give the players the right rewards for their daring.

This chapter contains the rules for ***Worlds Without Number***. With the characters made in the prior chapter and the guidelines given here, a GM should be able to adjudicate the great majority of the challenges and daring exertions undertaken by the heroes.

The Basic Systems

There are a few basic systems in the rules that every GM and player should understand. These particular systems come up regularly during play, and it can slow down the game considerably if they need to be explained too often.

Skill checks are used whenever the PCs are attempting some feat of skill that doesn't involve combat. When the PCs try to climb an obsidian cliff, persuade a crime boss to sell them some juicy blackmail material, pick the lock of a Deep's treasure-vault, or do something else that requires expertise, a skill check is in order. This section also describes those situations in which a skill check is *not* necessary, such as when the feat is something ordinary for a character's background or too uninteresting to merit the roll.

Saving throws are rolled when the heroes try to dodge some dire fate. Poisons, evil spells, stumbling plunges into fathomless pits, and resisting the pangs of privation might all call for a saving throw. Not every misfortune allows a save; a spear in the gut must be evaded with efforts in combat, and not with an Evasion save. Even so, a GM can always call for a particular save to give a hero a chance to escape the worst of some other calamity.

Combat is something almost inevitable to most campaigns, though it can be lethal for novices and scarcely less dangerous for more experienced heroes. This system will help you find out whether your PC has succeeded in gutting the Anak warrior who was trying to brain them, or if their skull has been smashed by his iron club. Cunning maneuvers to save your own hide or perforate your foe are described in this section, along with rules for the Shock of bloody melee and the panic of broken Morale.

Players familiar chiefly with more modern games are encouraged to give the combat section a careful read. The heroes of ***Worlds Without Number*** have nothing in the way of plot armor or special mechanical advantage in avoiding death. Confident daring that might be perfectly appropriate to more narrative-based games can be a quick return ticket to character generation here. Heroes are mortal, and should carry themselves accordingly.

Using These Systems in Play

While every player is encouraged to read and understand the basics of the foregoing systems, a practical GM must recognize that the great majority of players will read and digest no more of a rulebook than they absolutely must, and often not even so much as that. A GM needs to know how to use these systems, and how to handle certain issues that are likely to crop up in play.

Be willing to translate actions into rolls. There is a certain breed of player who is fun to play with, engaged in the game, and a credit to the group… but quite unable to master specific rules. They may just not be very good at it, or they may have so little time outside of the game that they really can't afford to spend it studying rulebooks.

For players like these, just let them say what they're trying to do and then tell them what to roll. If they say they're swinging their axe at a bandit, just tell them to roll 1d20, see if they hit, and then tell them what damage die to roll. The player may or may not pick up the rules eventually, but you'll keep things moving quickly.

The GM decides what is rolled. The players always decide what their heroes are trying to do, but the GM decides what they roll for it, or if any roll is possible or needed at all. A PC with Convince-4 skill may be great at persuading others of things, but they can't just decide that they're going to talk a duke into handing over a border keep and then reach for their dice to roll a skill check. The GM is the one who decides if a particular action is plausible, whether it can be accomplished by a skill check at all, and if so, what the skill and difficulty will be. A PC's manner of action might make a roll harder, or easier, or even omit it entirely if their actions are particularly apposite or hopeless.

The GM makes the rules. While this chapter has many rules in it, not all of them will be right for every game table. Groups will dislike certain rules, and forget others, and reinterpret a few more. Just because a rule is in this book does not mean it has to exist at your table. The GM and the group know best what kind of game they want to have, and if they think a different rule ought to be used, then they're probably right. Ultimately, the GM's decision about which rules best suit the campaign and group they're working with are final, and no contradiction in this book can make them wrong.

Lastly, ***hold these rules lightly***. If you can't remember a rule mid-game, then make a call that sounds reasonable and keep going. Spending five minutes digging through the chapter for an edge-case rule isn't as good as taking ten seconds to make a judgment call and playing on. There will be time to look it up afterwards and decide if the printed rule is better. To help you, the quick reference sheet on page 59 is formatted to be printed off for use at the table, and any often-missed rules you need to add can be scribbled on the back.

Scenes, Turns, and Durations

Most time can be tracked relatively loosely during play but sometimes it becomes important to know how long it takes to accomplish a particular activity, or how long a magical effect can be trusted to last.

The ***scene*** is the basic measurement for most effect durations. A scene is simply one general event or activity. A single fight is a scene, infiltrating a smuggler's warehouse is a scene, negotiating with a merchant prince is a scene, and so forth. So long as the PCs are doing the same general thing in the same general place, it's usually a single scene.

Most scenes last no longer than fifteen minutes or so, though some stretch is possible at the GM's discretion. Many powers and abilities are listed as lasting for one scene; this means that when the PCs trigger them while doing something, the effect is going to last for as long as they keep up their current activity. If it runs particularly long, however, a GM is justified in letting these effects run out partway through.

Sometimes it's important to track the time of a more complex operation, like exploring a Deep or navigating the trackless depths of some ancient ruin. In such cases, the ***turn*** is a common measure of time. Each turn lasts ten minutes and is equivalent to one scene for those situations when it matters.

GMs use turns to track exploration usually, so as to keep a firm grip on light sources running out, unplanned monster encounters, movement speeds, and other important elements of delving into pits of ineffable darkness.

Situations that don't require this degree of carefulness with time-tracking can generally be glossed over as taking so many hours or however many days they might require. GMs are advised to keep a calendar on hand, however, and mark off time accordingly when the PCs are at their adventures. A land that seems to dwell in ageless indeterminate summer can sometimes lack a little something in verisimilitude.

Saving Throws

Adventurers tend to face horrors of innumerable varieties, from the festering poison that smears some Deep-dwelling degenerate's bone spear to the shadow of falling stones from above to the bite of some devil-wizard's hideous sorcery. In order to avoid perishing to such dooms, they can attempt a ***Saving Throw***. A saving throw is a chance a hero has to avoid some particularly grim outcome.

To make a saving throw, the subject rolls a d20 and tries to roll equal or higher than the relevant saving throw score. There are four different kinds of saving throws.

Evasion saves are made to dodge hurled perils, take cover from explosions, pull back from sudden pits, and face other challenges of nimbleness and reaction speed. Evasion saves for PCs are equal to sixteen minus the hero's level and minus the best of their Intelligence or Dexterity modifiers. Thus, a third-level hero with an Intelligence modifier of +1 and a Dexterity modifier of -1 would have an Evasion save of 12.

Mental saves are made to resist mind-affecting magic, disbelieve illusions, throw off intangible magical afflictions, and other tests of willpower or force of character. Mental saves for PCs are equal to sixteen minus the hero's level and minus the best of their Wisdom or Charisma attribute modifiers.

Physical saves are made to resist poisons, diseases, exhaustion, bodily transformation, or other taxes on the subject's physical strength. Physical saves for PCs are equal to sixteen minus the hero's level and minus the best of their Strength or Constitution modifiers.

Luck saves are for occasions of blind random fortune, where no quality of personal strength or cunning can help the hero. The GM might call for a Luck save when it really is nothing but sheer good luck that a hero might avoid some danger. Luck saves for a PC are equal to sixteen minus the hero's level, unmodified by any attribute.

Note that saving throws are meant to be last-ditch chances to avoid the worst of unusual perils or uncommon dangers. You can't make an Evasion saving throw to dodge a sword stroke; that's what the hit roll is for. It's up to the GM to decide whether a particular danger might allow a saving throw or not.

Monsters and Saving Throws

Monsters, NPCs, and other creatures other than PCs don't bother with four different saving throws. Instead, they just have a single save equal to 15 minus half their hit dice, rounded down. Thus, a peasant with one hit die would have to roll 15 or better to make a saving throw against something, while a slavering hell-beast with 14 hit dice would only need to roll 8+ to succeed.

Some monsters might have particular bonuses against certain kinds of effects or perils, and the GM might decide to give some exceptional humans a boost based on their possession of unusual quickness or bodily fortitude.

Skill Checks

Most characters are skilled, competent men and women who are perfectly capable of carrying out the ordinary duties of their role. Sometimes, however, they are faced with a situation or challenge beyond the usual scope of their role and the GM calls for a ***skill check***.

To make a skill check, roll 2d6 and add the most relevant skill level and attribute modifier. If the total is equal or higher than the check's difficulty, the check is a success. On a failure, the PC either can't accomplish the feat at all or they achieve it at the cost of some further complication to the situation. The GM determines the specific outcome of a failure.

If the character doesn't even have level-0 in the pertinent skill, they suffer a -1 penalty to the roll. In the case of particularly technical or esoteric skills they might not even be able to attempt the skill check at all.

Some checks might be suitable for more than one skill. A javelin-throwing contest might use Exert for being an athletic contest, or Shoot for involving a ranged weapon, or Stab for using a muscle-powered thrown weapon. In such cases the PC can use the best applicable skill. In other situations, a skill might seem peripherally relevant; trying to find the damaged component in the ancient magical engine before it explodes would certainly be Magic, but a GM might also let Notice or Craft be applied, as a skilled craftsman or sharp-eyed observer might be able to recognize signs of damage. In such peripheral cases, the check difficulty usually increases by 2.

Skill Check Difficulties	
6	A relatively simple task that is still more than the PC would usually be expected to manage in their regular background. Anything easier than this isn't worth a skill check.
8	A significant challenge to a competent professional that they'd still succeed at more often than not.
10	Something too difficult to be expected of anyone but a skilled expert, and even they might fail.
12	Only a true master could expect to carry this off with any degree of reliability.
14+	Only a true master has any chance of achieving this at all, and even they will probably fail.

Particularly helpful or hostile circumstances might give a bonus or penalty to the skill check. As a general rule, extremely bad circumstances or tools would apply up to a -2 penalty to the skill check, while a very good situation or the perfect set of tools might give up to a +2 bonus to the roll. Usually, no combination of modifiers should add more than +2 or -2 to any given skill check.

When To Call for a Check

The GM calls for skill checks, but they should only be called for challenges that fall outside the PC's background and common experience. A PC with the background of a sailor should not be rolling skill checks to dock a ship or navigate to a commonly-known destination. As a general rule of thumb, if failure at a particular task would make the PC seem notably incompetent at their role in life, then they shouldn't have to roll a skill check for it. In addition, if failure or success at a check really doesn't *matter* in the game, if it won't produce some interesting result either way, then a check shouldn't be made.

Even concept-related feats might require a skill check, however, if the situation is especially bad or the circumstances particularly hostile. The sailor might have to make a Sail skill check to dock a ship if they attempt it in the middle of a gale wind, and a noble might have to make a Connect skill check to find shelter with an aristocratic relation if they're currently wanted by the Witch-King's inquisitors.

Aiding a Skill Check

Sometimes one PC will want to lend a hand to another as they attempt a difficult feat. To do this, the player first describes what sort of action they are taking to help their comrade. If the GM agrees that their effort makes sense and would be helpful, the player then rolls a relevant skill check against the same difficulty as the original check. If it's a success, the other PC gets a +1 bonus on their roll. Multiple PCs can try to help, but the acting PC can't earn more than a +1 total bonus.

The helping skill doesn't necessarily have to be the same skill the PC is checking. If a player can think of a way to help a Sneak check with Convince, then so be it.

Opposed Skill Checks

Sometimes a PC wants to accomplish something that another character wants to prevent. Sneaking past an alert guard, winning an archery tournament, or besting a squamous monster in a tentacle-wrestling competition might all be opposed skill checks.

In such cases, all participants roll their relevant skills and the highest score wins, with ties going to the PC. To make the NPC's roll, check their listed skill bonus; they can add it to any skill check appropriate to their role or profession. If the NPC has no reason to be particularly good at the challenge, they simply roll 2d6 and add nothing.

In most cases, the relevant skills are obvious. A character trying to skulk past a vigilant guard would be rolling their Dex/Sneak against the guard's roll, while one trying to out-tentacle a monster would be rolling Str/Exert. When in doubt, the GM decides which skill or attribute is most applicable.

Combat

A hero's trade being what it is, it's to be expected that the PCs might find themselves locked in bloody battle. The rules below explain how such frays are to be managed, but every hero must remember well their own mortality. Even a veteran hero may fall to the spears of a sufficient mob of foes, and novice adventurers run the risk of death from a single sure stroke of a blade.

Rounds, Initiative, and Surprise

Combat and other time-sensitive situations are broken into ***rounds***, each of which is roughly six seconds in length. During a round every participant gets to take a turn, after which a new round begins.

The order of action is determined by ***Initiative***. To determine initiative, each side rolls 1d8 and adds the highest Dexterity modifier in the group. NPCs usually have no modifier, unless the GM decides they're exceptionally quick. The side with the highest roll goes first in whatever order the members choose, and then the other sides act in their respective order. The PC party wins any initiative ties. At the end of the round, it cycles back to the first group and repeats accordingly.

Optionally, some groups prefer to use "individual initiative", with each participating rolling their own initiative roll and going in order. This takes a little longer and can complicate party plans that require each member to act in a particular sequence, but it also mitigates the risk of the group being overwhelmed by foes before anyone can act. The GM chooses which version to use.

In some cases a group may be ambushed or surprised by a foe. The more alert the targets, the more difficult it is to ambush them; a group of heroes prowling through a Deep is going to be much more difficult to surprise than one having dinner in a tavern. Generally, if the group is alert for danger an ambush has to either crash down on them suddenly or come from an angle or location they never suspected.

If the GM decides that surprise is possible, an opposed Wis/Notice versus Dex/Sneak skill check should be rolled. If the attackers win, they surprise the targets and get a full round of action to themselves before initiative is rolled and the combat progresses as usual. An ambush might also provoke a Morale check in undisciplined or unmilitary targets at the GM's discretion.

Actions in Combat

When it's a given participant's turn in combat, they can take their action. There are four different kinds of actions in combat or other time-sensitive situations.

Main Actions are actions that take up most of the actor's round. Attacking someone, manipulating some device, applying first aid to a downed ally, casting a spell, or other complex actions that would take several seconds to perform are all Main Actions. A participant gets one Main Action every round.

Move Actions involve moving up to the participant's normal movement rate. Thus, a normal human with a movement rate of 30 feet can move up to that distance with a Move action. Climbing, swimming, crossing difficult terrain, or other challenging movement usually is only half as fast as normal combat movement. A participant gets one Move action per round, though they can also choose to spend their Main Action taking an additional Move action if they wish.

A combatant in melee who moves away from their enemy must take a *Fighting Withdrawal* action or suffer a free Instant attack from all enemies in melee with them.

A Move action must spend all its movement at once; it cannot split it around a Main Action. Thus, it's not possible to move 10 feet, shoot a foe with a Main Action, and then dive another 20 feet behind cover.

On Turn Actions are quick, simple acts that take very little time and focus to perform, such as falling prone, saying a few words, a skilled archer reloading a bow from a Readied quiver, drawing out a Readied object, or similar things. A participant can only perform an On Turn action on their own turn, but they can do as many of them as the GM thinks is reasonable.

Instant Actions are so fast and simple that the participant can use them at any time, even when it's not their turn. They can even use them after the dice have been rolled, delaying their use until they're sure the action is needed. Instant actions are generally related to special powers and abilities, like a Warrior's ***Veteran's Luck*** class ability or certain magical arts. If multiple Instant actions are triggered at the same time, they execute in whatever order the GM thinks is most reasonable. There is no limit to the number of Instant actions a participant can take.

This section includes a list of common combat activities and their respective action types. If a PC wants to do something different, the GM should simply pick an action type for it that seems to make sense.

Attacking a Foe

When a combatant wants to harm an enemy, they need to make a ***hit roll***. An attack usually counts as a Main Action and the assailant must be close enough to actually hit the target with whatever weapon they have to hand.

To make a hit roll, the attacker rolls a d20 and adds their relevant combat skill, their class attack bonus, and their relevant attribute modifier. If they lack even level-0 skill in the weapon being used, they suffer a -2 penalty. Any other situational modifiers or penalties are also added to the roll.

If the total is equal or greater than the target's Armor Class, then the attack hits and damage is rolled. If less, then the attack misses. A missed melee attack may still inflict Shock damage, if the weapon has a Shock rating and the target's Armor Class is equal or lower than it.

To roll damage, the attacker rolls the weapon's listed damage die and adds their relevant attribute modifier and any bonus from a magical weapon, Focus, or other special benefit.

The damage is then subtracted from the target's hit points. If the target is reduced to zero hit points, it is either dead or mortally wounded. Generic NPCs with no name worth remembering are usually dead on the spot. PCs and NPCs significant enough to deserve characterization are instead Mortally Wounded.

Some attacks may not be lethal in nature. If a non-lethal attack reduces a target to zero hit points, the attacker can choose to simply have their victim be unconscious or helpless, unable to act and reviving ten minutes later with one hit point. Attacks that are psychic or emotional in nature may reduce their victims to helpless shock or numbing confusion when they bring them to zero hit points, likewise incapacitating them for ten minutes.

Unarmed attacks can always be non-lethal at the attacker's discretion. Attacks with blunt and relatively forgiving weapons such as batons, staves, or clubs might also qualify, though it may take a Str/Stab or Dex/Stab skill check against the target's Morale score to see whether that last blow pacified them or accidentally knocked their brains out. In ambiguous cases, it's the GM's call as to whether damage is or isn't non-lethal.

A "hit" in combat doesn't always mean a physical blow landed. Creatures or PCs with many hit points might take several "hits" before actually going down. In such a case, these successful hits are blows that exhaust the target, tax their luck, force them out of position, or otherwise bring them closer to losing. It may be that the only serious physical hit is the one that brings them down.

Hit Roll Modifiers

The table below notes some common cumulative hit roll modifiers. GMs should use them as general guidelines when applying their own adjustments to hit rolls for circumstances not listed on the chart.

Circumstance	Mod
Shooting at a distant prone foe	-2
Shooting or meleeing an adjacent prone foe	+2
Melee attacking while prone	-4
The target is at least half behind cover	-2
The target is almost completely in cover	-4
Thrown attack while being meleed by a foe	-4
Shooting a bow while being meleed by a foe	N/A

Note that no penalty is given for shooting or throwing a weapon into a melee. It's assumed that PCs have worked together enough to coordinate such attacks and avoid getting in each other's way. A PC whose combat style is built around ranged attacks can easily end up frustrated by the rest of the party if they have to spend extra effort on special Foci or accept hit penalties simply because the rest of the group prefers to fight up close.

Shock Damage

Some melee attacks inflict ***Shock***, the inevitable harm that is done when an unarmored target is assailed by something sharp in melee range.

Shock for a weapon is listed in points of damage and the maximum AC affected. Thus "Shock 2/15" means that 2 points of damage are done to any target with AC 15 or less. More heavily-armored targets are immune to the weapon's Shock.

Assailants add their weapon's attribute modifier to Shock, along with any magical bonus to the weapon and any damage bonuses that are explicitly noted as adding to Shock. Other damage bonuses do not increase Shock.

An attack never does less damage on a hit than it would do in Shock. Thus, if an attack that would normally do 4 points of Shock to AC 15 hits a target with AC 13 and rolls a 3 for damage, 4 points are done instead.

Dual-Wielding Weapons

PCs who wish to wield two one-handed weapons at once may do so if they have at least Stab-1 skill. Doing so grants them a +2 bonus to damage rolls, albeit not to Shock. They suffer a -1 penalty on hit rolls, however, due to the extra complication. Only one weapon may be used to attack in any given round, but either one may be used. Unarmed combatants cannot dual-wield.

Shoving and Grappling

To shove a target or force them back, the attacker must first hit the target normally for no damage and then succeed in an opposed Str/Punch or Str/Exert skill check. If the attacker succeeds in the skill check, the target is forced back up to ten feet or knocked prone.

To grapple a foe, the attacker must first hit with an unarmed attack, doing no damage, and then both must make opposed Str/Punch skill checks. If the attacker wins, the defender is grappled and remains that way until released or until they spend a Main Action and succeed in a new opposed check. An attacker can grapple only one target at a time, though multiple attackers can cling to the same luckless defender. In such cases, the defender's single skill check is compared against all of their foes.

While grappling, neither attackers or defenders can move from their current location, nor can they fight with anything but unarmed attacks. At the end of each round in which a defender remains grappled, they suffer damage from each attacker as if hit with an unarmed attack from each foe grappling them.

If the attacker wishes to move the target, they must spend a Main Action and succeed in an opposed Str/Punch skill check. If they win, the target is either moved ten feet along with them, or thrown five feet and knocked prone. If they lose, the defender breaks free.

These rules assume both targets are man-sized. Grappling or shoving significantly larger but still humanoid targets is done at a -2 penalty on all skill checks by the attacker. Doing so to creatures only barely plausible for such manhandling is done at a -4 skill check penalty.

Execution Attacks

A target that is completely unaware of danger is vulnerable to a quick and bloody death, no matter how great their martial prowess or how thick their armor. An ***Execution Attack*** gives an assailant an opportunity to slay a foe with a single well-placed arrow or blade.

Setting up such an attack requires a full minute of preparation. Archers, gunmen, and other ranged attackers must spend it judging distance, wind, and details of aim, while melee assassins must use it to drift up to the target and position themselves in the exact right place for the attack. Melee assassins must use a weapon for an Execution Attack, unless they have such special training as to make their unarmed attacks unusually lethal. If the target is spooked, the opportunity is lost.

Once the preparation is complete, the assailant may use a Main Action to attack. The target's Armor Class is irrelevant, assuming the attacker is using a weapon that can hurt the target. A melee Execution Attack will always hit. A ranged Execution Attack requires a Dex/Shoot skill check against a difficulty of 6 for a point-blank shot, 8 for one at the weapon's normal range, and 10 for a shot at extreme range. A Warrior can use their ***Veteran's Luck*** ability with this skill check, but it only allows a reroll on a failed check rather than forcing an automatic hit.

If the Execution Attack hits, the target must make an immediate Physical saving throw at a penalty equal to the attacker's combat skill level. If they fail, they are Mortally Wounded on the spot, or knocked unconscious if the attacker was using a plausibly non-lethal weapon. If they succeed, the weapon still does its maximum damage.

Attacking an unconscious or incapacitated target will always leave them Mortally Wounded.

Common Combat Actions

The actions below include some of the more common actions a participant might take during combat. The GM can make individual judgments about other types of activities that might be attempted.

Make a Melee Attack — Main Action

The combatant attacks an enemy within melee range with a Readied weapon, rolling a normal hit roll and inflicting damage on a successful hit. Most melee attacks inflict Shock damage on a miss, if the target's Armor Class is low enough, and no successful hit does less damage than the weapon's Shock would have done on a miss.

Make a Ranged Attack — Main Action

The combatant fires or throws a Readied ranged weapon at a target. The combatant can't *Make a Ranged Attack* with a two-handed weapon such as a bow if there's a enemy armed with a melee weapon within melee range; it's too easy for the assailant to hinder the use of a bow. One-handed ranged weapons and thrown weapons can still be used, albeit at a -4 penalty to hit.

Make a Snap Attack — Instant Action

A combatant with a Ready weapon can rush their attack, sacrificing accuracy for speed. The combatant must still have their Main Action impending or available. As an Instant, they can sacrifice it to make a melee or ranged attack against a foe, whether a snap shot with a bow or a quick thrust at an adjacent melee foe. This attack takes a -4 penalty to its hit roll. If multiple Snap Attacks go off at the same time, they are resolved simultaneously.

Snap Attacks are normally only possible for PCs and other very well-trained or talented combatants. If an opponent isn't significant enough to have been given a name, they probably shouldn't be using Snap Attacks.

Make a Swarm Attack — Main Action

Each assailant takes this action against a target in range of their current weapon, until up to four have done so. When the final participant has taken this action, one of the mob can elect to make an immediate melee or ranged attack against their target, gaining a +2 bonus to hit and +1 to damage for each other surviving attacker, up to +6/+3. This damage bonus does not add to Shock and it cannot drive the attack's damage over the maximum usually possible for the blow, but Shock from it always harms the target, even if they have a too-high AC, are using a shield, or have a Focus immunity to Shock. The sheer swarming numbers of foes are bound to inflict some kind of harm on the target provided they're not completely immune to the mob's weaponry.

Cast a Spell — Main Action

An arcanely-gifted PC can cast a spell as a Main Action. If they've suffered any hit point damage this round, drawn or sheathed an item with their spellcasting hand, or have been severely jostled they cannot take this action. If they suffer hit point damage while casting, such as by someone who has held their action to attack at that moment, the spell fizzles uselessly and the spell slot is wasted.

Charge — Special

A combatant can make a wild charge before hurling a weapon or crashing into a foe, moving up to twice their normal move in a straight line before making a melee or thrown attack at +2 to hit. The charging attacker must be able to move at least 10 feet to get the requisite momentum and suffers a -2 AC penalty for the rest of the round. Charging takes both a Move and Main Action.

Shatter a Shield — Main Action

To shatter a shield, the attacker must be using an axe, a mace, a Focus-improved unarmed attack, or some other crushing or hewing attack. The maneuver requires a successful hit roll and then an opposed Str/Stab skill check between the attacker and the defender, with the defender gaining a +1 bonus on their check. No damage is done, but if the attacker wins then the shield will be broken. Magical shields cannot be broken this way. Patching a damaged shield takes a scene's work and Craft-0 skill.

Screen an Ally — Move Action

The PC moves up to their normal Move rate towards an ally and then physically blocks opponents from attacking them, provided they remain within ten feet. Until the PC's next turn, enemies who wish to make a melee or ranged attack against the screened ally must succeed in a successful Str or Dex-based opposed skill check against the PC using the combat skill applicable to their weapon; on a failure, the attack roll is automatically directed toward the screening PC.

A PC can screen against a number of attackers in one round equal to their combat skill; thus, Stab-2 lets them block the attacks of two different attackers. PCs with level-0 or worse combat skills can't effectively screen. Multiple PCs can try to screen the same ally; in such a case, the attacker's skill check is compared against all blockers and the lowest-rolling successful blocker is attacked. PCs can only screen against foes and attacks they could plausibly physically parry or block with a shield.

Total Defense — Instant Action

As an Instant action, the combatant focuses on nothing other than avoiding knives, arrows, hurled crystalline spears, or other perils in the vicinity. Using *Total Defense* costs the user their Main Action for the round, and cannot be used if they've already employed their Main Action. They become immune to Shock damage for the round, including from *Swarm Attacks*, and gain a +2 bonus to their Armor Class until their next turn.

Run — Move Action

The combatant moves their normal combat movement rate, which is 30 feet for most humans. If they're climbing a surface, swimming, or navigating extremely rough terrain, this movement rate is halved, and they might have to make an Exert skill check to achieve even that. Prone characters crab along at half this rate.

Make a Fighting Withdrawal — Main Action

The combatant disengages from any melee foes around them. They don't actually move away, but they can now get away from their assailants without giving them a free melee attack. Usually, this means the combatant uses their Move action to get clear, because if they just stand there the enemies might choose to re-engage them.

Use a Skill — Main Action

The combatant uses a skill that could be plausibly applied in a few seconds. An Int/Heal or Dex/Heal skill check to stabilize a wounded comrade is one such potential use, as is turning a creaking engine wheel, shouting out a stirring rallying cry to timorous NPC allies, or anything else that might be done quickly.

Ready or Stow an Item — Main Action

The combatant draws a weapon, extracts an item from their backpack, digs a potion out of a belt pouch, or otherwise moves an object around on their person. They can Ready an item this way or Stow it.

Reload a Weapon — Main Action

The combatant reloads a weapon like a crossbow or an ancient projectile launcher with a Readied magazine or a quarrel from a Readied quiver. Bows can be reloaded as an On Turn action, assuming the archer has a Readied quiver and Shoot-1 skill; otherwise it's a Move action.

Drop an Item — Instant Action

The combatant drops something they're holding. They can do this Instantly at any time to free up their hands.

Pick up an Item — Move Action

The combatant can scoop an object off the floor if they have a free hand, leaving it Readied in their grip.

Stand Up — Move Action

The combatant gets up from a prone position, gathering any dropped belongings. Most characters that have just been revived from unconsciousness must get up before they do much else.

Go Prone — On Turn Action

The combatant falls flat, forcing distant ranged attackers to take a -2 penalty to hit them. Adjacent melee enemies find them an easier target, however, gaining +2 to hit.

Hold An Action — Move Action

By choosing to *Hold An Action*, the combatant can delay taking the rest of their actions until later in the round, activating them as an Instant action. Thus, a hero who wins initiative might use their Move action to *Hold An Action*. Later in the round, as an enemy rushes around a corner, he may Instantly elect to use his Main Action to *Make A Ranged Attack* with his readied crossbow. If acting in response to someone else's impending action, the held action is resolved first.

Delay an Action — On Turn

The combatant simply chooses to delay the remainder of their actions this turn until after a particular other participant has acted. Such a pause may be needed for some tactical plan or to respond to a particular enemy's action. Unlike *Hold An Action*, however, they cannot suddenly choose to act earlier than their chosen place in the turn order; they must wait until the participant they chose has acted before using whatever remaining actions they may have for the turn.

Examples of Combat

Combat in ***Worlds Without Number*** is based on a rules chassis that dates back almost fifty years, but some readers may still be new to it, or a little uncertain of the tweaks and options that the game adds to the classic fundamentals. The following are a few examples of how these rules work in practice.

Our Heroes

The characters in these examples are ordinary, first-level adventurers fresh into the trade. Having met on a caravan trip into Llaigis, they've resolved to work together to find a better fortune than fate has sent them thus far.

Zenobia is an embittered Adunic clerk let go from the retinue of her beggar-noble employer after the money finally ran out. An Expert in cadging a living any way she can, she wears a buff coat for armor and bears a short sword and a selection of knives, which she uses effectively with her Stab-0 skill. More nimble than most with a Dexterity of 14, she has an effective Armor Class of 13 while wearing the coat, counting the buff coat's value of 12 plus her Dexterity modifier of +1. When she fights with the sword or daggers, her attack bonus is +0 for being a first-level Expert, +1 for her Dexterity, and +0 for her Stab-0 skill, for a total of +1. She adds that +1 Dexterity modifier to the damage dice or Shock of both sword and dagger, as both can be used with either Strength or Dexterity as the modifier to hit and damage, depending on which is better for the wielder.

Kham is a great bull of a man, a back-country Warrior from Emed-Kist with mighty thews and empty pockets. His wealth all went to his harness, which includes pieced armor, a sturdy longsword he uses with Stab-1 skill, and a stout large shield. His Strength of 18 is tremendous, but he's a little clumsy, with a Dexterity of 7. His effective Armor Class is 14 from the pieced armor, +1 for carrying a shield, -1 for his Dexterity modifier, for a total of 14. His hit bonus with the longsword is +1 for being a first-level Warrior, +2 for his Strength, and +1 for his Stab-1 skill. His damage and Shock with the sword are also boosted by his Strength modifier and ***Killing Blow*** class ability.

Sarra is a Llaigisan hedge-witch driven out of her village on the death of her much-despised mentor, though her powers as a Mage are very real. Proud of her occult arts, she shuns armor, as she can cast no spells while her limbs are profaned by its coarse mundanity. She carries a staff, though she uses it chiefly for driving off exceptionally importunate beggars and starving dogs as she lacks any combat skill at all. With no unusual Dexterity, her Armor Class is 10, for being a normal unarmored person. If driven to use the staff in combat, her hit bonus is +0 for being a Mage, +0 for her attribute modifier, and -2 for lacking even level-0 combat skill, for a total bonus of -2. It does its normal, unmodified 1d6 damage and Shock of 1/AC 13.

The Mean Streets of Gathis

The trio wander onto the wrong street in Gathis one night and are set upon by four half-starved thugs. Sickly, unarmored and carrying nothing more than knives, the thugs have AC 10, four hit points each, and do 1d4 damage with their daggers and a Shock of 1/AC 15. In a city like Gathis, a few more bodies in the street will pass without comment in the morning.

As everyone involved was half-expecting trouble, there is no chance for surprise. Each side rolls 1d8 for initiative, adding the best Dexterity modifier of their side. The GM decides the thugs have no particular nimbleness, so rolls 1d8 for a result of 5. The heroes roll 1d8 and add Zenobia's +1 Dexterity modifier to it for a result of 7. The heroes go first.

Zenobia is first to act, deciding on her course of action while the other two players are still mulling their options. She uses her Move action to close with a thug and stabs at him with her Readied short sword, rolling 1d20 and adding her hit bonus of +1, and rolls an 8. Because that's less than the thug's Armor Class, she misses. The sword's Shock value is 1/AC 15, however, which means she still inflicts Shock on him because his AC is less than that of the dagger's Shock value. She inflicts 1 point of damage from the sword and +1 from her Dexterity, for a total of two points. The wretched hooligan yowls as she carves a divot in his beard.

Kham decides that the fight will be much shorter if he thins the enemies early. He uses his Move action to close with the nearest thug and then makes an attack with his longsword, which he has Readied as part of his encumbrance. He rolls 1d20 and adds his +4 hit bonus to the result, unluckily getting a 9. He decides to use his ***Veteran's Luck*** class ability to turn that miss into a hit, however, rolling 1d8 for damage and adding +3 for his Strength and ***Killing Blow***, doing 7 points of damage. This reduces the thug's hit points to zero, and as he's a mere common goon he dies instantly, gurgling out his life.

Sarra decides that hacking up thugs is no part of her role in the group, and uses her Move action to get behind Kham and Zenobia. Her Main Action is given to *Total Defense*, improving her AC by 2 for the rest of the round and making her immune to Shock.

Because the thugs have lost their first comrade, the GM rolls a Morale check for the group on 2d6, getting a 10. This is higher than the thugs' Morale score of 7, so they turn to flee in a reckless, undisciplined panic. The goon engaged with Zenobia turns his back on her and runs; because he doesn't spend his Main action making a *Fighting Withdrawal*, Zenobia gets a free attack on him as he flees. His death is certain, as even if she misses the Shock of her sword will be enough to cut away his last two hit points. The two surviving footpads race down different alleyways, yelping like scalded dogs.

Village Fisticuffs

Kham finds himself in a Thurian village, squaring off with the hamlet's strongest farm boy in a "friendly" sparring bout. The lad's broad as an oak tree, with eight hit points, an unarmored AC of 10, and a +2 bonus to hit and 1d4 damage with his fists because the GM decides that sounds about right for a small village's best pugilist. Kham is without his armor or shield and lacks even Punch-0 skill; despite this, his Warrior hit bonus of +1 and his Strength modifier of +2 cancel out the -2 penalty for fighting without a skill, giving him a total of +1 to hit. If he lands a blow, he does 1d2 damage unarmed, +2 for his Strength modifier and +1 for ***Killing Blow***. Having no special unarmed Focus, his fists do no Shock.

Initiative is rolled, and the young peasant rolls a 6. Kham also rolls a 6, but has to apply his -1 Dexterity modifier as a penalty, so the boy goes first.

The lad rolls 1d20+2 to hit and gets a 9. Normally an unarmored man has an AC of 10, so it would miss, but clumsy Kham's Dexterity penalty to his AC means that the haymaker lands. The GM rolls 1d4 for damage and gets 4; Kham's down to 4 hit points after that wallop.

Kham retaliates, giving the bumpkin an elbow for a roll of 13 on his 1d20+1 hit roll. He rolls 2 on his 1d2 damage dice, but his great Strength increases that to 4, and his ***Killing Blow*** ability adds +1, so he loosens the boy's teeth and drops him to 3 hit points.

Staggered but unbowed, the villager misses his next punch with a roll of 6. Kham's blow goes wild as well, but he triggers his ***Veteran's Luck*** to turn it into a hit, doing 4 points of damage and dropping the big fellow into the dust.

Because the two were fighting with non-lethal weapons and not trying to kill each other, the boy is just winded rather than dead, and in ten minutes or so will regain one hit point and be able to function more or less normally as he buys Kham a round at the village alewife.

A Fearsome Foe

The heroes are in trouble now. They're face to face with the bandit chief who rules this Deep, an expert combatant with four hit dice, 22 hit points, a +5 bonus to hit with his sword, a Shock score of 2/AC 13, and an Armor Class of 14 with his buff coat and large shield. If they hadn't lured the rest of his men away with a distraction further down the tunnels, they'd be swarmed by now. Luckily, the heroes won the initiative.

The heroes have been working together long enough to have built tactics for a situation like this. Sarra moves in first, her staff up and prodding at the chief to open up his guard. She uses the *Make a Swarm Attack* action, doing no damage but setting her allies up for a better attack.

Kham follows up, using his Move action to *Screen an Ally* for Sarra and his Main Action to *Make a Swarm Attack* as well. Zenobia goes in directly for an attack, rolling a 15 and getting a lucky short sword hit in for 1d6+1 damage, with a roll of 5. The chieftain's down to 17 hit points.

Now the two heroes who made a swarm attack can choose one of their number to make a hit roll, gaining +2 to hit and +1 to damage for every other ally who took the action. Kham is the obvious choice, so he rolls 1d20+4 to hit for his sword, +2 for Sarra's help, for a total of 14. That's just enough to hit the chieftain, and he rolls 1d8+4 for damage, rolling a whopping 12 points. That's more than the weapon's maximum without the *Make a Swarm Attack* bonus, however, so it's capped at 11 points. That still leaves the chieftain down to a mere 6 hit points.

The furious chieftain whips his blade at the unarmored Sarra to cut her down, but Kham's *Screen an Ally* action forces him to make an opposed Str/Stab check against Kham. The GM decides the chief can apply his skill check bonus to the roll, but his 2d6+1 gets an 8, while Kham's 2d6+3 gets a 10. His attack is redirected at Kham.

The chief rolls 1d20+5 to get a 16, enough to hit the Warrior. Worse still, he rolls an 8 for his sword's damage. Kham would be mortally wounded by such a blow, but he triggers his ***Veteran's Luck*** to negate the hit, letting it glance off his shield rim and miss his head by a hairsbreadth.

On their turn, Sarra and Kham repeat their actions; one more hit from the huge Kistian will probably drop the villain. Zenobia helps with another attack of her own, rolling a mere 6 to hit this time. She tries to apply 2 points of Shock, since her shortsword can do so to AC 15 or less, but the bandit chief's shield negates the first Shock he'd take each round and blocks the sword. Kham rolls his swarm attack with Sarra's help and once again hammers the knave, though he rolls a mere 5 points of damage. The chieftain is left with a single hit point between him and a gory end.

The GM knows the chieftain is a canny survivor. He could probably mortally wound Zenobia or Sarra before he died, if that Kistian ox doesn't get in his way, but if Kham drops his big blade and goes in with a knife and Zenobia joins him with her pigsticker he's going to die from the Shock no matter what happens. Being a rational combatant who prizes nothing as much as his life, he's not going to fight to the death unless he has no choice. Rather than face the prospect of being dragged down and stabbed to death by his assailants, the chieftain uses his Main action for *Total Defense* to hide behind his shield, and swears he'll tell the heroes where he buried his loot if they spare his life….

Injury, Healing, and System Strain

Despite the eons of meddling and corruption, the Legacy has still conferred a certain degree of health and recuperative ability on the humanity of the Latter Earth. While this hardiness is a subtle quality, the natives of this age can recover with unusual quickness.

Mortal Wounds and Stabilizing

A creature reduced to zero hit points is dead or dying. Ordinary NPCs or unremarkable creatures will generally die on the spot. PCs and those NPCs important enough to have deserved a name will be ***Mortally Wounded***.

A Mortally Wounded creature is helpless, unable to do anything but scream, writhe, or lie unconscious. At the end of the sixth round after they were downed, they will die. They'll die instantly if they take more damage.

An ally can attempt to stabilize a Mortally Wounded companion. Doing so is generally an Int/Heal or Dex/Heal skill check, one requiring a Main Action.

The difficulty for this skill check is 8 plus the number of full rounds since the target was downed. If the healer lacks any useful medical implements, the difficulty for this skill check is increased by 2. Only one ally can try to stabilize a target in any given round, though others can attempt to aid their skill check, and a failed check can be re-attempted the next round.

Once stabilized, the target recovers with 1 hit point after ten minutes of rest, and can rise and act normally thereafter. They count as ***Frail***, however, and will remain Frail until they have had at least a week of bed rest. Frail PCs cannot heal damage through natural healing and will die immediately if brought to zero hit points again.

A physician can try to remove the Frail condition with an hour's work and a skill check against difficulty 10. They only get one chance to remove a given Frailty.

Natural Healing

A wounded creature recovers its level or hit dice in lost hit points after every night's rest, assuming they're properly fed and can get decent sleep. At this time they also lose one point of accumulated System Strain.

Creatures that are Frail do not recover hit points this way, nor do they lose System Strain.

Magical Healing

Some healers have access to abilities that automatically heal hit points, such as a Healer's arcane arts or the vitality-transmitting spells of a Necromancer. Other PCs might have elixirs of health, artifacts that cure injuries, or other sources of magical healing.

A character healed by any amount of magical healing automatically loses any Mortally Wounded or Frail qualities and can immediately rise. A downed hero at zero hit points who gets 3 points of healing from a magic potion, for example, can immediately get up on their next turn and return to the fray without any frailty.

First Aid

The powerful vitality of the people of Latter Earth can be complemented by skilled medical attention and the use of numerous herbs, compounds, and other "mundane" techniques. While this can't work miracles, it can prevent even significant injuries from slowing a victim too much.

By spending a few minutes tending an ally, a healer can cure 1d6 plus their Heal skill in points of damage. They suffer a -1 on this roll if they have no Heal skill, perhaps doing no good at all. Each such application of first aid adds 1 System Strain to the target, but it can be repeated for a wounded ally as often as the healer wishes and the subject's System Strain allows.

A single ten-minute turn or scene is usually sufficient to apply as much first aid as the party wants to apply. First aid can restore lost hit points to a Frail PC, but it cannot get rid of the Frail quality itself.

System Strain

Most forms of healing and certain other magical powers add to a target's ***System Strain***. System Strain is a measure of how much stress the target's body is under, and how profoundly it has been taxed by magical energies, hunger, privation, and forced healing acceleration.

A character's maximum System Strain is equal to their Constitution attribute. Thus, someone with a Constitution of 13 could accumulate up to 13 points of System Strain. This strain is usually lost at a rate of one point for every night of good, refreshing sleep.

Healing often adds to a target's System Strain, whether as first aid or as the effect of some magical power. If the target is already at its maximum System Strain, it can't handle the additional stress and gets no benefit from the effect or attempting healing.

Poisons and Diseases

When a character is struck by some poison, they generally get a Physical saving throw to avoid its effect, or at least mitigate its harm. Particularly powerful poisons might apply a penalty of up to -4 on this check, while weak toxins might grant a bonus of up to +4. The exact effect of a failed save depends on the poison.

Diseases also generally allow a Physical saving throw, but are significantly slower in onset. If the first saving throw is a success, the target has avoided infection. If it's a failure, the disease begins to take hold. The victim can make further saving throw attempts at weekly intervals, generally, with a certain number of successes sufficient to throw off the disease. Each failed save tends to make things worse, however, and fatal diseases can kill after three or four failed saves.

Those with the Heal skill can tend the sick, granting a bonus to their saving throws equal to twice their Heal skill, or +1 in the case of a nurse with Heal-0 skill.

Falling and Other Hazards

An adventurer's lifestyle leaves them susceptible to certain hazards. While every situation has its particulars, the guidelines below can be used to cover some of the most common.

Falling: Most creatures will take 1d6 damage per 10 full feet they fall, up to 20d6 maximum. Spikes or other hazardous terrain at the bottom will add at least 1d6 to the total. A creature that intentionally leaps or skids down in a controlled way may make a Dex or Str/Exert skill check at a difficulty of 7 + 1 for every 10 full feet; on a success, the effective distance fallen is halved.

Suffocation: Creatures can fight or act normally without air for one round per point of Constitution, or 10 rounds for most NPCs. If they don't move, they can quadruple this time. Once they run out of air, they must make a Physical save each round or take 1 hit point of damage per HD or level they have.

Poisons: Typical dungeon poisons found crusted on needle traps force a Physical save or a loss of half the victim's maximum hit points. Very potent ones might kill a victim outright. Those who die due to poison damage usually take at least 1d6 minutes to actually expire, but are helpless in the meanwhile. An antidote applied during this time can revive them with 1 hit point. A skilled healer can try to counteract the toxin with an Int/Heal skill check at a difficult of at least 10 for most poisons, or 12 or more for truly fearsome ones.

Aside from any hit point damage a poison does, many also have lingering side effects, such as penalties to hit rolls or skill checks, or the loss of Move actions for a certain period of time. Some also add System Strain to the victim due to the stress they put on their bodies. A victim forced above their maximum System Strain will collapse and die in minutes if the poison is not neutralized.

Overland Travel

PCs can generally travel for ten hours a day in most seasons, the rest being absorbed in rest, camp construction, and incidental activities. For each hour of travel they can cross as many miles of a given terrain as listed in the table. This travel presumes that the PCs are moving directly toward their destination and not taking any particular time to scout the area for points of interest or investigate their surroundings. This rate of travel also assumes average walking or wagon speeds; horses can be used by their riders for quick bursts of speed to chase or avoid others, but don't increase the average travel rate much.

The roads of the Latter Earth are seldom safe, and even less secure are the trackless wilds surrounding them. For every day of travel and every night of camping outdoors, the GM rolls one die for a wandering encounter check, as explained on page 51. The die used will depend on the terrain, with safer or more peaceful lands using a larger die size. On a 1, the PCs come upon creatures or a situation that requires their attention.

Assuming it's not an ambush or a sudden encounter in an obscured area, the groups usually encounter each other at maximum sight range. An opposed Wis/Notice check can be used to determine who spots who first; PCs who get the edge can usually avoid the other group automatically if they have sufficient cover.

PCs traveling with a caravan or riding a well-stocked travel wagon need not concern themselves with details of food, drink, and shelter, but PCs who plan on making an overland expedition without these ready comforts should consult the rules for overland exploration on the next page for details on the supplies and difficulties involved.

Terrain Type	Miles per Hour
Plains or savannas	3
Light forest or desert	2
Dense forest or rugged hills	1.5
Swamp or marsh	1
Mountains or *arratu* wastelands	0.5
There is a road through the terrain	x2
Foul weather, mud, or heavy rain	x0.5
Deep snow on the ground	x0.1

Sea Travel

Granted fair winds and an absence of sea monsters, a ship can usually manage about six miles an hour of travel when under sail, and can sail around the clock if far from coasts and other perils. Oar-powered galleys average the same speed, but are heedless of the winds. An ordinary crew can only row for eight hours a day, however.

Encounters at sea are rarer but potentially more hazardous; the GM should roll daily and nightly checks on 1d10 or 1d12. On a 1, some creature has come across the ship, a troublesome wind or storm has sprung up, something has been damaged on the ship or gone awry with the crew, or otherwise complicated the vessel's journey. Some such encounters can be overcome with a good plan and a decent Sail skill check, while others may require bloodier answers.

Wilderness Exploration and Expeditions

Heroes are inclined to venture into the wilds for their own purposes, chiefest being the gathering of loot and glory. Unfortunately, such expeditions are dangerous, difficult, and oftimes costly in support and supplies. Once a GM has drawn up a hex map with the tools on page 120, these rules can be used to handle the actual exploration.

Magical devices or special circumstances might alter these rules, allowing swifter movement, faster surveying, or better supply. Of course, should these magics be lost halfway through a trip, the consequences can be dire.

Supplies for Adventuring

When venturing into the untamed wilderness, a group is going to need certain supplies. Fire, water, shelter, and food are the four most critical. In some places, some of these supplies may be easily acquired along the way, such as fresh water from a river the PCs are following, or shelter when the climate is warm and pleasant around the clock, but usually some kind of provision will need to be made for bringing or gathering these things.

Food is measured in days of food per person. Each day's needed food counts as one item of encumbrance, though they can be packed snugly together as weekly rations that count as four items instead. Some magical items or Mages might be able to create food; a party who relies entirely on such things had best hope nothing happens to their literal meal ticket.

Water is also measured in days of water per person, each unit counting as one item of encumbrance. Exceptionally hot or dry climates may require multiples of this to avoid dehydration or overheating.

Shelter means adequate clothing for the climate and some kind of tent or lean-to to protect from the elements while resting. Characters with Survival-0 can put together a minimal lean-to of boughs and branches in wooded areas, but in places of torrential rain, fierce snows, or other extreme conditions it may prove more difficult. Lack of shelter can make it impossible to rest comfortably, or even threaten a PC's life.

Fire means fuel sufficient to cook food, dry wet clothes, and warm PCs after they've stopped moving for the day. In most places it's easy enough for even the least wood-wise PC to scavenge enough dry wood or twigs to get a minimally sufficient fire going, but voyages into a land devoid of woody vegetation can mean trouble. A load of dung cakes, charcoal, or other fuel sufficient to keep a group warm for an ordinary night counts as four items of encumbrance.

Supply Encumbrances

Type	Enc
One day of food or water	1
One week of carefully-packed food	4
One night's load of fire fuel	4
One day's fodder for a horse or large beast	4
One day's fodder for a mule or small beast	2
Daily water for a large beast	8
Daily water for a small beast	4

Pack Animals and Porters

Pack beasts can carry a certain amount of items of encumbrance, assuming they're packed carefully. Professional porters are also common hires for adventurers, though they generally refuse to enter dangerous ruins.

Most beasts of the Latter Earth can survive on nightly browse and brief water stops for the duration of an expedition. In barren lands, food and water must be packed in for the beasts as well as the humans.

During combat, porters will hide or fight as normal humans to defend their lives. Pack beasts might panic if not calmed by a handler's successful Cha/Ride skill check made as a Move action, usually against a difficulty of 8 or more. Carters, nomad riders, and other professional stock handlers always succeed at these calming checks barring the most unusual circumstances.

Exploring a Hex

To lightly explore a standard six-mile hex for points of interest takes a full day of scouting. If the terrain is especially rugged or concealing, such as a range of mountains or trackless swamp, this time is doubled or tripled.

This much time is sufficient to find most major points of interest that the GM may have placed in the hex. It won't necessarily catch small features or provide a detailed survey of the terrain.

Pack Animal and Porter Loads

Type	Enc
Riding horse or warhorse, with laden rider	5
Riding horse or warhorse, pack only	20
Heavy pack horse	30
Mule or donkey	15
Professional porter	12
Two porters carrying a shared litter	30

At need, a healthy horse can be butchered into 30 days of rations, and a mule or similar-sized beast into 15 days. Preserving this meat takes time and fire, as explained in the Foraging section.

Starving, Thirsting, and Freezing

If the PCs don't have enough food, water, warmth, or shelter, bad things will start to happen. Each day without these necessities will apply the following penalties.

System Strain is gained. If this would put the PC over their maximum, they must make a Physical save or die by dawn if not fed, watered, and sheltered by a rescuer. On a success, they're helpless until death or rescue.

They can't recover System Strain, gain nightly hit point healing, refresh daily Committed Effort, or restore expended spells until they've had a day of proper food, water, and warm sleep.

Situations That Cause Privation

Circumstance	Sys. Str.
First day without enough food	+0
Consecutive day without food	+1
First day without enough water	+2
Consecutive day without water	+3
Night without adequate shelter or fire	+0
Harsh night without shelter or fire	+1

Foraging

PCs who find themselves low on supplies or lacking a particular resource can take time to forage the surrounding terrain. It's assumed the group sticks together during this process, sacrificing efficiency for security. They can split up if desired, but each group then risks encounters.

Some supplies can be gathered as normal parts of travel. If passing through ordinary, non-arid, non-barren terrain it's assumed the PCs can refill their waterskins whenever they wish and can scrounge enough dry firewood as they walk along to have an adequate campfire.

Foraging requires either a half-day or a full day of effort. The group's most apt member makes a Wis/Survive check against the difficulty listed on the table, and on a success earns 1d6 units of forage plus the sum of the group's Survive skill levels, to a maximum of 10. Those without the skill at all subtract 1 from the total, to a minimum of one unit found by the group.

Each forage unit is worth either a day of food for a person, a day of water for a person, or a night's firewood for the party, and the group can decide how much of each was found after the roll is made. PCs who are barbarians or other natives of the wilds never find less than two units of forage, barring extreme situations.

Foraging

Type of Foraged Terrain	Diff
Woodlands or areas of heavy vegetation	8
Mountains, scrublands, savannas	9
Deserts, badlands, or normal barrens	12
Arratus or barely human-survivable lands	14
A full day foraging rather than a half-day	-2
Each successive day foraging the same hex	+1
On success, 1d6 units of forage are found, plus the total Survive skills of the foragers. Those without even level-0 skill in it subtract 1 from the total found.	

Foraged food is unpreserved and will spoil in three days. Smoking or drying it requires use of a day's worth of firewood and a half-day's labor. Any reasonable amount of forage can be preserved with a single half-day's work.

Wandering Encounters

PCs risk encountering trouble in their expeditions. Every so often, a Wandering Encounter check die should be rolled by the GM, with example probabilities on the adjacent table. If the GM rolls a 1, something comes up. A GM should roll an encounter check…

Once per day of travel and once per night of camping outdoors. Such encounters will commence at the terrain's usual maximum sight range, with a Wis/Notice opposed check to see who first spotted who.

Once per foraging attempt. Whether a half-day or a full day, one check is made per attempt, per foraging group. If the group forages all day instead of traveling, the daily travel check above is omitted.

The precise nature of a Wandering Encounter will depend on the terrain and the GM's preparations. A pack of bandits might lurk along a trade road, while a rampaging monster might roar through a deep wilderness. These encounters fit the logic of the situation, not the levels of the PCs, so a swift retreat may be in order.

Wandering Encounter Checks

Type of Terrain	Chance
Dangerous wilderness area	1 in 6
Area of civil unrest or heavy banditry	1 in 6
Ordinary trade road	1 in 8
Well-policed trade road	1 in 10
Borderlands or rural back country	1 in 8
Ordinary wilderness	1 in 8

Not all Wandering Encounters are hostile or involve combat, however. A pompous noble might be clearing rabble off the road in front of him, or a woodsman might be found with a broken leg, or the bandit crew might be carousing and willing to have visitors join in. In general, they're simply situations, creatures, or events that the PCs will need to react to, even if that reaction is simply to duck back behind the brush and put their spurs to their horses.

Site Exploration

Sooner or later the heroes are almost certain to plunge into a freshly-unearthed Deep, ancient ruin, Outsider outpost, bandit fortress, or other place of peril and mystery. While the details for actually creating such a site are explained in the adventure creation chapter, this section gives guidelines for running the exploration of the place.

These rules are meant for tracking adventures in a dangerous site where perils could spring up at any moment. They're not meant for casual exploration of some bosky glade or city street, and in such cases the PC actions can just be followed scene-by-scene as usual.

It's important that GMs understand the purpose of the Wandering Encounter checks in a site. They're intended to put constant pressure on the party to get in, accomplish their purpose, and get out before they're worn down by encounters or the natives realize that they're being invaded. Not all Wandering Encounters are hostile, but each is a risk of pointless fighting or sudden alarm.

Note that some groups will prefer to do things more loosely than is prescribed here. Issues of resource management and measured risk aren't as interesting to these groups, and they'll instead prefer to use something more like the simplified rules given in this section.

Timekeeping in the Ruin

Once the heroes intrude on a ruin, Deep, corrupt noble's mansion, or other potentially-dangerous site the GM starts tracking time in ***turns***. Each turn counts as about ten minutes or one scene. Members of the party can generally do one significant thing per turn. Different party members can be doing different things in the same turn, such as one of them picking a chest's lock while the others ransack the room for hidden valuables.

The point of tracking turns isn't to have a minute-by-minute tally of PC activities, but to have a rough measure of how much activity they're engaging in within the ruin. The more they do and the longer they stay, the more likely that they'll run into Wandering Encounters or the natives will have time to realize that intruders are present. Eventually, the PCs need to either pull back or clear the site entirely of its dangerous inhabitants.

Movement and Fleeing

For the simplified diagram sites built by the procedures on page 243, movement between rooms of interest just takes one turn. Once inside a room or location, PCs move at their usual movement rate.

If forced to flee, the party needs to decide how exactly they're retreating, and what measures they're taking to dissuade pursuit: blocking doors, throwing food to slavering beasts, dropping treasure, jumping from windows, or other means of retreat. In some cases, this alone will be enough. The GM may decide the pursuers have no reason to chase them beyond a certain point.

The Order of Play

At the start of each turn after the PCs enter the site:

- ***Roll a secret Wandering Encounter check*** if necessary. On a 1, the encounter will happen at some appropriate moment this turn.
- ***The PCs decide what they want to do*** this turn, be it move into a new room, carefully search their current location, fiddle with some object they've found, or something else that takes ten minutes.
- ***Tell them the result of their actions***, whether that's a first-glance description of a new room, notice of the hideous abomination that's rearing up before them, or the explosive detonation of the crystal they just experimentally rapped.
- ***Start over from the top***, assuming their actions have consumed a full turn, until they withdraw from the site or it becomes safe enough to stop counting turns.

Example Time Costs in Turns

Activity	Turns
Move from one room of interest to another	1
Pick a lock or disarm a trap	1
Get in a fight with something	1
Perform first aid and looting after a fight	1
Search a room carefully	1
Have an extended parley with inhabitants	1
Jury-rig something or work a complex device	1
Time a torch lasts until burning out	6
Time a filled lantern lasts before burning out	24

If their foes are determined, the PC with the best Dex/Exert skill makes an opposed check against the pursuing group. They get a +1 on the roll if the PCs are fewer in number than the pursuers, and possibly another bonus if their escape plan is good. The group with the slowest member takes a -2 penalty to their skill check.

On a success, the PCs eventually outpace or lose their pursuers. On a failure, they're caught somewhere along their escape route. A successful escape usually takes up one turn worth of time and leaves the PCs in whatever location the GM decides they've eventually fled to.

Encounters and Surprise

Usually, PCs are sufficiently alert when exploring a site to avoid any chance of surprise, barring a set ambush. If they burst in on the natives suddenly, however, the locals might be too stunned to act for a round. If the GM thinks this is possible, give it X-out-of-6 odds and roll it.

If the PCs run into a Wandering Encounter in a room, the creatures will enter through one of the available entrances. In the corridors outside, they're usually 1d8 x 10 feet away when first spotted or heard, assuming there's enough space for such a distance.

Remember to make a reaction roll when PCs encounter creatures, as explained on page 296. Not every group of Deep denizens will immediately lunge for their weapons when they spot intruders.

Usually, there's a brief, tense moment of recognition when the PCs encounter creatures, just enough time for a reaction roll and a chance to size up the odds of diplomacy. The GM should always give the PCs a chance to parley or run when encountering creatures unless the situation makes that completely impractical.

Light, Locks, and Searching

A torch or lantern will cast usable light in a thirty-foot radius. Objects outside this range are too indistinct to be made out in the typical stygian gloom of a Deep.

Locks, discovered traps, stuck doors, and other obstacles usually take a full turn to pick or pry free. Most locks or small traps can be defeated with a Dex/Sneak skill check. The difficulty begins at 8 for a fairly good lock or average needle trap. If the PC is in a panicked haste, an attempt can be made as a Main Action at +2 difficulty, but failure means the lock's jammed against further attempts. Failing to disarm a trap usually sets it off.

To search a room, the PCs need to spend a turn and describe just what it is they're searching: whether they're looking under beds, pushing over the big iron cauldron, knocking around the chimney with a pole, or so forth.

If they search where the GM knows something is hidden, they find it automatically. If they don't mention it, the PC with the best Wis/Notice skill then rolls a skill check at a difficulty chosen by the GM. If it's a success, the group happens to also search where the hidden object is concealed and will discover it. Other PCs can aid this skill check as usual.

Wandering Encounter Checks

Every so many turns, a GM should roll 1d6 to check for a Wandering Encounter. On a 1, the PCs will run into one at some point during the turn. The frequency of the check will depend on how vigorously alert and organized the site's inhabitants are.

The actual contents of the encounter are decided when the GM puts together the site with the tools on page 246. Not all encounters involve running into creatures. Some are mere events or situations that fit the site. In the same vein, not all encounters are necessarily hostile, either. Reaction rolls should be made for all creatures.

When to Roll an Encounter Check

Type of Location	Turns
Alerted site with organized defenders	Every 1
Unalert site with organized defenders	Every 2
Site with no organized or active defense	Every 3
Site with very few mobile inhabitants	Every 4
Abandoned or disused nook in a site	Every 6
Hidden area or concealed chamber unknown to the natives of the site	No check

Simplified Ruin Exploration

The rules on these pages are meant to create a tense expedition into the site, with the party constantly forced to weigh the advantages of plunging deeper with the risk that they'll be worn down by foes before they can escape the site. It requires tracking time, light sources, and other resources fairly carefully, but it rewards good judgment with successful mission completion or plundered loot and punishes imprudence with the risk of death.

Not all groups are interested in that sort of play, however, and some don't find any pleasure in tracking turns, minding light sources, or worrying about Wandering Encounters. Such an approach is a perfectly reasonable one and much in line with certain styles of play.

For these groups, the GM can drop the timekeeping and just maintain the usual scene-based structure of play. Each room or location of interest counts as its own scene for purposes of fighting, searching, or meddling with the contents, and the PCs shift to a new scene each time they venture into a new place within the ruin.

A Wandering Encounter check is made only when the PCs do something that might attract attention, or when they pause in a single location for an unusually long time. PCs that avoid slowing down and that keep their actions discreet can escape any risk of such encounters.

PCs in such groups are assumed to have adequate light sources unless there's some reason they shouldn't. The typical adventurer's gear bundle from the equipment list has all the requisite tools necessary for ordinary dungeoneering, and it's not necessary to track each picklock, crowbar, or torch. Abuse or loss of these items, however, might make them unavailable until replacements are obtained.

GMs who use this simplified method should keep in mind the practical realities of the site. Just because you're not making regular encounter checks, it doesn't mean the site won't react violently if the PCs make a big enough fuss or do something that would logically bring the place's inhabitants down around their ears.

Character Advancement

When characters accumulate enough experience points, they advance a ***character level***. New PCs start out at level one and the most experienced, capable heroes in the kingdom might reach level ten. Advancing beyond such prowess is the realm of the Legates, a matter discussed more fully in the deluxe edition of this book.

Gaining Experience Points

To advance in capability, PCs need to earn ***experience points***. Once they accumulate enough experience, they can advance to the next character level, representing the sharpening of their skills and the heroic veterancy that comes of surviving perils and dire challenges. Experience points earned are cumulative, and do not reset each level.

There are many different things that can earn a hero experience points, and the kind of activities and goals that reward them will vary with the kind of campaign you're playing. The GM should make clear to the whole group what kind of things earn the PCs experience.

For some games, success might lie in plundering forgotten hoards or clawing wealth from the hands of desperate patrons. Other games might reward the PCs for achieving personal goals, whether or not there was any money in it. Some might even award XP only for spending gold, requiring every PC to recklessly waste their wealth before gaining a level. It's up to the GM to pick a method that fits the group's tastes.

The adjacent table indicates how many experience points need to be earned before a PC can advance to that level. Once the requisite number of XP are earned, the hero gains their new level and all the benefits, improving them as soon as they get a day or two of downtime.

Level	Fast Leveling	Slow Leveling
1	0	0
2	3	6
3	6	15
4	12	24
5	18	36
6	27	51
7	39	69
8	54	87
9	72	105
10	93	139
11+	Special	Special

Two different rates are given, one for campaigns where the group wants a quick climb to the upper levels and the other for games that want to spend more time at low levels. GMs can pick whichever suits their needs, or can adjust them to suit their own game's needs.

In general, you can assume that one "successful" gaming session should usually earn you about 3 XP.

Advancing Past Tenth Level

By default, it's assumed that heroes stop advancing at tenth level. That pitch of power is as much as a mortal can attain without tremendous luck, hideous pacts, uncanny natural gifts, or other special advantages.

GMs who want to take their heroes beyond tenth level can consult the Legate rules in the deluxe version of this book.

Benefits of Gaining a Level

Once a PC has been awarded enough experience points to reach the next level, they immediately gain the benefits of advancement. No special training is required as their abilities are assumed to have been honed by their adventures over the past level.

Roll Additional Hit Points

First, they become harder to overcome in combat. To determine their new maximum hit points, they roll the hit dice for their class and level as given on the chart in the character creation chapter, adding their Constitution modifier to each die. If the new total is no greater than the old, add one point to the old total and record it instead.

Thus, a Warrior who reaches third level and who has a +1 attribute modifier for their Constitution would roll 3d6+9 to find their new hit point total. If they already had 15 hit points and rolled a 12, they'd instead record 16 hit points as their new total.

Improve Attack Bonus

A PC's base attack bonus improves according to their class and level, as given on the charts in the character creation chapter starting on page 18. Warriors rapidly gain new skill in martial undertakings, while other classes might need to advance considerably before their prowess improves. Heroes who want to get better with their weapons without an increased attack bonus should consider improving their Stab, Shoot, or Punch skills as explained on the following page.

Improve Saving Throws

The PC becomes more capable of evading chance harms and perils. Their saving throw scores decrease by one, making it easier to succeed on saving throws by rolling equal or over it. As a first level character has saving throw scores of 15, reaching second level would lower them to 14, modified by attributes.

Gain and Spend Skill Points

A PC who advances a level gains three ***skill points*** they can spend on improving their skills or save to spend later. Experts and Adventurers with the Partial Expert class option gain an extra bonus skill point to spend on a non-combat skill or attribute improvement.

Skills that are gained or improved immediately on gaining a level are assumed to have been perfected over the past level and require no training time or teaching. If you save your skill points to spend them later then you'll need to find some teacher or other explanation for developing them in the meanwhile. It doesn't take more than a week to refine your new ability, but you can't usually spend your points mid-scene to develop a heretofore-unmentioned expertise with hurlants.

The cost for improving a skill is listed below. Every skill level must be purchased in order; to gain level-1 in a skill you need to pay one point for level-0 and then two points for level-1. A PC must be the requisite minimum level to increase a skill to certain levels. Less hardened heroes simply don't have the focus and real-life experience to attain such a pitch of mastery.

A PC cannot "partially buy" a skill level. If they don't have enough skill points to buy a new level, they need to save them up until they can. A PC cannot develop skills beyond level-4.

New Skill Level	Skill Point Cost	Minimum Character Level
0	1	1
1	2	1
2	3	3
3	4	6
4	5	9

Add New Spells and Arts

Some Mage classes automatically acquire new spells as the fruits of their recent researches. Partial Mages learn them just as full Mages do, but an Adventurer PC with two Partial Mage classes must pick one or the other for the purposes of gaining new spells each time they advance a level.

High Mages can pick any two High Magic spells they are capable of casting, adding these spells to their spellbooks. Necromancers and Elementalists may pick only one, but may make their choice from among High Magic spells or those New Magics unique to their particular tradition.

In addition to this, Mages may sometimes pick a new art, as given in the class charts for each magical tradition. Adventurers with two Partial Mage classes gain these bonus arts from both traditions, though the new picks must be made from arts allowed to that class. Thus, a Partial Necromancer/Partial Elementalist who reached third level could pick one new Necromancer art and one new Elementalist art, but they could not pick two from the same tradition.

Purchase Improved Attributes

A veteran adventurer may have trained or honed their natural abilities well enough to improve one of their six base attributes. While even the most determined development isn't enough to turn complete ineptitude into gifted competence, a hard-working adventurer can hone their existing strengths considerably.

The first time a PC improves an attribute, it costs 1 skill point and adds +1 to an attribute of their choice. The second improvement to their attributes costs 2 skill points, the third 3, and so forth. Each improvement adds +1 to the attribute, potentially improving its modifier. A PC can only ever make five such improvements total; not five per attribute.

PCs must be a certain level before purchasing the third, fourth, or fifth attribute boost. No more than five attribute boosts can ever be purchased by a PC.

Attribute Boost	Skill Point Cost	Minimum Character Level
First	1	2
Second	2	2
Third	3	3
Fourth	4	6
Final	5	9

Choose New Foci

Finally, the PC might be eligible to pick an additional level in a Focus. At levels 2, 5, 7, and 10 a PC can add a level to an existing Focus or pick up the first level in a new Focus.

If this is the first level they've taken in the Focus, they might be granted a skill as a free bonus pick, depending on the Focus' benefits. During character creation, this bonus skill pick is treated like any other skill pick. If the Focus is taken as part of advancement, however, it instead counts as three skill points spent toward increasing the skill. This is enough to raise a nonexistent skill to level-1, or boost a level-1 skill to level-2. They may do this even if they aren't high-enough level to normally qualify for a skill level that high.

If the skill points aren't quite enough to raise the skill to a new level, they remain as credit toward future advances. If applied to a skill that is already at level-4, the PC can spend the three skill points on any other skill of their choice.

Changing Leveling Choices

Once made, Focus picks, skill purchases, and other leveling choices are permanent. Some great sorcery or adventure reward might allow a reconfiguration, but a PC is usually obliged to live with the choices they make.

An exception can be made by the GM if a particular choice or concept is proving troublesome in play or out of step with the rest of the group. Such reality rewrites should be reserved for genuine game problems, and not for the sake of "optimizing a build".

Modifying and Customizing Equipment

The ancients left a host of wondrous materials and enigmatic artifices in the ruins of Latter Earth, and the best of the modern crafters have learned how to make the most of these ancient relicts. Exceptionally talented NPC crafters, Experts, and Partial Experts are able to use this salvage to create ***modifications*** to gear, provided they have the requisite Craft skill.

Unfortunately, these ancient leftovers are finicky, fragile, and subject to decay and decalibration if not carefully maintained by a competent crafter. If left long enough, they often decay to uselessness, and even a relatively short period of neglect can make the item they're used in ineffective until they've been properly maintained. As such, modified equipment is rarely for sale on the open market, as uneducated owners aren't capable of maintaining it properly. Neither are they often found in ancient salvage, as such a long period of neglect usually ruins them. Most often, they are the customized works of expert crafters, made for their own use or the use of a skilled ally.

Any Expert or Partial Expert PC with at least Craft-1 skill, or any PC with the ***Artisan*** Focus, can modify equipment with ancient salvage. Their crafting background does not need to precisely match the gear they're modifying; the basic principles of using ancient salvage are the same among all disciplines.

Making Modifications

Many modifications require ***ancient salvage***. While salvage usually takes the form of ancient super-materials and wondrous substances in the Latter Earth, more traditional fantasy settings might instead use precious magical monster parts, legendary jewels, or other occult substances with magical properties. To simplify tracking, it's assumed that any piece of ancient salvage can be used to make any particular modification.

Modifying a piece of gear requires the usual tools necessary to create or repair the gear in question. Modifying a sword requires access to a forge, modifying a suit of linothorax armor requires sewing implements, and so on. It also usually requires a large number of expensive supplementary materials. Mods can be removed, but their materials cannot be salvaged.

Modifications have a minimum Craft skill required. An Expert crafter with inadequate skills can't install such a mod, though they can maintain it.

It takes one week to install a modification per level of Craft skill required. Thus, if the modification requires Craft-2 skill to create, it takes two weeks of work to properly install it. An assistant with at least Craft-0 skill can halve this time, and if the crafter does nothing but work, eat, and sleep, it can be halved again.

Maintaining Modifications

The main reason modifications are not more widespread, aside from the rarity of usable ancient salvage, is that they require regular maintenance by a skilled crafter. Calibrating rituals, proper preservative oil application, counteracting thaumic stress points, and other skilled labor must be done if the modification is to continue functioning.

An Expert or Partial Expert crafter has a ***Maintenance*** score equal to the total of their Intelligence and Constitution modifiers plus three times their Craft level. Thus, an Expert PC with an Intelligence modifier of +1, a Constitution modifier of +0, and the Craft-0 skill would have a Maintenance score of 1. PCs with no Craft skill can't maintain modifications, nor can those without full or partial Expert classes. Mages who wish to create similar marvels must build them from scratch as magic items.

A crafter can maintain a number of modifications equal to their Maintenance score without cutting into their adventuring time. It's assumed that it's done during downtime and pauses. The work requires no particular special materials or expenses. If they don't adventure or do anything but work, they can double their Maintenance.

If a modification goes without maintenance for 24 hours, it stops working and no longer grants its benefit. If it's unmaintained for a week, the entire item becomes too dangerous or fragile to use. Lack of maintenance for years or ages may result in complete item destruction. A maintenance backlog can be cleared by an hour of work by a crafter capable of maintaining it.

A crafter who builds a mastercraft item from scratch, as explained on page 58, can tune it to better support their modifications if they wish. The first mod they add to such an item costs twice as much in arcane salvage and supplementary costs, but requires no maintenance.

Example Modifications

The mods listed here are merely some of the possibilities for using ancient salvage or large amounts of costly mundane materials. These mods are almost never available on the open market due to the rarity of usable salvage and the difficulty of maintaining the gear. Acquiring the salvage needed to make them usually means finding it as part of an adventure, receiving it in payment from a patron, or setting out on specific expeditions to find it.

Multiple modifications can stack, but cannot increase a hit, AC, or damage bonus above +3, or a skill check bonus above +1. Magical and masterwork weapons and armor can be modified, but mods can't improve them above this cap.

Arrow Storm (Craft-2): A bow or other projectile weapon automatically generates its own ammunition, albeit the conjured projectiles vanish a round after firing. This mod does not increase reload speed. Cost: One unit of salvage and 5,000 silver pieces.

Assassin's Trinket (Craft-2): A one-handed weapon is modified to adopt the shape of some item of jewelry or adornment. It can be shifted to or from this shape by the owner as an On Turn action. Cost: One unit of salvage and 1,000 silver pieces.

Augmented Gear (Craft-1): A tool, medical kit, or other item of equipment is improved for a specific purpose chosen at the time of augmentation. Skill checks made for that purpose gain a +1 skill bonus with the item. Cost: One unit of salvage and 5,000 silver pieces.

Automatic Reload (Craft-2): A hurlant can be modified to reload itself, if ammunition is available. Once per scene, a man-portable hurlant can be reloaded as an On Turn action. Cost: Two units of salvage and 10,000 silver pieces.

Customized (Craft-1): The weapon or suit of armor has been carefully tailored for a specific user. When used by them, they gain a +1 to hit with the weapon or +1 Armor Class with the armor. This mod doesn't work with shields. Cost: 1,000 silver pieces.

Flying Razor (Craft-1): A throwing weapon is imbued with various esoteric materials, allowing it to return to the hand of its thrower after each attack. Cost: One unit of salvage and 5,000 silver pieces.

Harmonized Aegis (Craft-3): A suit of armor is altered to harmonize with the dangerous sorceries of allied casters. Provided the wearer and the caster have had ten minutes to coordinate the protection, the wearer is unharmed by the caster's harmful spells for the rest of the day, even if caught in their area of effect. Cost: One unit of salvage and 10,000 silver pieces.

Long Arm (Craft-2): A ranged or thrown weapon is modified to double its normal and maximum ranges. Cost: One unit of salvage and 5,000 silver pieces.

Manifold Mail (Craft-2): A suit of armor is augmented to allow it to shift its appearance to any of five or six pre-set choices, mimicking normal clothing or other armor types as an On Turn action. The armor's Encumbrance is not altered. Cost: One unit of salvage, 5,000 silver pieces.

Omened Aim (Craft-2): Occult components improve a ranged or thrown weapon's targeting, adding +1 to hit rolls. Cost: 4,000 silver pieces.

Preserving Grace (Craft-1): A suit of clothing or armor is specially altered to preserve the wearer. Once per week, when the wearer is Mortally Wounded, they will automatically stabilize. Cost: One unit of salvage and 5,000 silver pieces.

Razor Edge (Craft-2): A weapon has been given an improved edge or shifting weight system, adding +2 to the damage and Shock it does, albeit requiring far more care. Cost: One unit and 5,000 silver pieces.

Tailored Harness (Craft-2): A suit of armor is altered to perfectly fit a single wearer, decreasing its effective Encumbrance by 1 for them only. This does not affect skill check penalties or the *Armored Magic* Focus. Cost: 5,000 silver pieces.

Thirsting Blade (Craft-3): A weapon is imbued with a fated inclination to harm, adding +1 to hit rolls. Cost: Two units of salvage and 10,000 silver pieces.

Building and Crafting Gear

It's not unknown for PCs to want to fabricate their own equipment, or earn some money with mundane skills, or make a desperate effort to jury-rig some critical piece of equipment just before calamity overwhelms them. While such ambitions aren't always practical, the guidelines here can help a GM sort out these goals.

Crafting New Equipment

Assuming a PC has the tools and workspace to fabricate a piece of equipment, they can generally do so. Raw materials for the equipment will cost half the usual retail price, and then some time must be spent crafting the gear.

No skill check is needed to simply craft the objects if they are of a kind appropriate to the crafter's background or habitual work. If the crafter is making something unusual for their skills, a skill check at difficulty 7 for simple objects, 9 for demanding works, and 11 for things only a specialist ought to be able to make might be required at the GM's discretion.

Small, simple equipment such as knives, spears, bundles of torches, cloaks, sacks, or the like takes about an hour to make for each piece or bundle of six simple objects such as torches.

Items that requires significant craftsmanship to make an adequate item, such as most clothing, leather armor, blunt weaponry, movable furniture, saddles, or other objects that require skill but not particularly lengthy effort can be made with one day of work per item.

Objects that are particularly large or that require very careful construction to make, such as large tempered blades, ox-carts, hourglasses, metal armor, or the like require one week of work to complete.

Crafters in a hurry can make an Int/Craft or Dex/Craft check against difficulty 9 to halve the time involved. If the crafter has an assistant with at least Craft-0 to help them, the skill check is made at difficulty 7. On a failure, half the raw materials were ruined and no speed gained.

Crafting Masterwork Equipment

A PC with the ***Artisan*** Focus or a background as a weaponsmith, armorer, or other maker of a specific type of goods can attempt to make a masterwork piece of equipment. The raw materials for such an undertaking cost ten times as much as the retail price of an ordinary item and the time needed to build it is twice as long.

At the end of that period, the crafter makes an Int/Craft or Dex/Craft skill check against difficulty 10. On a success, the piece is a masterwork. On a failure, the item is no better than an ordinary item.

Masterwork weaponry grants a +1 bonus to hit rolls with the item. Masterwork armor counts as 1 fewer point of Encumbrance, down to a minimum of 1 point, albeit not for purposes of the ***Armored Magic*** Focus. Masterwork items of other kinds may grant similar minor benefits at the GM's discretion.

Jury-Rigging Equipment

Adventurers have the habit of needing the most unlikely objects at the worst possible times. It's not uncommon for them to need to jury-rig together a piece of equipment on short notice.

If the materials they have to work with don't seem completely inadequate to the GM, the crafter can make an Int/Craft or Dex/Craft skill check at a difficulty ranging from 7, for something that seems crude but plausible, to 10, for a jury-rig that stretches the boundaries of plausibility. The time taken is five minutes for small, simple objects, fifteen minutes for ones that would normally require some craftsmanship, or an hour for large objects or those that would normally need careful construction.

If the time is taken and the skill check is a success, the crafter has a usable item that will last at least as long as is needed for the particular purpose they jury-rigged it for. Its ramshackle construction will tell, however, and it will never work for longer than a day before falling to irreparable pieces.

Building Structures

PCs who want to oversee the construction of buildings and other large structures can use the price lists given on page 341 to get an idea of the cost. If a PC is capable of personally overseeing the undertaking, these prices can be decreased by 10% due to saved labor and the avoidance of wastage.

The time to build these structures will depend on how much help is available. Assuming all the needed resources are on-site, one skilled worker can build 25 silver pieces worth of the structure for each day of labor. Thus, a building worth 10,000 silver could be constructed in 40 days by a team of ten skilled laborers. Unskilled laborers or those with no experience in construction are worth only 5 silver pieces of completed work per day. Large or complex structures built with less than 10% skilled labor may be less than perfect in execution.

Working as a Crafter

PCs with salable professional skills can try to make some money by plying their trade, but this is a difficult undertaking. Few local crafters will have any interest in dealing with a potentially unreliable adventurer, and local guild laws and customs may flatly forbid strangers from working in a trade. Often a PC will have to make do with piecework and under-the-table help given to employers who are in no rush to pay them.

A PC with Craft or Work or some other salable skill can generally make one silver piece per day per skill level, to a minimum of 1 silver piece. The longer such work goes on, however, the more pressure they're likely to feel to join whatever guilds or social circles control the business in the area.

System Quick Reference Sheet

Skill Checks

- Roll 2d6 + the skill level + most relevant attribute modifier and equal or exceed the check's difficulty
- The easiest checks are difficulty 6, most are 8+, the most difficult are 12+
- Without even level-0 skill, take a -1 penalty if the skill can be attempted at all by the totally untrained
- Bad or good circumstances or tools can apply up to a -2 to +2 penalty or bonus to the roll
- Allies can aid with their own skill use at the same difficulty, granting a +1 bonus if any helper succeeds.

Saving Throws

- Roll 1d20 and equal or exceed your saving throw score to succeed
- Roll Physical saves against poison or bodily stresses
- Roll Evasion saves against perils you can dodge or duck
- Roll Mental saves against mental or intangible magic
- Roll Luck against things only blind luck can forfend
- Monsters and NPCs have a single saving throw of 15 minus their halved and rounded-down hit dice

Injury and Healing

- A creature dies or is mortally wounded at zero hit points
- Minor NPCs, PCs with the Frail quality, or creatures hit by unsurvivable injuries die instantly
- Others are Mortally Wounded and die six rounds later
- An ally can stabilize the Mortally Wounded with a Dex or Int/Heal check at a difficulty of 8 plus the number of full rounds since the target was felled
- Stabilized creatures stop dying and revive in ten minutes with one hit point and the Frail quality
- Creatures lose the Frail quality after magical healing or a week of bed rest
- Magical healing stabilizes and revives a Mortally Wounded PC with no Frail quality applied
- First aid after a battle heals 1d6 HP plus the healer's Heal skill. This can be done multiple times, but each use adds 1 point of System Strain to the target
- A creature's maximum System Strain is equal to their Constitution score, and if maximized they can no longer benefit from any effect or healing that would add strain
- A creature that is not Frail recovers their level or hit dice in lost hit points after each good night's rest and also loses one accrued System Strain point

Spellcasting

- Casting a spell takes a Main Action, one free hand, and the ability to speak in a clear voice. Spells cannot usually be cast while wearing armor or while holding a shield
- If a caster suffers damage or is badly jostled, they cannot attempt to cast a spell for the rest of the round
- If the caster is struck while actively casting, they lose the spell slot and the spell fizzles uselessly

Combat Rounds

- A combat round lasts about six seconds
- At the start of combat, each side rolls initiative once on 1d8 and adds the best Dexterity modifier on their side. The highest-rolling group goes first; ties go to the PCs.
- At the GM's discretion, each individual combatant can roll initiative and then everyone acts in descending order
- On their turn in the round, a creature can take one Main Action, one Move action, and as many On Turn or Instant actions as the GM thinks reasonable
- Main Actions are attacks, spellcasting, or other activities that would eat up most of six seconds
- Move actions allow the PC to move 30 feet or do similar short, simple actions
- On Turn actions allow the PC to say a few words, drop prone, or do other reflexively simple things
- Instant actions can be taken at any time, even during someone else's turn, or even after dice have been rolled. Instant actions are usually special powers the PC can use or the result of holding an action in combat.

Hitting and Damage

- An attack is made with a hit roll of 1d20 plus the attack bonus, weapon skill, and the weapon's attribute modifier
- If the resultant roll is equal or higher than the target's Armor Class, the attack hits
- A roll of 1 always misses and a roll of 20 always hits
- On a hit, the attacker rolls the weapon's damage die and adds their relevant attribute modifier. That much damage is done to the target's hit points
- Weapons or unarmed attacks that use the Punch skill can also add the wielder's Punch skill to the damage total
- On a miss, melee attacks may do Shock damage. If the target's Armor Class is less than or equal to the weapon's Shock value, then Shock damage is done. Thus a weapon with "Shock 2/13" does 2 points of damage even on a miss to a target with an AC of 13 or less
- The wielder's attribute modifier and any Shock-specific damage bonuses are added to the Shock damage done
- Shields negate the first instance of Shock that a target would take each round. The ***Total Defense*** action makes the target immune to Shock for the rest of the round
- A successful hit can't do less damage than the weapon's Shock would do on a miss

Morale Checks

- A Morale check is rolled on 2d6. If it's higher than the target's Morale score, they rout, retreat, or surrender, depending on the situation and their overall discipline
- PCs never check Morale. NPCs do so when an ally first is downed, when half of them are down, or when shaken by some great reverse or terrifying foe
- Even on a successful Morale check, NPCs will not continue to fight when it is obviously futile or not worth the risk

MAGIC AND THE ARCANE TRADITIONS

The magic of Latter Earth is born from the Legacy, the accumulated mass of arcane laws and thaumic energies that have accrued over fathomless eons. From its first crude beginnings in the Highshine emergency recovery nano-systems of the ancient past to the modern alterations laid down by the conquering Outsiders and their vengeful usurpers, the Legacy and its magic has existed as a tool to serve the purposes of Latter Earth's masters.

Primitive societies might try to define the Legacy as a "nanite cloud" or a "malleable energy field", or some other technical description. It is more than that. It is the product of sciences and enlightenments utterly unfathomable by the modern dwellers of Latter Earth, and it has less relation to the crudity of a 25th century nanite swarm than a silicon chip has to a grain of sand. Its functions may as well be credited as magic, for in a very real sense that is what they are.

The Legacy has been influenced over the ages by the rulers of Latter Earth. New processes have been established, old ones deprecated, new limits placed on old powers and old powers transformed into newer, more serviceable functions. The incomprehensible science of the former ages was able to tune and adjust the Legacy, though rarely with perfect precision; just as they desired to change it to suit their purposes, former users had placed barriers and complications against undoing their own changes. Often the new masters had to make compromises in their plans in order to route around some old forbiddance.

The end result has been chaos. The natural decay of the Legacy has combined with the confused scrawlings of unnumbered eons to produce a power that is capricious, decadent, and unruly in the hands of Latter Earth's present occupants. Ancient magics no longer function as they once did, and new sorceries are tremendously difficult to devise. The power to actually amend the Legacy has been almost entirely lost to this world's modern inhabitants.

This decay is a torment to present-day wizards. The ancient magical techniques recorded in the most venerable grimoires no longer work as they once did, and alternate methods must be salvaged from the footnotes and digressions half-mentioned in these texts. Wizards may spend their whole lives simply trying to find a working substitute for some process that is vital to an ancient spell, conducting dangerous and difficult experimentation to feel out the technique. Success is rewarded by powers that may have been sleeping for an age. Failure, in the worst case, is punished by deaths so terrible that only a wizard could die of them.

Yet despite these hardships, mages persist on Latter Earth. These scholars and gifted souls yet seek to unravel the secrets of the Legacy and learn the methods by which its powers can be harnessed and invoked. The process is intensely laborious, requiring years of study and practice to master the trigger incantations, somatic gestures, psychic configurations, and ritual keys that patch together a usable effect. Whole traditions of sorcery have developed, with mentors passing on their wisdom to new generations of wizards, hoping that those who come after might be able to drag more from the darkness of the past.

Mages on Latter Earth

Sorcerers have a varied reception among the nations of Latter Earth. In some they are accepted as skilled artisans with talents that are useful to society as a whole. In others they are counted as nothing more than dangerous lunatics who'll inevitably plunge their neighbors into some hellish nether-dimension with their crazed fumblings. There are elements of truth to both opinions.

Most mages are trained into specific magical traditions. These traditions were formed at some ancient date by like-minded wizards who shared a similar goal or perspective on the Legacy, and their teachings have been passed down to the present day through formal magical schools or a tradition of master-pupil teachings. There are considerable advantages to having trained assistance in the research and development of new magics, to say nothing of the practical benefits of a live-in servant, so few accomplished wizards have been wholly without apprentices. Some of these masters are just, fair-minded men and women who require nothing more of their pupils than diligent study and honest labor. Others have less pleasant uses for their apprentices, and very final roles for those who fail to prove useful.

Other traditions have established magical academies for their pupils, usually with the patronage of the local nobility. In exchange for this generous tolerance such academies usually serve as training-grounds for mages dedicated to the service of their patrons, or those who pay a tribute of service as part of their tuition. The advantages of having a force of trained mages on hand are considerable, but some nations are reluctant to establish such a potent power center outside their own governing class.

A few wizards are even self-taught, having come to their powers through the study of old grimoires and personal experimentation. Such prodigies are exceedingly rare, however, as the slightest mistake in magical training can result in a hideous death. Only the truly brilliant or remarkably lucky can hope to self-study their way to occult power.

The magics practiced by PC wizards are not the only sorceries to be found in the world, however. Throughout the Latter Earth there remain innumerable small sects, isolated traditions, and mad geniuses possessed of secrets and methods long since lost to wider knowledge. There are sorcerers who can perform with ease such feats as would dazzle a traditional mage, yet it is not uncommon that these feats should come at a terrible price. Not all paths of magic are paid for with simple study, and the cost can be more than a wholly human heart can bear.

Spells and Arts

The ancient invocations and sorceries of yore are known conventionally as ***spells***, each one ranked in power from level one, the relatively weakest, to level five, the most potent. There are hypothetical and legendary incantations supposedly of sixth level or higher, but such remarkable magics are not discussed in this book.

The common corpus of ancient spells is known as High Magic, a collection of scores of different invocations that all have been inherited from the deepest past. A separate body of sorcery known as "New Magic" exists in the form of jury-rigged enchantments cobbled together out of the very limited understanding of modern mages, but this form of magic tends to be extremely specific to individual casters and exceedingly difficult to develop. Only the most brilliant and determined mages can ever salvage a novel yet useful new spell.

In this book, a collection of several dozen High Magic spells are recorded. These are by no means the only spells extant but they are some of the most common. Careful researchers and bibliographers suspect that there may be as many as two hundred functional spells surviving from former ages, though some of these produce effects that are seemingly impossible to detect or entirely useless to modern sorcerers, and others may be no more than New Magic passed off by their developers as something more antique. Few wizards are willing to be overly specific about their available magical powers.

High Magic is extremely powerful. While the effects are rarely long-lasting, even the weakest rank of spells is capable of killing people outright, enslaving their thoughts, or conjuring perfectly convincing illusions. The most potent spells can destroy several city blocks, translate the caster over hundreds of miles of distance, or halt time temporarily. There are High Magic spells that create effects modern sorcerers do not understand, but there are no High Magic spells that create only *petty* effects.

It is this very power that makes High Magic so difficult to use. Even the most accomplished mage of the modern day can't channel more than five or six spells before the eldritch energies exhaust them or burn out their vital forces for a time. A mage capable of hurling three High Magic spells in a single day is considered exceptionally capable. Most novices or modestly-talented wizards can't manage more than one each day.

Innumerable generations of mages have struggled against these limitations, forming a host of unique magical techniques and quasi-spells built from their knowledge of High Magic. These New Magic "arts" are unique to each tradition of magecraft, building on insights and training techniques specific to that tradition's education. Most of these arts are much easier to use than High Magic, and many traditions are capable of a considerable range of magical effects without ever calling on a true spell. Others have developed New Magic incantations related to their tradition's special focus. Such customized magic is useless to other practitioners outside the tradition, as they don't have the necessary grounding for it.

Preparing and Casting Spells

Each High Magic practitioner must first learn a spell before they can cast it. They may be taught by a mage who already knows the spell, even if they're from a different tradition, or they must find a grimoire laying out the fine details of the incantation. New Magic spells specific to a tradition cannot be learned by mages outside that tradition.

Learning a spell requires one week per spell level, less one week per level of the learner's Magic skill, down to a minimum of one day. At the end of this time the student will either have mastered the contents of a written copy of the spell or created such a copy from their master's tutelage. They must continue to retain access to this written document if they are to prepare the spell later, as it is an actual thaumaturgically-attuned artifact in itself. Without its formulas, attunement tables, and enchanted diagrams the mage will be unable to prepare the spell for later use. The full collection of these documents is generally known as the mage's "grimoire" or "spellbook", though some texts actually take the form of teaching artifacts or physical models.

A mage must be able to actually cast the spell in order to learn it. A novice mage can cast only first level spells, so they can learn only first level spells as well, even if they somehow come into possession of a grimoire with a more potent incantation. They'll need to wait until their own enlightenment is sufficient to cast the spell before they can finally master it.

Once the spellbook is prepared, the mage must perform the necessary attunements and propitiations to prepare the spell for casting. The number of spells a mage can prepare at once varies with their experience level, from as few as two or three at first level to as many as twelve when at tenth level. The mage may prepare any spell they have in their spellbook; there's no obligation to prepare a certain number of low-level spells should the mage wish to fill all their available "slots" with their most powerful magics and run the risk of lacking some lesser, yet more useful spell.

Preparing a new set of spells takes an hour, and can only be done after a good night's rest, when the mage's mind is most fresh and malleable. Once spells have been prepared they remain so indefinitely until replaced with a different set of magics.

Once a set of spells is prepared, the mage may then cast them at their leisure. Casting a spell usually requires a Main Action and at least one free hand, along with vocalizations at least as loud as clear normal conversation. The arcane gesticulations and vocal incantations are quite obviously occult to any onlookers, but it's usually impossible to tell *which* spell a mage is casting merely by looking at them.

Casting a spell requires focus and undisturbed concentration. If a mage has taken hit point damage or has been severely jostled in a round, they cannot cast magic that round. Thus, a mage who acts late in a round runs the risk of being hurt and having their concentration

spoiled, thus forcing them to do something other than cast a spell when their turn comes around.

High Magic cannot normally be cast while wearing armor or restrictive clothing. The profane materials, restrictive fit, and unsalutary occult configurations of armor spoil the necessary flow of energy, as does the bulk and clumsiness of a shield. The same hindrances usually also spoil the use of any arts the tradition may teach, and not just spellcasting itself.

A mage can cast only so many spells each day before needing a full night's rest to recover. Novices can cast only one spell, while masters can manage six. The spell to be cast may be selected from any prepared by the mage; the same power can be used to invoke a mighty fifth-level spell or a relatively modest first-level incantation. The same spell may be cast more than once, if the mage has multiple castings left for the day.

Adventurers who take the Partial Mage class are more limited than more focused specialists. They are able to cast fewer spells each day and the maximum level of spell they can cast is also significantly lower as compared to an equivalent full Mage. The total spells they can prepare for the day are also often somewhat fewer than that of a full Mage. When they cast the spells, however, any level-based effects also use their full level, so a third-level Partial Necromancer's invocation of ***The Coruscating Coffin*** does 3d8 damage, just as a full Necromancer would.

Adventurers who take two different Partial Mage spellcaster classes use the table on page 64 to determine how many spells they can prepare and cast each day. A dual Partial Mage can prepare and cast spells from either of their traditions. PCs who pick one spellcaster partial and one non-spellcaster, like a Necromancer/Healer, do not use this table, but instead use the usual partial spellcaster table for their class.

Creatures, Targets, and Visibility

Many spells or powers specify particular targets or creatures, or require that a target be visible. For purposes of these spells, "creature" means any animate entity, whether living, undead, or synthetic. Plants do not qualify as creatures unless they're some sort of plant monster.

A spell that can be aimed or used on one or more targets can include the caster as one such potential target, unless the spell indicates otherwise. If a spell specifies that it applies only to "chosen targets", the mage can pick and choose; otherwise all in the area are affected.

A "visible" target is one the caster can see or whose exact location is obvious. If a maximum range isn't given, assume it's no more than a bowshot away.

Arts and Effort

Arts are those special magical techniques and abilities taught by a particular magical tradition. These are much less powerful than actual High Magic spells, and often produce relatively minor, even trivial effects. Even so, they may be used with far more facility than the mighty spells of ancient days and their practical utility is a blessing to modern sorcerers.

Each tradition has a list of available arts, though additional techniques might exist in far lands or isolated sub-sects of the group. A mage can pick one or more arts from this list as they rise in character level, while some traditions automatically grant certain arts to all members. Once picked, an art cannot be exchanged; the occult attunements involved are final and permanent.

Arts are fueled by ***Effort***, a representation of the mage's available focus and magical energy. This Effort is separate from the power used to cast spells, and a mage who has exhausted his spells for the day might still have a considerable fund of Effort left. Effort is deployed and regained much more quickly than spellcasting slots.

Effort is measured in a score equal to one plus the mage's Magic skill plus the higher of their Intelligence or Charisma modifiers. Adventurers with the Partial Mage class have an Effort score one point lower than full Mages, though never less than one point. Healers, Vowed, and other Partial Mage classes have this decrease already factored into their listed Effort calculation.

Using Effort requires that it be ***Committed***. The Effort is sunk into fueling the power, but will return automatically once a certain time has passed. There are three durations for which Effort is Committed, and each art indicates in its description how long the Effort must remain Committed to trigger it.

- **Commit Effort for the day** to trigger powerful arts. One point of Effort is invested in the power and returns the next morning after the mage has had a good night's rest.

- **Commit Effort for the scene** to trigger more modest abilities. One point of Effort is invested in the power, but returns as soon as the scene is done.

- **Commit Effort indefinitely** to activate a persistent, lasting ability that keeps active as long as you keep one point of Effort Committed. You can reclaim this Effort at any time as an Instant action, immediately turning off the art. This Effort can remain invested indefinitely even while you're asleep or unconscious provided you have a few minutes to prepare things properly before falling asleep. If you're suddenly struck unconscious or killed any such powers immediately end.

Whenever Effort is Committed, only a single point is required. A very few powers might require more than one point to be Committed, but if so, it will be specified in the ability.

Each tradition has a separate pool of Effort; there is Necromancer Effort and High Mage Effort and Healer Effort and so forth. An Adventurer who picks two different traditions has two different pools of Effort, neither of which can be used to fuel arts from the other.

Dual Partial Mage Traditions

Some Adventurer PCs are adepts of two different magical traditions, such as a Partial High Mage/Partial Necromancer, or a Partial Elementalist/High Mage. The rules for these combinations are a little bit different, as mixing two spellcasting traditions creates a little more aptitude for sorcery than merely mixing in a martial Warrior's training or learning the non-spellcasting magical arts of a Healer or Vowed.

Dual-spellcasting Adventurers have a wider range of arts and more prepared spells than their more focused peers, but they have slightly fewer spells usable each day, and they never attain mastery of the most powerful spells.

If the two Mage traditions are both spellcasters, they don't use the Partial Mage tables listed under each tradition to determine their allowed spells per day and preparation limits, Instead, they use the adjacent table to find out how many spells they can cast each day, how many they can prepare at once, and what the maximum level of spell they can cast might be. Spells can be prepared and cast from either of their partial traditions, so a Partial Elementalist/Partial Necromancer could prepare or cast High Magic, Elementalist, or Necromancer spells with their allowed slots.

Thus, a 1st level Partial High Mage/Partial Necromancer could prepare up to three first-level spells and cast one of them each day. He could pick one art from the High Mage list, because that's what a first level Partial High Mage can pick, in addition to one Necromancer art, because that's the allotment a novice Partial Necromancer gets.

Such polymaths do not attain the focused mastery of their specialist brethren, but tend to have more Arts and a wider breadth of prepared spells available.

Partial Mage/Partial Mage

Level	Hit Dice	Attack Bonus	Focus Picks
1	1d6-1	+0	1 Free
2	2d6-2	+0	+1 Free
3	3d6-3	+0	
4	4d6-4	+0	
5	5d6-5	+1	+1 Free
6	6d6-6	+1	
7	7d6-7	+1	+1 Free
8	8d6-8	+1	
9	9d6-9	+1	
10	10d6-10	+2	+1 Free

PCs with Dual Spellcasting Traditions

Level	Max Level	Spells Cast	Spells Prepared	Arts Gained
1	1	1	3	As per both partial classes, gaining each level's art picks as usual.
2	1	1	4	
3	1	2	5	
4	2	2	6	
5	2	2	8	
6	2	3	9	
7	3	3	10	
8	3	4	12	
9	3	4	13	
10	4	5	15	

High Magic Spell List

First Level Spells	
Apprehending the Arcane Form	See magic for 15 minutes per level, while also seeing in the dark
Cognitive Supersession of the Inferior Orders	Telepathically bond with an animal, which obeys but won't fight
The Coruscating Coffin	Do 1d8 dmg/level to a visible target, save for half. 1 HD foes die
Damnation of the Sense	Take control of one sense of a target for a scene on a failed save
Decree of Ligneous Dissolution	Destroy all non-magic plant-derived matter in the target area
The Excellent Transpicuous Transformation	Turn one target per level invisible for an hour per caster level
Imperceptible Cerebral Divulgence	Detect a target's surface thoughts and get answers to questions
Ineluctable Shackles of Volition	Enslave a target's mind, leaving them visibly dazed but obedient
The Long Amber Moment	Put a willing creature into temporary invulnerable stasis
Phantasmal Mimesis	Create an independently-functional illusion in the target area
Velocitous Imbuement	Augment the movement speed and options of one target/level
Wardpact Invocation	Make a target partially weapon-immune or make a weapon useless
The Wind of the Final Repose	Put living targets of 4 HD or less to sleep within the area of effect

Second Level Spells	
Calculation of the Evoked Servitor	Summon a magical familiar that can't fight, but obeys all other orders
Casting Forth the Inner Eye	Scry a distant location through a luminous or reflective surface
Conjunction of the Inexorable Step	Teleport a creature or loose object to a visible non-dangerous place
Decree of Lithic Dissolution	Destroy all non-magic stone, earth or non-metal minerals in an area
Extirpate Arcana	Dispel magic in a twenty-foot radius on the target point
The Inexorable Imputation	Make a statement; listeners believe it unless impossible or abhorrent
Jade Palanquin of the Faceless God	Summon a floating palanquin that can bear heavy burdens
Mantle of Disjecting Dissection	A willing target is mantled in blades, harming those who get close
Prudentially Transient Abnegation of Life	A willing target at zero hit points appears to die, but later revives
Resounding Temporal Echo	Give targets an extra Main Action for a short time for System Strain
The Verdant Vallation	Create a solid wall of plant life; it persists if planted in good earth
Visitation of the Clement Clime	You and three allies/level become immune to natural heat or cold
Third Level Spells	
Adopt the Simulacular Visage	Transform a target into a chosen humanoid shape until the next dawn
Conjunct the Vital Viscera	Merge living creatures to share hit points or body parts
Exhalation of Congelating Cold	Freeze a target area, doing 1d6 dmg/two caster levels, with save
Foresightful Apprehension	Divine the most likely outcome of an action in the next five minutes
Glass Chimes of the Bamboo Terrace	Summon chimes for long-distance messages or 3d6 area damage
The Howl of Light	Cause an explosion doing 1d8 dmg/level in a large area, with save
Phobic Storm	Terrify foes within forty feet, forcing Morale checks and damage
Scorn the Fetters of Earth	You and an ally per level can briefly move through the air
The Torment of Tumefaction	Curse a foe with hideous disfigurements that hurt them if they act
Touch of Elucidating Intangibility	Touch a barrier to see through it or make it briefly intangible
Vallation of Specified Exclusion	Draw a line that bars targets of a particular obvious type or kind
Fourth Level Spells	
Calculation of the Phantasmal Eidolon	Summon an obedient magical servitor that can fight for the caster
Contingent Excision of Arcana	Cast the spell to later dispel magic as an Instant action once
Disjunctive Temporal Reversion	The target can redo their current round's actions; can cast Instantly
Evert the Inwardness	Summon contents from a container or viscera from a living creature
The Grinding Geas	Bind a target to obey a command or suffer a terminal disease
Obnubilation of the Will	A helpless target is made an intelligent slave to the caster's will
Ochre Sigil of Juxtaposition	Swap targets between a current place and a distant prepared one
Pierce the Pallid Gate	Create a short-ranged gate between two near known locations
Sigil of Aeolian Auctoritas	Create a blast of air or control weather in the nearby area
Fifth Level Spells	
Abdication of Temporal Presence	Stop time for 1d4+1 rounds, though you can't affect the world
Banishment to the Black Glass Labyrinth	Exile targets to an extradimensional prison-maze for a time
The Dazzling Prismatic Hemicycle	Blast targets in a 100 foot cone to inflict random gruesome effects
Deluge of Hell	Do 1d8 dmg/level in a huge area, but risk taking a quarter of it
The Earth as Clay	Mold and shape natural stone and earth in a very large area
Invocation of the Invincible Citadel	Create a force-shield bubble as an Instant action
Open the High Road	Create a temporary gate to a prepared distant target point

High Mages

A High Mage is the product more of a philosophical tendency than a specific magical tradition. There are countless magical orders that embrace the principles of this path, whether they are the austere master-and-pupil instructors of the Eightfold Lineage, the formal magical schools of the Sodality of Wisdom, the unstructured teachings of hermit-sorcerers to their apprentices, or a host of other organizations named and unnamed across Latter Earth.

High Mages are united not by an organization, but by the belief that true power and enlightenment lies in the High Magic of the ancients, and that a wizard of sense will direct their efforts towards unearthing, understanding, and mastering these lost arts. New Magic is a waste of valuable time and effort, a mere fumbling with ill-understood tricks when a mage ought to be spending their labors in better-comprehending the deeper principles behind the magic of old.

High Mages are skilled at the production of magical Workings and the development of arcane devices and standing enchantments, but they rarely ever attempt to devise New Magic. Instead, they work to unearth lost spells of High Magic and expand their own grimoires with more of these potent sorceries.

To this end they have developed numerous arts that help them control and focus the powers of High Magic. Experienced High Mages can mold and adjust their spells in ways that other wizards cannot hope to achieve, and they are exceptionally skilled at resisting, undoing, and discerning the magics of others.

Because of this aptitude it is common for High Mages to be credited as the "orthodox" magical practitioners of many nations, with their way of doing things taken as the generally correct way for a wizard to conduct their business. Some High Mage organizations push this even further, using their influence to outlaw or suppress rival traditions in their pursuit of arcane lore.

High Mage PCs may choose to have been taught by a lone practitioner of the tradition, or they may decide to be part of some larger organization of mages that exists in the campaign world, either as a newly-released apprentice or a less-successful student who seeks a new path.

If the GM doesn't have any particular magical lineages in mind for their campaign setting, the player should feel free to make up their own and credit their PC as a newly-graduated initiate in the occult arts. Provided the GM thinks the player's creation is reasonable and appropriate for the setting, it can be added in as another element to the campaign.

High Mage Benefits

All High Mages gain Magic as a bonus skill, acquiring it at level-0, or level-1 if was already level-0. Every High Mage is well-educated in the principles of magic as understood by the sorcerers of Latter Earth.

High Mages can prepare and cast High Magic spells, and have a number of arts dedicated to improving their use of these incantations. As usual for spellcasters, they cannot wear bulky clothing or armor while casting or using arts, nor use shields. Mages who have trained to overcome these limits with the ***Armored Magic*** Focus have more latitude.

High Mages conduct extensive experimentation and study as part of their daily activities. This relentless focus helps them master High Magic spells without needing the outside help of tutors and discovered texts. Each time they advance a level, they may pick two High Magic spells from the list in this book to add to their repertoire. These spells must be of a level they can cast.

High Mages also gain arts specific to their tradition. At first level, a full High Mage picks two arts and a partial picks one. As they gain levels and experience, they'll learn additional arts from the adjacent list. Once picked, an art cannot be changed.

Full High Mage

Level	Max Level	Spells Cast	Spells Prepared	Arts Gained
1	1	1	3	Any Two
2	1	1	3	Any One
3	2	2	4	
4	2	2	5	Any One
5	3	3	6	
6	3	3	7	Any One
7	4	4	8	
8	4	4	9	Any One
9	5	5	10	
10	5	6	12	Any One

Partial High Mage

Level	Max Level	Spells Cast	Spells Prepared	Arts Gained
1	1	1	2	Any One
2	1	1	3	Any One
3	1	1	3	Any One
4	1	2	4	
5	2	2	5	
6	2	3	6	Any One
7	2	3	7	
8	2	3	7	
9	3	4	8	Any One
10	3	4	9	

Arts of the High Mages

High Mage Effort is calculated as usual, with each PC's maximum being equal to one plus their Magic skill level plus the better of their Intelligence or Charisma modifiers. Partial High Mages have a score one point lower than this, albeit not less than one.

Arcane Lexicon: Commit Effort for the scene. For the rest of the scene, you can read any script that was not intentionally obfuscated or encoded by its writer. Extremely esoteric or nonhuman scripts may not be comprehensible this way; the "plain meaning" of the text might be utterly foreign to human logic.

Counter Magic: Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action when a visible enemy mage casts a spell. Both of you make opposed Int/Magic or Cha/Magic skill checks; if you win, their spell fizzles and is wasted. This art only works on actual spellcasters and not creatures that merely activate magical powers. You can use this art no more than once per round.

Empowered Sorcery: Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action to re-roll any variable die roll associated with a spell's effects, such as a damage roll; take the roll you prefer.

Hang Sorcery: Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action when casting a spell. The spell does not go off, but remains "hung" and waiting to be triggered as an On Turn action, with details of targeting and effect determined at that time. Damage does not disrupt a hung spell, but no additional spells can be cast until the hung spell is released or allowed to dissipate.

Inexorable Effect: Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action to force an enemy to re-roll a successful saving throw and take the worse result. You may use this art only once per scene.

Iron Resolution: Commit Effort for the day when injured or disturbed in combat; you may make a Physical saving throw to resist spell disruption and ignore the damage for purposes of spellcasting.

Preparatory Countermagic: Commit Effort for the scene when you are affected by a spell you have prepared, including when you are standing in the area of effect of one of your own damaging spells. You are unaffected by the spell's direct effects.

Psychic Conversion: Once per day as an On Turn action, expend one casting slot to remove one point of accrued System Strain and heal 2 hit points per level.

Restrained Casting: Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action when casting a High Magic spell. You may do so in perfect silence and without need for somatic gestures, though damage will still disrupt the casting.

Retain Sorcery: Commit Effort for the day as an On Turn action after casting a spell; it does not count against your casting limits for the day. You can use this art no more than once per day, and the stress of using it prevents you from casting another spell before the end of your next turn.

Sense Magic: Commit Effort as an Instant action; while it remains committed, you can visually perceive magical energy and get a one-sentence description of the effect of any standing magics or magical items you inspect. The ambient magical energies in most areas allow you to see clearly even in conditions of perfect darkness.

Suppress Magic: Commit Effort for the day as an On Turn action and target a visible or known magical effect within one hundred feet. The effect is suppressed as if by the ***Extirpate Arcana*** spell for 1d6 rounds plus the caster's character level. Spells cast by more powerful casters may not be successfully suppressed, as noted in the spell description. The caster can attempt to suppress an effect only once.

Swift Casting: Once per scene, you may Commit Effort for the day to turn a spell that normally requires a Main Action to cast into an On Turn action. You can cast no other spell this round and you can't use this art if you've already cast a spell this round or been injured or otherwise disqualified from casting.

Ward Allies: Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action to omit up to six allies from the effects of an area-effect spell you cast, allowing them to avoid any damage or other negative effect that would be directly produced by the spell. This does not protect them from indirect consequences, however, such as destroying the building they are standing in.

Wizard's Grandeur: Commit Effort as an On Turn action. As long as it remains Committed, you will not become dirty, sweaty, stained, or rumpled regardless of the circumstances. Noxious substances will slide off you without staining and you will remain comfortable regardless of your attire in any normal climate. You may sleep comfortably without shelter or bedding as per the privation rules on page 51.

High Mages in Other Worlds

The High Mage is a default baseline magic-user in most campaign settings, easily reflavored as the most traditional sort of wizard in a world. While they lack the specialized talents of more conceptually-focused wizards, they have arts that help them excel at using conventional magic.

High Mages have arts almost exclusively limited to manipulating spells and the energies of spellcasting. If you use them for settings where the "average wizard" is defined by a broader scope of abilities, you may wish to add some extra art options. For example, if wizards in this setting are all generally able to hurl bolts of magical force, then you might add that as an art.

Be careful not to step on the concepts of more focused wizards, however, by giving your default casters too broad a range of toys. Specialists should always have a sphere of effects only they can use.

Spells of the High Mages

Abdication of Temporal Presence Level 5

The caster and up to one visible ally per caster level briefly step outside of the conventional flow of time, the rest of the world freezing around them. These subjects can take 1d4+1 free rounds of actions, but they cannot physically affect the world or move any object they were not carrying at the time they cast the spell. Any spells the caster or other allies cast can affect only their own group, and not those entities still in the normal flow of time.

Adopt the Simulacular Visage Level 3

A brief incantation transforms one visible, willing target per caster level into a perfect simulacrum of any humanoid creature the caster has seen before, whether a specific individual or a general type. No special abilities are granted by this transformation, but the target will perfectly resemble a chosen individual, including in voice and scent. Their non-magical clothing will transform to whatever clothing is appropriate to the target, and they will gain an intuitive ability to speak and understand the target's native tongue. The spell lasts until dawn of the day after casting it, whereupon the targets and any transformed clothing revert back to their original seeming.

Apprehending the Arcane Form Level 1

The mage opens up their mind to the presence of occult energies. For fifteen minutes per character level, they are capable of seeing active magical effects, curses, enchantments, or other dweomers as colored auras or patterns of light. They may identify magical items and get a one-sentence description of their purpose or most significant powers, and may get more sophisticated answers with successful Wis/Magic skill checks at difficulties of 8 or more depending on the subtlety of the enchantment. Mages with prepared spells are visible to the caster, though which spells the subject might have prepared is not knowable. As a side effect of this spell, the ambient thaumic currents cast enough quasi-light to allow the caster to see normally even in perfect darkness.

Banishment to the Black Glass Labyrinth Level 5

Aimed at a visible point within three hundred feet, the spell affects all creatures except the caster within a ten-foot radius of the target, translating them into a lightless extradimensional maze of endlessly tall obsidian walls. The maze is infinite, featureless, and empty. Transported creatures get a Mental saving throw to end the spell, re-appearing one round after it was cast. Those who fail their save get to make an additional attempt once an hour afterwards. Creatures with five or fewer hit dice cannot attempt these saving throws and are trapped forever unless the mage is killed or ends the spell. Time passes normally while trapped, and creatures snared within may rest, fight, or starve as their situation and wills so recommends. Dead or escaped creatures appear in the nearest clear space to their original departure.

Calculation of the Evoked Servitor Level 2

This spell conjures up an intelligent familiar for the caster, one with one hit point per caster level, an AC of 14, a ground movement rate of 30' per action, saving throws the same as the caster, a +0 skill modifier, and no effective attack. The familiar always adopts the same shape for the same caster, though the initial casting can set this to any shape the caster wishes provided it's no larger than a small human. The familiar retains a telepathic connection with its creator and will obey any command it is given, including suicidal ones. It can perform any action that a competent human servant could. If the familiar is slain, it fades away, but can be called forth again by the spell. The familiar retains its memories of what happens while it's summoned, and can develop its own personality in time. The familiar remains in existence until dawn following the spell's casting or until dismissed by the caster.

Calculation of the Phantasmal Eidolon Level 4

The caster conjures up a semi-real phantasmal creature in any shape or appearance they desire, provided it is no larger than an ox. The servitor is as intelligent as a human and will obey the caster with fearless and suicidal devotion, having 4 effective hit dice, 20 hit points, AC 15, a movement rate of 30' per action, a +1 skill modifier, saves of 13+, and a +6/1d8 damage melee attack with 2/AC 15 Shock. As the creature is partly phantasmal, the damage it inflicts cannot kill a subject, but only knock them unconscious for an hour before they awaken with 1 hit point. The caster may pick one special quality for the creature when it is summoned: the ability to fly at a rate of 30'/move, the perfect duplication of a particular person they've seen, the ability to form a telepathic speech connection with the caster, or the ability to effectively use normal weaponry and armor. The servitor lasts until destroyed or the dawn after the spell is cast.

Casting Forth the Inner Eye Level 2

A pool of water, mirror, open flame, polished crystal, or other luminous or reflective surface is used to peer at a distant location. The location must either be within one hundred feet per caster level or be a location the caster has physically occupied before. The caster perceives the location as if he were standing at the targeted point with-

in it, seeing and hearing events there as if he were present. This spell cannot scry locations that have been magically warded, and scrying the same location repeatedly is hindered by the resonance created by the spell. The spell cannot perceive the same area twice within the same week, or position its target point so as to overlap a prior area with its perceptions within that time. If a target present in the area has more hit dice than the caster has levels, they get a Mental saving throw to get an uncanny sense of being watched, something that will alert those cognizant of this spell. This spell lasts until the caster performs some action other than focusing on the scrying.

Cognitive Supersession of the Inferior Orders — Level 1

The mage targets a visible, normal, non-magical animal or insect, obtaining temporary control of the beast and the ability to share its senses. The animal gains a telepathic bond with the caster, obeying any non-suicidal command and allowing the mage to perceive everything it perceives. The beast will not fight for the caster, but can perform complex actions entirely out of character for it while under the mage's control. The mage must focus to share the beast's senses, requiring a Main Action and leaving the mage unable to act physically while so focused. The spell lasts until the mage releases the beast, it is dispelled, or it is cast again.

Conjunct the Vital Viscera — Level 3

The caster renders the forms and life energy of up to one visible subject per caster level into something plastic and transferable. Hit points, poisons, and diseases can be transferred from one creature to another, if both are willing or helplessly bound, healing up to the maximum allowed hit points of the target creature. Body parts can be exchanged or gifted so long as each subject retains at least half of their original corpus. A willing target can even be absorbed into the body of another subject of the spell, disappearing into them until the spell ends or they choose to spring back out, fully-equipped. Assimilated subjects can continue to see and hear what goes on outside their carrier. A given subject can absorb up to five other human-sized targets. The spell lasts until dispelled, released, or one hour per caster level has passed, though transferred hit points or afflictions do not return to their original subject. If a subject is killed while "borrowing" another's body parts, those parts do not return.

Conjunction of the Inexorable Step — Level 2

A visible target within a hundred feet is immediately teleported to any visible, solid resting point within a half-mile, provided the target point has enough room to accept them and it is not a position of imminent physical peril. Unattended objects can be translocated by the spell, but they can be no larger than a horse. Unwilling creatures targeted by this spell may make a Mental saving throw to resist; on a success, it is the caster who is transported to the intended destination instead.

Contingent Excision of Arcana — Level 4

The caster sets up a triggered resonance of dispelling magic which may later be invoked as an Instant action. Until the next dawn, the mage may negate magic as if with an ***Extirpate Arcana*** spell as an Instant action. Once this negation is triggered, the spell ends.

The Coruscating Coffin — Level 1

A thaumic discharge is focused on a single visible creature within one hundred feet per caster level, wreathing them in a lethal mantle of crackling energy. The target suffers 1d8 damage per caster level, with a Physical save for half. NPC targets with only 1 hit die will inevitably be slain regardless of the damage done. The spell cannot be blocked by non-magical intervening barriers, provided the caster can see the target with their unaided vision.

Damnation of the Sense — Level 1

The caster targets a visible creature within two hundred feet. The target gets a Mental saving throw to resist; on a failure, one sense of the caster's choice is entirely under the caster's control for the rest of the scene, while a success leaves them bound only for the next round. Any false impression may be given, or any true one concealed, and a creature may be left effectively blinded or deafened. Distracting tactile sensations can force the victim to make a Physical saving throw in order to act each round. Blinded creatures can't make ranged attacks and roll all melee hit rolls twice, taking the worst result. If a creature thinks itself in mortal peril its excitement allows it to make a Mental save to throw off the spell at the end of each round.

The Dazzling Prismatic Hemicycle — Level 5

A blinding fan of impossible colors cascades over all targets in front of the caster in an area equal to a cone a hundred feet long and a hundred feet wide at the end. Each creature within that area must make a Physical saving throw; those who fail roll 1d6. On a 1, they are unharmed, on a 2 they collapse into a handful of dust, on a 3 they fall unconscious for an hour, on a 4 they go violently insane for the next hour and attack all around them, on a 5 they turn to stone, and on a 6 they become utterly enthralled to the caster's commands for the next hour, as if under the effect of an ***Ineluctable Shackles of Volition*** spell.

Decree of Ligneous Dissolution — Level 1

Wood, linen, cotton, rope, and other plant- or fungus-derived matter is annihilated by a wave of entropic force that washes through an area near the caster. The mage targets a point within one hundred feet per caster level and designates a number of contiguous 10-foot cubes within that area equal to or less than their caster level. All non-magical plant matter within that area immediately erodes away to dust. Enchanted objects of plant matter cannot be affected, but ordinary plant-based clothing, bows, or wooden-hafted weapons will be destroyed. If used against plant-based monsters, the spell does 1d10 damage per caster level, with a Physical save for half.

Decree of Lithic Dissolution — Level 2

Stone, earth, sod, sand, or other largely mineral material is reduced to a faint spray of fine dust by this sorcery, though metal and enchanted objects are unaffected. The caster nominates up to one contiguous 10-foot cube per caster level in a visible area within one hundred feet per caster level, causing all such stone or mineral material within the cubes to disappear. Such rapid destruction may well cause larger structures to collapse as well. If used against rock-based monsters, the spell does 1d10 damage per caster level, with a Physical save for half.

Deluge of Hell — Level 5

The caster unleashes a consuming destruction on a visible point within three thousand feet. A torrent of eldritch ruin rains down from the heavens on everything within up to a two hundred foot radius per caster level, inflicting 1d8 damage per caster level with a Physical save for half damage, and automatically killing all targets with 4 or fewer hit dice. This damage is sufficient to destroy any wooden or lightly-built stone structure and will seriously damage even fortifications. The caster can tighten the radius down to a minimum of 20 feet, but cannot be selective about targets within that area, This spell cannot be cast indoors, and is extremely hazardous to the caster; they must make a Mental saving throw on casting it or suffer a quarter of the damage inflicted, rounded up.

Disjunctive Temporal Reversion — Level 4

The caster may invoke this spell as an Instant action on any single creature within one hundred feet. Time is rolled back slightly, allowing them to replay their current round of action as if it never occurred, though all involved retain a memory of what originally happened. This spell is only useful on targets that are currently taking their round's actions; once they've finished for the round and another creature has started acting, it is too late to benefit from this spell. If the target is unwilling to roll back their action, they may make a Mental saving throw to resist the spell.

The Earth as Clay — Level 5

The caster molds the soil and stone of the land around them, raising hills, digging trenches, or forming simple structures out of extruded bedrock. Once cast, the mage may psychically mold the terrain within three hundred feet per caster level, shifting it slowly over the course of an hour to form whatever shape they desire out of it, provided the material used can actually maintain such a shape. Simple buildings and walls may be created out of bedrock or available stone, and tunnels and caves may be shaped up to 50 feet down from the caster, while hills may be raised up to 200 feet above the prevailing grade. This spell cannot work within a thousand feet of stone or earth that has been significantly worked by intelligent creatures, though the use of this spell by the same caster doesn't count as working the earth on further castings.

Evert the Inwardness — Level 4

A single visible target is selected, whereupon whatever contents that target may possess are extracted and placed in the caster's hands. If used on a cabinet, backpack, pocket, or other such container it can be no larger than an armoire, and the caster can choose whether or not to receive any particular object from inside it, being instantly appraised of its contents when the spell is cast. If used on a creature, it attempts to tear out the subject's innards; if the subject has equal or fewer hit dice than the caster, it must make a Physical save or die instantly. Whether or not it perishes, it suffers 1d10 damage per caster level, with a Physical save for half.

The Excellent Transpicuous Transformation — Level 1

The mage chooses up to one visible willing target per caster level provided they are within 100 feet, though afterwards the targets can separate freely. The targets and all they wear or carry become perfectly transparent. Missile attacks against invisible foes are largely impossible, and melee attacks against them usually suffer a -4 penalty to hit rolls. The spell lasts for up to an hour per caster level, but it breaks if a subject performs some violent motion, such as running, attacking, or casting a spell. Once broken for one subject, it breaks for all.

Exhalation of Congelating Cold — Level 3

The caster invokes a gust of deepest winter on a point within one hundred feet per level, freezing everything in a radius up to ten feet per caster level. All liquids freeze solid down to a depth of two feet and all living creatures not impervious to arctic cold must suffer 1d6 damage per two levels of the caster, with a Physical save for half damage. Those who fail their Physical saves are numbed by the cold and lose their Move action each round for the next 1d4 rounds. The frozen area warms again at the usual rate for the surrounding environment.

Extirpate Arcana — Level 2

The caster sweeps away all unwanted magical effects and enchantments within a twenty-foot radius, centered on any visible point within one hundred feet per level. If the magical effect was cast by a creature with equal or fewer hit dice or levels, the effect is negated automatically. Otherwise, a contested Int/Magic or Cha/Magic skill roll must be made, with higher-leveled caster gaining a +2 bonus on their roll and the dispeller winning any ties. This spell is not strong enough to permanently suppress standing magical effects, and requires the aforementioned contested roll to have any chance to even temporarily suppressing them. If successful, the effect is negated for 1d6 rounds. If cast on a very large enchantment, only the portion within the spell's zone of effect is suppressed.

Foresightful Apprehension — Level 3

The caster probes the near currents of fate to discern the likely immediate outcome of an action. The caster describes a particular action they or a comrade intend to presently undertake, whereupon the GM tells them what is most likely to happen in consequence within the first five minutes after the action, as the GM thinks it most probable. This spell cannot be used more than once a week on the same general topic.

The Glass Chimes of the Bamboo Terrace — Level 3

This spell calls forth a floating set of colored glass chimes. The caster alone may strike them, producing sounds of great subtlety and penetration. The caster may allow anyone in the desired range to hear the music, or may make it inaudible to anyone save specific targets within range. Such is the expressiveness of the chimes that those who hear them may instantly understand the caster's desired message, however abstract. If the caster strikes the chimes violently as a Main Action, they may shatter them, causing a deafening clamor that does 3d6 damage to all non-deaf targets within forty feet except for the caster. The maximum range of the chimes is ten miles per caster level, and they persist until shattered or the scene ends.

The Grinding Geas — Level 4

A single visible living creature is struck with a grim geas, forcing it to comply with a particular command or else suffer a progressively-worse affliction. The caster may lay one single-sentence command on the target that is neither suicidal, indefinitely imprecise, nor likely physically impossible for them to comply with. Thus, the caster could geas a man to kill his son or never seek to harm his lord, but he could not reasonably command a peasant to become king or bind someone to forever after comply with a master's arbitrary commands. If the target then defies that geas or unreasonably delays its execution, they suffer an agonizing progressive wasting disease that will inevitably kill them in 1d6 weeks, applying -2 to their hit rolls and -1 to skill checks for each week that passes and halving their maximum hit points. If they again begin complying with the geas afterwards or if the curse is lifted, the disease halts and reverses itself at the same rate it progressed. An active target can make a Mental save to resist this spell, but they cannot if they are restrained, unconscious, or otherwise subdued. The curse lasts until dispelled or the caster lifts it.

The Howl of Light — Level 3

A flattened disc of tremendous heat, sound, and shock is triggered at a visible point within fifty feet per caster level, erupting in a twenty-foot radius eight feet in height. Everything within the area suffers 1d8 damage from flame, concussion, and sonic shock per caster level, with an Evasion save for half. If used in a space less than 40 feet in width, the explosion is channeled through adjacent spaces and passages for an additional 1d6 x 10 feet.

Imperceptible Cerebral Divulgence — Level 1

The mage focuses on a visible living creature within 100 feet per caster level. For the rest of the scene, they immediately receive an impression of the target's surface thoughts and interests, understanding them regardless of any lack of a shared language. The caster may ask one question of the target's memories per caster level, but doing so risks breaking the spell; the target can make a Mental save before answering each question and the spell ends if the save is successful. These questions can only query memories, not compel any exercise of judgment or extrapolation. This spell is very subtle in its casting, and can be invoked without any visible gestures or audible incantations.

Ineluctable Shackles of Volition — Level 1

The mage targets a visible living creature within 100 feet. The subject must immediately make a Mental saving throw at a penalty equal to the caster's Magic skill or become enthralled to the caster's will. Such victims will obey any physical commands issued by the caster, bar-

ring ones that seem suicidal or patently meant to result in their murder. The caster cannot order the creature to answer questions or perform acts that require independent judgment, nor to use non-physical abilities or spells, but it will fight for the caster or to defend its own life. Enchanted victims appear torpid and dazed, and will act only to defend themselves or satisfy their needs. The spell lasts until dispelled, or until the caster dies or releases them. Every time this spell is cast, however, all prior subjects get an immediate unmodified Mental saving throw to throw it off. If the creature has more hit dice than the caster, it gets an unmodified saving throw to end the effect the first time each day it's ordered to do something it finds strongly objectionable.

The Inexorable Imputation Level 2

The caster makes a single one-sentence statement as part of casting this spell, a process which is subtle enough to appear as no more than ordinary conversation. All who hear the caster speak within a forty-foot radius must make a Mental saving throw or come to immediately believe the statement is true unless it seems physically impossible to them or it is emotionally intolerable to believe. The listeners must be able to understand the caster's language, and the caster may exempt up to two targets per caster level from this delusion when casting the spell, so as to avoid beguiling their companions. The spell's effects linger for one hour per caster level, after which the believers will be no more persuaded of the fact than events or their own common sense would allow.

Invocation of the Invincible Citadel Level 5

The caster hurls up a magical shield that is impervious to almost all hostile powers. Unlike most sorceries, this spell can be cast as an Instant action, and immediately creates a transparent bubble of force around the caster with up to a twenty-foot radius. Entities and forces outside the bubble cannot penetrate it, and the interior remains a warm, breathable, safe environment regardless of the exterior. Those within the bubble can pass out of it, but they cannot then return within. The bubble can be dispelled by appropriate magics, but other enchantments and attacks cannot harm it, nor can magical effects or material objects pass through it from either direction. The spell lasts until the caster departs from the bubble.

The Jade Palanquin of the Faceless God Level 2

This spell calls forth a floating palanquin of ornately-carved green stone. A slim three-foot-tall statue of a faceless entity stands at the center of the platform, while four slender pillars rise at the corners, the roof and sides being draped by metallic golden cloth. The palanquin itself is twelve feet long and eight wide, with room enough for several people to sit on it. It floats at shoulder-height above the ground or a liquid surface below. It does not move of its own, but may be pulled along by even one human-sized bearer. The total burden on the palanquin cannot exceed more than two thousand pounds, or it sinks to the ground. It lasts until dusk, dawn, or until the statue of the god is struck or insulted, whichever comes first.

The Long Amber Moment Level 1

This spell may be cast as an On Turn spell, provided no other has been cast this round, and targets a single willing or helpless creature the caster is touching. The subject is shifted out of the flow of conventional time, freezing and being limned in a pale sepia light. They and all their carried possessions are rendered impervious to all non-magical harm and are frozen in temporal stasis until the spell ends or is dispelled. Enchanted creatures are quite light, counting as only four items of Encumbrance due to their unwieldiness. The spell ends when the mage releases it, or up to a maximum of one day per caster level. If cast on himself, the mage cannot end it before the full duration expires.

Mantle of Disjecting Dissection Level 2

A visible willing creature within thirty feet is surrounded by a whirl of razor-sharp energy shards. Anyone who attempt to touch the target or make a melee attack against them must make an Evasion saving throw or suffer 1d6 damage plus the caster's level before resolving their attack. The field of blades is indiscriminate and will affect even allies trying to touch the target. The blades remain as long as the target gives up a Move Action each round in order to avoid disrupting them from within, up to a maximum of one scene.

Obnubilation of the Will Level 4

This spell can only be applied to a helpless or restrained living victim, who gets a Mental saving throw to resist it and be forever after immune to its effects. On a failure, the target becomes hopelessly subject to the caster via a series of psychic fetters, obediently carrying out their will. The target must be able to understand the caster's wishes, but will obey them to the best of its intelligence, capability, and initiative. They must make a Mental saving throw to resist performing even suicidal acts. The spell lasts until it is dispelled or the caster releases the target. A caster can have no more creatures under this spell than twice their level or hit dice; if this number is exceeded, the earliest thrall is freed first. Creatures under the effect of the *Obnubilation of the Will* display numerous small tics and magically-compelled quirks of behavior that may provoke puzzlement in casual observers and will give away the mental influence entirely to an onlooker with at least Magic-0 skill who can observe them for at least an hour.

The Ochre Sigil of Juxtaposition — Level 4

This spell is cast in two parts, each of which must be cast separately within a mile of each other, though such paired use counts as only a single spell slot. The first casting inscribes a palm-sized seal of ruddy brown radiance on the ground beneath the caster. The second casting will immediately switch the caster and all creatures and objects within ten feet with all creatures and objects within ten feet of the sigil. The caster may refrain from swapping certain targets as they wish. Only portable objects are swapped; any object too heavy for the caster to lift or secured in place remains unmoved. Unwilling targets get no saving throw if they have four or less hit dice; others can make a Mental save. Unused sigils dissipate in a day.

Open the High Road — Level 5

The caster carves open a metadimensional gate between their present location and a preset target point. Attuning the target point requires an hour of effort, after which this spell will open an opaque portal to it from a distance of up to one hundred miles per caster level. The portal is large enough to admit a cart and wagon and will remain open for up to one minute per caster level, ending when they pass through it. The gate is one-way only, from caster to target. Only living creatures and the vehicles they drive and objects they carry may pass through; atmosphere and other environments remain on the far side of the gate. Only one target point may be prepared for this spell at a time, and there is a 1-in-10 chance for every casting that the real destination is 1d100 miles in a random direction, discovered only after the portal is used.

Phantasmal Mimesis — Level 1

The mage creates a phantasmal seeming at a visible location within 100 feet per caster level. The illusion can occupy a number of 10-foot cubes equal to the caster's level and can include visual, audible, olfactory, and even tactile elements. If onlookers have no reason to believe the illusion is false, they will unconsciously move and perceive so as to conform to its apparent physical qualities, halting before walls, reeling from imagined blows, and seeing their clothing burnt by phantasmal flames. The illusion will behave and act on its own in accordance with the caster's intentions for it, but it cannot go more than a hundred feet from where it was conjured. Phantasmal monsters fight with the caster's hit bonus, do 1d8 damage, have AC 10, and vanish if struck. There can be no more than one active illusionary attacker per two caster levels. Foes brought to zero hit points fall unconscious and wake up ten minutes later with 1 hit point. Creatures convinced the illusion is false can make a Mental saving throw each round to reject its psychic influences, becoming immune to its effects. The illusion lasts until dispelled, the caster drops it, or this spell is cast again.

Prudentially Transient Abnegation of Life — Level 2

This spell may be cast as an Instant action, even if another spell has been cast the same round, and targets either the caster or a willing visible target. It can only be used in immediate response to an injury that reduces the target to zero hit points. When it does, the target suffers dramatic and ostentatiously obvious death, with mortal blows cleaving them asunder or gorily butchering them. They are dead to all mundane or magical examination. Up to two hours later however, at the target's discretion, the various remains of the target flow back together and restore their body with two hit points per caster level and two additional System Strain points gained. If the target's remains are intentionally scattered widely, incinerated, or entirely eaten, however, they cannot revive. The subject is aware of their surroundings while "dead".

Phobic Storm — Level 3

A wave of numbing terror sweeps over all enemies of the caster within forty feet. They must immediately make a Morale check at a -1 penalty, with failure causing flight. Those who succeed at the check suffer one point of damage per caster level from demoralization and despair, with those brought to zero hit points instead regaining one hit point and fleeing. This spell has no effect on creatures that feel no fear or that have a Morale of 12.

Pierce the Pallid Gate — Level 4

The caster opens a short-ranged spatial rift between two points within one hundred feet per level, provided they can see or have physically occupied both points at some prior time and provided the two points are at least twenty feet apart. The rift forms a gateway that connects the two points, one large enough to drive a cart through, and allows subjects on either side to see through and pass through the gate. Ambient environmental qualities such as liquids or atmospheres will not pass through the portal; only intentionally-directed creatures and objects will transfer. Once the creature has passed through a portal, it cannot pass through again until its next turn. The portal remains open for up to one round per caster level, but can be shut as an Instant action by the caster. Creatures partially in a rift when it closes are spat out on the far side.

Resounding Temporal Echo — Level 2

The caster imbues one visible ally per caster level with a burst of tremendous speed as their localized time begins to flow more rapidly. For 1d4+1 rounds, all subjects get an extra Main Action during their turn. This Main Action may not be used to cast spells or use arts. This spell severely taxes those who take advantage of it, adding 1 System Strain for each round in which the recipient takes the bonus action.

Scorn the Fetters of Earth — Level 3

The caster and up to one visible ally per caster level are briefly granted the ability to move in three dimensions, being able to walk and run upward into the air as easily as along flat ground. For the rest of the scene, those affected can move in such a way, remaining suspended in the air after their movement for the round. When the spell ends, either naturally or upon being dispelled, all affected targets float gently to the ground. Optionally, the caster can instead use this spell on one visible flying creature per caster level, which must make a Physical save at a penalty equal to the caster's Magic skill or be forced to land as they had fallen half the distance they had descended. For the rest of the scene, such creatures remain grounded and unable to fly.

Sigil of Aeolian Auctoritas — Level 4

A fierce gust of wind may be conjured in a line a hundred feet long and thirty feet wide. All creatures of man-size or smaller must make Physical saves or be bowled over and blown back thirty feet, losing their next round's Main Action and suffering 1d6 damage. Light wooden constructions or similar structures are flattened by the wind. If used outdoors, the spell can instead control the local weather, transforming the quarter-mile around the caster into any climate found normally at that location at any point during the year. The spell cannot summon a tornado or other extreme weather, but it can call rain and conventional storms sufficient to cause flooding in areas prone to it. The gust of wind is instantaneous, but the weather change lasts for one hour per caster level before reverting to its natural state.

The Torment of Tumefaction — Level 3

A single visible living creature is smote with a hideous curse of torment. Boils erupt all over their body, blood weeps from their orifices, tumors engorge their flesh, and all of their hair falls out almost instantaneously. If they perform any vigorous physical action save movement they incur two points of damage per caster level from the effects of the curse, damage which can be suffered no more than once per round by a target. A creature may spend its Main Action to attempt a Physical save to throw off the curse and return to a glabrous normalcy, but on a failure, the curse remains for the rest of the scene. If the creature has fewer hit dice than the caster has levels, a single failed save means the curse lasts indefinitely, until dispelled or until the caster releases them.

Touch of Elucidating Intangibility — Level 3

The caster touches a solid non-magical barrier when casting this spell. A 10 foot cube of the barrier then becomes perfectly transparent on the caster's side, allowing them to see and hear whatever lies on the other side as if it were well-lit and visible. Optionally, the caster may make the barrier insubstantial for one round per caster level, allowing anyone to pass or shoot through it from either side. The barrier always appears solid and opaque from the other side, even while the caster is peering through. If someone is caught within the barrier when it becomes solid again, they're spat out on the nearest clear side and suffer 2d10 damage. The spell ends when the caster ceases to touch the barrier or immediately after it has been made insubstantial.

Vallation of Specified Exclusion — Level 3

The caster must form some sort of line as part of this spell's invocation, either with dropped powders or a trace drawn in the dirt or a more permanent inlay into a floor. In extremis, the caster can make such a line as part of a Move action, tracing it out or scattering powder as they go. The line itself may be no longer than twenty feet per caster level, and may be straight or curved as the caster wishes. Once it has been drawn, this spell may be cast, empowering the line with the ability to ward off a particular target and prevent them or their powers from crossing or being made to cross the line, as if it were a physical wall. The caster can nominate any kind of target to be warded that could be distinguished without need for knowing their thoughts, such as "humans" or "non-humans" or "men wearing the livery of the baron". The barrier extends a hundred feet upward and ten feet downward and blocks any attack or magical power used by those warded. If the excluded creatures are attacked or targeted by powers from the other side of the barrier, however, the entire field shatters. The barrier lasts until dispelled, the caster drops it, or until one hour has passed per caster level.

Velocitous Imbuement — Level 1

Unlike most spells, this one may be cast as a simple On Turn action, targeting up to one visible willing creature per caster level within one hundred feet. Enchanted creatures become incredibly fleet of foot, doubling their usual ground movement rate and becoming capable of running up walls and across ceilings without falling, provided they end their round upright on a navigable surface. They may also move away from melee opponents without needing to make a *Fighting Withdrawal* to avoid a parting attack, and may pass through and around armed foes who do not completely physically block their path. The spell lasts for the remainder of the scene and adds 1 System Strain to those who take advantage of it.

The Verdant Vallation — Level 2

A vast wall of thick, heavy vines and other plant life blooms from a visible point within one hundred feet per caster level. The wall is up to twenty feet high and three feet thick and runs for as much as twenty feet in width per caster level. The vine wall can be shaped as the caster wishes within the spell's area of effect, so long as it's contiguous, and may be laid horizontally if a bridge or roof is desired. Enemies must inflict five hit points of damage per caster level to cut a man-sized hole in the vines, and they must be using weapons or means that could actually cut through a wooden wall to do any meaningful harm. The vines may be optionally covered in long, vicious thorns to discourage climbing, inflicting 2d6 damage on any creature who tries to climb over it. If the vine wall is summoned from earth that could plausibly support plant life, it remains until dispelled or until it dies naturally. If called from bare stone or other infertile soils, it withers away to dust at the end of the scene.

Visitation of the Clement Clime — Level 2

The caster and up to three visible allies per caster level are shielded from the excesses of hostile elemental energies, becoming immune to mundane extremes of heat and cold and natural acids or electrical discharges. Against magical harm of this nature, they automatically take only half the damage they normally would, or none if they make a successful Physical saving throw. This spell lasts for one hour per caster level.

Wardpact Invocation — Level 1

This spell may be cast in two different forms. If it targets a creature within 200 feet, the target becomes partially immune to physical weapons; any weapon hit on them requires the attacker make a successful Physical save or the hit is negated. This effect lasts for one round per two caster levels, rounded up, and can't target the caster. If it targets a visible weapon within two hundred feet, that weapon is rendered entirely harmless and unable to inflict damage for the rest of the scene, with no saving throw. The spell may only affect a given target or weapon once per scene and natural body weapons aren't affected.

The Wind of the Final Repose — Level 1

The mage designates a visible point within two hundred feet. A silent, invisible burst of soporific influence erupts from that point, targeting all living creatures within a twenty-foot radius. All such targets with 4 or fewer hit dice within that area fall unconscious instantly, and can be roused only by damage or by a Main Action used to kick them awake. If not roused, they revive at the end of the scene. Entities that do not sleep are immune to this spell.

Elementalists

The long eons of the Legacy have ravaged the natural laws of Latter Earth. Simple properties such as electrical conductivity, steam pressure, chemical reactions, and other qualities now no longer behave as they once did and react in unpredictable and unreliable ways. Sages have demonstrated how some physical reactions that should be necessary for basic human life no longer function outside of living organisms, suggesting that entire swaths of fundamental reality are being supported as special-case exceptions by the power of the Legacy.

The intellectual ancestors of the Elementalists attempted to deal with this chaos by returning to the basics; not the reactions of combustion or the elemental chemicals, but the classical elements of earth, fire, wind, and water. These substances were thought to be the key to the unfathomable changes of the Legacy, as they were simple enough to avoid the decay of complex machines and devices, yet complex enough to behave in a logical way rather than as the chaotic matter of subtler chemical compounds.

Elementalists thus seek to use New Magic to control these elements, adapting fragments of High Magic spells and dimly-understood aspects of the Legacy to control their creation and manifestation. By using the classical elements as subjects for their magic, the Elementalists believe that they can eventually understand the logic of the Legacy, and perhaps even learn to control it, enforcing a new, stable implementation of natural law.

Of course, not all Elementalists are fired by this high zeal. Many simply find the practical uses of flame, stone, water, and air to be beneficial for their own ends. The fiery rebuke of a master Elementalist can scourge whole towns, and even less talented mages can work wonders in helping others deal with physical obstacles.

Some Elementalists learn at the feet of wizened masters, while others belong to formal schools that teach the art for the benefit of their patrons. A PC might be one such student, or some scientist-sage who has developed their arts in pursuit of some deeper understanding of the Legacy and its impact on physical laws. Outside of their formal organizations, Elementalists often find much to discuss in their occult studies, though differences of opinion regarding the "correct" operation of unaltered reality can sometimes cause bloody disputes.

Elementalist Benefits

All Elementalists gain Magic as a bonus skill, acquiring it at level-0, or level-1 if was already level-0. A firm grounding in the arcane science of Latter Earth is necessary to master their particular arts.

Elementalists can prepare and cast High Magic spells in addition to the New Magic spells specific to Elementalists. Some of the latter are given on the following pages, but others doubtless exist. As usual for spellcasters, Elementalists can't cast spells or use arts while armored or holding a shield.

Elementalists are not as talented at general High Magic research as High Mages are, but their studies still bear fruit in time. Each time they advance a level, they can pick a new High Magic spell or a New Magic Elementalist spell to add to their spellbook. They must be able to cast the spell to add it to their selection.

Elementalists gain the ***Elemental Resilience*** and ***Elemental Sparks*** arts as part of their basic training, and may pick one additional art from the adjacent list. Further arts are learned as they advance in character level, as given in the tables below. Once chosen, an art cannot be changed.

Full Elementalist

Level	Max Level	Spells Cast	Spells Prepared	Arts Gained
1	1	1	3	Elemental Resilience, Elemental Sparks, and Any One
2	1	1	3	Any One
3	2	2	4	
4	2	2	5	Any One
5	3	3	6	
6	3	3	7	Any One
7	4	4	8	
8	4	4	9	Any One
9	5	5	10	
10	5	6	12	Any One

Partial Elementalist

Level	Max Level	Spells Cast	Spells Prepared	Arts Gained
1	1	1	2	Elemental Resilience, Elemental Sparks, and Any One
2	1	1	3	
3	1	1	3	Any One
4	1	2	4	
5	2	2	5	
6	2	3	6	Any One
7	2	3	7	
8	2	3	7	
9	3	4	8	Any One
10	3	4	9	

Arts of the Elementalists

Elementalist Effort is calculated as usual, with each PC's maximum being equal to one plus their Magic skill level plus the better of their Intelligence or Charisma modifiers. Partial Elementalists have a score one point lower than this, albeit not less than one.

All Elementalists learn the ***Elemental Resilience*** and ***Elemental Sparks*** arts as part of their basic training. Other Arts may be chosen normally afterwards.

Elemental Resilience: You are unharmed by mundane extremes of cold or by heat less than that of a furnace. You suffer only half damage from magical or extremely intense flame or frost attacks.

Elemental Sparks: You can conjure petty amounts of flame, water, ice, stone, or wind, sufficient to do small tricks, chill drinks, light candles, or do other minor things. Conjured substances last no longer than a scene, and conjured water cannot lastingly quench thirst. This art cannot actually be useful in solving a problem or overcoming a challenge more than once per game session.

Other Elementalist Arts

Beckoned Deluge: Commit Effort for the scene as a Main Action to conjure a considerable amount of water at a visible point within fifty feet per caster level. This water is sufficient to drench one 10-foot cube of matter per character level, making non-magical bowstrings useless, extinguishing flames, and inflicting 1d6 damage per caster level on fiery supernatural creatures. This water persists indefinitely after its conjuration and is sufficient to hydrate ten people per caster level.

Earthsight: Commit Effort for the scene as an On Turn action. For the rest of the scene, you can see the outlines of solid objects even in perfect darkness, and can peer through a number of feet of earth or stone equal to your character level.

Elemental Blast: Commit Effort for the scene as a Main Action to hurl a blast of some elemental force at a visible target within fifty feet per character level. The attack is made with Magic as the combat skill, Int, Cha, or Dex as the attribute, and a bonus to hit equal to your character level. It is not hindered by melee foes. On a hit, the attack does 1d6 damage plus your character level and attribute mod. The blast may have collateral effects on objects in the case of hurled fire or a torrent of pressurized water, but any conjured matter vanishes at the end of the round.

Flamesight: Commit Effort as an On Turn action. While the Effort remains Committed, you can see thermal gradients sufficient to distinguish surfaces and living creatures, even in perfect darkness. Optionally, you may cause your own eyes to cast a light sufficient to illuminate your surroundings clearly out to a range of 30 feet.

Pavis of Elements: Commit Effort as an On Turn action to conjure an elemental barrier around yourself. The barrier improves your Armor Class by +4 and remains as long as the Effort remains Committed. This bonus stacks with other effects, but cannot increase AC above 18, regardless of the combinations.

Petrifying Stare: Commit Effort for the day as a Main Action and target a visible creature. The creature must make a Physical save or become partially petrified, losing its Move action for a number of rounds equal to half your caster level, rounded up. Flying creatures are forced to land by this art and swimming creatures will inevitably sink to the bottom.

Rune of Destruction: Commit Effort for the day as a Main Action and target an adjacent solid surface. A glowing rune the size of a handprint forms on the surface and persists for one hour per caster level. Any creature who gets within two feet of the rune will trigger it, causing it to explode in a five-foot radius with an elemental force of your choice and suffering 2d6 damage plus your caster level. Creatures already within five feet of the rune when it is laid will not trigger it until they re-enter the area, nor will the caster trigger their own runes. Runes cannot overlap their areas of effect.

Steps of Air: Commit Effort for the scene as an On Turn action and target a visible ally; for one round per caster level, the target can fly at their usual movement rate. If the art ends while they are still in the air, they descend harmlessly to the ground. This art may also be used as an Instant action to negate falling damage for any single target.

Stunning Shock: Commit Effort for the day as a Main Action and target a visible creature within fifty feet per caster level. The target creature must be wearing or holding at least a pound worth of conductive metal or be considerably dampened. An electrical bolt leaps from the caster to stun the target, causing them to lose their next Main Action. A Physical saving throw can mitigate the effect, causing the target to lose their Move action instead of their Main. A creature can be targeted only once per scene by this.

Thermal Shield: Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to immediately negate one instance of fire or frost damage to any single visible ally or object. This defense lasts only long enough to nullify the single instance of damage.

Elementalists in Other Worlds

The wizard who specializes in a particular variety of elemental magic is a familiar fantasy trope. If you want to create such a specialist in a different campaign setting, you can do so by giving the Elementalist a few more art and spell options specifically flavored for that element and forbidding them from taking arts or spells related to other elements.

Elementalist New Magic

As with other specialist traditions, the Elementalists have been able to devise a number of New Magic spells in line with their particular specialties. Only Elementalists may learn or cast these sorceries.

Aqueous Harmony — Level 1

The elementalist and up to a dozen allies are charmed with powers of water-breathing, a tolerance for the pressure and cold of the deeps, and the ability to see through water as if it were well-lit air. Ensorceled beings may move freely while in the water at their usual movement rate and their attacks and projectile weapons are not hindered by the medium, nor are their possessions soaked or damaged. The spell lasts for one hour per caster level, but will not naturally end so long as a subject is still at least partially submerged. Only the caster or magical dispelling can stop it under those circumstances.

Flame Scrying — Level 1

The elementalist becomes aware of the approximate locations of all open flames within thirty feet per caster level. They may choose one of those flames as a focus for the scrying, allowing them to see and hear everything around the flame as if they were present. The spell's duration lasts for as long as the elementalist remains motionlessly focused on it; during this duration, they may switch their focus between the various flames in range as they wish.

Elemental Favor — Level 1

The elementalist makes a direct appeal to a non-magical mass of earth, stone, water, flame, or air no larger than a ten-foot cube. At the end of the round, the mass will move or reshape itself within that space as the elementalist requests, maintaining its new form until the end of the scene. If its new shape is one that is stable without magical help, it can be told to remain in it after the spell is finished.

Elemental Spy — Level 1

The elementalist enchants a stone, ounce of liquid, flame no smaller than a candleflame, or a particular plume of smoke or incense. For one day per level, so long as the charmed object is not destroyed, dispersed, or consumed, they can as a Main Action see and listen to anything around the object as if they were standing there.

Boreal Wings — Level 2

The elementalist chooses a visible ally within one hundred feet; the target becomes capable of swift and easy aerial travel, flying at twice their usual movement rate. If the spell ends or is dispelled while aloft, the target descends gently to the earth. This spell lasts for one scene, though casters of fifth level or more can make it last an hour, and those of eighth level or more can make it last until dawn or dusk, whichever comes next.

The Burrower Below — Level 2

A passage is carved through natural stone or earth, forming a tunnel up to twenty feet long per caster level and up to ten feet wide and tall. The caster can cause the earth to compress and pack itself so as to stabilize the tunnel even in very sandy or burdened soil, or they can allow it to collapse naturally if burdened by some large structure or unstable surroundings. This spell can function against worked stone, but the length of the tunnel is much shorter, being only two feet per level. Magical stone or earth cannot be altered by this spell. The caster has basic control over the direction and interior features of the tunnel, and can form stairs or other simple structures within it.

Flame Without End — Level 2

A sample of flame no larger than the caster is made effectively eternal. It no longer consumes the object it burns, though it can still be used to burn or heat other things, and it resists all extinguishing save being buried or wholly immersed in water. The elementalist can temporarily extinguish it at will. A number of such flames can be created equal to the elementalist's level; beyond that, special ingredients and fuels are needed that cost 500 silver pieces per flame. If used as a weapon, it adds +2 damage to a successful hit, albeit nothing to Shock. The flame lasts until dispelled, extinguished, or the elementalist releases it.

Pact of Stone and Sea — Level 2

The elementalist chooses earth, water, fire, or wind when casting this spell and selects a visible target to be affected. For the rest of the scene, the target is immune to injury caused by mundane manifestations of that substance; stone weapons don't harm them, water doesn't drown them, fire doesn't burn them, and wind doesn't topple them. This affects secondary effects of the material as well; a fire-pacted mage couldn't be boiled in a pot, and an earth-pacted one won't be suffocated if buried alive.

Elemental Vallation — Level 3

A wall of a chosen churning elemental force can be called up by the elementalist. The barrier is ten feet long per character level, with a height of ten feet and a thickness of one foot. The barrier must rest on solid ground but may be bent or shaped as desired so long as no part of it

is more than two hundred feet from the caster. Earthen walls are impervious to anything but mining-appropriate tools or rock-shattering strength, taking 20 HP of damage to knock a man-sized hole in them. Fire walls inflict 3d6 damage plus the elementalist's level on anyone who passes through them. Water walls spin and hurl creatures of ox-size or less who pass through them, ejecting them at a random point on the far side of the wall and doing 2d6 damage from the buffeting. Air walls are invisible, inaudible, and twenty feet in height; those who cross them suffer 1d6 plus the elementalist's level in electrical damage. The walls vanish at the end of the scene.

Like the Stones — Level 3

The elementalist charges their physical shape with the qualities of a chosen element for the rest of the scene. In all cases, they need not breathe and become immune to poisons and diseases not already present in them. If stone, they automatically stabilize at zero hit points and ignore the first three points of damage from any source of harm. If water, they can pass through any aperture a mouse could get through. If air, they can fly at their usual movement rate and gain a +4 Armor Class bonus against ranged attacks. If fire, they inflict 1d6 damage to all creatures in melee range at the start of their turn each round and become immune to heat damage.

Wind Walking — Level 3

A visible target creature and their possessions are briefly transformed into a misty, insubstantial cloud. Only sources of harm that could conceivably disrupt a cloud of mist can harm them, and until the spell's end they may pass freely into any area that a vapor could reach. They may move freely in all three dimensions at their normal movement rate, though they cannot physically manipulate objects. The spell lasts until the end of the scene or until the target or the caster choose to end it.

Calcifying Scourge — Level 4

A visible target within one hundred feet must make a Physical saving throw or be turned to stone. Any size of living creature may be so transmuted, though inanimate objects larger than a cart cannot. Objects being held or worn by someone else get a Physical saving throw made by their user. The calcification remains until dispelled or the caster undoes the magic, but if the object or creature is damaged in the meanwhile, it may end up being harmed or killed on its restoration. If the Physical saving throw is made successfully by a creature, the target is temporarily slowed, losing its Move action for the next 1d6 rounds.

Elemental Guardian — Level 4

The elementalist imbues a human-sized mass of earth, water, fire, or air with a crude awareness and an eagerness to defend them. Whatever the substance used, it now has 4 HD, AC 15, a Move of 40'/action, a +1 skill bonus, saves of 13+, Instinct 0, Morale 12, and a melee attack of +6/1d10 with no Shock. If called from earth, it has 6 hit dice, albeit its other stats don't change. If called from fire, it does 5/- Shock damage. If summoned from water, it has an AC of 18, and if called from air, it can fly at its usual movement rate. It has a human degree of intelligence, can communicate with others and manipulate objects, and serves with suicidal devotion. Only one elemental guardian can be summoned at any one time, and if destroyed, a new one cannot be called that same scene. A guardian persists until destroyed or until the dawn after they have been summoned.

Fury of the Elements — Level 5

A combination of molten rock, searing pyroclastic winds, and superheated steam erupts forth to ravage a chosen target point within two hundred feet per caster level. The cataclysmic ruin smites everything within thirty feet of the target point for 10d6 damage, destroying all conventional structures. The zone of devastation then moves 1d6x10 feet in a random direction at the start of the next round, blasting everything in its path. The zone will continue to wander in this fashion for 1d6 rounds in total before dying out. The molten remnants of the spell remain after this duration, a hazard for whomever enters the area for the rest of the day.

Tremors of the Depths — Level 5

The elementalist calls up a deep, rolling tremor from within the earth, centering it on a visible point and affecting all structures in a radius of up to five hundred feet. This spell's effects build slowly, requiring five minutes to fully manifest, but they can successfully topple or destroy any structures, tunnels, or caves within the affected area unless such structures are magically reinforced. The effects are negated if the spell is dispelled within a minute after it was cast; after that, it's too late to stop the effect.

Healers

Every culture has need of physicians and menders, and it is no surprise that many of them would turn to magic for this need. Healers are those adepts of curative sorcery who focus on mending wounds, purging diseases, and preserving the lives of living creatures. They are very rarely the only medical specialists in their native society, but their remarkable powers are in high demand wherever they are found.

Healers do not practice High Magic or other forms of conventional spellcasting. Instead, their training revolves around specific techniques for mending damaged living tissue and the neutralization of diseases and toxins. Conventional medical treatments that revolve around the germ theory of disease and ancient commonplaces of physiology aren't always reliable or valid in the lands of Latter Earth, and so magical techniques are sometimes necessary to achieve what antibiotics or surgical intervention could accomplish in a former age.

Not every aspiring physician is cut out to be a Healer. Channeling the magical energies requires the right traits, and those without these native gifts can't hope to be trained successfully. Those with the right magical potential can look forward to a position of respect and reward from most societies.

The actual training of a Healer is often left to a master-apprentice relationship, with likely candidates serving out a period of instruction and field practice before being freed to make their own way. Richer or better-organized societies might establish special schools for Healer candidates, often patronized by the very nobility they will later be expected to serve.

Religious orders are another major source of Healers, as many monasteries and seminaries are ideally positioned to identify compatible candidates early in their careers. In some nations, the very role of a Healer is considered a fundamentally religious one, with the powers they wield being special gifts of their patron deity. Such Healers are often called upon to act as priests as well.

Partial Healer

Level	Arts Gained
1	Healing Touch and Any One
2	Any One
3	
4	Any One
5	Any One
6	Any One
7	
8	Any One
9	
10	Any One

Healer Benefits

The Healer class exists only as a partial Mage class, to be taken by an Adventurer along with another partial class. Thus, a Partial Warrior/Partial Healer might be a grizzled combat medic, a Partial Expert/Partial Healer might be an erudite physician gifted in both mundane and magical healing methods, and a Partial Necromancer/Partial Healer might be an adept of life and death.

All Healers gain Heal as a bonus skill, acquiring it at level-0, or level-1 if they already have it at level-0. A basic grounding in mundane healing techniques is necessary in order to learn their more sophisticated magical arts.

Healers do not learn how to cast spells. Instead, they focus on their special arcane healing arts. Wielding these arts usually requires nothing more than touching the target and concentrating on the desired effect, and the process is direct and simple enough to perform even when burdened by armor or carrying a shield. These arts are usually quite subtle, and don't produce visible or audible indications of their use.

A Healer may have certain social advantages in some situations, depending on the culture and their own traditions. Even in the roughest surroundings, a proven Healer can likely expect hospitality and decent treatment in exchange for their efforts in treating the innumerable pains and augues of their hosts. A famous Healer can often impose on the powerful in exchange for curing some noble's persistent or difficult case of illness.

At first level, a Healer gains the ***Healing Touch*** art and can pick one more of their choice. As they advance in levels afterwards, they can learn new arts. Once chosen, an art is permanent and cannot be exchanged.

Arts of the Healers

Healer Effort is calculated with Heal rather than Magic, with each PC's maximum being equal to their Heal skill level plus the better of their Intelligence or Charisma modifiers, to a minimum of one point.

All Healers are trained in the ***Healing Touch*** art, but may develop other techniques with time.

Healing Touch: Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action; for the rest of the scene, you may heal 2d6 damage plus your Heal skill to a touched ally as a Main Action. This healing adds 1 System Strain to the target each time it is applied.

Other Healer Arts

Empowered Healer: Your ***Healing Touch*** becomes more powerful, adding your level to any healing.

Facile Healer: Your ***Healing Touch*** ability is improved;, and you no longer need to Commit Effort to activate it.

Far Healer: Your ***Healing Touch*** ability is improved, and may be used on a visible target within ten feet per character level.

Final Repose: Target a visible living creature and Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action. For the rest of the scene, they take a Physical saving throw penalty equal to your Heal skill. If they are reduced to zero hit points before the end of the scene, they die with no chance for stabilization or revival.

Healer's Eye: Commit Effort as an On Turn action; while the Effort remains committed, you can use a Main Action to visually detect diseases and poisons, diagnose creatures flawlessly, perceive their physiology, and learn their current hit point totals. As a side effect, you can detect living creatures by sight regardless of available light or obscuring mists.

Limb Restoration: Only expert healers can master this art, which cannot be learned earlier than 8th level. You must Commit all remaining Effort for the day, a minimum of one point, to regenerate a missing limb or organ for a target you are touching, or efface some dramatic scar or other physical debility. The target's System Strain is automatically maximized.

Purge Ailment: Commit Effort for the day as a Main Action. An ally you are touching is cured of one poison or disease. Creatures killed by poison can be revived by this art if it is used within six minutes of death. Magical poisons and diseases may require a Wis/Heal or Cha/Heal skill check against a difficulty of 8 or more. At seventh level, you need only Commit Effort for the scene to use this ability.

Refined Restoration: You and up to a dozen allies you tend before they sleep will all lose 2 System Strain from a good night's rest instead of 1.

Revive the Fallen: Only expert healers are capable of mastering this art, which cannot be learned earlier than 8th level. Commit Effort for the day as a Main Action to revive a recently-slain living creature that you are touching. This ability must be used on a target within one minute per caster level of their death, and will not work on a corpse that has been dismembered, incinerated, or otherwise disjected. The target's System Strain is automatically maximized and they'll be unconscious for twenty-four hours after their restoration before awakening with 1 hit point.

Swift Healer: Your ***Healing Touch*** ability is improved, and may be used as an On Turn action once per day per character level, though not more than once per scene on any given target.

The Healer's Knife: Your ***Healing Touch*** ability is altered, and may be used to inflict damage to a living target instead of healing it. The damage done is equivalent to the healing that would normally be done, albeit you receive 1 System Strain instead of the target. Using this power in melee requires a successful Punch attack with a hit bonus equal to your Heal skill, with the damage added to any done by the blow, or simply touching an unwary target. Arts that modify your ***Healing Touch*** don't aid this power.

Tireless Vigor: Commit Effort; while it remains Committed your need to eat, drink, breathe, or sleep does not grow further. You may exert yourself tirelessly and regenerate 1 lost hit point per hour.

Vital Furnace: Your tremendous life energy can be used to instantly regenerate any non-mortal wound you have received. Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action to negate the damage from an injury you just received that did not reduce you to zero hit points. Aside from this ability, you automatically stabilize if reduced to zero hit points and awaken ten minutes later with 1 hit point. This ability cannot undo damage you intentionally inflict on yourself via some power or magical exchange.

Healers in Other Worlds

The classic "cleric" or "priest" concept could be replicated by using Healer in conjunction with Warrior for the armored fighting-cleric or a different flavor of Mage for the robed spellcasting priest.

The former might pine for some of the wider variety of spells often given to such clerics in other role-playing games, but a GM might be best off just adding the most characteristic of those powers or deity-specific gifts as optional arts the PC can pick.

However it's decided, a GM should be careful not to make magical healing the only source of quick hit point recovery in their campaign unless they want every party to require a Healer or the equivalent. The first aid rules on page 48 should allow a party without a Healer to still recover after a fight, even if it's less efficient than a magical healer and not practical for use mid-combat.

Necromancers

The Legacy has changed much in the eons that have passed since humanity first obtained its power, but death remains the common fate of all. Whether king or peasant, all must find the grave in time.

Necromancers are those sorcerers who are not satisfied with this finality. Through study of ancient records and the examination of the countless fragments of healing magic and restorative arcana that still persist in the Latter Earth, they have concluded that at one point in the past, humanity was immortal. The Legacy once preserved all the children of Earth from their final dissolution, and only through the malice of the Outsiders and some unfathomable historical change was this blessed state ever undone.

Necromancers are determined to restore this lost immortality. Some seek it only for their own selfish purposes, while others wish to make war on Death itself and drive it out of the world once more. The ancient powers that once granted every human a perpetual life of vigor, health, and happiness must be renewed once more, and all the corruptions and bars that banished that state must be undone.

The path to this immortality is regrettably laden with corpses. Only by studying death itself and examining the intricate relationship between the Legacy and unliving flesh can the deeper secrets of life be unlocked. Some zealous Necromancers are inclined to enlist unwilling "volunteers" for this work, while others content themselves with the naturally dead and the remains of those who cannot object.

Skilled Necromancers are able to imbue corpses with a semblance of life, evoking ancient Legacy protocols to call back shadows of intellect or echoes of former identity. Actual full restoration of the long-dead is considered the hallmark of true arch-mastery of this tradition, but only a Legate-Necromancer is ever apt to have that kind of power.

Unsurprisingly, Necromancers have a checkered reputation among people. Their life-prolonging research is eagerly sought by the rich and powerful, but also often outlawed on the basis of their supposed depredations and the worries of anxious heirs. Some more broad-minded or amoral polities allow Necromancers to operate openly, but usually a considerable amount of discretion is necessary.

A Necromancer PC was likely taught in secret by a mentor who either posed as a High Mage or kept his powers entirely hidden. Some nations do have actual open orders and schools of necromancy, however, though such organizations tend to be havens for the worst impulses of the tradition, where the most ruthless and savage of sorcerers rise highest in the hierarchy.

Necromancer Benefits

All Necromancers gain Magic as a bonus skill, acquiring it at level-0, or level-1 if was already level-0. The arts of life and death require a proper education in the occult to practice correctly.

Necromancers can prepare and cast High Magic spells in addition to the New Magic spells specific to Necromancers. Some of the latter are given on the following pages, but others doubtless exist. As usual for spellcasters, Necromancers can't cast spells or use arts while armored or holding a shield.

Necromancers are not as talented at general High Magic research as High Mages are, but their studies still bear fruit in time. Each time they advance a level, they can pick a new High Magic spell or a New Magic Necromancer spell to add to their spellbook. They must be able to cast the spell to add it to their selection.

Necromancers can pick an art specific to their tradition from the adjacent list. Further arts are learned as they advance in character level, as given in the tables below. Once chosen, an art cannot be changed.

Full Necromancers

Level	Max Level	Spells Cast	Spells Prepared	Arts Gained
1	1	1	3	Any One
2	1	1	3	Any One
3	2	2	4	
4	2	2	5	Any One
5	3	3	6	
6	3	3	7	Any One
7	4	4	8	
8	4	4	9	Any One
9	5	5	10	
10	5	6	12	Any One

Partial Necromancers

Level	Max Level	Spells Cast	Spells Prepared	Arts Gained
1	1	1	2	Any One
2	1	1	3	
3	1	1	3	Any One
4	1	2	4	
5	2	2	5	
6	2	3	6	Any One
7	2	3	7	
8	2	3	7	
9	3	4	8	Any One
10	3	4	9	

Arts of the Necromancers

Necromancer Effort is calculated as usual, with each PC's maximum being equal to one plus their Magic skill level plus the better of their Intelligence or Charisma modifiers. Partial Necromancers have a score one point lower than this, albeit not less than one.

Bonetalker: You can see and communicate with any undead creature, regardless of a shared language or the creature's natural state of invisibility. By Committing Effort for the scene you can sense the surface thoughts of any visible undead, including an impression of any commands or behavior it has been ordered to carry out. Unintelligent undead will not attack you or your companions unless specifically compelled to do so by a command or a master. Even intelligent undead will generally pause at least for an initial parley before attacking.

Cold Flesh: You no longer require sleep and feel pain only in an abstract sense. You can suffer no more than 2 points of damage from any given instance of Shock and you have a natural Armor Class equal to 12 plus half your level, rounded down.

Consume Life Energy: By making a Punch attack or using a melee weapon you have spent at least an hour properly consecrating, you can absorb a portion of the damage you inflict on others as healing to yourself. For each successful attack you make with such implements, you heal 1d6 damage, up to a maximum of the damage done by the attack. You cannot drain more life than the target has remaining hit points.

False Death: Commit Effort as an Instant action; while it remains Committed you appear dead to all mundane examination. You lose your Main Actions while "dead", but can move and perceive normally and do not need to eat, drink, breathe, or perform other bodily functions. Poisons and diseases do not progress in you while you are "dead". You can maintain this state of death for up to one day per level before needing at least an hour to recover.

Gravesight: Commit Effort as an On Turn action; while it remains Committed, you can see the life energies of living creatures around you as various glowing patterns, regardless of the mundane illumination available. You can perceive sicknesses, poisons, and other physical qualities on sight. As a side effect of this ability, you can see normally even in perfect blackness.

Keeper of the Gate: At your discretion, creatures within twenty feet of you per character level that are Mortally Wounded will die instantly and cannot be revived by magic or medicine. Conversely, you can Commit Effort for the day to automatically stabilize any or all within that range, increasing their System Strain by 1 point. This benefit cannot aid creatures that have been dismembered, shredded, or otherwise suffered unsurvivable injuries.

Life Bridge: You can transfer life force between willing or helpless participants. Commit Effort for the day; for the rest of the scene, you can shift hit points from one willing or helpless target no smaller than a dog to another as a Main Action, provided you are touching both. You can shift enough hit points to Mortally Wound a donor, but you can't give more to the recipient than would refresh their maximum allowed hit points.

Master of Bones: Undead must roll twice to save versus your abilities or spells and take the worse roll. You may Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to negate any single attack, magical power or spell an undead uses against you. Undead with more than twice as many hit dice as you have levels cannot be foiled this way.

Red Harvest: You are empowered by death. As an Instant action, whenever an intelligent living creature with at least one hit die perishes within fifty feet of you, Commit Effort for the day to either heal 1d6 plus your level in lost hit points or gain a +4 bonus on your next hit roll this scene. This art cannot be stacked, and it can be used only once per round.

Unaging: You no longer naturally age, and will remain perfectly hale and vigorous up to your species' natural maximum age plus 20% per character level, after which you will collapse into dust and decay. Immortality beyond this point is possible, but generally requires consistent supplies of life energy, occult materials, or other difficult-to-acquire or morally questionable materials. You also become immune to poisons and diseases.

Uncanny Ichor: Your blood is not like the blood of normal beings. Predators find it nauseating and will not bite you unless provoked. Unintelligent predators will not consider you edible. This ichor is reluctant to leave your body, and stabbing or puncture injuries can Mortally Wound you but cannot result in your death unless you are entirely pincushioned by your foes or suffer catastrophic physical damage.

Unliving Persistence: Commit Effort for the day as an On Turn action to automatically stabilize when Mortally Wounded. You may use this ability to benefit others if you are able to touch them. This ability cannot save a subject that has experienced dismemberment or other extremely final deaths.

Necromancers in Other Worlds

Death wizards are a mainstay of fantasy literature, and the Necromancer can work well for adding such flavor to different campaign worlds. They don't necessarily need to be naturally malevolent casters, however; it's quite possible to build a more morally-neutral broker of life energy or undead-hunter with this class. You can drop the class in whenever you need some mechanics to represent such mages.

Necromancer New Magic

As with other specialist traditions, the Necromancers have been able to devise a number of New Magic spells in line with their particular specialties. Only Necromancers may learn or cast these sorceries.

Command the Dead — Level 1

The necromancer exerts their will over a number of hit dice worth of undead equal to twice their character level. These undead must be visible and within one hundred feet of the caster. Undead get a Mental saving throw to resist this binding, at a penalty equal to the caster's Magic skill. Creatures only partially-bewitched by the spell due to their excess hit dice merely stand dazed for a round. Those fully within the hit die cap who are affected become suicidally loyal to the necromancer until they are released by the caster. Regardless of how often the caster uses this spell, they may have no more than twice their level worth of hit dice bound at any one time, with the oldest-enchanted being first released.

Query the Skull — Level 1

This spell requires a corpse with largely-intact organs of communication. The corpse cannot have been dead for more than one day per caster level. Once sorceled, the corpse will answer up to one question per caster level, with the caster understanding the answers regardless of the creature's natural language. Corpses are laconic, and generally answer in no more than one or two sentences; their replies will be truthful, but tend to be literal and they have no power to hypothesize or make judgments. This spell may not be used twice on the same corpse.

Smite the Dead — Level 1

The necromancer conjures a blast of dispelling force at a point within one hundred feet per caster level, affecting an area up to 20 feet in radius. All hostile undead within that area immediately suffer 1d10 damage per caster level. Undead with hit dice equal or less than the caster's level must make a Physical save or be destroyed outright. The necromancer may Commit Effort for the day immediately before casting this spell; if so, its casting does not count against the Necromancer's available spell slots for the day.

Terrible Liveliness — Level 1

A necromancer can give an undead creature the semblance of a healthy, normal living being with this spell. The target appears as it did in life, at any point in its lifespan that the necromancer so desires, and is capable of performing all normal human activities that its cognition allows it to perform. The spell uses the creature's nature as a template for its effects, so the disguise is tangible and physically real until dispelled or the necromancer drops the effect. A necromancer can maintain only one such disguise per level, and it does not work on sentient unwilling targets.

Augment Mortal Vitality — Level 2

The necromancer may refine and enhance the natural flow of vitality within a willing visible target. For the rest of the scene, all Physical saving throws they make gain a bonus equal to the necromancer's Magic skill and they automatically stabilize when Mortally Wounded. Once during the scene, as an Instant action, they can immediately heal from all damage inflicted by an injury that did not Mortally Wound them. The recipient of this spell gains one System Strain.

Enfeebling Wave — Level 2

A wash of debilitating force erupts in a 20-foot radius at a visible point within one hundred feet. All living creatures within the area must make a Physical saving throw or for the rest of the scene their movement rate is halved and they must make all attack and damage rolls twice and take the worse result. If the save is successful, these penalties apply only to their next turn.

Final Death — Level 2

The necromancer curses one visible target per level. For the rest of the scene, these targets cannot recover or gain hit points and will die instantly if Mortally Wounded. After each failed instance of healing, a target can make a Physical save to throw off the spell.

Raise Corpse — Level 2

The necromancer targets a mostly-intact skeleton or corpse, imbuing it with a semblance of life. Whatever the creature's attributes were in life, it now has 1 HD, an AC of 13, a Move of 30'/round, a +0 skill bonus, saves of 15+, a +1/1d6 unarmed melee attack, Instinct 0, and a Morale of 12. Such corpses may be equipped with weapons or armor. Its decay or dissolution immediately ceases, and it becomes suicidally loyal to its creator. The corpse has no natural volition, but will obey commands with a human degree of intelligence. It has only vague memories of its prior life, and while it may retain human tics or habits it had in life it can answer only the simplest and most self-evident questions. Damage to a corpse can be repaired only by casting this spell on it again, which restores it to its original "health". The corpse continues to exist until it is reduced to zero hit points or its creator releases it. A necromancer cannot have more active subjects of this spell than their character level.

Compel Flesh — Level 3

A visible living creature or physically-bodied undead within 100 feet is ensorceled by this spell, their flesh and bones becoming temporarily enthralled to the caster's will. The target becomes paralyzed unless commanded by the caster as an On Turn action; once given a command, their body will dutifully carry it out on their next turn. The user's mind is not affected by this spell, so they cannot be made to cast spells, answer questions, or perform other intellectual tasks, but they will fight, move, and perform other non-suicidal physical acts as normal. The target may make a Physical saving throw at the start of each of their turns to throw off the effect, but they will inevitably suffer one point of damage per caster level with each attempt as their flesh writhes and tears. If not thrown off earlier, the spell lasts until the end of the scene.

Festering Curse — Level 3

The qualities of a corpse are forced upon a visible living target. The subject begins to rot, fester, and decay in whatever ways the necromancer thinks appropriate. Food tastes like ashes, water does not quench thirst, and their body is numb to all physical pleasures. They suffer a -2 penalty to all social skill checks due to their repugnance. This transformation does not inflict physical injury, but it makes the target's life an utterly joyless misery until it is dispelled or the necromancer lifts the curse. Creatures with more hit dice than the necromancer has levels can make a Physical save to resist the curse.

Forgetting the Grave — Level 3

A necromancer can temporarily suspend the mortality of a willing target within sight. For one round per Necromancer level, the creature simply cannot die, no matter how drastic their injuries. Those reduced to zero hit points lose their Move action each turn but can continue to act otherwise; if such a target is damaged yet again, they must make a Physical saving throw each time or become incapable of movement until healed. At the spell's end targets reduced to zero hit points are Mortally Wounded; those that have been dismembered or otherwise slaughtered beyond the hope of survival die instantly.

Merge Souls — Level 3

By molding the plasmic stuff of life force, the necromancer can create a bond between two willing or helpless targets. These subjects must be close enough for the necromancer to touch; thereafter, for as long as the spell is in effect, the two creatures pool their hit points. Injuries to either subtract from this pool, and neither dies until it is reduced to zero, whereupon both are Mortally Wounded. They can communicate telepathically at will while the spell is in effect. The power ends at daybreak; if dispelled sooner, the remaining pool is split proportionately.

Boneshaper — Level 4

The clay of flesh and bone run obediently to the will of the necromancer. Whether living or undead, a willing or helpless victim under the effects of this spell can be reshaped into any roughly-equivalent form with an hour's work. Limbs can be added or removed and existing tissue can be recolored, re-textured, or rearranged to the necromancer's wishes. Perfect imitation of a particular creature requires a Dex/Magic skill check against difficulty 10. This spell is limited in the physical changes it can effect; a bonus of +1 can be added to modifier of Charisma or a physical attribute at the cost of a -1 penalty to the modifier of one of the same attributes, to a maximum of +2 or -2. This spell lasts until the necromancer lifts it or it is dispelled.

Raise Grave Knight — Level 4

The corpse used for this spell must be of a relatively powerful creature with at least four hit dice or levels. The result is much like that of the *'Raise Corpse'* spell, but this undead servitor is much stronger, with 4 HD, AC 15, a Move of 40'/action, a +1 skill bonus, saves of 13+, Instinct 0, Morale of 12, and a melee attack of +6/1d10, assuming it doesn't use a normal weapon. It is fully intelligent and self-willed, albeit utterly devoted to its creator, and it remembers a significant amount about its prior life. A grave knight regains all lost hit points at dusk each day, assuming it's not destroyed. A caster may have only one grave knight active at a time. One that has been reduced to zero hit points is destroyed and can only be rebuilt with a month of painstaking repair and re-enchantment.

Call of the Tomb — Level 5

The necromancer invokes the inescapable urge for self-dissolution within the substance of all that exists, amplifying the weight of their own mortality. All enemy creatures within forty feet are affected. Targets can make a Physical saving throw to resist, in which case the effects last only one round, otherwise lasting for one round per caster level. During this time all attacks made against the victims automatically hit and all damage dice they suffer are maximized. Any special defenses they may have against mundane weapons or certain types of injury are negated while the spell is on them.

Everlasting — Level 5

The spell may be triggered as an Instant action by the caster, imparting a burst of unquenchable life force to all allied creatures within 50 feet. For the next five rounds, no affected ally can be reduced below 1 hit point, regardless of the damage inflicted upon them. At the end of the spell's effect, the caster's own life energy is exhausted, leaving them with only 1 hit point. A creature can benefit from this spell no more than once per day.

Vowed

Innumerable sects of bodily adepts can be found throughout Latter Earth, each determined to master the hidden capabilities of their body and spirit. Some focus on a religious or philosophical dedication to the task, while others see only practical benefit in honing their bodies to a pitch of superhuman prowess. These "Vowed" are those men and women who have attained some measure of success in their quest.

The ancient Legacy was tuned to provide numerous benefits and augmentations to human beings. Despite the interference of the Outsiders and the inevitable corruption of eons, some threads of this ancient power still remain, and the Vowed practice secret techniques for awakening this power within them.

Not all of these sects do so through innocent means of meditation, training, and diet. Some employ terrible rituals of blood and unclean sorcery to imbue their adepts with supernatural power, while others have made certain pacts with Outsiders or stranger entities in order to get the help they need to awaken their strength. Savage brawlers and bestial warriors are as often found among the Vowed as are serene ascetics and philosophers.

Vowed sects are commonly found as guardians to some powerful organization, perhaps as royal guards or temple defenders for a faith. A few are wholly independent orders, perhaps dedicated to some religious or philosophical quest or else a secular power that the locals look to for defense and lordship. Occasionally the lines blur, with temple priests becoming mundane lords as well as spiritual leaders.

Vowed are usually trained in monasteries or retreats dedicated to that purpose. A strict hierarchy of masters and disciples is common to most sects, and many members might spend their entire lives laboring on behalf of the sect's faith or political interests. Some Vowed are knocked loose from their former homes by the vagaries of chance, however, and must set out alone to avenge a ruined monastery or slain master… or escape the censure of instructors who find them unfit to represent the order to the outside world.

Vowed Benefits

The Vowed class exists only as a partial Mage class, to be taken by an Adventurer along with another partial class. Thus, a Partial Warrior/Partial Vowed might be a hardened temple warrior-monk, a Partial Expert/Partial Vowed might be a sage teacher of religious or philosophical truths, and a Partial Elementalist/Partial Vowed might be a mountain sage who wields the elemental forces of nature. Regardless of classes, a Vowed's hit dice can't be worse than 1d6 per level thanks to ***Martial Style***.

All Vowed gain a non-combat bonus skill appropriate to their order, acquiring it at level-0, or level-1 if they already have it at level-0. Orders that focus on physical training might grant Exert, while scholarly ones might give Know, religious ones Pray, or occult sects grant Magic. You may pick whatever non-combat skill suits your order, assuming the GM finds it reasonable.

Vowed do not learn how to cast spells. Instead, they refine their inner powers and physical capabilities. These arts are too precise and delicate to bear the encumbrance of heavy clothing, armor, or shields, and cannot be used when so burdened. The ***Armored Magic*** Focus can mitigate this, but Vowed are all trained in effective unarmored defense techniques.

At first level, a Vowed gains the ***Martial Style***, ***Unarmed Might***, and ***Unarmored Defense*** arts, in addition to one more art of their choice as given on the adjacent list. Further advancement will grant additional arts, though once chosen they cannot be changed.

Partial Vowed

Level	Punch Hit Bonus	Punch Damage	Punch Shock	Arts Gained
1	+0	1d6	1/15	Martial Style, Unarmed Might, Unarmed Defense, and Any One
2	+1	1d6	2/15	Any One
3	+1	1d8	2/15	
4	+2	1d8	2/15	Any One
5	+2	1d10	2/15	Any One
6	+3	1d10	3/15	Any One
7	+3	1d10+1	3/15	
8	+4	1d10+1	3/15	Any One
9	+4	1d10+2	4/15	
10	+5	1d10+3	4/15	Any One

Vowed in Other Worlds

Bare-knuckled fighting monks and prowling ninjas are commonplaces in some campaign worlds, and the Vowed can be used to represent both archetypes, as well as any other that your specific setting might require.

The particular flavor of a given unarmed combatant can be adjusted by the other partial class they take, such as ninjas perhaps picking up the stealth and subterfuge skills of a Partial Expert, or a grimly determined order of guardian monks taking the Partial Warrior class. Monks with exceptionally strange powers may have additional art options.

Arts of the Vowed

Vowed Effort is based on the skill they chose to represent their order's main focus of study, whether Exert, Know, Magic, Pray, or some more esoteric skill.

Their maximum Vowed Effort is equal to this skill level plus their best attribute modifier, whatever it may be, to a minimum of one point. All Vowed automatically gain the ***Martial Style***, ***Unarmed Might***, and ***Unarmored Defense*** arts as part of their basic training.

Martial Style: Regardless of class, your hit die can't be worse than 1d6 per level. When attacking with the Punch skill, your class hit bonus can be no worse than that of an Expert of your same character level. At third level, any attack using the Punch skill counts as a magic weapon.

Unarmed Might: Your unarmed attack damage increases as you gain levels, as noted on the chart. You may add your Punch skill to the damage done by these attacks as usual, but Foci such as ***Unarmed Combatant*** that replace or improve your usual Punch damage do not apply to you.

Unarmored Defense: When not wearing armor or using a shield, your base Armor Class is equal to 13 plus half your character level, rounded down.

Other Vowed Arts

Brutal Counter: Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action after resolving an enemy melee attack against you, whether it hits or misses. You may make a free physical attack against your assailant, using either a normal attack or some other offensive ability that takes no more than one Main Action to execute. You cannot use this art more than once per round against a single foe, but you may use it while performing a *Total Defense*.

Faultless Awareness: Your awareness is such that you cannot be surprised, and will even wake from a sound sleep in time to respond normally to some imminent peril.

Hurling Throw: After you make a successful attack, you may Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action. The target must make a Physical saving throw or be thrown up to ten feet in any direction, falling prone on landing and suffering the damage rolled for your attack. If the Physical save is successful, the target simply takes damage as normal. This art can be used only once per round on any given target, and the target must be no larger than an ox.

The Inward Eye: Commit Effort as an On Turn action. For as long as it remains Committed, you are mystically aware of your surroundings with a sense equivalent to normal eyesight regardless of darkness, obscuring mists, or your actual eyes being closed or blinded.

Leap of the Heavens: Commit Effort for the scene as a Move action to leap up to your full Move action horizontally or half that vertically. You may also Commit Effort for the scene as an Instant action to negate falling damage, no matter the distance.

Master's Vigor: Your body retains its vigor and youthful vitality to the full normal span of your life. You regain two lost hit points per hour due to your natural restorative powers.

Mob Justice: As an Instant action, Commit Effort for the day to become impervious to the *Make a Swarm Attack* maneuver as described on page 44. Your assailants cannot use this maneuver against you for the rest of the scene, and you become immune to Shock as long as you remain in melee with at least two foes. Making use of this benefit disrupts any spellcasting you may attempt, however, due to the violent motion required.

Nimble Ascent: Commit Effort for the scene as an On Turn action. For the remainder of the scene you may move up vertical and overhanging surfaces and across difficult terrain at your full movement rate with no chance of slipping or falling, provided the surface is not glass-smooth or enchanted. You require only one free hand to cling to a wall or ceiling.

Purified Body: You may Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action to cure any disease or poison currently affecting you, or instead to negate any need for sleep, food, water, or air for the next 24 hours.

Revivifying Breath: Commit Effort for the day as an On Turn action to heal yourself for 1d6 hit points plus your level. This healing does not increase System Strain. This ability may be used on your turn even when you are at zero hit points, but in such a case it Commits all your remaining Effort for the day. This art can be used only once per scene.

Shattering Strike: Commit Effort for the day and take a full round of motionlessness to prepare. On the next round, as a Main Action, your unarmed attack can shatter a wooden door, wooden wall, or other similar object up to a depth of one foot per level and a width sufficient to allow a man-sized creature to pass through. At fourth level this ability improves to affect even a stone wall and at seventh it can affect even a metal wall or solid iron door. The blow is useless against a target that can move, but against an immobilized creature the attack does 1d12 damage per character level.

Style Weaponry: Pick three general classes of weapons, such as "swords", "bows", "axes", "daggers", or the like. When using weapons of those classes, you may use Punch for hit rolls instead of Stab or Shoot. Your Punch skill does not add to the damage done by these weapons, however, though the benefits of ***Martial Style*** apply to their hit rolls.

Unobtrusive Step: You not only possess a considerable skill for disguise and obfuscation, you can become extremely hard to detect. Once per scene, you may Commit Effort for the day as an Instant action to reroll a failed Sneak skill check or skill check related to impersonating someone else.

Developing New Spells

It's a normal inclination for both GMs and players to want to add new spells to a mage's repertoire. Spell research is a normal pastime of almost all mages, and it's a useful sink for the money or magical exemplars that the wizard might have acquired. GMs should generally be willing to let PC wizards come up with new spells, provided they fit the tone of the campaign.

High Mages very rarely create New Magic spells. Their time and effort is spent unraveling the secrets of the past and trying to discover lost High Magic sorceries. Where an Elementalist might spend her time patching together fragments of other sorceries to create a spell, a High Mage would be poring over ancient books, searching for leads to new avenues of research and mentions of magic now lost to the world. Mechanically, it works out the same way; the Elementalist will eventually develop a New Magic spell of her own, while the High Mage will unearth a lost High Magic spell that fits his own desired effects.

To research a new spell, the wizard's player first writes up the spell they want to develop. The GM then checks the spell against the guidelines given below, adjusting it where it's necessary. If it passes, an appropriate level is assigned to the spell and the PC can begin the magical research process. Researching a spell requires a properly-equipped laboratory, raw materials, and time.

The laboratory must be established in a secure, serviceable room or building. A lab sufficient for researching a level 1 or 2 spell can fit into a room, one for a 3rd level spell can fit into a house, one for a 4th level spell can fit into a wizard's tower, and a lab suitable for devising a new 5th level spell needs its own subterranean research complex or similar edifice. The cost for the lab is given on the adjacent table; this does not include the price for the building itself. The necessary materials for a lab can generally be acquired in any major city, provided it's not hostile to sorcerers.

The raw materials must also be purchased in a city or gathered from ransacked lairs by adventurers. They include occult materials, esoteric creature body parts, specialized lab equipment, and obscure monographs and grimoires. These materials are used up in the process of research.

The time required for researching a spell varies with its complexity, as given on the table. A wizard can halve this time by spending twice as much on raw materials, and adventuring for certain lost grimoires or special ingredients might further decrease the time required.

A wizard can adventure and perform other tasks during their research time, including the development of Workings or the construction of magical items, but they can't simultaneously research two spells at once. Wizards kept entirely away from their labs for weeks or months at a time might suffer a halt to the work until they can get back to it.

Spell Research

Spell Level	Lab Cost	Materials Cost	Time Needed
1	50,000 sp	25,000 sp	1 month
2	125,000 sp	50,000 sp	2 months
3	250,000 sp	100,000 sp	4 months
4	500,000 sp	200,000 sp	8 months
5	1,000,000 sp	400,000 sp	2 years

Once the lab is established, the raw materials gathered, and the necessary time taken, the mage makes an Int/Magic skill check against a difficulty equal to 10 plus the spell level. If they have apprentices to assist them, they can add +1 to their skill check. Specialist mages researching New Magic in their own field add an additional +1 to the skill check, so an Elementalist researching a New Magic spell of elemental nature would get the bonus, as would a Necromancer researching a spell about undeath. Special resources or uniquely apposite grimoires gathered on an adventure might add an additional bonus to the roll.

If the roll is successful, the spell is perfected and added to the caster's grimoire. They can teach it to other wizards if they wish, or keep it to themselves. Specialist magic can only be learned by wizards of the same tradition; if they took the spell research skill check bonus, it's a specialist spell. Spells devised by High Mages are almost inevitably rediscovered High Magic and can be learned by any mage capable of casting such.

If the roll is a failure, the wizard has a choice. They can abandon their research and start over from scratch, expending new resources and time, or they can roll on the formula flaw table. This flaw becomes part of their spell, as adjusted by the GM. Some flaws might not be problematic at all; a spell only ever designed to affect the caster isn't much hindered by only being usable on willing targets. Other flaws might make the spell worthless or force the PC to start over. If the caster decides to live with the flaw and continue research, they can spend half the required research time and make a new skill check at a cumulative +1 bonus, with no need to spend additional resources.

A determined and unlucky mage may repeat this process several times, accruing new flaws each time and increasing their bonus until they eventually come up with a functioning spell. It may be so gnarled by flaws as to be scarcely recognizable as their original intent, but they can add it to their grimoire all the same.

New Spell Criteria

When planning out your new spell, you should keep the following basic principles in mind. They are not iron laws to be followed in all situations, but a spell that breaks one of these rules should be inspected very carefully. Don't worry about trying to balance spells for the abstract masses; worry about balancing them for the specific people and situations at your table. If you know that a particular player is a bad match for a particular spell effect, then don't approve it, even if the effect itself seems innocuous.

Spells should not substitute for other classes. If a spell gives a mage the combat prowess of a Warrior or substitutes for an arbitrary selection of skills, it's too much. For specific groups, make sure that a spell doesn't substitute for the main concept of another PC in the party; if another PC's concept is that of a gifted musician, don't allow new spells that make the wizard a supernatural singer. Keep a special eye out for summoning spells, as any summoned creature that's remotely comparable to even a lower-level Warrior needs to come with serious drawbacks in usability or duration.

Spells should not offer simple numeric bonuses. A spell might add a bonus to hit rolls or damage rolls as a minor consequence of its effect, but a spell fundamentally made to increase a score or add a bonus to something should not be approved. Magic is meant to create impossible effects and alter the ground rules of a situation. If it simply amplifies the existing abilities of the group, it changes nothing in actual play.

Spells should not offer cheap and easy combat damage. No mage can cast very many spells each day, but it's important that the combat spells they do have be heavy, loud, clumsy things rather than easy magical bolts of unavoidable damage. Area-effect spells should not normally be able to exclude friendlies from their damage. If the spell's damaging effect is clean and simple, it should only affect one target. Think of mages as artillery rather than snipers; when they hit something, they tend to hit everything around it, too.

Spells should not create permanent magical effects or valuable matter. Any lasting changes the spell creates need to be sustainable by the existing situation. Growing plants in earth is one thing, but growing them on bare rock is something that should be a temporary effect. Creating rocks isn't much of an issue, but creating lumps of gold shouldn't be a persistent change.

Spells that buff a target shouldn't last more than a scene. This rule is somewhat looser, as buff spells that are intended to make the target viable in a hostile environment, such as water-breathing or cold-climate survival, might last for a full day. Their purpose is to make an adventure possible, so making them last as long as the adventure is reasonable. Buff spells that add new powers or benefits to a target shouldn't last longer than a scene, however, or else they tend to turn into permanent powers that just happen to cost a slot.

d10	Formula Flaws
1	The spell can only target the caster.
2	The spell only works on willing targets.
3	Your prior work is mistaken; the formula is not changed, but you don't get the cumulative +1 bonus on the research roll for this or prior research continuations.
4	The spell can only target people other than the caster.
5	The spell is unusually slow, taking at least a Main Action to cast, or two Main Actions over the course of two consecutive rounds if it already takes a Main Action to cast.
6	The spell is very draining, exhausting two spells worth of energy for the day instead of one.
7	The spell inflicts a severe backlash on the caster, adding 1d4 System Strain to them. If this maximizes their System Strain, they fall unconscious for ten minutes and can't cast this spell again until some System Strain is lost.
8	The spell is more difficult than it seems, being one level higher than expected. This doesn't increase the research costs or time, but if you can't cast a spell of that level, the entire project fails.
9	The spell is simply unreliable in its effects; whenever it's cast, roll 1d6. On a 1, the spell fizzles uselessly and the casting slot is wasted.
10	The whole effort was a tragic mistake. All progress and research materials are lost and everything must be done over from the start.

Spells should not be petty. Latter Earth does not have much in the way of "trivial" magic spells, and cantrips that perform some minor change should not be allowed unless you want to change the general flavor of magic as a whole. Every spell should do something *big*, with even the smallest damaging spell capable of killing someone and the least magical effect having some degree of wonder about it.

Steal spells from existing games. You can usually borrow spells from other old-school games or the classic TSR role-playing games of the eighties and nineties with impunity, but halve their levels to figure out where they'd fit in ***Worlds Without Number***. Thus, a 9th level spell in the original game might be a 5th level spell in this one. First-level spells should be upgraded if you import them, because most 1st level spells are too weak to fit well in this world. Keep in mind the other principles on this list when importing spells, however, as other games rarely follow all of them.

Building Magical Workings

As potent as the Legacy is, it can be no surprise that various sorcerers and artificers have channeled it into useful edifices and standing magical effects. In the jargon of wizards, a ***Working*** is any stationary, persistent magical effect or structure, such a magical ever-flowering spring, an array of heatless eternal lamps, or a persistent curse that blights all within its reach. Unlike a conventional magical item, a Working cannot be moved from its set location, and unlike a spell it will normally persist until damage or thaumic decay finally disperse it.

Workings come in five commonly-recognized tiers: trivial, minor, major, great, and supreme. Trivial Workings might be some minor magic like an enchanted light source, while a supreme effort might transform a whole city into a flying metropolis. While lesser Workings are still possible for skilled and erudite mages of Latter Earth, supreme Workings are too mighty to be accomplished by anyone short of a Legate. Examples persist from the former ages of the world, and surviving supreme Workings can be wonders renowned throughout whole nations, but they are beyond duplication by conventional sorcery.

A Working requires a skilled mage, a great deal of resources, and a considerable amount of time. Details can vary based on the arcane suitability of the landscape or especially powerful, useful components, but even a trivial Working is no minor labor.

To create the Working, the architect must first be a spellcaster of at least 6th level, whether a full Mage or a Partial Mage. Mage classes that do not cast spells cannot normally create Workings, as their magic is insufficiently flexible. Less-accomplished spellcasters also lack the practical experience necessary to mold the powers.

The architect then decides what exactly the Working should do. The table on the opposite page gives examples of different Workings and the effects they might produce. The player involved discusses any custom ideas with the GM, using the examples as guidelines. A single Working may involve multiple effects, but they should be closely aligned; enchantments that provide a magical spring, hot water, enchanted lamps, and a pleasant climate might all be established as part of the same housekeeping Working, but placing a ward against devils and a magical garden at the same time might not be so plausible.

The GM then decides the total difficulty of the Working by adding up the difficulty point cost of each element of it. The adjacent table gives common ranges for each degree of difficulty, and the GM should pick a number that sounds right; the pettiest of petty Trivial magics might be 1 point, while something that could maybe even be Minor in strength would be 4 points. The total cost of the Working is whatever element costs most plus half the rest, rounded up. Thus, if some 10-point major effect also had a 3-point trivial effect and 8-point minor effect bundled with it, the whole would have a difficulty of 16 points.

Magical Working Costs

Degree	Difficulty Points	Area Affected	Difficulty Multiplier
Trivial	1-4	Room	x1
Minor	4-8	Building	x4
Major	8-16	Village	x16
Great	16-32	City	x64
Supreme	33-64*	Region	x256

* Only Legates can fashion supreme Workings

This difficulty is then multiplied by the area the Working will affect. If the magic spring merely pours a small stream of water into the kitchen cellar, the area might only be that of a Room; if the stream was meant to provide a moat around a wizard's keep, it would affect a Building, or perhaps even a Village-sized area. If the spring was to irrigate miles of surrounding countryside, it would affect a whole Region, and would probably be a great Working to boot, if not supreme. The difficulty total is multiplied by the given multiplier of the biggest area affected, so if the 16-point example above affected the whole wizard's tower, its final difficulty would be 64 points.

The architect must then demonstrate that they can actually *design* such a Working. A given designer multiplies their character level by their Magic skill level times two. Thus, a 6th level High Mage with Magic-3 skill would have a total of 36. If this total is equal or greater than the Working's difficulty, they can establish it alone. If it's at least half the difficulty, they can build it if they can find other mages to help them and make up the missing points. If it's less than half the difficulty, the whole enterprise is too difficult for them to envision.

If the Working is designed properly and enough help is had, it can be constructed at a cost of 1,000 silver pieces per point of difficulty and a time cost of one month, plus one week per five points of difficulty or fraction thereof. If the cost is doubled, the work can be done in half this time. Note that this construction only applies to the *magical* components of the Working; if the mage means to enchant a wall, the wall must already be built. A mage can generally adventure and do other things while completing a Working, but if they are taken away from the site for too long, the work may halt in their absence.

While Workings are generally very durable, intentional sabotage of critical points or the slow decay of ages can end up corrupting or destroying them, sometimes with catastrophic results. It is for this reason that many of the Workings found in ancient Deeps or forgotten ruins are dangerous or perverse, and many nations that could at least theoretically afford the construction of Workings avoid making use of them.

Type	Example Elements of a Working
Trivial	Bar ordinary vermin from the area
Trivial	Create lights, or illusions that are obviously illusions
Trivial	Destroy wastes, dusts, or other nonliving matter
Trivial	Heats or chills things within normal climate ranges
Trivial	Preserve foodstuffs indefinitely
Trivial	Provide cooking heat in specific places within the area
Trivial	Provide plumbing or ventilation, assuming water and air supplies exist
Minor	Communicate between points in the area
Minor	Create convincing illusions that are still disproven by close interaction
Minor	Create guardian entities of limited intellect equivalent to a 2 hit die combatant
Minor	Create water or a common inedible material
Minor	Improve natural healing within the area, doubling natural System Strain and hit point recovery
Minor	Inflict minor damage on targets that trigger a trap or are struck by defenses, 1d6 to 2d6
Minor	Maintain the area magically, repairing wear and minor damage over time
Minor	Provide simple motive force for an existing object with basic controls, though no intelligent response
Minor	Sustain a livable temperature in the area despite any normal exterior climate variations
Minor	Ward off a single type of intruder that can be described in no more than a sentence. Such targets must make a Mental save to enter
Major	Create foodstuffs that sustain the eater even if they later leave the affected area
Major	Create guardian entities with some modest special abilities equivalent to a 4 hit die combatant
Major	Create illusions so perfect that close interaction just grants a Mental save to realize their nature
Major	Grant compatibility with an environment to all occupants, like underseas, lava pits, or freezing heights
Major	Immunize occupants from the effects of diseases
Major	Induce a subtle mental influence to subjects that fail a Mental save, causing them to do or not do something unless it is hazardous to them
Major	Inflict significant damage on a target, 4d6 or 5d6
Major	Provide motive force for an existing object in a complex way, with intelligent adherence to its purpose
Major	Sustain a certain number of inhabitants without need for food or drink
Major	Teleport things within the affected area according to its rules
Major	Ward off several types of intruders as per the Minor effect, or make the ward so strong against a single type that it must be suppressed if they are to enter
Great	Create a powerful guardian with several impressive magical powers and 8 or more hit dice
Great	Create some moderately valuable material
Great	Distort internal spaces, shrinking or expanding them by up to a factor of 20
Great	Induce a powerful mental influence on targets that fail a Mental save, even a complex command
Great	Inflict lethal damage on a target, 8d6 to 10d6, or a save-or-die effect
Great	Ward it so tightly that only particular subjects are allowed to enter, while others must suppress the Working
Supreme	Affect the flow of time within the area
Supreme	Utterly mentally enslave subjects, perhaps even without a Mental save, forcing them to comply with a certain intent even if it's suicidal
Supreme	Generate a small army of 2 hit die guardians to defend it
Supreme	Imbue a structure or area with the ability to fly freely
Supreme	Implant an artificial mind in a structure to control and monitor it

Creating Magic Items

The forging of magical artifacts is not unknown on Latter Earth, though the ease of the process varies greatly from place to place. Some regions are largely desolate of the subtle thaumic currents and special environments needed to set an item's enchantments, while others are particularly friendly to the process. A GM will have to decide on their own whether their campaign setting will allow mage PCs to create magical items.

Unlike Workings, which are comfortably stationary, a portable magic item directly increases the power of the bearer when they're out adventuring. Allowing the creation of magic items lets the party convert treasure into direct personal power, which increases the consequences should they find "too much" treasure in their ventures. If magic items can only ever be found, salvaged, or created by specialist mages who are no use at adventuring then the GM has a much better grip on power inflation. Conversely, a lot of GMs and Mage players are very fond of creating their own magical devices, and may not be satisfied by the use of Workings alone. For most campaigns, a middle ground is recommended.

All permanent magical items are difficult to make. Even if the item is nothing more than a tankard that keeps its contents perpetually chilled, making that tankard is every bit as difficult as forging an enchanted sword. As a consequence, very few sorcerers bother to make petty items; if it's going to be as hard to make a trifling token as a significant one, why make trifles?

Magical items are exceedingly expensive to build. The rare components, expensive rituals, and costly processes involved eat up vast amounts of silver and great labor on the part of the mage. These components must be bought at some major city or salvaged from the Deeps or ruins that the PCs are exploring. They form many of the same components that are used in building Workings or researching new spells, so the same general pool of magical components can be used for any of those purposes.

Magical items are also complex and difficult to create. A novice mage cannot fashion them and even an expert might find it difficult to get an item to come out just right. Flaws can creep into the construction process, forcing the PC to either start over or cope with an item that isn't exactly what was intended.

Creating the Item

To build a magic item, the player first describes what it is that the item is supposed to do. The player might want to build an item from the Treasures section of this book, or one from another old-school game, or perhaps one completely of their own devising. It's up to the GM to decide whether or not the item fits with their campaign and is an acceptable introduction.

For item designs, it's recommended that the GM be careful not to allow magic items that simply solve whole categories of problems. A set of magic earplugs that make it impossible to hear lies may seem clever, but it also immediately solves any challenge revolving around detecting deceit. Boots that grant perpetual flight, apotropaic wands that banish specific types of creatures, and other items that simply remove certain problems from the party's concerns should probably be denied. Even if they're charged or limit-use items, they'll probably be available whenever the party *really* needs them, which means those challenges that would otherwise be the most critical become the ones they most easily bypass.

A GM should also be careful about items that simply add bonuses to the PC's rolls, whether skill checks or combat rolls. Magical weapons and armor do exist, and there are some items that do simply add numbers to the PC, but these should be avoided in other cases. There's a reason that most veteran Warriors are eager to find a magical weapon; such a weapon simply makes them better at their most important function. If other items exist that simply increase critical numbers, then the other players will feel obligated to hunt them down.

If the item's concept passes muster, the GM should compare it to the adjacent table to see what kind of price and minimum difficulty level should be required to make it. Spellcasting wizards can generally make any kind of magic item, while non-casters such as Vowed or Healers are usually restricted to making items appropriate to their particular concepts, whether those are magical scriptures or healing elixirs. A GM should always feel free to adjust prices and difficulties to reflect their own sense of what's appropriate for their campaign.

In addition to the minimum level and money involved, permanent magic items always require at least

Magic Item Creation Costs

Type of Item	Creation Difficulty	Creation Cost in SP	Creation Time
A single-use item, such as an elixir or calyx	8–10	250–2,500	1 week
A multi-use item that still contains limited charges, such as a wand	9–11	5,000–25,000	1 month
A low-powered but permanent magic item, such as a ***Sword +1***	10	12,500	1 month
A significant item that creates a situation-changing effect	12	50,000	3 months
A powerful item or one with multiple significant abilities	14	250,000	6 months

one adventure to acquire the necessary components. The wizard will have researched the item sufficiently to know where they need to go and what they need to fetch, but it will always be dangerous and difficult to do so. Very capable underlings or hired adventurers might be able to fetch the required component, but it's up to the GM whether such efforts are successful. From a GM's perspective, this required adventure is to ensure that a wizard who makes a permanent magic item provides at least one session worth of adventure grist in exchange for the new gear, and it also ensures that not too many permanent magic items will be made unless the party agrees to constantly be out adventuring for parts.

If the creator is capable, the coin is at hand, and any adventuring components have been fetched, the mage can attempt to make the item. They spend the time given on the adjacent table and then make an Int/Magic skill check against the appropriate difficulty. If they're making a batch of limited-use items, such as a batch of magic potions, they can make two doses for a +1 difficulty or four doses for a +2 difficulty. If they have an apprentice to aid them, they can add +1 to their skill check.

If the check is a success, the item is made. If it's a failure, they have a choice; they can start over from the beginning, spending the money and time anew, though not needing to repeat any adventure the item might have required. They can then make a second attempt at creating the item. If they are reluctant to do this, they can roll on the Item Flaw table, suffering that hindrance to the item's eventual effect as adjusted by the GM. If that flaw isn't intolerable, they may spend half the time they originally took to make another skill check to make the item at a cumulative +1 bonus. No additional coin need be paid. They can repeat this process, adding a new flaw each time and paying half the original time, until they either succeed or the flaws become intolerable.

A mage can generally keep adventuring while crafting a magic item, as the work doesn't eat up all their spare time. Particularly massive or powerful magic items might require the use of a dedicated laboratory, forcing the wizard to remain there while the work is underway lest the process be spoiled. Any special tools or resources such a laboratory requires are assumed to be part of the item's creation cost.

d12	Magic Item Design Flaws
1	The magic item can only be used by the first person to touch it after creation.
2	The item's magic can only affect the bearer or user.
3	The item actually has the exact opposite effect as the one intended for it.
4	The item is very slow to activate, not taking effect until the round after it's triggered or used.
5	The item is very loud and visually showy when deployed, and continues to be loud until it's no longer used.
6	The item will only benefit or function for a given user 1d6 times before becoming inert for them thereafter.
7	The item becomes non-magical if the creator dies.
8	The item drains the user's life force, adding one System Strain the first time it's used each day. It won't function without this drain.
9	The item bonds to its users; if separated from the item, the user gains one System Strain each day until the item's destroyed or recovered. The item forms only one bond at a time.
10	The item exudes a psychic pressure that makes it impossible not to notice and recognize as a magical object so long as it is carried by the user. Stealth is impossible while carrying it.
11	The enchantment is unreliable; the first time it is used in a day, roll 1d6. On a 1, it's devoid of magic for the rest of the day. Single-use or charged items waste the use or charge.
12	The whole plan was flawed from the start. All time and resources spent have been wasted, and everything must begin again from scratch.

THE WORLD OF THE LATTER EARTH

The Latter Earth is unknown in its whole; some sages would go so far as to say it is unknowable due to the existence of the Iterums and the chronospatial damage inflicted by the decaying Legacy and the spite of the ancient dead. Even so, something can be said about some of it, and this chapter will discuss what a GM must know about its Gyre region order to set a campaign within it.

Starting a Gyre Campaign

To begin a campaign in the Gyre, a new GM should take the following steps.

Read this chapter. Read the following pages and get a basic grasp of the Gyre setting and its major nations.

Choose an initial campaign flavor. What do you want the first sessions of the campaign to be about? Dungeon-crawling? Urban adventures? Political scheming? It's unlikely the whole campaign will stick to this kind of activity, but your first session or two will be about it, until the players get their own ideas on where to take the game.

Pick a suitable nation or location. If you want to play a game of mercenary treasure-hunters, then Llaigis is a good choice. If you want to start the PCs out with exploring an *arratu*, then plant them near the Ashblight or some other badland. Don't worry about the specific details of location or what particular city or hex they might be in. Just choose a general area.

Create the introductory adventure. Using the tools in the adventure creation chapter starting on page 222, build an introductory adventure for the players, something simple that should only take them a session to resolve.

As you create the adventure, you'll start to need details. If the adventure is near a village, you'll need to name and define the village. If the adventure is in a Deep, you'll need to locate the Deep on the map. You might need a local lord, or a village priest, or a particular wicked wizard. Using the background info for the nation or location you just picked, fill out these blanks with names and places that make sense for the area.

Thus, instead of making all these sandbox details and then creating an adventure that uses them, you work backwards from the adventure to ensure that you only have to create content that will matter in play.

Round out the background details. You've established all the facts important to your adventure, but there are probably other details or bits of local information that are likely to matter in play. Take a moment to fill in important facts the PCs may need to interact with. Planting healing-capable shrines, naming a few local grandees or wealthy merchants, getting a sketch map of the area around the adventure, and cooking up a few obvious next-adventure hooks are all worthwhile.

Once the PCs finish the introductory adventure, just get them to tell you their next intended exploit, and you can repeat the process to be ready for the next game.

Genres in the Gyre

The Gyre was built to provide support for a wide range of campaign styles and flavors. Some sorts of play are easily found almost anywhere in the region, while more specific flavors can be found in particular kingdoms or *arratus*.

Classic dungeon-crawling can be had almost anywhere. The ancient Deeps dug by the Outsiders litter the land, and new ones are discovered regularly by explorers and excavators. Seemingly-abandoned Deeps might suddenly reveal access to some deeper, unexplored region, while the ancient cities of the Gyre are often built atop older, buried settlements that still hold their treasures.

Wilderness exploration works well in the Black Spine mountains, the *arratu* wastelands, the jungles of Lost Emed, or the eastern border regions of the Gyre map. The simplest way to add some unknown wilds is to stretch out the southern border of the map and fill it with whatever terrain suits you, studding it all with the ruins of the lost provinces of the old Vothite Republic. Even players who read this chapter carefully will have no idea of what to expect in such lands.

Pulp sword & sorcery fits in numerous places, but has a special home in Llaigis, where steely-thewed warriors and sinister sorcerers are both readily found. The countless petty warlords and chieftains provide a steady supply of antagonists and patrons, and the decadence of their rulers offers a convenient source of plundered loot.

Steampunk or other tech-flavored play can fit in Thur, where the ancient Workings still provide thaumic energy and the Gentry provide a classist society. GMs who want to play up the tropes of gritty industrial labor and wondrous magic-tech can emphasize those traits in Thur and its culture.

Court intrigue is particularly supported in Ka-Adun and Emed-Kist. In the former, a withered class of dispossessed nobles struggle to gain access to the limited supply of tribute and taxes that the Hepatizon Throne still commands, while in Emed-Kist the Great King must perpetually balance the tensions and hostilities of innumerable petty lords and Darian officials.

Fantasy Wild West adventures are easily found in New Voth, where brash commoners are eager to pioneer dangerous regions and now-abandoned noble holdings. Law is little in evidence in these lands and self-reliance is the rule. An adventurer's worth is what they make of themselves, and there's no cavalry coming to save them.

Domain play is an option for any adventurer willing to become valuable to a local lord. All of the kingdoms have enough poorly-held or dangerous land that their rulers would have a reason to grant some to a strong subordinate capable of taming it. Adventurers who would rather not bow to an earthly lord can seize land in Lost Emed or reclaim some stretch of xenoformed *arratu*, leaving their ostensible rulers to accept an accomplished fact.

N
Capital
Major City
Ruin or Deep
1 Hex = 6 Miles
The Carceral Sea
Spray
The Sisters
Fenport
The Blind Marsh
Adun Vol
Norwick
Ka-Adun
The Rebel Coast
The Mirewash
The New City
The First City
Bendale
Tunwold
Makpist River
Usulmoi River
Highbridge
Eastwick
Thur
Plain of the Iron Sky
The Black Spine
Acitor
Sudford
Usuldarum River
Clarum
Sarx
New Voth
The Tombwater
Gwendim
Llaigis
Drunem
Gathis
Thuvad
The White Waste
The Winterwall
Emed-Kist
Yukai
Akan Lai
Medek
Hodrin
The Font
Emed-Dar
Shuay
Sarul
Uzag
The Anak Wastes
Lost Emed
The Ashblight

Of Former Days

The region now known as the Gyre is a relatively isolated segment of the greater continent of Gyaros, once held under the rule of the mighty Hepatizon Throne and its Brass Hegemony, but now a troubled welter of quarreling subject-states and trackless *arratu* wastelands. The formerly docile subject states now have no fear of the seemingly-indifferent Reaping King, and concern themselves with the inevitable struggle over which is to be the new hegemon of the Gyre.

Records of this region are relatively well-supported, extending back for some two thousand years to an indeterminate period during the rule of the sorcerer-kings. These ancient lords had risen from the Deeps with their subject peoples once the rule of the Outsiders had been cast down, and throughout the Latter Earth they formed the nuclei around which new nations formed and grew. Their mighty sorceries and Deep-born kindred soon overwhelmed the remnant bands of surface-living human rebels and Outsider colonies that yet remained.

More than two thousand years ago, the whole of the Gyre was under the rule of the heirs of the Sorcerer-Queen Voth. The Vothite Empire was one born of terrible mental sorceries, with its nobility divided into "thought houses" dedicated to the furtherance of specific ideals or aesthetics. Their struggles were expressed in the form of arcane persuasions and elegant works of alien art, artifacts and spells that could bend the minds of onlookers into agreement with the values of the thought-house that constructed them.

The whole of the Gyre was riddled with grand monuments, cerebral mandalas, and infectious meme-chimes, all beneath the implacable will of the Mentarch. Even war lost its old trappings as the Vothite houses battled with symbols and artifacts to sway the opposing force, until one side came to see the transcendent correctness of the other and joyously joined with them in pursuit of a magnificent truth.

Vothite commoners were considered little better than animals, too stupid and imperceptive to truly apprehend the deep truths that each thought-house pursued. Their thoughts were transparently obvious to the least Vothite noble, but the mind-influencing magic used by the nobility was less effective against subjects that had not been exposed to the same complex inventory of symbolism and philosophical thought that the gentry of the thought-houses embraced. The rare commoner who was deemed capable of appreciating the deeper truths of reality was skimmed off by some ambitious thought-house, while rebels and malcontents were identified at a glance and disposed of with great rapidity by mind-shackled enforcers.

The Vothite Empire fell some two thousand years ago to a revolution from within. The precise mechanism of this fall is unclear at this late date. Some records suggest it was the product of a renegade thought-house that rejected Vothite philosophy, while other artifacts imply a commoner rebellion that was somehow invisible to the Vothite nobility until it was too late for their enforcers to crush it. Some credit the interference of Outsider remnants, believing that they aided the rebels in order to eliminate the threat that the Vothites presented to them. A few even believe it was a relatively peaceful transition initiated by a thought-house that successfully imposed its will on the other Vothite nobility.

After an uncertain transition period, the next major hegemon of the Gyre was the Vothite Republic, a polity that was chiefly united in its absolute rejection of mind-sorcery of all kinds. The remnant thought-houses were either exterminated, dissolved, or driven into provincial exile as refugees or hidden cells. The various groups of commoners that had once made up the Empire were now left to their own devices, with minimal control exerted by a central government that could require very little of the provinces that they were not willing to give.

It was during this period that the Anak threat to the south became more pronounced. Several southern border provinces of the Empire were entirely destroyed by the Blighted or by the unchecked expansion of *arratu* land, and it was only after the loss of a considerable portion of the old Empire that the remaining provinces were convinced of the necessity of more active support. Together, their resources stopped the Anakim at the southern border of the Emedian province of Emed-Dar, setting the stage for an unending cycle of periodic Anakim invasions and constant border fighting.

This uneasy state of affairs persisted for centuries, the Republic never mustering the strength to truly drive back the Anakim and never quite allowing the Blighted to consume another state. The limited political capital possessed by the central government was constantly invested in getting the various provinces to continue their military contributions, leaving them practically independent for all other purposes. Petty wars between the states sapped the Republic's vitality, and such disruptions as the Rule of Shun, the Perfected Circle, the Free Cities Compact, and the Time of Three Senates limited its cohesion. Old Vothite infrastructure and the Workings of prior ages of sorcerer-kings were left to slowly decay and be forgotten, casualties of the constant, grinding expense of the war with the Blighted and the struggle to hold the Gyre together.

Matters changed a thousand years ago, when the immortal Reaping King crossed the Carceral Sea and made his landing on the Republic's northern coast. The origins of his power were complex, but are not pertinent here; it is enough that he landed with several thousand devoted followers and the dread might of the Black Brass Legion.

The Legion was unstoppable, rolling over the northern provinces league by league. While the numbers of these manlike automatons were never great, no ordinary

army had a hope of victory against them, and the few military resources that the Republic possessed that might have stood a chance were immured on the southern border, fighting the Anakim. The advance of the Reaping King was slow and methodical, culling out portions of the Republic, establishing his own followers as governors, and ensuring the docile obedience of the new lands before advancing further south. At times he even supported Republican troops against the Anakim, all the better to ensure that the Gyre did not collapse completely before he could take control of it.

His final victory came some eight hundred years ago, when the last Senate of the Republic voted to accept his rule. Resistance was pointless by that time, with the very existence of the Republic hinging on the Reaping King's forbearance and the protection of the Black Brass Legion. With the dissolution of the Vothite Republic, the Reaping King was the unquestioned immortal ruler of all the human lands of the Gyre.

His rule was a relatively light-handed one. Tributes of labor and goods were exacted for his grand capital of Ka-Adun, and a quota of slaves were required to staff his human armies and serve the noble families of his first followers, but such demands were considerably less than what he could have extracted from the beaten Vothites. The governors of the provinces were allowed a relatively free hand with their people, provided the growing city-state of Ka-Adun received its expected tributes, and the strength of the Black Brass Legion ensured a modicum of peace on the border and between the states.

The Reaping King remained a mystery to most, however, dwelling always within his folded palace in vast Ka-Adun and communicating with the outside world through slave-officials and favored Adunic nobles. His wives were in the thousands, but only a handful ever saw him, and no true progeny were ever recorded. Only on certain ritual occasions were even the nobility permitted to gaze upon their lord, and the commoners were allowed to know him only by the commands he handed down.

It was not until two hundred years ago that the Reaping King's rule was truly shaken. One of the periodic Anak invasions erupted from the south, but this time the Black Brass Legion was present only in trivial numbers. The pleas from the viceroy of Emed were ignored, and his entire province of Emed-Dar was wiped out by the exultant Blighted. Only the desperate efforts of the warriors of Llaigis, the followers of the Sixteenth Prophet, and the hastily-gathered forces of the other provinces were able to hold the Anakim back from further conquests.

The questions that flew north to Ka-Adun never received useful answers. In desperation, the provincial governors curtailed their tributes to Ka-Adun, pleading the necessities of war; when no chastisement came, this curtailment became permanent. The rulers obeyed the other commands that came from the Hepatizon Throne, but their traditional attendance at the Reaping King's court was gradually omitted, and in time even their lesser obediences were performed less fastidiously.

Epochs of the Gyre

The common epoch of the region is the landing of the Reaping King in Ka-Adun; dates are thus measured either AL, After Landing, or BL, Before Landing. The current date in the Gyre is 1055 AL.

Scholars argue over specifics, but most would place the rise of the Vothite Empire around 2500 BL, its fall and the ascent of the Republic at about 1000 BL, and the final collapse of Republican resistance in the year 241 AL. Even so, all these dates are susceptible to multiple interpretations.

This abandonment came to a head a hundred years ago, when a new Anak invasion was repelled without the slightest help from Ka-Adun or the Black Brass Legion. Infuriated by the neglect, the lords of the remaining provinces resolved to treat the Hepatizon Throne with the same indifference they had received. A few maintain polite fictions of submission, but they no longer pay the slightest attention to the wishes of the Reaping King, and the king in turn no longer sends them commands.

Were it not for Ka-Adun's importance as a port on the Carceral Sea and the taxes he takes from goods traded there, it is questionable whether he could maintain even the populated zone of his capital city. As it is, countless noble houses of the Hegemony have been thrown into dire poverty as their provincial lands are confiscated and their traditional tribute neglected. For a century they have dwindled, making do with what resources they have, until now only a handful can still maintain some pretense of their former wealth. Hegemonic nobles without such fortune have found themselves reduced to serving as advisors, tutors, and the occasional hiresword for provincial lords. The remaining open province surrounding the massive megalopolis of Ka-Adun is now a welter of petty warlords and desperate robber-princes, plundering their neighbors for the wealth to continue on a little longer.

Forty years ago a tide of war swept over the Gyre states, each of them snapping at the others to become the new hegemon of the region. The results of this Autumn War were singularly inconclusive, with borders shifting somewhat but nothing more accomplished beyond a great loss of life and a seeding of grudges. The struggle was over within a year, but it was enough to leave the successor states licking their wounds and plotting to better their position.

Now, a new season of war is feared to be at hand. The Anakim have been quiet, perhaps too quiet, and their attention has been distracted by the crusaders of their cousins in Sarul. The successor states eye each other warily, wondering which of them is to be first to declare war, and which of them might be the first to perish. And in the north, the Reaping King sits silent in his folded halls, the Black Brass Legion never departing far from the megalopolis. It is an uneasy season for all in the Gyre, and there is little that promises a kinder age to come.

The Nations and Features of the Gyre

The following pages describe the major nations of the Gyre and their qualities. Aside from the great human polities of the region, however, there are a number of points of interest to be found. In addition, numerous small *arratus*, minor ruins, forgotten citadels, or Outsider enclaves can be found throughout the Gyre, unremarked here but of great significance to their near neighbors.

The Ashblight: A vast southern *arratu* that extends into the ancient lost provinces of the pre-Hegemony Gyre. The Anak hordes that crushed Emed-Dar poured out of the Ashblight and the losers of their endless quarrels inhabit it still. The craggy terrain is dominated by monstrous fungal growths that exhale choking, ash-like spores that root in the unfortunate or unprepared. The monstrous fauna of the *arratu* is a mix of amorphous, tentacular Outsider beasts and luckless native creatures that have been colonized by the fungus, thus rendered immortal and insane by the parasitism.

The Black Spine: A towering mountain range that marks the western edge of the Gyre. The vast height and near-impenetrable wall of the mountains catches the western rains; were it not for the constant venting of the Font on the eastern side of the mountains, much of the Gyre would be a desert. The Black Spine is riddled with ancient Outsider facilities and sorcerer-king outposts. The danger of their high peaks makes mining or herding too perilous for ordinary souls to attempt.

The Blind Marsh: A product of the Black Spine's rain-catching and a constant outflow of water from the mountain range's roots, the Blind Marsh is a boggy hell of voracious plants, venomous beasts, and amphibian abominations. Scholars believe it was once a coastal stronghold of the Polop, and some of those Outsiders and their ruins may lurk there still.

The Carceral Sea: Like most seas of the Latter Earth, sailing far on the Carceral Sea is tremendously dangerous. Huge Outsider sea-monsters prowl the waves, many of them as intelligent as humans in their own way, and the vicious Polop are jealous of intruders into their domain. Unpredictable ocean currents, lethal atmospheric disturbances, and blindly dangerous megastructures only compound the risk. Sorcerously-augmented ships might have some chance of making it across the sea, but the traders and wayfarers that ply the northern coast seldom dare to lose sight of land. Only pirates and other reckless mariners dare venture far out, and those are usually reliant on some charm or assurance that will help them dodge the inevitable sea monsters and Outsider beasts that would otherwise sink them there.

Emed-Dar: Once the jewel of the southern provinces of the Hegemony, Emed-Dar was overwhelmed by the Anakim two hundred years ago. Its fertile fields, beautiful cities, and peaceful villages were annihilated, and it was only by a desperate struggle at the Usuldarum River that the forces of Llaigis and the remaining Emedians were able to hold the line. The Anakim have ruled Emed-Dar ever since, occupying themselves chiefly in murdering each other and raiding the surrounding lands. Despite the long arm of the Ashblight that has spread into Emed-Dar, much of the land remains rich and good, should the Anak ever be driven back into the *arratu*.

The Font: A tremendous megastructure that predates even Outsider rule, the Font is a mile-wide well of perpetually-overflowing water, the drainage rolling down the eastern slopes to eventually form the headwaters of the Usuldarum River. Numerous broken control structures ring the Font, with evidence of ancient tubing suggesting that the Font was once the main water source for some long-vanished megalopolis or far-buried Deep.

Lost Emed: Emed-Dar was not the first part of Emed to be lost. In the early days of the Vothite Republic, before a stable confederacy could be achieved, Anak raiders from the Ashblight succeeded in rolling over the ancient province of Emed-Mar. The destruction of certain Vothite Workings there and the last desperate efforts of the Emedians caused an ecological eruption that turned much of the area into a steaming jungle of viciously dangerous plants and native fauna. To this day, countless Maran cities and towns remain lost within the green shadows of the place, their relics guarded by Maran automatons, furious shades, and those Anak jungle clans that have learned to adapt to the environment.

The Mirewash: The waters of the Usulmot River flow into this depression, swelled by the runoff from the Black Spine. The marshy bog has always been a favored retreat for rebels and refugees from the Reaping King's rule and today its seclusion serves to cloak a considerable number of fallen Hegemony officials and beggar-nobles. Many family treasures and stolen goods are carried into the Mirewash, but few come out without bloodshed.

The Plains of the Iron Sky: This great *arratu* has been partially dislocated from the surrounding reality; the sky within it is a perpetual shade of dull iron and the air is an unbreathable, choking haze like that favored by certain Outsiders. Only adventurers with special tools or sorcery can venture within to plunder the ruins that dot its gray, waterless sands. Not all of those ruins are human, and sages suggest that one of the ruined cities within the Plains was actually translocated from a different world.

The Rebel Coast: Once part of Ka-Adun's administrative sphere, the cities of the Rebel Coast split off over a century ago to make their own way. That way consists largely of intercine warfare, piracy, and a kaleidoscopic shift of rising and falling princes. The coastal cities send considerable trade to the First City of Ka-Adun, but the inland princelings and the machinations of the rival cities keep the coast in a constant state of low-level turmoil. Rule of the various princedoms is often far more reliant on a lord's strength of arm and powers of cunning than any purity of blood, and more than a few of the coast's rulers were once freebooters. Few last long enough to install heirs.

The Sisters: A refuge for the boldest and maddest of the Gyre's pirates, those seamen skilled enough to cross the narrows from the mainland without incident will find a few small, thickly forested islands and the single ramshackle town of Spray to serve their needs with whatever might be available. The "uninhabited" islands are favorite refuges for wizards and worse, their lairs made in the ancient ruins that are common there. Indeed, the *arratu* on the largest isle appears to be a festering mass of heaving alien life that's completely overgrown the miles-wide top of some ancient, sunken megalopolis' highest tower.

The Tombwater: The depth of the Tombwater is unknown, but scholars agree that somewhere at the bottom, some ancient pumping device is forcing a river's worth of water up to the surface. Most credit the mere as a fallen-in Deep, the miles-long tunnels and galleries of the ancient working now filled with dark, silty water. Explorers along the southern coast of the Tombwater have found numerous surface ruins from the age of the sorcerer-king, and some villages of demihumans or exiles have made homes out of these remains.

The White Waste: The climate of the Gyre is fairly temperate, being cooler in the north and somewhat hotter in the south, but the White Waste is an anomaly created by the ancient Working at its heart. Within its zone of effect the temperature is usually below freezing, with occasional thin snowfalls or white-out blizzards sweeping across the barren land. Most believe the disruption to be produced by some damaged ancient xenoforming Working, but a few claim that the waste is a product of an ancient sorcerer-king's experiment gone awry. Whatever the cause, only the desperate venture into the Waste, and then only to plunder the frozen dead of the installations and small Deeps that can be found beneath the snows.

Emed-Kist

A loosely-bound monarchy among the nations of the Gyre, Emed-Kist is ruled from the city of Medek, where the Great King deals with the numerous barons, earls, and dukes that hold ancestral fiefs throughout the kingdom. The lords are constantly conniving to weaken royal power, while the king relies on the merchants and commoners to give teeth to his pronouncements.

Emed-Kist was once the backwater frontier of the kingdom of Emed-Dar, a loose patchwork of tribal chieftains, isolated ethnic groups, Darian colonial towns, and villages of *arratu*-reclaimers, with a not-inconsiderable fragment of Old Vothite nobility who had fled their falling empire a thousand years ago. When Emed-Dar was drowned under the Anakim hordes two hundred years ago, vast numbers of refugees flooded into the eastern frontier, overwhelming the existing authorities.

The Kistian refugees coalesced around a minor cadet branch of the Darian royal house, elevating its patriarch as the first "Great King" of Emed-Kist. The Great King claims nominal rule over all of former Emed-Dar, but in practice, his authority extends only to the Kistian border-and that, only to a degree. The former tribal chieftains, Vothite thought-houses, provincial governors, and minor ethnarchs were raised to noble ranks commensurate with their influence, and their traditional lands assigned to them as royally-granted fiefs.

Ever since then, the old nobility of Emed-Kist have waged a halfhearted struggle against royal authority while jealously guarding their ancient privileges and the autonomy of their fiefs. The refugee Darians had no particular loyalty to these new lords, and the villages they founded and the towns they swelled had a much deeper tie to the king than to their nominal local overlords. Numerous royal rights and protections were granted to them, limiting the degree to which their lords could tax them, enlist their labor, or conscript them for war.

As a consequence, the lords rely chiefly on their own ancient kindred, enlisting them as soldiers and officials in their domain. This leaves the heirs of the Darian refugees with little prospect of advancement outside of mercantile wealth or service to the king, leaving it the present case that hardly any feudal officials are Darian, and hardly any royal servants are of the Old Kistian peoples.

This tension can occasionally erupt into violence. Some fiefs are relatively calm, with the Darians and the native locals forced into cooperation by external threats or reconciled by a skillful lord's rule. Others are bitter, sullen places with a restive Darian population under the hard hands of a lord and people who view them as little better than colonial invaders. While the combined military strength of the lords and their kin-armies is vastly greater than any of the standing forces of the Great King, their ancient grudges and the shared hostility of the Darian commoners keeps them nominally subject to the will of the throne.

Population

Approximately 1,000,000 humans and demihumans. The capital of Medek has perhaps 50,000 citizens.

Government

Great King Syet Lun rules through vassal dukes, marquises, counts, and barons. Towns and cities are held directly of the king by chiefs and mayors.

Problems

Border raids from Sarulite bandits or the Anakim of Emed-Dar are common perils.
The feudal lords are constantly quarreling over land.
The Darian-descended newcomers and the native Kistians dislike and distrust each other.

Names

The non-Darian peoples have their own name customs which often vary considerably from those below.
Male: Suen, Lauw, Kham, Wan, Kang, Tuok, Shway, Kwo, Sam, Zan, Bo, Pak, Hun, Gyat, Kin, Byet
Female: Kata, Jena, Jaia, Zaia, Sami, Pai, Zena, Kaia, Ji, Kanna, Hana, Fei, Ani, Dani, Juni, Chana
Family Names: Gow, Lyak, Tau, Jwei, Kej, Lien, Mak, Dek, Seng, Zju, Myan, Kwai, Xong, Jiet, Kyan

Character Concepts

Darian freebooter, Fallen noble heir, Rebel Kistian, Mercenary sellsword, Disgraced official, Displaced refugee, Wandering troubadour, Runaway peasant

Every fief of Emed-Kist has its own ancient traditions, customs, and quirks, kept fastidiously by the natives and respected only at convenience by the Darians dwelling there. In the rare harmonious domains, the two groups mingle socially and may even live together; in others, there are Darian villages and native villages, and their interactions are at arm's length. Most of the market towns and major cities are populated chiefly by Darians, and it is through this influence that they control much of the liquid wealth of the kingdom. The great vassals are perpetually annoyed by the fact that most trade towns are direct vassals of the king, and not the local lord.

The present Great King is gravely worried about this division in his kingdom. He would like very much to pronounce a grand crusade of reconquest into Emed-Dar, there to reclaim the lost kingdom and unite his bickering people in a shared dream of their former glory. This plan has considerable support even among the native lords, for they imagine that the Darians may then all go back to their own country. Despite this, the Great King has been unable to quell the grudges and mistrust among the feudal lords, and any great commitment of military force into Emed-Dar would leave the state easy prey for an attack by Llaigisan warlords or a greedy Vothite Senate.

Ka-Adun

Ka-Adun is a city and a province both, the former so vast that it is almost the province itself. When the Reaping King landed in the ancient port city a thousand years ago, it was little more than the crumbled remnants of some ancient Vothite coastal garrison. By the time he finished his conquest of the Gyre two centuries later, it was a vast metropolis that has only grown in the centuries since.

The heart of Ka-Adun is the "First City", the original port on the Carceral Sea. Almost all the remaining inhabitants of the city dwell there, with food grown in cleared areas of the new city or sent down the mighty Usuldarum River as payment for foreign goods. It is the last outpost of true authority for the Brass Hegemony, and the nobles and officials who rule there do so with desperate vigilance.

Beyond the First City is the legacy of a thousand years of tireless construction by the automatons of the Black Brass Legion and uncounted slave laborers. Mile upon mile of paved streets and pale buildings and endless tunnels and vaults all stretch out for leagues in every direction, encasing the earth in structures of stone and alien metal brought up from the Deeps. This "new city" was intended for the Welcoming, a promised time of greeting when the kindred of the Reaping King will come to take possession of the entire continent.

No such kindred have ever come, and few seriously believe they ever will. The Reaping King orders the Legion to raise new structures but the artisans who design them and the human laborers who remain to toil do so only for the sake of their pay and the hope of security. The vast majority of the new city stands wholly empty, with pockets of bandits, monsters, rebels, and worse making petty baronies and miserable dominions in palaces and gardens meant for those who will not come. The Black Brass Legion shows no interest in such intruders, too absorbed in the work of further construction.

Every month, a welter of trading vessels make port in Ka-Adun. Most are coasters from along the Rebel Coast to the east, taking produce and plunder to the markets in order to trade under the eye of nominally neutral masters. More precious by far are the Yellow Ships that come at unpredictable times in a season, bearing wondrous goods from across the Carceral Sea. The delicacies, fabrics, mechanisms, grimoires, and priceless raw materials they bring draw merchants from throughout the Gyre and the interest of wealthy grandees from every corner of the realm. The men of the Yellow Ships go veiled and silent, communicating through manlike slaves that speak their thoughts. To rob them is punishable by a hideous death at the hands of the Hegemony.

The great city of Ka-Adun does not absorb the whole of its province, though it is intended to eventually do so. Outside the new city, noble estates and grand retreats were built in former centuries for the refreshment of Adunic nobility. Since the collapse of the Hegemony, these estates have become strongholds for desperate beggar-princes, ones who no longer receive their largesse from the Reaping King nor the fruits of their expropriated provincial estates. They maintain the old elegance of Ka-Adun with grim determination, many refusing to accept the present situation as anything but a temporary inconvenience to be remedied when the Reaping King finally sees fit. In the meanwhile, they collect "taxes" from their serfs and plunder each other in the name of fairly sharing the wealth due to the nobility. Many employ devices or Workings created during the height of the Hegemony and poorly maintained since. The numbers of magical disasters and unplanned arcane events in Ka-Adun dwarf those elsewhere.

The broken nobility rule over a common populace that once made their living as servants to the great or laborers on their vast estates. Many are gone now, having fled into the Rebel Coast in hopes of better prosperity or perished to banditry or plundering. Those that remain are left to either huddle in the First City under the eye of the Reaping King's chief servants or to seek the patronage of some beggar-prince who has the strength to protect them from his foes. Many are disappointed in their search.

Population

Perhaps 500,000 people still remain in the province, a quarter of them packed into the First City, another quarter in various pockets in the new city, and the rest in the remaining rural area of the province.

Government

The Reaping King is silent in his folded palace. Currently, the Grand Censor Euphon leads the strongest party in the First City's political mire.

Problems

Rebels and worse are forming small statelets within the empty structures of the new city.
Ka-Adun has a noble class far too large to be supported by the commoners without oppression.
The Reaping King seems totally indifferent to his own government, leading to chaos in the palace.

Names

Male: Arcadius, Constantine, Damianus, Demetrios, Phocas, Valens, Basil, Alexios, Belisarius
Female: Ariadne, Eulogia, Eudokia, Irene, Sophia, Zoe, Thekla, Theodota, Helena, Anastasia
Family Names: Komnenos, Phokas, Cydones, Lascaris, Psellos, Dalassa, Prodromus, Xiphilinos

Character Concepts

Beggar-noble scion, Out-of-work clerk, New city robber, Escaped slave, Coastal pirate, New city builder, Urban merchant, Impoverished functionary

Llaigis

Grim Llaigis is a half-tamed land of wild hillsides, trackless forests, pockets of *arratu* badlands and the looming peaks of the Black Spine to the west. Throughout the past two millenia it has always been a backwater land for the desperate and the strong, its few cities built on the bones of prior civilizations and its farming hamlets hemmed in by perils.

Llaigis offers little to those living there. Its fields are unremarkable, its forests dangerous to exploit, and its hills not unduly burdened with riches. Its isolation, however, has made it a favorite refuge for exiled sorcerers, fallen nobility, and unacceptable cults. The ruins these refugees have left behind often contain precious remnants from a former age, and so relic-plundering has provided the Llaigisan people with rare opportunities for riches.

For all else, the people of Llaigis turn to steel. They fight each other for the meager wealth of their fields and mines when they cannot find more profitable work fighting for foreigners willing to pay for their savage strength. Llaigisan sellswords and mercenary bands are found throughout the Gyre in the employ of any master who has the silver and bread to hire them. While they are a brutal lot even by the standards of the Gyre they are not ignorant of military discipline or incapable of subtle tactics. The ordinary Llaigisan farmer knows as much of a warband's work as most common soldiers elsewhere.

The folk of Llaigis sharpen their skills not only on each other, but on the grim foes that emerge from the south and the ruins of Emed-Dar. The Anakim who destroyed that nation make a habit of raids north into Llaigis, and every savage warband must be turned back with blood and steel. The *arratu* that have festered in Emed-Dar send their own share of abominations to harry the people of Llaigis, and the considerable stretches of their own infected lands add to the burden.

In such a harsh land military might is the final justification for any ruler. Each patch of land has its baron, chieftain, prince, duke, pontiff, headman, or autarch to claim it, and each one proves his claim by the number of warriors he can direct into battle. Those warriors must be fed, of course, and so heavy taxes and cruel exactions are commonplace among the peasantry. Many such serfs yearn to be accepted into a lord's retinue and win a place in the warband, but a lord can afford to accept only the best warriors into their service.

King Hulit in the great, vile city of Gathis is the foremost of these warlords, with a legion of warriors ten thousand strong to carry out his will. While his might is more than a match for any single rival, there are enough great lords in the country that he cannot act with complete impunity. He makes bargains with his subordinates, trading them license to act as they wish in exchange for obedience in matters important to him. He rose to rule the city by his cunning, but he fears his son lacks the wit to keep it once he is gone.

Population

Approximately 800,000. Gathis, its largest and most decadent city, has 40,000 inhabitants.

Government

King Hulit of Gathis is the foremost of a half-dozen kings, princes, and primates. In practice, the law belongs to whatever warlord is nearest to hand.

Problems

Llaigis' government is unstable and constantly subject to disruption by ambitious warlords.

Anakim and monsters from Emed-Dar are forever crossing the southern border.

Numerous vile cults and loathsome groups operate with relative impunity within Llaigis' borders.

Names

Male: Goruk, Hroth, Lagan, Gurm, Narhak, Kroth, Yarog, Bolg, Yirn, Jagan, Mirtok, Fulvik

Female: Sarra, Tarsha, Miluni, Haru, Nira, Laheli, Bolga, Guthli, Jireela, Minna, Hejati, Kalana

Family Names: Rare outside of membership in some important dynasty or clan. Most distinctions are by epithets or places, where it matters.

Character Concepts

Untamed barbarian, Decadent thief, Grizzled mercenary, Hard-bitten village defender, Reclusive hunter, Abandoned concubine, Former cultist, Warband survivor, Ruin robber, Escaped slave

Gathis itself is a city that feeds on the wealth its soldiers bring it, either as tribute from its subject settlements or as silver brought from foreign paymasters. Filthy delights and abhorrent pleasures are to be found there, along with rare delicacies from afar and plundered opulence from ages past. Gathis makes little itself, but it feeds on what its people bring it.

Gathis, like most of the cities in Llaigis, is built atop a buried and ruined city of ages past, presumably one of the cities of the Rule of Shun that ended more than a thousand years ago. That grim sorcerer-king's land extended over much of present-day Llaigis and his places of power can still be found deep in the forests and hills. While generations of Llaigisan adventurers have plundered many of these sites, there are always new ones being discovered in some hidden copse or revealed beneath a hollowed hillside.

More than the past lingers in Llaigis, however. With the warlords so indifferent to any matters but their own advantage, Llaigis is a fertile ground for the planting of unseemly cults and dark conspiracies. There are many groups operating in the country that would never be tolerated in a more orderly realm, and sometimes the lords themselves find uses for their dark arts.

New Voth

New Voth is a land lavishly endowed with the trappings of rule. Ancient ruins of the Vothite Empire lie beneath the foundation stones of Republic-era structures, and atop them stand the palaces of the Hegemonic governors that once ruled this land as regents for the Reaping King. Now all those old lords are gone, and New Voth's people are eager to regain their former place in the world.

New Voth is the sole significant republican state of the Gyre. All of its neighbors are under the hand of oligarchs, warlords, or hereditary nobles, but in New Voth alone the Senate can be found as proud representatives of their fellow citizens. Each of the hundred and one districts within the borders grants full suffrage to every land-owning citizen and the right to choose their representative senator every four years.

As any proud Vothite would tell you, it's only natural that the senators so elected should be the richest and most influential people in their home district, or the favored choices of those men and women. Admittedly, their interests are perhaps better-protected than those of the common citizenry, and the consequences for opposing these favored candidates can be very unfortunate, and some senatorial seats are practically the hereditary property of certain powerful dynasties, but still, they serve at the leave of the people.

The Vothites are proud of their civilized and educated populace and their fierce independence from any outside rule. They were the last to bow to the Reaping King's legions at the Hegemony's rise to power, and the first to refuse him tribute when the Legion no longer came. They deplore the hidebound classism of the Thurians, the brutality of the Llaigisans, and the blood-consciousness of the folk of Emed-Kist. There is little doubt in New Voth that their own ways of self-reliance, industrious effort, and determined personal improvement are the best.

To the Vothites, personal self-determination is something sacred. They have inherited a horror of all mind-influencing sorceries from their imperial predecessors and even today, the proven use of telepathic or mind-bending magics is a capital crime. In the same vein, New Voth and Sarul are the only provinces of the Gyre where privately-owned slaves are outlawed; in Sarul because the Church assumes its parishioners would inevitably use slaves as occasions for sin, but in New Voth because the people consider it an unforgivable crime against freedom.

The Vothites did relatively well in the Autumn War forty years ago, and popular feeling still believes that the ancient Republic should be reformed, whether by diplomacy or steel. Only the fear of uniting their neighbors in an alliance against them currently stays their hand.

The love of independence and free thought has spawned numerous small communities of like-minded men and women, along with communes, social pacts, religious retreats, and other self-chosen settlements. Some are established on philosophical grounds, while others are simply towns where the locals think new profit is to be had. A surprisingly large number of Vothites are *arratu* settlers, willing to risk death to tame the wastes.

In many ways, New Voth is a gold rush nation, one eager to burst free of a thousand years of alien rule. Strangers and expatriates are welcomed so long as they offer something to their neighbors, and the broad tracts of land once held by absent Hegemonic nobles are being thrown open to new settlers. Old ruins once sealed off by cautious Hegemony governors are now open to plunder and explore, and the *arratu* wastes that former viceroys found unprofitable are now being parceled out to newcomers willing to risk their unearthly perils.

Yet this new exuberance comes with an equal measure of roughness. The losers in this great game are given little mercy, and a man without silver in his pocket or a friend to hold him up has little hope for help. The strong are eager for workers and serfs, and while slavery is forbidden in New Voth, the employment of rough-handed "persuaders" is easier to hide. On the frontiers of New Voth many things are done that are not in accordance with the laws, and there are few officials or senators interested in righting such wrongs without being paid for it.

Population

Around 1,500,000 total inhabitants, with the capital city of Clarum holding 150,000, the second-largest city in all the Gyre.

Government

A hundred and one senators make laws to be carried out by functionaries and bureaus they appoint, but these agents are often pawns of the magnates.

Problems

A senatorial faction wants to increase its influence by conquering new districts from surrounding lands.
Slave traders are furious at their inability to travel in New Voth with their stock, and demand concessions.
Popular feeling is for war with their "backward and wicked" neighbors to impose republican government.

Names

Male: Brogimar, Domnu, Epon, Olor, Mertom, Tecto, Rigos, Volcan, Marku, Torix, Maros, Taskos
Female: Adia, Camma, Inda, Mara, Epona, Manisa, Sibylla, Teria, Beka, Milya, Xanthe, Korai
Family Names: Ankyra, Gordon, Clow, Konion, Angra, Bedu, Midai, Vanak, Attis, Secrops, Lycas

Character Concepts

Badlands prospector, Runaway foreign slave, Debt victim, Aspiring entrepreneur, Political party agent, Ambitious peasant, Ignored Hegemonic noble heir, Freedom fighter

Sarul

Sarul is a great rarity; a nation composed almost entirely of Blighted. Most of the natives are Anakim, savage warborn Blighted imbued with an intrinsic hatred of humanity and brutal instincts of violence, cruelty, and malice. Others are different breeds of Blighted, those crippled and maimed by ancient curses or magical alterations that make it all but impossible for them to live peacefully in human lands.

All, however, are devotees of the nameless Bleeding God, an ancient deity promulgated by the Sixteenth Prophet some two hundred years ago, when the Anakim swept over Emed-Dar and threatened to destroy all the western Gyre. The prophet's tremendous martial prowess and invincible charisma formed the seed of Sarul, and it continued to expand until his death some thirty years later. Its borders have been relatively stable since then, despite the constant attacks by the Anakim of Emed-Dar and the uneasy peace Sarul holds with Emed-Kist.

The Bleeding God's teachings are simple: he is the only true god, all thinking life is wicked and deserving of damnation, and it is only by the Bleeding God's self-sacrifice and love that any are spared from eternal suffering. The Blighted are cursed with evil hearts, perhaps, but they are not fundamentally different from baseline humans and no more damned than their brethren. By faith in the Bleeding God and obedience to his teachings both baseline and Blighted may be forgiven their evils and saved in the world to come.

As a consequence, it is the Church that rules Sarul, from the village priests and priestesses to the Bishop-Generals that rule cities and the mighty Red, White, and Black Pontiffs who are chosen from among the bishops. The command of a cleric is law to the commoners, and a predictable amount of corruption, wickedness, and selfishness comes from this authority. The Church itself expects as much due to its theological principles, and so the Inquisition within its ranks never lacks for work.

Sarulite law is brutal and direct. Much petty crime that would bring severe punishment in other lands is held lightly here; brawling, mugging, minor theft, unlawful adultery, and public disturbances are met with on-the-spot beatings or fines and then dismissed. Serious crimes such as murder, rape, maiming, blasphemy, treason, or assault on a cleric are answered by summary execution, usually carried out by the nearest available Church crusader. These judgments are not always fair, proven, or merited, but the Church is convinced that only through merciless law can any kind of peace be kept in the nation. Outside scholars argue over whether or not they are right.

The villages and towns of Sarul are crude, poor, and dangerous. Fistfights and bare-handed robbery are common, advanced learning is a province almost exclusively of the clergy, and many of the cities and towns are built in the ruins of earlier, more materially advanced civilizations. Bandits and worse are common on the roads.

Population

Approximately 400,000 Anakim and other Blighted. The capital of Uzag has 20,000 residents.

Government

The Red, Black, and White Pontiffs of the Church of the Bleeding God are the absolute rulers of Sarul, their personal identities known to few.

Problems

Corruption within the Church is a constantly-fought menace at all levels of the organization.

The Anakim of Emed-Dar hate the Sarulites as traitors and rivals for control of the southern Gyre.

Blighted within Sarul can cause significant problems due to their own cursed needs or psychology.

Names

Male: Abdi, Arakhu, Balasu, Anshar, Dakuri, Izdu, Gamil, Kha, Kullani, Makru, Suzub, Urukh, Zabu
Female: Belit, Shala, Kishar, Aralu, Mylitta, Rubati, Gula, Damkina, Sunat, Serua, Zirra, Sarae, Kalu
Family Names: Largely unknown. Individuals may have epithets of their role, church rank, father, clan, or village when a distinction must be made.

Character Concepts

Secret unbeliever, Crusader sent wandering, Blighted seeking refuge, Escaped criminal, Framed innocent, Adventurous Anak peasant, Cleric out to convert, Merchant adventurer, Hunted infidel

While the Blighted of Sarul are lacking in the civil arts, no one disputes their terrifying martial prowess. The crusaders of the Bleeding God are some of the most fearsome cavalry troops in the Gyre, many of them still riding the fanged coursers of their tribal ancestors. They fight constantly with warbands from Emed-Dar, Blighted bandits and renegades within Sarul, and the least of them is a hardened veteran of war. Their Blighted instincts of warlike aggression have been channeled and directed by the Church, and they fight with a combination of joy and pious cruelty that disquiets even their allies.

There are very few baseline humans or demihumans in Sarul. The Anak urge to kill baselines can only be shackled by the laws of the Church, not erased, and human visitors are advised to go cloaked and avoid dealing with those Anakim not verified in their ability to control their innate Hate. The continued company of a crusader or other Anak in authority is advised for such safety as it can bring.

Visitors who do not share the faith of the Bleeding God are counseled to be strictly silent about matters of religion. While unbelievers and backsliders are by no means unknown within Sarul, any cleric who suspects a stranger of spreading a false faith will act accordingly.

Thur

Thur is a land of fragile wealth and delicately-balanced prosperity. Numerous ancient Workings still function in Thur, survivals from the age of the Vothite Republic. While relatively fragile and in need of regular maintenance, their distance from the capital in New Voth spared them from much of the violence of war and allowed their Thurian caretakers to profit from their ancient power.

These Workings provide raw energies of heat, light, and motion to their attached factories and infrastructure. Every town of significance is built around such a Working, with the factories and pumping stations at the heart of the town and the residential quarters encircling them. Great buried leytubes snake outward to surrounding villages and estates, providing smaller measures of energy to light heatless lamps at night and provide hot running water and smokeless warmth to those wealthy enough to afford a connection.

The great engines and factories of Thur are capable of producing large amounts of consumer goods, granted sufficient raw materials imported from New Voth, Ka-Adun, and Emed-Kist. The standard lifestyle of a Thurian commoner is as comfortable and well-fed as a knight of Emed-Kist or a Llaigisan slave merchant. Many sophisticated goods are made in Thur, including most of the functioning hurlants found in the Gyre.

Ruling over the common laborers and countryfolk of Thur are the Gentry, a class belonging to the Great Guilds that command Thur. These Guilds are heirs to the maintenance workers who kept the Workings running, and their *de facto* control of Thur's wealth has ensured their domination over the military powers of the state. The High Masters are in charge of each guild's affairs, and every five years they elect one among them to serve as Grand Master and first among equals.

Many of these Guilds no longer have any functioning arcanotechnical knowledge, their arts having decayed under the shifting of the Legacy or the Workings they once kept having since been lost. Even so, tradition and their entrenched political power have kept the Guilds in firm control of Thur, with every position loftier than a village clerk being filled by one Guild member or another.

Membership in the Guilds is not hereditary. Every Gentry candidate must successfully graduate from one of a number of elite schools originally founded to pass on the arcanotechnical arts. Certain Guilds will accept recruits only from certain schools, and the loftiest and mightiest will accept only from the best of them. While a Guild member might expect to find a place for one or perhaps two of their children, only extensive connections and dearly expensive bribes can ensure that all of a family's children have a hope of joining the Gentry as well.

The schools are hotbeds of politics, treachery, and the occasional assassination. Rivals are expelled via blackmail and bribery, and unworthy candidates are passed through with enough "encouragement" from a patron. Even so, sometimes a remarkably talented commoner might be allowed to enter one of the lesser schools.

Unsurprisingly, many outsiders would love to live in Thur, enjoying the comparative luxury and comfort of the land. Thurians are very selective about who they allow to settle permanently, however; adventurers and travelers can pass through with minimal difficulty, but winning permanent residence requires the patronage of the Gentry, and that kind of favor never comes cheap. Foreigners with business in Thur are given passes at the border, and the Gentry are not gentle with interlopers who are found without those documents or who have overstayed their allowed time.

Alas, Thur's prosperity has been on a steady downward slide since the Autumn War forty years ago, when Vothite armies sacked several important border cities and destroyed their Workings. The remaining facilities can barely keep up with the current load on them, and outages of light and heat are becoming more common. Without the material comforts that have kept them docile, Thurian commoners are beginning to blame the Gentry for failing at their ancient duty, and accusations of "power theft" and "energy hoarding" are beginning to inspire anger among the populace.

Population

Approximately 1,200,000. Its capital of Highbridge has a hundred thousand permanent residents.

Government

Grand Master Ellia Grinton of the Hydrotheurgic Guild leads the High Masters of Thur. Other senior guild members act as officials, mayors, and chiefs.

Problems

The Gentry schools are increasingly corrupt, with rankings and expulsions bought and sold.

The Workings the nation relies upon are very vulnerable to sabotage and focused attacks.

The damage of the Autumn War forty years ago has caused serious infrastructure problems.

Names

Male: James, Edward, Thomas, Henry, Theodore, William, Philip, Cuthred, Hugh, Owen, Harold
Female: Mary, Elizabeth, Rebecca, Anne, Emily, Gwyn, Felicia, Penny, Susan, Olivia, Morwen
Family Names: Usually by place or an ancestor's trade, such as Cooper, Smith, Witch, or Watermaster. Foreign names from immigrants are not unknown.

Character Concepts

Expelled school candidate, Workings maintenance mage, Ambitious guildsman, Hard-used common laborer, Demimonde denizen, Immigrant with something to prove, Fugitive debt-slave

The People and Languages of the Gyre

Most of the inhabitants of the Gyre belong to one of five different major ethnicities, all derived from different mother-populations that emerged from the Deeps at the end of Outsider hegemony. While all of these peoples had their own tongues, customs, and ancient culture, the ensuing thousands of years have largely effaced these old ways, leaving only small tokens behind in the surviving populace.

Aside from the five major groups, there are dozens of smaller ethnic groups that derive from surface populations of rebels, Outsider servants, or escapees from the Deeps. Most of the original stock has melted away into the surrounding population, but in isolated areas or frontiers such as Emed-Kist there yet remain a considerable number of these minor populations. Those that derive from Outsider servants are often considerably changed from human baselines, not uncommonly to demihuman degrees of difference. This difference is often the only thing that has kept them from being assimilated into the surrounding population, so the surviving groups tend to be those that had least occasion to mingle with their neighbors or conquerors.

Among the five major groups there is relatively little ethnic feeling or solidarity compared to the ties of place and province. A Vothian official in Ka-Adun will care far more for the interests of his peers in the First City than the well-being of his kinsmen in New Voth, and a Khalan in Emed-Kist will fight her own kind at the command of her lord without much concern. Shared ethnicity can be a convenient point of sympathy when two people wish to interact, but it does little to hinder competition or existing loyalties.

The minor groups tend to have a different mindset. These small populations simply could not have survived as they did without a keen sense of their own difference and the importance of preserving their own identity. They often refuse to marry outside their own kind and will commonly prioritize the interests of the group over those of outsiders. A steady state of friction with the surrounding majority populations is common, though most long-standing communities have worked out methods of dealing with these strains. Many such small groups survive by being especially useful to the majority in some way, often employing any unique graces they have in the service of the local rulers. Their leadership cultivates patronage relationships with important local powers, and it's common for the resident duke or local war chief to have them under their personal protection… in exchange for proper tribute.

Major Ethnicities of the Gyre

The five different major groups are found throughout the Gyre. Some may be more densely represented in some nations than others, but seldom would they look out of place in any cosmopolitan center.

Vothians are the people that emerged from the Deep known as the Well of the One Thought, a folk originally led by the first Mentarch of the Vothite Empire, the dreaded Imperator-Queen Voth. They're found largely in New Voth, with considerable populations of Hegemony servants and officials in Ka-Adun. Refugee thought-houses from the fall of the Empire also left groups of them to be found in Emed-Kist. "Vothian" is the ethnic name they go by; citizens of New Voth or the prior Empire are distinguished as "Vothite" regardless of their bloodline. Vothians tend to be tall, slim, and pale-skinned, with black hair and blue eyes.

Khalan are the people of the Black Crucible, a terrible punishment-Deep established for unfathomable reasons by the Outsiders. The awful scars that the Deep left on the people and their customs have largely dissipated in the ensuing ages, but unwary adventurers still sometimes stumble on ancient Khalan ruins and the hideous engines within. Some postulate that the excesses of the vile Rule of Shun derived from study of these things. Most Khalan are found in Llaigis, though they are known in Emed-Kist, and a few Vothite river-villages are of their kind. They are a large, broad, bronzed people in the main, with dark or red eyes and hair that ranges from black to various dark hues of red. A few Khalan bloodlines are unusually slight, however, rarely exceeding five feet; most think them the heirs of some special-purpose sub-group.

The ***Lin*** are derived from the people of the Tin Mirror Sky, a false-world Deep fabricated by the Outsiders. The experiment appears to have been loosely monitored, and an unusual number of ancient Lin escaped to add their numbers to the rebels and hunted survivors of the surface world. They once formed the aristocratic elite of Old Emed, with lesser cadet houses as governors in Emed-Kist. When Emed-Dar collapsed, the rush of refugees has left Emed-Kist well-populated by their kind. They are a somewhat short, compact people with skins that range from ivory to dark gold, black hair, and almond eyes that are usually black. Some surface-tribe admixtures have left certain lines with pale hair or light eyes.

Olok are the folk of a broken Deep, the Downward Tower, that was disrupted in some Outsider quarrel unintelligible to humanity. Cast on the surface before the fall of Outsider rule, they were harried in a desultory fashion but left largely alone until the eventual fall of alien rule. They concentrated chiefly on the northern coast of the Gyre, forming the original population of the modern state of Ka-Adun. They were the folk the Reaping King first met on his landing, and so formed the backbone of the Hegemony's aristocracy and laboring classes. They are a very dark-skinned people for the most part, with dark, tightly-curled hair and matching eyes. The marks of their time spent among surface tribes sometimes emerge in different colors and textures of hair or different shades of eyes.

Osrin are the people of modern Thur, having derived mostly from the labor-Deep known as the Turning Vault. When their endless labors on behalf of the Outsiders ended, they emerged into a Gyre that had already been largely dominated by those Deep-dwellers who had emerged earlier. As such, their main population is found mostly in Thur, though considerable numbers of smaller groups are found in almost every other land as the descendants of unsuccessful independent city-states or colonial outposts. They are a folk of average stature, with skin colors ranging from pale cream to ruddy or olive hues. Their hair color is blond or brown, with blues, greens, and hazels most often found for eye colors.

Languages of the Gyre

Each of the five major groups had their own native tongue in the days gone past. Scholars and Deep-raiders sometimes study the written form of these languages to better understand the inscriptions they find, but none of them are spoken today save in the most venerable cultural rituals or by the most zealous enthusiasts. Sages refer to them as ***Ancient Vothian***, ***Ancient Khalan***, and so forth.

Trade Cant is a language favored by merchants, adventurers, and travelers, being a pidgin of various tongues found throughout the Gyre. While it has no status as a literary language and scarce any as a written one, a speaker of Trade Cant can generally convey basic ideas and important wishes to most cosmopolitan people in the Gyre, or conduct sophisticated mercantile exchanges with a fellow speaker.

Old Vothian was the lingua franca of the Vothite Empire and its subject peoples in the Gyre, gradually supplanting the ancient versions of their own speech and shifting their subjects' tongues in turn. It's found on many ancient Workings of the Empire and early Republic, but it is not spoken save by erudite scholars, who often use it as a common language between them. ***Modern Vothian*** is the common tongue of the present-day New Voth; while influenced by its neighboring languages, its speakers can often get the general gist of the older tongue.

Brass Speech is the tongue of the Hegemony and its servants, being spoken as a mother tongue in Ka-Adun and among the nobles and elites that once served the Hegemony. Aside from being a spoken language, it is found in many Hegemony-era books and inscriptions meant for the use of the Reaping King's loyal servants.

Emedian is the former language of Old Emed, and by extension much of Emed-Kist. Derived from Ancient Lin, it was a poetic tongue of sophistication, grace, and nuance, and it has never lost its reputation as a tongue of literary importance, even during the rule of the Vothite Empire.

Thurian is the modernized form of Ancient Osrin that serves as the common tongue of Thur. That nation alone can maintain any effective printing industry, and so popular pulps, newspapers, and extensive arcanotechnical documentation continues to be produced in Thurian.

Llaigisan is a smoothed-over Ancient Khalan, with extensive loans from Emedian and Old Vothian. Considerable amounts of Ancient Khalan vocabulary were excised over the years as being incompatible with peaceful sleep by those familiar with the terms.

Anak Speech is the local language spoken by the Anak tribes of the wastes and the people of Sarul. Its roots lie in the servant-speech of the Outsiders who created the first Anakim, and it has nothing to do with any of the modern human tongues. It is crude, simple, and direct, unnuanced in anything but its vocabulary for violence. The Church of the Bleeding God that rules in Sarul finds it necessary to use Old Vothian as its clerical language in order to discuss more sophisticated ideas.

Predecessant is a particularly rare and esoteric language known only to the most determined scholars and the most rapacious adventurers. It is the original language of the Reaping King and his first servitors, preserved only in a handful of documents and found on certain strange structures and occult inscriptions within the new city of Ka-Adun. Most believe it to be a language from over the Carceral Sea, spoken by whatever powers sent the Reaping King forth.

Preterite is not so much a language as a code, an ancient method of directly communicating with the Legacy. It is impossible to learn Preterite as a mere tongue; scholars can spend their entire lives trying to define the magical and metaphysical significance of a single Preterite glyph. Any mage or learned scholar can recognize the existence of Preterite markings, but even magical spells of translation are useless in giving anything but the crudest, most superficial translation of their meaning. Their presence is usually an indication that the Black Gate to a major world-Iterum is near to hand, or some similar Legacy working of unearthly power.

Outsider tongues are largely incomprehensible to humans, and usually impossible for them to physically produce. ***Abased*** is a patois that survives in certain places, a more easily-vocalized pidgin used by many Outsider species of the Gyre region in order to command their slaves. It exists now chiefly in the books of scholars and the memory of adventurers who must often interact with Abased inscriptions in the ancient Deeps.

Among the demihuman peoples of the Gyre, the languages spoken are usually those of the surrounding majority. Those descended from some cohesive cultural group may still preserve their ancestral speech, but many of these groups never had one to begin with, being created out of another group's population, and the "ancestral speech" of two different populations may have been entirely different. Some scholars maintain that the "***Recurrent***" spoken by some of those transhumans known as "elves" is evidence of a unified origin for that demihuman species. Others believe that the "***Deep Speech***" of the Outsider-engineered "dwarves" is more a consequence of their intimate involvement with the Legacy and its impact on their communication rather than the result of any unified origin.

Faiths of the Gyre

Every nation in the Gyre has their own selection of favored deities, some shared between peoples and others unique to particular nations, provinces, or even individual cities or villages. Most of these gods are of little interest to adventurers, and a GM who wants to detail them for additional setting flavor can use the tools on page 140.

Other gods, however, are more pertinent to an adventurer's ambitions. They either offer services of special interest, goals that adventurers could either further or oppose, or they are major political authorities in certain areas. The faiths described below are but a few of these.

The Brass Cult

The Reaping King never required formal worship from his subjects, but it was inevitable that some among them would seek to give him the honors due a divinity. Veneration of the King became a mark of nobility and membership in the Hegemonic elite, and even today many elaborate Brass Cult temples can be found in places that were once important to the Hegemony's aristocracy.

Since the Reaping King went silent, the cult has become convinced that inadequate worship and reverence is the cause for his seeming inaction. They loudly preach submission to the Hegemony and return to a strict obedience to Hegemonic officials, a plea that commonly falls on deaf ears. Even so, the Brass Cult is still in possession of substantial wealth and arcane resources given to it by noble believers, and they are able to reward cooperative lords and work vigorously against open enemies of the Hegemony. Most of their aristocratic clergy seek only the stabilization and strengthening of the remaining Hegemonic authority in the Gyre, and will commonly employ adventurers to carry out tasks toward that end.

The Servants of Shun

The Rule of Shun was a centuries-long secessionist movement during the Vothite Republic, during which much of modern Llaigis was taken over by the devotees of a latter-day sorcerer-king known only as "Shun". While his bloody kingdom was eventually crushed by a Republican army, his worshipers persist even into the present day in modern Llaigis, New Voth, and Emed-Kist.

The Rule of Shun was infamous for its biological experiments and mutated abominations. Modern devotees pray to Shun for deliverance from sickness and injury, and seek his favor in order to gain physical might and martial prowess. The clergy of Shun are privy to many techniques from the fallen Rule and are marvelously effective healers and augmentors. All of them, however, are sworn to aid Shun in being reborn into this world, a process that requires numerous ancient artifacts and a vast supply of "raw materials" from believers and their prey. Once this is done, believers are convinced that they will be the elect of the new age and appointed to rule over the lesser, inferior breeds of the present day.

The Old Lords

Dreaded servants of the ancient Outsiders and their alien gods, the worshipers of the Old Lords are convinced that the rule of the alien tyrants was actually an era of order, harmony, and peace, and that it was only through the treacherous machinations of wicked humanity that the era was ever lost. They blame every modern suffering on human error and point to the vast megastructures of the Deeps as proof that the Outsiders had the power to grant humanity all they could ever desire. Records of suffering, torment, and cruelty are dismissed as sorcerer-king lies.

This faith is usually found in small cells centered around an ancient Outsider control unit or fabrication node, one powered by various rites of submission and sacrifice. The cultists tend to credit any cruelty it inflicts as no more than just punishment for human wickedness, and are rewarded by the goods, powers, or augmentations that the ancient artifice bestows on them. Sometimes actual living Outsiders, particularly Tuhulot, can be found as high priests of these cells, using them for their own purposes and rewarding them for their slavish obedience.

While priests bemoan the folly of the poor and wretched sorts who often become cultists of the Old Lords, these acolytes have their reasons. Many surviving Deep artifacts can bestow wondrous benefits or abundant goods on humans who perform the proper rituals of abasement and sacrifice, and these tangible rewards of piety can mean the difference between life and death for some communities. Even some cultists who privately acknowledge the horror of the Outsiders are willing to hold their tongues for the sake of the rewards they grant.

The Golden Path

This faith is convinced of the eternal recurrence of the soul, that every creature is incessantly recycled by the Legacy into new incarnations of suffering, attachment, and loss. Only by liberating the self from any attachment to the world and conducting special rites of disentanglement may a soul be permitted the peace of final unity with the cosmos… or final extinction, depending on the sect's particular interpretation of their doctrine.

The Golden Path has temples that follow the teachings of a host of different "Liberators" who are supposed to have escaped the cycle of life and death. Their doctrines vary from place to place, but their dedication to eliminating suffering makes them a major source of Healers, and numerous temple-schools of the faith instruct candidates in those arts. Extremists of the faith, known commonly as "Wheelbreakers" are convinced that only the destruction of the world can cut short the suffering of existence, and their zealous pursuit of complete nullification of all extant reality has caused more than a few disasters.

The Bleeding God

Devotees of this faith flatly refuse to recognize the deserved divinity of any other god; to them, the name of their deity is simply "God", and they distinguish him as the Bleeding God only when they must be clear with nonbelievers. Their church rules the nation of Sarul, but other branches can be found in other nations, usually minor missionary churches and local cells. Outside of the theocracy of Sarul, the only authority is a given nation's Pontifex, and many regions have more than one of them due to disagreements on theological or political matters.

The Bleeding God is depicted as the sole creator, ruler, and judge of the world and the font of all virtue and meaning. Sentient life is hopelessly deficient in virtue, being inescapably wicked and deserving of eternal suffering. The Bleeding God accepted this just punishment on behalf of creation out of love for what he had wrought, and so believers may be redeemed by accepting his sacrifice and striving to follow the teachings of his prophets. Compassion, courage, mercy, continence, truthfulness, and self-discipline are prized by followers.

While the ethical standards of the faith are attractive to many, and its promise of an eventual afterlife of joy to faithful believers is appealing, its contempt for human virtue and strict moral demands makes it an unpopular faith in most areas. It's found most often among Blighted, slaves, outcasts, and the lowest social rungs, who find the idea of an all-powerful god that actually cares about their existence to be an exciting novelty.

The Seers of Voth

While worship of the first Mentarch of the Vothite Empire was proscribed during the thousand-year rule of the Republic, it didn't stop a variety of refugee thought-houses, wary provincial villages, and secret Republic cells from maintaining their rites. With the fall of the Republic and the religious tolerance of the Brass Hegemony, it grew back into a faith that has congregations in almost all the cities and major towns of the Gyre.

Voth is held to be the arch-architect of the Gyre, the fathomless mind that set in motion all that has come to pass. Any suffering or misery is the result of deviation from Voth's great plan and any personal problems can be overcome if the petitioner finds the correct course of action that Voth's omniscience would direct him to take. Believers work on behalf of Voth's clergy, carrying out their directions and paying tithes in exchange for oracular knowledge, secret guidance, and practical advice. Even nobles have considerable use for a Seer advisor, as their information networks can often supply any deficiencies of their magical foretelling.

Every provincial district has its First Seer to direct and coordinate individual temples, with the First Seers gathering from time to time to further the plans of their enigmatic mistress. These plans are derived from ancient rescripts issued by the Mentarch, exegised and interpreted according to cult methodologies. Different factions employ different methods, but all are eager to unearth additional "scriptures" to better plot out the future.

Outsiders and the Arratus

The aliens that formerly ruled the Latter Earth are innumerable and at least partly indescribable. The conquered world was host to thousands of different alien species, each with their outposts, consulates, and garrisons bent on maintaining their control over humanity and its Legacy. There is no doubt that a considerable number of them would have been just as glad to eradicate the entire species, but the power of the Legacy made such measures impractical; too drastic a genocide risked triggering ancient defense protocols that may have been too much even for the conquerors to have overcome.

As a consequence, the Outsiders settled in for an ages-long occupation, punishing, consuming, or "improving" the humans in their charge as they saw fit. The Deeps ensured that the populations were easily controlled, and the rebel surface tribes and the limited number of humans directly in service to the Outsiders were of little importance. During this period the chief interests of the Outsiders lay in their own obscure quarrels and intercine struggles, with wars fought occasionally by human slave armies or Blighted servitors.

When the rule of the Outsiders finally collapsed, whether from their own conflicts, the rebellion of the first sorcerer-kings, or from some unknowable decision to depart, the remnants left behind were swiftly slaughtered by the avenging human survivors. Those that survived retreated to their best-hidden or most strongly-fortified fastnesses, there to seethe in bitterness. Due to the constant splintering of Iterums, the Outsiders of most iterations of Latter Earth cannot even hope to flee the world. They are trapped forever in the home of their mortal foes.

Outsiders hate humans, for as much as a human emotion can describe their attitudes. Some hate them for what they did, others hate them for what they are, and a few hate them for what they might yet become. It is not impossible for an Outsider to form a working relationship with a human, and indeed, some modern communities still have secret ties to Outsider patrons, but such arrangements are almost always born of desperate mutual necessity. A few Outsider species are rumored to have a more benevolent attitude toward humanity, and some might actually be well-disposed toward them… or feigning it for some more awful end.

There are three major species of Outsider found within the Gyre, along with more than a dozen lesser species that have been identified in certain remote regions.

Jikegida, the Parasites

Known as the "Stickmen" by some, the Jikegida are an emaciated-looking, bipedal, four-armed humanoid species that stands approximately seven feet tall. They have a chitinous, plate-like outer integument, seven long, slender talon-fingers on each arm, and a long, flat, beetle-like body surmounted by a head with bulging black eyes and mandibular jaws. Due to their reproduction method, many of them have incongruous body parts or features from their host progenitor, such as human-like faces, furred pelts, pawed feet, horns, or human hands.

The Jikegida are semi-immortal once mature, but require immobilized or helpless warm-blooded hosts to reproduce. The larva is implanted along the spinal column, putting the host in a torpid daze that continues while the larva swells to fill their abdominal cavity and digests the less-important tissues of the host. Within a week, surgical removal is impossible without killing the host, and only powerful healing magics have any chance of saving them. After a month, a juvenile Jikegida emerges, killing the host, and then grows to full maturity over a period of five or six years. While any warm-blooded host of sheep size or larger will serve, Jikegida spawned from intelligent, neurally-dense hosts such as humans are more intelligent, bigger, and stronger.

The Jikegida favor the use of crossbow-like launchers and other mechanical weapons, as their thin limbs are relatively weak compared to human arms. Their social life revolves around pheromonal exchanges and scent "debates" that resolve theoretical questions of philosophy and ontology that humans can barely categorize, let alone fully understand. As far as human scholars can tell, the Jikegida consider humanity to be nothing but "philosophical zombies", false machines of flesh that only *seem* to have emotions and desires, and so are fit only for use.

A Jikegida nest is usually built of lightweight plant materials unless they have access to their ancient construction-shells or Blighted slave laborers, whereupon they favor smooth stone buildings with hexagonal masses of shapes and passages. Their technology is usually slightly better than that of nearby humans, but a few of them have access to marvels inherited from their once-dominant ancestors.

Polop, the Sea Kings

The "seamaws" or "fish devils" are never found far from water. A Polop can usually breathe air for as much as a day, but dry climates and extended periods outside of water or away from their life-support equipment doom them to a suffocating death. Most appear as horse-sized, vaguely sexapedal shapes with glabrous, scaled skin, huge, unblinking eyes and a maw of fanged teeth. Their body plan involves six clusters of locomotive and manipulatory appendages evenly paired along either side of their body, each cluster consisting of two to four crab-like legs that end in small "hands" of curved chitinous material. Flexing these limbs and the thin integument between them propels them rapidly underwater, while land movement leaves them in a vaguely centauroid posture, leaving two clusters free to manipulate tools.

The Polop are the unquestioned rulers of the Carceral Sea around the Gyre. Coastal raids by Polop harvesters are a commonplace, and every fisherman knows to sail

only in daylight hours, when the fish devils are quiet. Even so, colonies of Polop have been found in the Blind Marsh, the Mirewash and the Tombwater, with some reported around the Font. Even the Usuldarum and Usulmot rivers have known local infestations of them.

The Polop eat humans. As far as scholars can understand, they find humans to be delicious, but the act of eating them is some sort of religious or philosophical statement of species superiority. "We Who Eat" is the Polop term for themselves, and it's true that Polop biology appears capable of consuming almost any living creature without ill effects. Some Polop trench-cities contain extensive human breeding pens where captive populations are raised as meat stock. Most humans, however, are eaten shortly after they are taken back to the city. While Polop will eat dead flesh, they find it more satisfying to consume sentient creatures aware of their fate.

Polop magic and technology are sophisticated in matters of life support, live-coral construction and the mental domination of monstrous sea life, but their underwater existence leaves them with few high-temperature or high-energy resources. Their great trench-cities are built in the lightless depths, illuminated by phosphorescent masses, while colonies nearer the surface are fabricated of bubbles of pressure-tight coral lattices.

Tuhulot, the Ones Outside

The "folded men" are some of the most alien of Outsiders. They manifest as human-appearing entities but their motions are utterly wrong. Limbs jerk in non-Euclidean ways, voices manifest without moving lips, and their "walk" is a hideous shamble of twitching limbs like some ill-managed puppet. This is because the Tuhulot is not fully present; it is interacting with this world through a single facet of its being, and the interface is inevitably crude.

At some point in the unfathomable past, humanity locked the entire Tuhulot species away in some sort of alternate dimension. Only through ages of ferocious effort have they been able to penetrate this far back into our reality and the manifestations they have formed are the best they can do until the remainder of the seal is broken and they can fully incarnate in this world once more. This freedom can be obtained only by destroying certain ancient relics, disrupting certain ancient control sites, and extinguishing certain critical human bloodlines. The Tuhulot are desperate to escape their prison and return to their former rule, and they will do anything to advance this goal by so much as a single step.

Tuhulot are never found in groups. They operate as kingmakers and manipulators, using their uncanny powers of spatial and temporal perception to provide information and backing to their agents. They are extraordinarily difficult to kill, though a successful destruction of their manifestation will seal that particular Tuhulot away from the world for some indeterminate age. They are terrified of this fate, and will bargain richly to save their own "lives".

The Arratus of the Outsiders

In the ages of their control over humanity it was inevitable that the Outsiders should have tried to xenoform the Latter Earth to better suit their wishes. Despite their control of the surface, the Legacy made this process very difficult; xenoforming engines and curses of transformation were contained and suppressed. A frigid atmosphere of liquid methane might spread for miles around a Quhal ice-spire, but six miles from the center point it would be suddenly halted by the Legacy, unable to so much as chill the neighboring terrestrial atmosphere. If the ice-spire were to be destroyed, the entire atmosphere might be reverted back to Earthly norms in a matter of days, though the damage the methane did may or may not be swiftly repaired.

An *arratu* is one such xenoformed area. The closer it was to the terrestrial norm, the less likely the Legacy was to forcibly deconvert it, so the Outsider engineers tended to make their changes in small increments. Many of these *arratus* were so palatable to the Legacy that they continue to persist even in the absence of their makers or the destruction of their original central nodes. Within these cursed lands there can be found abominations both earthly and otherwise, some dependent on the special environment of the *arratu* even to exist.

Most surviving *arratus* have a human-breathable atmosphere, though it may be toxic over a period of long exposure. The flora and fauna within are usually wildly different from terrestrial varieties, being alien colors, strangely configured, or exceptionally vicious. Monsters from the *arratu* may roam outside its boundaries for hunting purposes, but few can survive extended absences from its alien vapors and strange radiations.

With long ages or favorable conditions, such an *arratu* can spread of its own, gradually expanding to devour the surrounding lands. Ancient boundary-markers placed by the sorcerer-kings sometimes work to contain these expanding wastes, while others are constantly fought by their human neighbors. Lacking such constraints, they will expand until the Legacy restricts them.

Within the *arratus* are found ancient Outsider ruins and the forgotten remnants of human cities overrun by the wastes. The difficulty and danger of penetrating deep into such lands keeps these ruins unusually well-preserved from scavengers, and particularly bold adventurers make a point of exploring *arratus* in search of these lost troves. These explorers often fail to return.

Especially brave settlers or wretched penal slaves are sometimes sent to deconvert an *arratu*, sowing certain Terran plants along its borders and raising certain native animals that assist the Legacy in rectifying the wastes. Through generations of effort, this can gradually shrink the *arratu* until it is entirely gone. With sufficient arcane power and the right artifacts, large stretches of *arratu* can be deconverted in a matter of moments. Of course, employing such powers often requires the discovery of the *arratu's* origination point and the defeat of whatever defensive measures the makers originally put in place.

Iterums, the Echoed Worlds

As the Legacy holds within it the raw descriptive encoding of innumerable possibilities, the application of sufficient energy to its patterns can create splinters of alternate reality. These ***Iterums*** echo the baseline worlds they emulate but each has its own independent substance. Some Iterums are as small as rooms, while others are so vast as to be full-scale replicas of the Latter Earth itself.

An Iterum usually shares the physical laws of its parent world, though arcanists of sufficient learning and ability to manipulate the Legacy may introduce changes. Errors in this process can produce catastrophes on a literally global level; more than one Iterum has been generated as an unsurvivable hellscape of twisted monstrosities when its creator desired only to make a paradise.

An Iterum's history splinters off at the point of its instantiation. While it may have been called into existence with a full panoply of inhabitants and sentient minds, the events and activities that go on from the point of creation are unique to each individual Iterum. Even those inhabitants who somehow manage to journey into the Iterum's past, before its supposed time of creation, find only a copy of the people and events that led up to its eventual divergence. The only conventional way to cross between Iterums is through those portals coded by the Legacy to admit cross-reality traffic, the infamous "Black Gates" that connect specific realities.

Powerful sorceries can also reach through the barrier between worlds by relying on the Legacy and its universal connection to all Iterums and all possibilities. Through the correct incantations and the appropriate thaumaturgical implements, entities from foreign Iterums can be called forth as servants, agents, or occasionally as gods. Such summoning powers are as capricious and dangerous as is all High Magic, and the decay of the Legacy has put many foreign Iterums out of the reach of modern sorcery, leaving only the stranger and more dangerous ones in common reach.

Every Iterum has its own identifying code. The Iterum described in this book is coded as "108 Triumphant Void", the last ideogram's translation being disputed by those few scholars capable of analyzing the Preterite glyphs that encode it. Some have translated it as an now-unknown place-name or personal name, while others would read it as "Consumption", "Undoing", "Negation", or "Completion". These names and their accompanying arcane coordinate glyphs are important in summoning magics, and numerous examples of other Iterums and the names given them by their creators are preserved in ancient texts.

This Iterum, like many others, is a vast one. It encompasses the entire Latter Earth and appears to be a relatively late splintering of the timeline, perhaps dating to the final years of the downfall of the Outsider rule of the planet. It is unclear what provoked the creation of this Iterum; some say that in its parent reality, the Outsiders were successful in crushing the rebellion, and this world was splintered as a refuge in which their efforts were in vain. Others suspect that this reality is one created by the Outsiders themselves, in which they did not suffer the complete extermination that they experienced in the parent Iterum. The truth is largely unguessable, as not even the name of the parent Iterum of 108 Triumphant Void has survived into the present day.

As implied, the denizens of an Iterum can splinter further iterations, some larger than the parent itself. Because of this, it is clear that the true Latter Earth, the First World of ancient origin, is now hopelessly lost somewhere back along the path of forked possibilities. The inhabitants of 108 Triumphant Void are thus trapped within the boundaries of their Iterum. While they may roam the whole of the Latter Earth and ascend to the very limit of its atmosphere, the stars beyond are nothing more than lights in the roof of the world, images calculated into reality as part of the Iterum's creation.

Only by tracking backward through the innumerable sharded possibilities of their parent Iterums could an explorer hope to somehow find the First World, and without knowing even the code for this world's parent Iterum the first step on such a journey is impossible. There are arcane cosmographers who devote their scholarly lives to mapping out the known connections between Iterums, identifying parent and child worlds and tracing the links of Black Gates and summoning incantations between them, but even those sages have never managed to find a provable path to the First World where they may ascend once more to the stars.

For most inhabitants of the Latter Earth, the existence of Iterums is of little importance. They are Hells, or Heavens, or fairy-tale worlds, or the muttered hair-splittings of useless old scholars. This world is as real as anything and its people as substantial as anyone could be. They have no interest in what could have happened in other possibilities; their concern is for their own lives and loved ones, and that is enough.

For sorcerers and heroes, the matter is not so simple. Expert mages have means to create Iterums of their own as Workings, albeit rarely ones larger than a room, or perhaps a building. A few nurse mad dreams of calving off entire nations to be their devoted slaves and worshipers, studying means by which the creation process can be corrupted and shaped more to their liking. Ancient Iterums can be found in many places, most serving as pockets in which some long-dead wizard was conducting their own unfathomable experiments, while others were fastnesses for Outsiders, exiled nobility, or fallen peoples. A few seem to have been created to suit their progenitor's aesthetic tastes or artistic visions. The Black Gates that connect these worlds to 108 Triumphant Void are usually obvious, but a few are so well-concealed that a traveler can pass through without even noticing their translation.

Iterums and Religion

Many religions promise an afterlife to their believers, whether it is the paradisaical garden granted to the faithful souls that die in the Bleeding God's grace or the endless torment that awaits rebels against the just rule of the Old Lords. Others place the homes of their deities not in some sacred mountain or holy glade on earth, but in a far realm beyond the reach of humanity.

While humble priests and common believers take these things as ordinary fact, theologians and sages argue over how many of these places and fates are purely fictional, how many are misunderstood Iterums, and how many are actual divine realms unrelated to the Legacy. These arguments would be considered abject blasphemy by most, were most believers able to understand them in the first place.

Yet there is no denying that some religions really do appear to have an afterlife in which the "souls" of their believers reside. Their shades can sometimes be called back by certain rituals, and the holy envoys of their gods can sometimes be called up by pious petitioners or special ceremonies. Other faiths can point to very palpable Hells for their renegades and the monstrous devils that sometimes are unleashed on the world. Orthodox theologians would declare that these realms are divinely-produced.

Yet atheistical sages have proposed that these afterlives are man-made creations of ancient Legacy-engineers who embedded the ideas of their faith in the basic fabric of reality. They created the Iterums of heavens and hells and encoded the rules of their functioning in the Legacy so that believers would receive their promised dues.

A few deny both proposals, saying that these realms are something else entirely, some phenomenon or state of being that humanity can only encounter and not create. The truth of the matter remains in dispute.

Iterums in Play

For a GM, Iterums serve as a simple in-world explanation for any differences or modifications you may choose to make to the default setting. If you prefer to shuffle nations around, rewrite the past, add or subtract sentient species, or adjust other elements of the default game you can simply set it in your own Iterum and not worry about "contradicting canon". While you could certainly do the same to 108 Triumphant Void, many GMs feel more comfortable in clearly distinguishing their own work.

Iterums also serve as "planes of existence" for the summoning of strange creatures or the machinations of invidious extraplanar entities. Many fantasy games all but require the existence of demons, angelic powers, extraplanar abominations, or other beings native to entirely different worlds. Iterums can serve as those worlds, providing a convenient source of otherworldly beings.

Iterums can also function as convenient dungeon sites. The rules of reality within such an Iterum might be such that strange Workings or warped natural laws prevail, and the architecture and contents of the place could be impossible under conventional physics. Such Iterums can be as large as they need to be for the GM's convenience. Some could be no more than handy pocket labyrinths to entertain the heroes for a session, while others could be big enough to hold all of Averoigne or contain an alternate-world campaign.

Most players honestly won't care much about Iterums or worry over the consistency of their details. Give them a "real world", a selection of alternate planes, a few dungeons that don't seem to respect conventional laws, and that's a sufficient campaign setting for their interests. Their main use is for the GM, so that they might have a coherent in-universe explanation for providing those elements to their own campaign creations.

CREATING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Heroic adventures take place in particular places and settings. If you're going to run an urban adventure, you need to have a city to put it in, and if the players want to delve into some long-forgotten tomb, you need to have someone buried there. Some of these details are handled when you create the adventure content, but that creation process is much easier if you have a certain default background setting to work with.

For a sandbox game, your ***campaign*** is the setting in which your adventures take place. At its broadest, it's the particular game world, while at its narrowest, it's the part of the setting that exists immediately around the adventure you're running, one that gives you the information you need to adjudicate events when players stop engaging with the content you prepared for that adventure.

Campaign settings tend to be built for two purposes. In the first, the GM is honestly just interested in the worldbuilding. They want the fun of sub-creation, forging their own world in the privacy of their home, fabricating nations and gods and societies as a pleasant recreation. This is a perfectly valid way to have fun, and this chapter can be used to support that worldbuilding hobby with a host of tools and resources.

The other purpose is more practical. These GMs build their campaign settings so they have a well-supported framework for creating and placing adventures and adjudicating the choices that PCs make during them. A good campaign setting not only provides a wide variety of hooks and inspirations for adventure creation, it's also fleshed out in ways that serve as a backstop and GM cue for handling unplanned situations.

If you know that the nation the adventure takes place in is a magocratic mandarinate with locals who love law and order and who identify their interests with their ancestral magical school, you'll have a much better idea about what will happen when the PCs decide to start a violent rebellion against the government. You'll know that they need to get the magical school deans on their side, that they'll be opposed by a lot of wizards, and that the natives won't be enthusiastic about it unless they can dress their actions in the guise of law. You'll also have a wide selection of adventure hooks and pre-existing conflicts to mine when it comes time to build playable content for your campaign.

It is for this reason of support that this chapter was written. The goal of these tables and tools is not just to create a satisfying, plausible world you can put on your mantle to admire, it's to create a usable backdrop that you can mine for adventure inspiration and consult for plausible consequences for PC actions.

It is not strictly necessary to build a campaign for your adventures. You can handwave the material not covered in your adventure prep as some generic fantasy world or commonly-understood trope setting. Spending the time on creation, however, generally repays the cost.

An Overview of Creation

While a GM can always pick and choose among the tools in this chapter, the basic process for campaign creation follows the steps below.

Plan your scope. What is the basic kind of campaign you want to run? Is it intrigue-based? Dungeon-crawling? Nautical? Exploratory? Emulating a particular existing setting or book? This scope can and probably will change over time as player interests shifts, but you need to start somewhere and have an idea of the sort of game play you want to have.

Build your backdrop. Starting from the topmost, global level of your campaign world, you make decisions about the place and assign it qualities and facts. There are three levels of backdrop of increasing specificity: world, region, and kingdom.

At the world level you're making a few basic decisions about the place: what the locals call it, any ways in which its basic qualities are obviously different from Earth, and any powers so mighty that their influence is felt throughout the planet. You may not even have a map of this world or know anything about its political geography, because those facts don't matter yet.

At the regional level, you're carving out a block of the world perhaps two hundred miles on a side, or some coherent peninsula, island, or chunk of geography. The region describes the area in which your campaign's play is probably going to take place for a long time, with multiple nations and groups that have their own histories, interests, and relationships. You sketch out this region in more detail, but you don't seriously develop any single part of it yet.

That happens at the kingdom level, when you pick the kingdom, polity, or province in which your campaign's first adventure session is going to take place. Your players are probably going to spend the first few game sessions there at least, if not more, so you dress this kingdom up fully in a properly-developed society, government, religion, and history. These facts can then serve as springboards when it comes time to build adventure content there using the tools in the next chapter.

Assigning tags to sites is a process that can happen at multiple levels during campaign creation. Tags are simply tropes or key ideas that can be mixed and matched to characterize particular noble courts, urban or rural communities, ruins and dungeons, or wilderness areas. By picking two tags and synthesizing them, you equip a site with a set of pre-made adventure hooks that you can easily return to later when needed.

Ultimately, the tools in this chapter are meant to save you time and effort, allowing you to spend your creative energy on the parts of your world you find fun and interesting. Use these tools in that spirit; they're here to serve you and your needs, not some abstract process.

Planning Your Work

When reading this chapter, it is crucial to draw the distinction between worldbuilding for fun and worldbuilding for playable content. Most of the people reading this book probably enjoy worldbuilding for its own sake. It's a lot of fun to brew up strange lands and stranger people, to fill dark corners of the world with nefarious evils, and to carefully limn the features of alien gods and time-lost history. These activities are a perfectly good hobby and a relaxing way to spend your downtime.

Campaign prep is meant to be more directed. You need to focus your efforts on creating useful, playable content. Sometimes that means leaving aside a fascinating thought-toy or neglecting some intriguing facet of your creation in order to have the time and creative energy to hammer out the pieces you *do* need for the next session. It's okay to return to those things once you've got your homework finished, but you need to get your critical components finished first. It's all too easy to exhaust both your time and your creative energy on peripheral matters, leaving you stressed and unequipped for the next session of gaming. If you follow the guidelines in this chapter, however, you should be able to get something fun and playable ready with minimal grief, giving you that much more time and energy to play with the fun parts of your world.

When creating your own campaign, the first step is to think carefully about the scope of the work you need to accomplish. Blindly charging into the job with a demiurge's enthusiasm and a bubbling font of ideas is a lot of fun and doubtless a fine way to spend an afternoon, but if a GM is concerned with actually creating playable, functional table content a little more preparation is in order.

First you need to think about your players and the scope of the campaign you want to build for them. Is this going to be a short campaign of tightly-linked episodic adventures, or do you want to build a big, sprawling sandbox for them to explore for months or years on end? Is the campaign meant to focus on the skulduggery and politics of a single vast hive-city and its ruined environs, or do you expect the heroes to be roaming from adventure to adventure over the whole of a kingdom?

Players being who they are, your expectations might be wrong. That short run of linked adventures could suddenly arc off into the wild unknown after the party gets fascinated by some peripheral hook you didn't realize you were feeding them. The roving freebooters might enjoy a particular decadent city so much that they spend a dozen sessions conquering its myriad mad oligarch-guildmasters. It's okay to revise your plans when the situation has clearly changed, but at the start, you need to pick a scope and build to fit it.

This basic scope is your touchstone. Everything you build, plan, or create should relate to this scope in some way and preferably be associated with some kind of adventure-worthy content or situation. Maybe the Athavian Empire has ten million war-saints who slay with edged words and murderous pity, but if the empire has no reason to impinge on your campaign scope, it's not an efficient use of your energy to spend much time elaborating their nation.

Once you have the basic scope set, you create your ***backdrop***. The backdrop for your campaign amounts to all the world facts that need to be established to give meaningful context to play. The backdrop is built in multiple layers, starting from global facts about the world itself down to details of the specific adventure location the PCs will find themselves in at the start of the campaign. The more remote a given layer is from your scope, the less work you need to put into defining it and detailing its features.

If you're working on a completely new world, you may honestly not know any of the details about it. You might have a basic idea for a theme and a scope for your campaign, like "Island-hopping pirate-wizards" or "Decadent political maneuvering in an underground city", but you have no idea what these islands might be like or what the name of the underground city is. By working from the top down on your backdrop, you build a framework and a context for your campaign that helps you answer important questions like these.

The Golden Rule of Preparation

In all of these pages, there is a single abiding rule you should follow in preparing your campaign. It is absolutely imperative that you understand it and that you apply it to your own work, or you run the risk of exhausting yourself and your creative powers long before you finish the content you need for a fun, relaxing night of play.

Whenever you are building something, you need to ask yourself two questions.

Am I having fun building this? If yes, you can keep going. You need to make sure you cover material you need for your next adventure session, but if you're having a good time then it's okay to indulge yourself. If the answer is "no" or "maybe", however, you need to ask yourself a second question.

Am I going to need this for the next play session? Will you need this specific content for your next gaming night? Don't ask yourself if it could be potentially useful, or if it's something you'll need in the future. Ask yourself if this piece of work is going to be necessary for what you expect of the very next session of play. If you can't answer yes with confidence, *put it down*.

It is painfully easy for a GM to exhaust their powers on minutiae or peripheral details that aren't fun to make and don't get any useful play time. All of us are limited mortal creatures with finite amounts of time, energy, and focus. We can't afford to spend it on trifles when there is more important and more satisfying work to be done. Instead, focus on what you need and what you enjoy.

Building Your Backdrop

Backdrops are created at several different levels. As the GM, you work top-to-bottom, letting the facts you establish at one level inspire and mold the facts you establish at lower levels. At no point do you put more work into defining or characterizing a level than your actual campaign scope requires, unless you're consciously doing so for the sake of enjoyment rather than efficiency.

Each level has certain questions and generation procedures associated with it. You don't need to give final answers to these questions, but you should be ready to make at least provisional decisions from which you can fashion lower, finer levels of detail. If you're using an established setting for your campaign, a lot of these questions might already be answered in the novels or fiction you're drawing on.

The World

At this level you're establishing some basic global facts about your campaign world. This "world" might be literal; if you're playing in an Iterum of the Latter Earth, the facts you establish here might be related to the Latter Earth itself. Conversely, you might be running a campaign about dimension-shifting refugees fleeing some cosmic pursuer, in which case your "world" might be the overall framework of dimensions and cosmic mechanics for your campaign. This layer of the backdrop is usually the most distant from a campaign's scope, and so needs the least prep.

Many GMs love making world maps for the campaign settings, or establishing different grand empires on far-flung continents, or writing cosmic histories for their world known only to the sagely. These activities can be fun worldbuilding indulgences, but the great majority of them have no meaningful bearing on the campaigns that they'll actually be running in that world. The coastline of England means nothing to a campaign set in 340 BC China, and the entire Tang Empire is no more consequential in Anglo-Saxon England than the silk embroidery on a bishop's best cloak. To give such distant glories names and a sentence or two of description is as much as any world-level backdrop likely needs, and often more than it requires.

At this level, the GM should establish any noticeable and drastic deviations from real-life physics or daily life. If there are two moons, or if the surface never knows night, or if water flows uphill as a general rule, then this is the level to establish those facts. Even in this case, however, these deviations should only be recorded when they're something the PCs should be expected to notice immediately. The world may be hollow and full of divine clockwork, but if that fact isn't widely known or doesn't have any particular effect on the chosen scope of the campaign, then it's not worth spelling it out beforehand.

Here are some basic questions to answer about the world level of your backdrop.

- ***What's the name of this world for people in your campaign's scope?*** Other people might have different names for it, but you need some kind of label to stick on your creation.

- ***Are natural physical laws mostly the same as in our world?*** If there are multiple moons, a lack of stars, a great crystal dome over a flat earth, or some other obvious global novelty of reality, you need to decide on it at this point because the PCs will likely know about it as a societal commonplace.

- ***Are there any spirit-worlds, alternate dimensions, novel planes of existence, or other cosmological locales generally associated with the world?*** Don't worry about gods just yet, but think about whether there are any heavens or hells or Crawling Darks that the natives of this world would likely know about. Of course, some such alternate planes might be established later in the backdrop creation as secrets known only to sages or sinister priests.

- ***Are there any grand global-scale empires or groups that impinge on the campaign's scope?*** If so, give them a name and two sentences of description at this point. If you can't give them a useful shorthand description in two sentences, then their concept is too vague; tighten it and try again.

- ***How interconnected are the parts of your world?*** Is it easy to move from one region to another? Do the natives know a lot about their more distant neighbors?

- ***Are there any vast global events that have happened recently?*** You can use the history tables on page 136 as inspiration if you wish, but this is the part where you identify any world-spanning catastrophes or dramatic universal changes that have happened in the relatively recent past. Leave distant history alone for now.

It can be tempting to add gods and religious faiths at this level of backdrop creation, but it's generally better to save that work for the regional level, or even the kingdom level. Some settings actually do have a set number of universal deities that are honored and worshiped worldwide under assorted names and guises, but most worlds will have faiths specific to particular regions and cultures. The divine patron of one kingdom might be unknown in a neighboring region, or have no more than a few petty shrines.

Once you've answered these general questions about your world, you're ready to step down to the next level of backdrop creation.

The Region

This level covers the cluster of nations or civilizations most relevant to the intended scope of the campaign. The nations, tribal groups, marauders, and faiths of the people in this region are likely to have an impact on the campaign scope, so it gets more attention and more carefully-drawn detail than the broader world. You should only worry about detailing one region at first, the one most pertinent to your campaign scope. If that scope shifts, then you can concern yourself with a different one.

One danger to watch out for at this level is that of excessive detailing. GMs and players both have a limit on the amount of detail they can constructively manage in a campaign setting. Just because you write it down doesn't mean you remember it in play or that the players will bother to read the handout about it. As such, you have to restrict your detailing at this and lower levels to those facts and situations that are most likely to produce interesting, playable content.

Remember also that this limit on attention applies to your entire campaign setting. You can't draw up a meticulously-detailed region and then focus down on a meticulously-detailed kingdom and expect your players to remember or engage with all the facts on both levels. You have a limited budget of things that will matter to them, one varying with the interest and engagement of the players, and every call you make on their attention will eat up some of that budget.

If you're working with an existing setting, it's relatively easy to draw the lines around a region. Mark the outline so that it includes about a half-dozen important nations, organizations, or other groups. These groups might have relations with nations outside the region, and external actors might sweep in from time to time, but most of the time these participants will be dealing with each other and creating the situations that are most likely to affect the PCs.

If you're starting with a blank slate, however, it can be difficult to generate a workable region. Follow the steps below to flesh out something usable.

Name the region. Decide what the locals call the general area. Perhaps the name is derived from ancient myth, a major cultural group, a particular significant geographical feature, or a former governing entity. Giving the region a name will help you keep things straight in the case that you need to create multiple regions to accommodate a shift of PC adventuring.

Choose about six major geographical features. The section on page 120 can give suggestions, but for this step you want to pick out the mountain ranges, great forests, huge rivers, steep plateaus, volcanic Hell-gates, blasted *arratu* wastelands and other major features for the region. You don't need to place them precisely just yet, but you should have a vague idea about their locations.

Create six nations or groups of importance. A few more or less is fine, but don't try to pack a score of major players into the same region unless you have the copious free time necessary to track their doings. At this stage, all you need is a name and a few sentences of description for each. You can use the section on page 124 for inspiration, but don't worry about fine details yet.

Identify regionally-significant gods. Many kingdoms and groups will have their own favorite deities, but if there are any gods honored throughout the entire region, define them now. The tables starting on page 140 provide tools for this. Remember that just because two nations worship the same god, it doesn't mean that they necessarily like each other. Most faiths despise heretics far more than they do mere unbelievers, and two churches with similar-but-not-identical ideas about the same god can hate each other with a fiery passion.

Make a sketch map of the region. Don't try to get it perfect at this stage unless you're doing it purely for fun. All you need is a crude map showing where the nations are in relation to each other as explained in the section starting on page 120. Use rivers and mountain ranges as convenient border markers, while forests, swamps, deserts, and other trackless zones can make for disputed frontiers. Don't forget to mark in plenty of unclaimed wilderness, dangerous wasteland, and other "blank space" that can serve as a playground for nefarious evils, lost cities, and ambitious heroes.

Assign two important historical events to each group or nation. The tables on page 138 give example historical events. These events might be very recent, in which case the region is probably still dealing with them, or they might be some remotely distant event that was somehow critically important to the group's development or current state. Try to connect the different groups via these historical events; use their neighbors as either antagonists, victims, or associates in the events. You might add even more events to each if you want to develop a fleshed-out timeline, but such deep historical work is best saved for a lower level of the backdrop.

Define the relationships between the groups. For each one, decide what they generally think about the others and pick something specific they want from them. One kingdom might have a claim on land taken from it in a long-distant war, while an ambitious faith might be trying to get a major temple built in an otherwise-unreceptive nation's capital. No group should simply "be there". Every one of them needs to be wanting something or doing something that could spark adventures.

Optionally, assign each group faction statistics. The Factions chapter starting on page 322 gives the rules for interactions between major groups and organizations. You can use these rules to run between-session events among the major players in the region, and use the results either as adventure hook grist or as background color to help give the region a lively feeling. You may want to restrict the initial number of factions to the three or four most pertinent to your scope, however; many GMs can have a hard time running more than a half-dozen factions between sessions, and new ones might pop up as the PCs establish their own forces or new NPC groups suddenly become relevant.

THE KINGDOM

Once you have the general region sketched in, it's time to take it to a still lower level. The kingdom level of your backdrop covers the nation or tribal region that best includes your adventure scope. This is the first level that's likely to include facts and details that matter to your very first session of play, so the amount of creative work you put into this single kingdom is roughly the same as you just put into an entire region.

"Kingdom" should not be taken literally. This broad scope might apply to a grand metropolis that's expected to absorb the first dozen adventures, or a raw frontier dotted with hardscrabble settlements and ancient ruins, or a particular stretch of *arratu* where the barbaric PCs were born and raised. It's the worldbuilding box that your campaign's initial stages will take place in.

In the end, your entire campaign might well remain in this single zone, if the PCs decide that their interests lie here as well. You may continue developing and adding on to this kingdom for the full length of the campaign. Conversely, your heroes may light out for parts unknown after the first few sessions, obliging you to generate another kingdom-level backdrop wherever they end up. As always, focus your prep work on what you expect to need for your next gaming session.

When building your kingdom-level backdrop, start with some basic steps.

Pick a linguistic touchstone and give your kingdom or area a name. This language is likely the tongue of the current or historical dominant group in the region. Conventional fantasy names tend to be random nonsense-syllables picked from the creator's cultural phoneme stock, and places often end up as the city of AdjectiveNoun or the NounNoun river. While some of this can work perfectly well, it's easier for the GM to pick some obscure or extinct real-world language known to nobody at the table and use it for names. Even if the words they use from it have no relation to what they're naming, the consistent set of sounds and syllable patterns will help give a coherent feel to the work.

Flesh out its history. You already have an event or two related to it that you generated at the regional level. Now take those same tables and add three or four more events. These historical circumstances might've been localized to specific areas of the kingdom, or they might have been nation-wide happenings. It's not necessary to have a year-by-year timeline of the past, but a half-dozen solid events can help inform the kingdom's current state.

Decide how it is ruled and identify the ruler. The zone might be a patchwork of city-states or a single unified monarchy, but now's the time to decide those details. Give names and a sentence or two of definition to the rulers in the area, with the tables starting on page 132 providing some help.

Identify the enemies of the rulers. Maybe they're a usurper who seeks to claim the throne, maybe they're a sullen band of rebel peasants, or maybe they're a slowly-advancing army of Hell. Somebody wants to depose or destroy the rulers of the region, even if they're so subtle in their work that the public knows nothing of them. The conflict they create is eminently useful for a GM.

Choose one or more problems or goals it's facing. It may be that something is not working right in the region, and its inhabitants are being forced to deal with it or suffer the consequences. These problems might be restricted to particular regions, or they might be long-standing afflictions that have been woven into the culture, or they could be sudden eruptions that the leadership is not equipped to handle. These conflicts will help create adventure hooks in the area and give the leadership something to react to. The tables on page 135 can help.

Make a rough map of the area. This doesn't need to be any more precise than the scope of your game requires. If you plan on doing serious hexcrawling in the area, you might make a detailed hex map of the kingdom, while a looser, more point-hopping style of campaign might just sketch some outlines and mark points of interest. Make sure to identify neighboring nations or groups.

Place ethnic groups and demihumans. The kingdom might consist of a single monolithic ethnic group, with their own gods and customs evenly distributed throughout the land, or more than one group may exist in the area, with relationships that may be friendly or fraught. Demihuman enclaves likely exist at some distance from human settlements, the better to ensure their relative independence. These groups may use the same linguistic touchstone you picked when building the kingdom, or you might give them different languages.

Flesh out the society and style of the kingdom and its occupants. The section starting on page 128 can be used to give character to the zone. The resultant society you create might be equally shared by all the ethnic groups in the kingdom – whether they like it or not – or each group might vary in their own way. The key at this stage is to give enough flavor to the kingdom that you can confidently ad-lib facts and details associated with it, because there's no possible way to prepare everything you might need in advance.

Assign local gods and religious traditions. Once you have the societies and cultures largely fleshed out, you can put details to the god or gods they worship and identify any major religious power groups in the area. At this stage it can sometimes be helpful to plant a dead or lost god or two into the area, perhaps still venerated by hidden cults or bitter survivors. At least one deity should be thoroughly malevolent or unsympathetic if you mean to make much use of evil cults or sinister high priests in your campaign.

Geography Construction

Almost everyone loves a good fantasy map. A well-drawn map has more than purely artistic charms; the names and borders and carefully-sketched wilds all evoke possibilities in the viewer's head and invite thoughts about the kind of adventures that could be had in such a land. A place feels more real for having been mapped, and the verisimilitude of a campaign setting is greatly improved by being established in cartography.

But as a working GM, your needs are a little different. A beautiful, artistically-done map is a wonderful thing, but very few GMs have the skills to execute such a project or the time to create it even if they did. When thinking about the physical construction of your world, it's important to start with the essentials and save the elaborations for afterwards.

Campaign Map Essentials

You need two maps at the start of your campaign: a map of the region most relevant to your campaign's backdrop, and a map of the kingdom-scale area in which your initial gaming sessions will occur. These two maps are going to be the most important when you're running through the other creation tools in this section, because they'll tell you which of the major players are adjacent to each other and show you where ruins, wildernesses, conflicts and problems are most likely to be found.

If you're playing in a fantasy-land sandbox the region might be a two hundred mile square chunk of terrain holding the various fantastic nations and organizations you picked as major players during the backdrop's creation as described on page 118. If you're running an urban campaign focused on a single massive city, the "region" might be a particular zone of the megalopolis. If you're doing an alt-history campaign set in 1033 AD, the region might simply be western Europe.

The kingdom-scale map should simply cover the specific nation or culture-zone where the first adventures of your campaign will take place. If you plan on starting the heroes in Neue Gruzland, then you want a map of Neue Gruzland. If they're working out of a keep on the untamed borderlands, then you want a map of the borderlands and its savage wilderness. Megacity campaigns might flesh out a single slum area within the greater city-zone. The region-scale map will tell you where the players could end up going and what they might find there. The kingdom-scale map will tell you what they find during their very first few sessions.

Note the distinct absence of any need for a global or continental map. You don't actually have to establish any details whatsoever about what the rest of the world looks like unless it's a fun bit of recreation for you. A few sentences of suggestive prose about the Enigmatic South or the Unknown North is plenty, especially since very few realms will have anything resembling reliable maps available to the PCs.

Making the Regional Map

Your beginning campaign maps should consist of nothing but loose scrawls and crude symbols. Indeed, many campaigns can make it through their entire run without creating any map more elaborate than a rough relational scribble. Hex-crawling campaigns and groups that like firm cartographic certainties can build out their initial maps later, but to start with, take a blank sheet of paper and focus purely on mapping basic relationships.

First, decide how many sides of the regional map will be oceanic. One or two makes for a curving coastline or a peninsula or land bridge that extends off two edges of the map. Three makes for a self-contained peninsula, and four means that the region is an island. It's generally wisest to have at least one side be a sea, or else you severely hobble your opportunities for piracy, nautical adventures or sea travel to distant regions.

Second, use the tables in this section to generate a half-dozen or so significant geographic features. Space them out on the map, keeping in mind the notes as to which features shouldn't go closely together. Of course, magic or Outsider manipulation might subvert that expectation, but if that's the case, make it clear that it's so. These features should be scaled to the size of the region; a mountain range might extend for a hundred miles in a large regional map, but a small map might have plausible room only for a stretch of rugged hills with a few mountain-worthy peaks.

Note that most regions will be small enough that the climatic variation is likely to be minimal. The polar-ward portions might be colder than the more equatorial side of the map, but a few hundred miles is unlikely to have comfortable room for both steaming jungles and barren glacial wastes. If you get table results that suggest a geographic impossibility, either convert the result to its local-climate equivalent or come up with some magical or geographical explanation for why it really makes sense. Warm ocean currents, geothermal heat wells, sorcerous curses, and berserk Outsider xenoforming engines are always handy rationales.

Third, sketch in 1d4+2 major rivers. Rivers make excellent borders for the nations you're going to be planting in this region. Barring sorcery, rivers will start in mountains or highlands and flow down to the sea or until they vanish into a lake, bog, or other sink. Rivers can split into tributaries and sub-branches, but these tributaries do not join together again; once the river splits, it can only split further, though multiple mountain-fed rivers might join on the lowest path to the sea. Across flat land the river will tend to meander, while streams that come down from a height will usually cut straighter from the force of the flow. Any given river should probably be no longer than a quarter of the maximum dimension of your map, though it might twist and wind within that length.

Optionally, add one to three significant lakes or inland sea areas to the map. These bodies of water can be particularly useful in giving "conjoining borders" to nations that would otherwise be entirely separated from each other. Each body of water should have at least one river flowing into it, but only one at most flowing out of it.

Fourth, place your nations, important tribal groups, major organizations, or other significant players you've decided will play a role in this region. Nations and tribal lands should be largely coterminous with natural barriers such as rivers, mountain ranges, deep forests, impassable swamps, or other easily-defended terrain. If the borders extend beyond these barriers, it's probably the result of successful warfare and a cause for future battles.

National borders probably include significant regions of marginal or uninhabitable land. Sun-blasted deserts, mephitic bogs, cursed *arratu* wastelands, or jaggedly perilous peaks might all be well within a nation's borders without actually having any locals to respect the nation's laws. This is perfectly acceptable, and a good source of adventuring grist when the heroes quest into the unmapped wilderness or fight back the hideous evils that burst forth from it.

If these badlands extend across a border, they probably are a source of regular tension as raiders or monsters emerge to scourge a nation before fleeing back into the wastes. Expeditions to control or punish them can easily become forces of invasion, and both nations might want to bring the land entirely within their borders to better have a free hand in repressing its dangers.

Don't worry about placing cities, ruins, or other points of interest on the map just yet. You'll do that as necessary when you flesh out the kingdom. Also, don't concern yourself with turning this rough sketch into a "proper" map just yet. You only need it to inform you of the basic spatial relationship between things in your campaign backdrop.

Making the Kingdom Map

Now take the chunk of your region that will contain your campaign's initial adventures and start with a new sheet of paper. Scrawl out the rough edges of the borders, filling up the whole sheet with the outline of your starting nation. Copy in any major terrain features from the regional map that happen to obtrude into the kingdom.

At this point, you basically repeat the regional creation process on a smaller scale. You roll for terrain features, add rivers, mark out provincial or cultural borders within the nation, and finish by placing cities, trade routes, and other features as explained in the nation generation tables starting on page 124.

For small kingdoms, it can be useful to roll a single time on the terrain feature table or take a single obtruding regional terrain feature and then riff off of it for the general landscape of the kingdom. If you roll "light forest", then maybe the entire kingdom is lightly forested, with other terrain types being spice. It can sometimes be illogical for a sixty-mile-wide stretch of land to somehow

d20	Significant Terrain Features
1	**Ancient farmland**. A huge stretch of land was re-engineered for optimal farming.
2	**Arratu wasteland**. An area here was once xenoformed by the Outsiders into an environment hostile to humanity or one inhabited by dangerous alien lifeforms.
3	**Blasted lands**. Radioactive or scorched over by ancient war. Many ruins are likely.
4	**Canyons**. A region with extensive canyons cut by rivers present or long-vanished. Make sure the rivers don't climb after leaving them.
5	**Dense forest**. Trackless, dark, and an effective natural barrier.
6	**Grasslands**. A broad sweep of savanna or grassy plains is a coherent whole here.
7	**Islands**. There's a single significant island off the coast or an archipelago of some note.
8	**Jagged mountains**. A new or re-sharpened mountain range forms a barrier in the region. The mountains are young, tall, and likely cast a substantial rain shadow.
9	**Jungle**. A classic adventure-worthy jungle of wild, semi-alien flora and fauna.
10	**Light forest**. Interspersed with other terrain.
11	**Megaplex**. The ruins of a single huge ancient structure stretch for endless miles.
12	**Pit**. A Deep or some other underground megastructure collapsed and left a hole with a diameter measured in tens of miles.
13	**Rain forest**. Vast, damp, and green.
14	**Rocky hills**. Rough and stony, with little arable land. Herding and raiding are the most profitable employments here.
15	**Rolling hills**. A stretch of gently rolling hills makes for good agricultural land.
16	**Sand desert**. This desert is a waste of sand and dunes. It may be from a rain shadow, or it might be a legacy of ancient war.
17	**Scrub desert**. These often appear on the leeward side of mountain ranges. Borders will often be grasslands or savanna.
18	**Swamp**. A sinking river, lake margin, or wet coastal delta forms a vast bog in this flat land.
19	**Volcano**. One or more mountains in a nearby range are volcanically active. This may be natural or it may be a consequence of Legacy flux or ancient manipulation.
20	**Weathered mountains**. A significant skirt of hills is common. The rain shadow is likely limited due to the rounded, low mountains.

contain both rain forests and scrub deserts simply because you rolled those to results on the table. In the same fashion, you can use this main terrain type to modulate the results you do get, so that the scrub desert you roll in your jungle kingdom is actually a stretch of barren land due to the exposure of naked, infertile bedrock.

Naturally, the rivers and terrain features you roll at the stage will be of significantly smaller scale than the ones you rolled for the region. A "volcano" result that was a stretch of seismically-active mountains on the regional map might be a single ominous peak in the kingdom, and the rivers and lakes rolled here might be modest bodies of water too small to bear marking on a regional-scale map.

Every terrain feature you roll will have its effect on the local inhabitants, however. Swamps will have swamp-dwelling fishers, grassy plains will encourage farmers, hills will often have mining activity or jealously independent herders, and so forth. These people will usually be different from those dwelling in the surrounding land, either consciously so as a self-separated minority, or different by virtue of their practical living requirements. PCs who go to mountains will tend to find mountaineers, and even if they speak the same language and have the same lord as the plains-dwellers their lives will inevitably be shaped by the different terrain they occupy.

Refining the Maps

What you have now is perfectly adequate for an initial session. If you need to establish specifics of distances and position as part of the first adventure's play, you can do so on a case-by-case basis, and some groups may never particularly care about the details of distances beyond knowing how many days it takes to get to wherever they want to go.

Some campaigns need tighter details, however, such as hexcrawl exploration campaigns that focus heavily on scouting and mapping an unknown land. For those cases, it's best to use an digital tool such as Hexographer to make a usable map at whatever scale is most convenient. A six-mile hex is a popular choice, as it's large enough to hold multiple points of interest but small enough to reasonably contain only one major type of terrain.

Artistic and handsomely-done maps of kingdoms or regions or continents should be left as exercises in creative enjoyment and recreation rather than necessary campaign prep. A simple hex map provides all the information needed to adjudicate the vast majority of travel or distance questions, and even the most art-incapable GM can stitch one together with the online tools available.

One-Roll Terrain Feature Details

It can be difficult to add spice to your sixth mountain range; there are only so many ways to enliven a forest, a desert, or a pile of rocks before the creative springs run dry. As a supplementary tool, you can roll one die of each type and reference the tables below to add more detailing and character to a given terrain feature.

It's assumed that the terrain feature is meant to be a place of adventure and profit, so the table's results are canted towards dangerous, enigmatic places. It's assumed the bucolic breadbasket regions of your campaign aren't in need of particularly exciting features.

A suitably inaccessible region can end up becoming a "borderland" zone even in the heart of a developed kingdom. Bandit kings, monstrous hordes, and other grist for adventure can thus be placed almost anywhere.

d6	How Dangerous is the Feature?
1	Safer than usual for someplace like it
2	There's one notable kind of danger there
3	It's got some site-specific flavors of peril
4	It's unusually dangerous in several ways
5	It will quickly kill the unprepared or unwary
6	It's a death zone for all but the strongest

d8	What Use is the Feature?
1	A rare and precious resource is found there
2	Ancient sites and relics are common there
3	It's sacred land to a group or religion
4	Controlling it has military significance
5	It has substantial productive infrastructure
6	A major trade route goes through it
7	Uncontrolled, it's a nest of raiders and worse
8	A mighty Working is still functioning there

d10	What Kind of Event Last Happened There?
1	A significant battle was fought there
2	A mad prophet tried to start a faith there
3	A usurper and supporters fled into it
4	A resource strike drew numerous people
5	A major nest of bandits or raiders formed
6	A rich ancient ruin was discovered there
7	An uncanny plague erupted in the area
8	Some grim and terrible thing was awoken
9	A community of outcasts or marginals formed
10	A natural or uncanny disaster struck there

d4	How Populated is the Feature?
1	Almost unpopulated for something like it
2	Very few settlers or workers there
3	Average or more population density
4	A rush of people have gone there

d12	What Antagonists are Common There?
1	Violent secessionist rebels
2	Angry cultists of a local faith
3	Locals who resent interloping outsiders
4	A type of cunning, dangerous beast
5	Relic-creatures of ancient settlements
6	Elemental emanations of the disordered land
7	A hostile sentient monster civilization
8	Brutal envoys of the central government
9	Raiders and bandits driven into the area
10	Rapacious local lords and gang bosses
11	Remnants of a furious native population
12	Outsider remnants with a bitter grudge

d20	Optional Quirk of the Feature
1	It has significant magical structures in it
2	It has a place in the national origin legend
3	It is entirely man-made by ancient arts
4	Time and space sometimes slip there
5	The magical power there attracts wizards
6	It subtly changes those who live there
7	It's holy land to a particular faith
8	It was formerly a different kind of terrain
9	It has human-worked vistas of beauty
10	It was formerly an Outsider stronghold
11	A significant part of it is subterranean
12	It'd expand were it not for ancient wards
13	It was a nature preserve of a megastructure
14	It's maintained by an ancient artificial mind
15	Magic is somehow warped in its area
16	The flora and fauna are queasily "off"
17	The locals once populated it more heavily
18	Rulership of the feature is widely disputed
19	It's riddled with caves and delvings
20	A unique type of sentient lives there

Nation Construction

When following the guide on page 118, sometimes a little extra flavor or a few more specific details are needed for a nation. These pages offer some guidelines and examples. The disputes, positive ties, current problems, and present felicities suggested on the opposite page can be used to provide a hint about current national concerns, while the nation themes that follow might be used to color the societies that you place there. Beyond those random tables, there are also a few more material qualities to a nation that require a little more guidance to establish.

Borders

The borders for your nations should generally follow rivers, mountain ranges, trackless forests, and other major geographic barriers. Borders that run through clear, easily-traversed terrain are likely to be points of friction with greedy neighbors and hotbeds of cross-border banditry.

Deserts, *arratu* wastelands, deep swamps, and other difficult terrain might nominally be inside a nation's borders, but they may have little or no practical control over such desolations. Lands and titles often await heroes who can make the nation's claim more than mere words.

Population

Population density in the Latter Earth is skewed both by the perilous *arratu* and the occasional pocket of ultra-dense habitation made possible by ancient sorceries or still-functional Workings.

For a general baseline population for a relatively low-tech, low-magic land of unremarkable prosperity, you can assume 60 people per square mile of non-wilderness, or 2,000 per six-mile hex. You can get a tolerable approximation just by multiplying the nation's longest width and length dimensions by sixty and adjusting that according to what seems sensible.

Urbanization

For most nations of the Latter Earth, at least ninety percent of the population will be rural. They will live in small villages of a few hundred people, if not fewer, with the occasional somewhat-larger market town. The more productive the agriculture of the nation, the greater the percentage that will be able to live an urban life.

For most nations, begin by taking ten percent of the population as city-dwellers. A third will live in the capital or chief city. Of the rest, a quarter will live in the second largest city, while the remnants will be roughly divided up among as many cities as you wish to place. A city in most nations qualifies as any settlement with more than two or three thousand people.

Thus, if you have a nation of a hundred miles square and 600,000 people, 20,000 would live in the capital, 10,000 would live in the second largest city, and the remaining 30,000 urbanites would be split up into as many as ten minor cities and major market towns.

City Placement

Put the nation's capital in the central region of the map or the richest farming terrain, unless there's a particular reason why the borders expanded rapidly in a particular direction. Locate it on a river or seacoast, because any city of its size will require constant food imports that would be prohibitively difficult to haul overland.

Now, starting from a random cardinal direction, start placing the remaining cities, working clockwise. Place them on rivers and other bodies of water. If you need to put one in the middle of a dry-looking region, assume that there's some small river there too minor to show up at the national map's scale.

When placing cities, put them near resource sites,-good farmland, trade crossroads, or excellent ports. Most of these communities will have grown up around exploiting those resources. Urban centers without any obvious resource extraction probably serve as trade hubs, industrial centers, military strongholds, or religious centers.

To characterize each city, you can use a pair of Community Tags as described on page 152. If you need to flesh out the dynamics of their ruling institution, you can use a pair of Court Tags from the same section.

Marking Wastelands

A land with no empty spaces and no regions of dubious law is lacking certain charms to adventurers. When building a nation, you'll want to know where to place forbidding ancient ruins, desolate lost cities, rabid bandit kings, and hard-bitten frontier settlers.

Look at your map and the cities you've placed. Identify the most likely routes of travel or trade between them. In all probability, the connections are by water when possible, and overland only when there are no canals or navigable waterways connecting them.

The resulting mesh will have holes in it, zones of land distant from any major travel route. These are the best places to put ancient ruins, *arratu* badlands, trackless forests, war-torn provinces, and other areas suitable for adventure. Note these zones down for later, even if you haven't made up any ruins yet or haven't decided exactly what desolate wastelands exist there.

These are certainly not the only places you can put your wastelands and ruins, but if you put them closer to the cities or directly on a trade route between them, you'll need to explain why the locals haven't already plundered the lost cities, or why they're insisting on sending a major caravan route through the middle of an *arratu*. There may be a perfectly good reason for either of those situations, but you'll need to think of one. It may be that the former trade route was recently blocked, or the ruin has already been reputed to be plundered, or the traders have some bargain with the Blighted tribes that roam the badlands that lets them pass with relative safety.

d20	Disputes With a Neighboring State
1	Raiders are taking refuge in their lands
2	Ownership of a resource site is disputed
3	A usurper or criminal is being sheltered there
4	A troublemaking religion is based there
5	Their rulers have a political claim on the throne
6	A diplomatic marriage is going sour
7	A past war's savagery has left deep scars
8	Their culture is supplanting local beliefs
9	Their immigrants are gaining great influence
10	They broke off an alliance or important pact
11	They lured away an academy or great temple
12	Border tariffs and taxes are blocking trade
13	They drove a terrible beast into this land
14	A Working of theirs caused problems here
15	They woke up a great peril from the past
16	They're cooperating with an enemy group
17	They're suspected of backing assassinations
18	A spy ring is suspected or has been found
19	They refused to give aid for some current need
20	They've been hostile to an allied group

d20	Positive Ties With a Neighboring State
1	The ruling classes are related in some way
2	An important faith crosses the border
3	They fought by our side sometime in the past
4	Their culture is widely admired here
5	They helped to overcome an eldritch peril
6	They held back an enemy from our border
7	They are co-ethnics of the same origins
8	They provide critical trade relations
9	Sages and scholars came from there
10	They gave critical aid during a disaster
11	A hero of this land came originally from there
12	A past hero-king once ruled both lands
13	They produce some vital commodity
14	They have a shared enemy
15	A Working they have is helpful here, too
16	A long-standing alliance or trade pact exists
17	They recently conceded some disputed land
18	They greatly admire elements of this culture
19	They're considered unusually attractive here
20	They took in refugees from here at one point

d20	Current National Problems
1	Farmland is becoming worn-out and depleted
2	Verminous monsters are swarming
3	A rebel front is stirring up trouble
4	An outside power is backing internal strife
5	The leadership is inept and distracted
6	A religious reformer is breaking old compacts
7	An evil is provoking outraged rioting
8	Dark cults are attracting the ambitious
9	A Blighted horde is threatening the borders
10	An ancient ruin has disgorged some peril
11	Malcontents have obtained a potent artifact
12	Luxuriance has left the nation's coffers bare
13	Local aristocrats are pushing for independence
14	An important mine has run out or been harmed
15	A sinister favorite has infatuated the leader
16	A recurring plant plague is causing hunger
17	Fearsome monsters are migrating into the land
18	A rival is preparing for war or raiding
19	A grand national plan is exhausting the people
20	A savage grudge has erupted between lords

d20	Good Things Happening Right Now
1	A splendid mine or resource has been found
2	A pious saint is strengthening a major faith
3	A noble heir shows signs of heroic greatness
4	A major rival has recently suffered a calamity
5	New farmland has been opened up recently
6	A new trade route has been forged
7	A horrible monster was slain or driven off
8	Good harvests have enriched the people
9	A wicked minister has been deposed
10	A new academy has recently opened
11	A bandit or rebel uprising has been crushed
12	Two rival lords have started to make peace
13	An old enemy has agreed to a peace pact
14	The military won a recent smashing victory
15	A helpful Working has been activated
16	A powerful artifact is helping the ruler
17	An old source of unrest has been calmed
18	A dark cult has been revealed and purged
19	New diplomatic ties have been made
20	A new lord has risen, loved by his people

Example Nation Themes

The themes here offer some suggestions for nation traits that might make for good adventuring grist. The adjacent table is organized in two groups; you can roll 1d10 to get a largely negative thematic trait or 1d10+10 to get a more positive quality.

Whether positive or negative, remember that the themes of the nation should be related to actual playable content. A seemingly idyllic land with traits of Justice and Pageantry might be splendid in many ways, but something about those qualities should cause problems or conflicts that adventuring PCs could become embroiled in. If you feel stumped at a prospect, think about the consequences of taking a virtue too far, or applying a virtuous trait in the wrong way.

Barbarism: The nation is brutally assailed by bestial, primitive forces, whether from external enemies or internal divisions. Naked violence, cruelty, ignorance, and hatred are always near the surface of things, either as threats pressing on the familiar or as instincts and habits among the natives.

Decadence: The nation is voluptuously cruel, indulgent, and indifferent to the prices it pays for its pleasures. Unspeakable debaucheries and sordid delights are in common circulation, and few ever think to question the appropriateness of inflicting brutal evils in order to obtain some elevated enjoyment or refined pleasure. The PCs are regularly exposed to the consequences of such indulgences and the damage they inflict on others.

Despair: The nation is redolent of hopelessness and apathetic submission to fate. It may be because some overwhelming evil seems inevitably due to pass, or because all prior efforts at improvement have brought only worse suffering, or because some bright cultural hope or golden age is now clearly lost and ruined forever. The nation will tend to accept evils and sufferings as inevitable, and the natives will do little to rebel, resist, or defy their unhappy fates.

Enlightenment: A genuine love of knowledge imbues the nation, such that academies and schools have an important role in social and political life and a good education is considered a hallmark of gentility. The populace has a genuine curiosity and zest for investigation, and finding the truth of things is considered more important than secure stability.

Exhaustion: The nation is depleted of something critical, whether that is a tangible resource or their spiritual reserves of enthusiasm and hope. Everything is tired in this nation, with spent rivers, barren fields, cut-over forests, and shorn hillsides. If material resources are sufficient, the natives simply don't have the energy or enthusiasm to bring in more than they presently do, perhaps out of a sense that nothing good can come of any putative improvement.

d20	Thematic Element
1	**Barbarism**, with brutal savagery
2	**Decadence**, of sins and fadings
3	**Despair**, with good things unlooked-for
4	**Exhaustion**, with strength spent and lost
5	**Ignorance**, of terrors and the unknown
6	**Oppression**, with rule a crushing weight
7	**Poverty**, where even the rich are poor
8	**Precarity**, with all goods made fleeting
9	**Stratification**, where classes do not touch
10	**Violence**, where life is something cheap
11	**Enlightenment**, where knowledge is loved
12	**Expansion**, where things swell greater
13	**Hope**, that the future should be better
14	**Justice**, where a reckoning is had
15	**Legitimacy**, where rulers are by right
16	**Pageantry**, of splendor and magnificence
17	**Prosperity**, with wealth easily had
18	**Renewal**, with things growing brighter
19	**Triumph**, with victory a fresh memory
20	**Unity**, where purposes are shared

Expansion: The nation's borders are expanding, either through successful conquest, peaceful assimilation of bordermarches, or the seductive appeal of their values and culture. The society is vigorous and confident, assured of the justification of their expansion and of the good it will provide to everyone deserving of good. There's usually some truth to this, albeit perhaps less than the expansionists would like to admit.

Hope: The nation is imbued with a sense of hope and potential, the promise of a better day to come and a brighter future for those who win through their present problems. There may have been a recent discovery of some great trove of resources, some magical or technological innovation that promises great results, or the rise of a beloved house of seemingly-blessed rulers.

Ignorance: The nation is an ignorant one, redolent of (incorrect) superstition, false gods, blundering institutions, and erroneous beliefs of all kinds. These beliefs are somehow critical to the setting's culture or society, such that being rid of them would cause some profound, potentially bloody disruption of life. Life in this nation can go on as it does only so long as the ignorance remains unilluminated, and the vast majority of its populace would rather remain in error than exist in chaos.

Justice: One or more powers or institutions in the nation have a genuine concern for justice and righteousness, such that the society's laws and values are fairly and even-handedly enforced. These laws may not perfectly match modern conceptions of justice, but what exists is meant to be applied evenly. Righteous crusaders for the cause, honest magistrates, and some great struggle to enforce justice on a widely-understood wrong might all be present.

Legitimacy: The nation's rulers or controlling institutions have a profound degree of legitimacy among the populace, such that it's hard to imagine ever overthrowing them as a group. Individuals among them might be criminals or incompetents, but the structures as a whole are accepted as necessary and eternal by most elements of the society. This legitimacy may derive from divine mandates, personal prowess, honored lineages, or a terror of the chaos that would exist without them.

Oppression: Some substantial portion of the nation is cruelly oppressed by some force. It's rare that this is the same group in all areas of the nation; oppression as a key theme to the setting implies that many groups in many places suffer under this, and it may be accepted as a commonplace that one group or another needs to be harshly repressed if the rest of society is to prosper. Oppressive groups will usually have a clearly-enunciated philosophy of why this state of affairs is necessary, and it usually will have at least some coloring of justification to have persisted as it has.

Pageantry: The nation is marked by dramatic displays, magnificent architecture, sweeping demonstrations of might, and large-scale undertakings for the glory or edification of the rulers and populace. The locals tend to place great store by such ritual displays, finding them inspiring, meaningful, and important in more than strictly material ways. These grandiose efforts actually have real results towards unification, inspiration, and societal harmony.

Poverty: The nation is poor. Even aristocrats might not be assured of the necessary staples of life, or basic resources might be constantly threatened by monsters, warfare, calamities, or simple dearth. The struggle for resources and the basic necessities for survival are apt to drive numerous conflicts in the setting, and the consequences of failure can be far worse than mere discomfort for the losers.

Precarity: Whatever good the nation has is under immediate siege by circumstances, and it looks very likely that it might crumble. Something is happening in the setting to make old verities and assured societal institutions totter, whether a massive monstrous invasion or a revolt by some displeased underclass. These institutions will tend to strike out violently at threats, fearing that their basic existence is at stake, and the recklessness of their responses might be the very catalyst that provokes their eventual collapse.

Prosperity: The nation is relatively rich, such that conventional scourges of famine, privation, and desperation aren't nearly as common as they would be in other cultures. Pockets of genuine want may exist, but the average commoner leads a well-fed, well-clothed life and the grandees have the resources for impressive displays of wealth. This prosperity may be the fruit of unusual natural resources, exceptional societal harmony, magical blessings, or simple good climate.

Renewal: A spirit of reformation and renewal breathes through the nation, with old noble houses rising once again, decayed religions being reformed, corrupt institutions being shaken, and the populace generally more insistent on improvement. This renewal could be a harkening back to the old ideals of yore or an appeal to some new innovation, and the subjects could just as easily be a royal house recalled from exile as a new republic's establishment.

Stratification: The nation draws harsh lines between social classes, cultural groups, regions, sexes, or some other distinction between people. Castes and aristocracies are a common feature of these settings, ones drawn sharply by blood or birth circumstances. Adventurers are apt to be wild cards in these societies due to their ability to obtain outsized personal power, and they may regularly run into conflicts or complications that they have the strength to deal with, but not the social permission.

Triumph: Something wonderful has recently been accomplished in the nation; a dark lord defeated, an evil king overthrown, a plague ended, a natural disaster overcome, or the like. The setting is touched with a sense of success and victory, despite the costs of that triumph, and filled with a confidence in its own power and potential. There will be many new institutions and groups seeking to exploit the aftermath and earn their rightful share of the rewards.

Unity: Powers and groups within the nation are highly united in their goals and sense of fellow-feeling. While not necessarily xenophobic, they will tend to value their brethren more than strangers, and paper over internal conflicts and disagreements that might fester into civil disorder or chaos in less harmonious societies. These societies might have been shaped by some all-consuming peril that forced them together or a culture that greatly prizes unity.

Violence: The nation is a bloody one, with human life held cheap and death a commonplace. This may be the result of incessant warfare, such that most people half-expect to die in battle, or it may be the product of a society that simply doesn't value people's lives. Death may be a penalty for comparatively trivial sins, or the environment might just be so dangerous that a death in bed is a thing unlooked-for by most.

Society Construction

A nation is the product of its society. While you can easily sketch the borders of a particular fantastic domain on a map, the more difficult part of the process is thinking about the kind of people who live there. The things they value and the way they organize their lives will have inevitable consequences when thinking about their government, their conflicts, and their ambitions.

This section allows you to roll up a society to inhabit the nations you've made. Some nations may be mono-ethnic, with a single dominant group and no meaningful pockets of any other ethnicity. Others may have more than one significant group within their borders, either as a legacy of shifting boundaries, ancient conquest, migration, or an old division in an existing people.

For now, just create one society for your nation and take it as the dominant group. If your history generation or your own plans suggest the need for an additional group, you can come back and build it out, placing it within the context of the majority's culture.

Note that the same society can exist in multiple nations. One might have been a colony of the other, or exiles from a lost conflict, or pioneers who pushed the border out and then demanded the right of independent rule. There may be pockets of the group as minorities in distant lands, and it's often convenient to use already-extant societies as candidates when your worldbuilding needs a minority pocket within some empire or vast kingdom.

Some societies may not be based on ethnic groupings at all. While the tables here presume that the members of a society share some overarching physical relationship, cultures based on ideology, religion, or historical chance might have many different bloodlines and ethnic groups mingled together. Membership in such a society might be contingent on agreeing to intellectual principles shared by the group, or joining with them in some overarching faith that is considered much more important than mere lineage. Of course, rebels against these principles can find themselves exiled or isolated, lacking any other ties with their former comrades.

The societies you generate with these tables may or may not be sympathetic to your own sensibilities, but you should have a good idea of how the party is likely to react to them. If you generate a society that believes in ritual kitten defenestration and ceremonial puppy-based sadism, you can't expect to use them as anything but villains with most parties. You may need to blur the uglier qualities of some groups or emphasize the virtues of others to make them into a more neutral society. Even so, don't be surprised if your party draws unexpected conclusions about how willing they are to work for a particular group.

Making Playable Societies

Every society needs to be built to serve the creator's purpose. For recreational worldbuilders, that purpose might be one of building the most "realistic", verisimilitudinous culture possible in a Barkerian opus of world building. For working GMs, the purpose is often much more modest and much more pragmatic.

This means you need to be ready to embrace assumptions and commonplaces. If your society violates the ordinary expectations of real life history or social organization, there has to be some kind of immediate payoff to it in adventure possibilities or play streamlining. Exoticism for exoticism's sake just makes more work for you at the table.

When you build the organization and cultural stylings of a society, start with the most basic, ordinary, commonplace expressions of your choices or random table results. If the roll says the society is based on dynastic houses, then start with a medieval-fantasy-standard collection of noble houses. If it says the society values martial might, then haul in schoolboy-simple echoes of Sparta or viking raiders. If it takes more than two sentences to reference how that part of the society works to a listener, you're making it too esoteric.

Only afterwards, once you have a simple, navigable, *playable* framework should you go back and start weirding it up or adding unique fantasy aspects or elements to your society. Maybe the dynastic houses are each blessed by feuding immortal saints. Maybe the violent raiders need human blood to empower an ancient magical gift. You can add these fantastical flourishes *after* you have a playable society built.

Almost every one of these flourishes should be attached to adventure hooks or societal conflicts that the PCs can get involved in. A marvelous weirdness that means nothing to the PCs' play is something they'll look at, admire, and then forget it exists because it doesn't matter to them. The truly satisfying weird societies are the ones where the strangeness is the direct fuel for the adventure session.

This basic framework also helps a GM deal with the inevitable awkward questions and unexpected angles that always crop up during play. The PCs may suddenly ask about some facet of the society the GM hasn't thought out, or make some assumption about local laws or values that may or may not be true. By starting from a basic framework the GM can fall back on those ordinary assumptions to fill in the blanks that they haven't personally scripted out.

These default assumptions may not fit perfectly, but they're quick to produce and playable at the table. Such qualities are ultimately worth a lot more in play than a perfect reply that takes a day to formulate.

Physical Appearances

A GM usually needs some idea of what the average member of a society looks like. The tables on this page provide some suggestions and possibilities for GMs who don't already have a clear visual aesthetic in mind.

These tables take into account the innumerable eons of sorcerous alteration, genetic manipulation, intermarriage, and alien aesthetic preferences that have gone on in the Latter Earth. The combinations may not map well to any real-life group, largely because all the real-life groups that presently exist have long since gone extinct.

In addition, it's not remarkable for certain groups of humans to have unusual physical additions or traits as an inheritance from some prior age's manipulations. So long as their cognition is similar to that of their neighbors, all but the most hostile usually count them as humans.

d8	Typical Skin Colors in the Populace
1	Extremely dark hues
2	Dark browns and mocha shades
3	Golden, sallow, or ivory
4	Olives or light browns
5	Ruddy or tanned complexions
6	Pale white or pinkish hues
7	An unusual color or pattern of colors
8	Scales, fur, or unusual hide type

d8	Hair Color	Hair Texture
1	Night-black	Very tightly-curled
2	Dark browns	Dense and curled
3	Lighter browns	Slightly wavy
4	Red shades	Stiff and straight
5	Blonds	Thick and wavy
6	White or white-blond	Thin and fine
7	An unusual palette	Thick and flowing
8	They lack hair	Scant and delicate

d8	Eye Coloration
1	Black or extremely dark brown
2	Hazel or olive
3	Blues in varying shades
4	Grays, whether flat or metallic
5	Ambers and yellows
6	Greens in different shades
7	An unusual or luminous color
8	Slit or unusual pupils; roll again for color

d4	What's the Typical Build of the People?
1	Smaller and slighter than their neighbors
2	Same height and weight as the neighbors
3	Either short and stocky or tall and slender
4	Much bigger and bulkier than neighbors

d12	Optional Common Forms of Adornment
1	Intricate hair styles or braiding
2	Painted skin markings that sometimes change
3	Tattoos of some cultural significance
4	Piercings, whether minor or elaborate
5	Role or class-specific clothing items
6	Patterned hair shaving or depilation
7	Culturally-significant jewelry or accessories
8	Color choices with social meaning to them
9	Socially-meaningful animal motif items
10	Worn weapons, tools or trade implements
11	Significant scent or perfume uses
12	Impractical or elaborate role-based clothes

d20	Optional Physical Quirks or Traits
1	They possess an extra eye somewhere
2	An additional set of limbs or extremities
3	Extremely pronounced sexual dimorphism
4	Patches of feathers, scales, fur, or the like
5	They have a tail of some sort
6	They possess wings, whether useful or not
7	Their skin is an unusual texture
8	Sigil-marked by their creator in some way
9	The sexes look very similar to outsiders
10	They have a particular scent to them
11	Their voices are peculiar in some way
12	Additional or too few fingers or toes
13	They have animalistic features in some way
14	Have one or more manipulatory tentacles
15	They have light-emitting organs or skin
16	Their mouths are fanged or tusked
17	They have alien Outsider features somehow
18	Their proportions are distinctly strange
19	They don't show age the way others do
20	Roll twice and blend the results

Values of the Society

Societies will tend to esteem certain values, holding them as emblematic of their people or specially blessed by their gods. Institutions will honor these values, folk heroes will act in ways to further them, and the rightness of decisions will be judged on how well they conform to these virtues.

These special virtues are not the only qualities the society values, of course. Even the most individualistic society will value some degree of order and civic peace, while the most violent warrior cultures can still understand the need for some periods of enforced calm. Yet when these values clash with other principles, the society will generally choose their favorites to prevail.

From the GM's perspective, you can use these principles to generate adventure hooks and problems within the society. Just take the virtue too far, or make a favored vice a cause for significant civic troubles.

The table below can help you generate two or three traits the society values. Conversely, you could use the table to find those qualities the society especially hates or considers contemptible.

It's easy for a GM to come up with unsympathetic societies with these tables or from their own campaign needs. If you need an antagonistic nation of slavery-loving ritual cannibals for your setting it's not likely that the players are going to find the natives particularly appealing in their habits or moral values.

For some tables, it's fine to leave it at that. The players want to put steel into slavers and not have to think carefully about it. The society is an evil one and it gets what it deserves. If the natives are Blighted or non-humans they might actually be every bit as intrinsically malevolent and wicked as their society implies.

If you're building a human society with unsympathetic values, however, you may want to think more carefully about how human traits such as compassion, familial love, loyalty, delight in beauty, and other positive qualities manifest. The natives have explanations for their beliefs that satisfy them and account for their own experiences. Even in a society of cannibal slavers, there will be beloved children, bonds of friendship and respect, and other positive human relationships. Don't make the natives into caricatures unless caricatures are wanted.

d100	Values They Esteem	d100	Values They Esteem
1–2	Individual rights and freedom of action	51–52	Personal sacrifice for one's causes or purposes
3–4	Courage and valiance in danger	53–54	Building things in service of their posterity
5–6	Honesty and truthfulness in speech	55–56	Faithfulness towards one's chosen friends
7–8	Eloquence and social expertise	57–58	Dominating and possessing other people
9–10	Raw strength and personal prowess	59–60	Exploring the unknown and discovering secrets
11–12	Discipline and obedience to the law	61–62	Seeking fortune in new places or new roles
13–14	Filial devotion to family and parents	63–64	Social progress toward some eventual utopia
15–16	Education and knowledge-seeking	65–66	Excellence in one's profession or trade
17–18	Piety and devotion to the gods	67–68	Loyalty to one's friends, family, and own
19–20	Beauty and seductive charm	69–70	Vengeance and execution of just vendettas
21–22	Conquest and domination of others	71–72	Restoring some real or imagined glorious past
23–24	Ascetic unworldliness and pious poverty	73–74	Unity and elimination of group differences
25–26	Harmony with nature and existing life	75–76	Magical prowess and occult ability
27–28	Ethnic purity of blood and culture	77–78	Sharing wealth and goods with others
29–30	Cunning and the ability to trick others	79–80	Membership in an elite bloodline or caste
31–32	Subtlety and indirectness of action	81–82	Personal indulgence and luxuriant pleasure
33–34	Prosperity and accruing material wealth	83–84	Scheming subtly against enemies or rivals
35–36	Submission to the collective will or culture	85–86	Remembrance of the past and memorializing history
37–38	Hardiness and endurance before woes	87–88	Aesthetic beauty in material goods and architecture
39–40	Honor and maintaining one's integrity	89–90	Zealous guardianship of their own land or holy sites
41–42	Sexual license and wantonness	91–92	Humanistic reason and "rational" religion
43–44	Submission to lawful authority	93–94	Industry and the ability to work tirelessly
45–46	Personal development and limit-pushing	95–96	Leadership and charisma in the group
47–48	Justice and fairness between people	97–98	Pacifism and peaceful resolution of problems
49–50	Purging evil and expelling the wicked	99–00	Societal or ethnic superiority over all outsiders

Societal Organization

How is the society organized at the basic level? While the ties of blood are fundamental to almost all societies, the basic units of identity and cooperation don't always fall along nuclear family lines. In the far future of the Latter Earth, societies built on ideological or functional delineations are more common, as some human lineages have had their cognition and preferences adjusted to better suit their ancient manipulator's purposes. These modified humans can make functional societies that modern humanity could never find tolerable.

The adjacent table gives suggestions for major social groupings in the society. A given individual might consider several of these identities to be important to them; a man may be deeply committed to his family and children, but he might also see himself as a member of his caste or professional role, and fight on behalf of their interests as well as those of his immediate family.

For the GM, conflicts between these groups are an easy source of adventure grist. The government likely treats many of these groups as subjects for their policies and laws, and different groups probably vie to win control of the governmental apparatus. A powerful dynastic lineage might strive to keep control of a particular ministry, while a trade guild might jealously guard "their" senatorial seat.

d20	Major Unit of Social Identity
1	Extended family out to cousins and like kin
2	Religious factions or faith alliances
3	Regional and province-based identity
4	Ethnic membership
5	Professional guild or trade-specific group
6	Identity based on their local community
7	Educational ties to institutions or traditions
8	Patron-client relationships with major figures
9	Hereditary loyalty to a political group
10	Trade guilds specific to particular roles
11	Dynastic lineages with cadet branches
12	Lineages based on ancient hero-ancestors
13	Numerous castes of hereditary workers
14	Inheritance of an ancient body modification
15	Astrologically-determined birth groups
16	Warbands or civic military service groups
17	Voluntary mutual-assistance brotherhoods
18	Far-flung clans of affiliated families
19	Having or lacking noble blood
20	Ideological groups or philosophical sects

Societal Aesthetics

It's impossible for a GM to define everything about a culture that might conceivably become important during play. Small details of dress, architecture, the titles of officials, and other minutiae might suddenly become critical when the GM needs a particular fact at hand.

Rather than trying to formulate a heroically Barkerian level of detail for your society, the easiest workaround is to take an existing historical society as a template. Whenever you need an answer for a particular question, provide whatever answer roughly matches the way that the chosen template society did it.

Historical accuracy is completely unimportant, as the whole point of the exercise is to give you quick, relatively coherent answers rather than to correctly portray an existing real society. You may be generating a society of albino pacifists with three eyes that have a magocratic government divided into multiple fractious religion-based factions, but if they have an Aztec aesthetic then they build grand stone architecture, favor their clothing styles, and like erecting imposing religious monuments.

For some of the more esoteric cultures or societies on this list, you might need to do some background reading to pick up the necessary details. Such investigation of real-life cultures and history can be a fruitful source of inspiration for problems, adventures, and novelties in your own world.

d20	Example Template Societies
1	Victorian England
2	Standard Medieval Fantasy Land
3	Spring and Autumn China
4	Pre-Columbian North American Tribes
5	Mali Empire
6	Unified Dynastic China
7	Imperial or Republican Rome
8	Greek City-States
9	Mongolian Steppe Nomads
10	Modern-day America
11	Renaissance Italy
12	Imperial Persia
13	Early Medieval Europe
14	Byzantine Empire
15	Incan Empire
16	Fantasy Viking Land
17	Sumerian or Assyrian Empire
18	Aztec Empire
19	Post-Islamic Arabia
20	Polynesian Islanders

Government Construction

When building a government for a nation, tribe, or other polity, it's important to keep in mind the purpose of your work. While there's a great deal of pleasure to be had in worldbuilding for worldbuilding's sake, a working GM should keep in mind three fundamental purposes in building any government.

Governments should provide adventure hooks. The conflicts within a government, the demands it makes upon a populace, and the problems it faces from rebels, malcontents, rivals, and its own internal corruption should all work to provide you with easy adventure creation grist and interesting events for PCs to encounter. A peaceful, orderly, intricately-designed government may be an enjoyable worldbuilding exercise, but it's not likely to give you much playable content.

Governments should provide guidelines for reacting to PC actions. You need to understand how the local rulers will respond to typical PC hijinks. While you don't necessarily need to explicitly tally the local lord's men-at-arms in full harness, you need to know what kind of resources the local authorities will likely have for dealing with troublemakers and responding to local crises. Is there anything like a police force? Are there particular things that PCs are likely to do or be that are problematic, like being a sorcerer in a magic-banning nation or a human in a land of demihuman supremacists? Your life as a GM will be much easier if you have a rough idea of the kind of muscle and money available to the local rulers at various levels of PC interaction.

Governments should fit the thematic goal of the nation. If you want to have pulse-pounding sword and sorcery adventures in a decadent land of untamed wilderness and debaucherous cities, you probably shouldn't put it all under an all-powerful mandarinate. Or if you do, you should have a very good idea of why scholar-officials chosen for academic ability and personal virtue actually fit the kind of play you want to encourage in the area.

With these three points established, you can go through the sections below to quickly generate a government that will help you fulfill each goal.

Governmental Density

First, you need to decide how dense the nation's governmental resources are. Very poor polities simply cannot afford the tremendous superstructure of officials, enforcers, functionaries, and men-at-arms in full harness that richer nations can indulge. As a consequence, they will tend to have very different mechanisms for dealing with public disorders and large-scale problems than more affluent nations.

Low-density governments tend to exist in tribal societies, small fiefs, compact institutions such as monasteries, or poor nations that produce very little surplus for the elites to collect. Their governments usually consist of a single autocrat or small group of leaders and their personal retainers. There is very little in the way of paid offices, bureaucratic institutions, or low-level functionaries. Taxes and other exactions are gathered and handed over by the common populace based on custom and the threat of direct violence from the leadership, rather than being collected by some intermediary enforcers.

If PCs or others start to create problems in an area, the local citizens will have to deal with it. Only if that proves impossible will they send to their leadership for help, and that help may not be quick in coming. In such cases, the leadership will dispatch one or more trusted retainers to lead the local response. These retainers may dragoon local citizens and resources to their purpose, but their actions will be based on custom, threat, and recognized necessity rather than any written charter.

Medium-density governments are found in richer polities or tribal nation-states where there's enough surplus to feed a thin layer of functionaries. Even in these nations, however, usually no more than one in three hundred people are actually officials or permanently-mustered soldiers. Small bureaucracies may exist devoted to the treasury, the military, economic control, or state religions, but these bureaucrats will tend to be centralized in the capital or other major cities. Villages and other provincial regions will generally have a single governmental representative present, along with a handful of local clerks, guards, and servants, often part-time.

When a crisis happens, the local governmental representative will resolve it with their personal retinue, or enlist locals to assist. Some of these natives may be formally organized as auxiliaries, such as a town guard composed of free citizens obligated to do the work on a rotating basis, or village chiefs charged with collecting crop taxes from their neighbors. These auxiliaries are rarely paid much, if anything, for their work. Many of their duties may be treated as unpleasant corvee labor exacted from the populace by the state.

In a medium-density government, PCs are unlikely to encounter the city watch or other low-level functionaries outside of an actual city. The lowest governmental representative is usually a city or district magistrate or governor, and individual village chiefs are likely no more than important local citizens deputized as such by custom. If the PCs cause serious problems in a city, the rulers may have a certain number of standing guardsmen to deal with them, but major uprisings will require calling out the citizenry, the local garrison, or sending for help.

High-density government is the sort most familiar to modern readers, being a fair description of many of the modern nations of the world. Perhaps as many as one in a hundred or even more are either professional soldiers, clerks, functionaries, or other state-employed servants. Bureaucracies exist in every city and town, and the government has the manpower necessary to involve itself in almost every form of human interaction.

Depending on the competence and responsiveness of the bureaucracy, a crisis might be met with a swift, overwhelming response, or it might meet an interminable delay of confused paperwork and competing departments before an overwhelming response is aimed in precisely the wrong direction. Governments of this kind have a tremendous fund of resources to carry out their will, but their will is often bent and warped by the countless layers of functionaries between the leader and the reality on the ground. In such states, it's not impossible for the ostensible emperor to be unable to control anything he's not personally overseeing, simply because the existing bureaucracies have too much inertia to direct without personal oversight.

As the GM, think about the wealth and general attitude of the populace of this nation and pick a government density that fits. Then if some crisis or calamity strikes in the land, whether PC-generated or not, you'll have some idea what the initial response will look like and what kind of resources they might have to deal with it.

The Ruling Authority

How many people are actually in charge in the nation? Is it an autocracy based on a single monarch, or is effectively ruled by a council? Don't worry about *who* these rulers are at this stage, just decide if they are one, several, or many significant rulers.

d4	Number of Rulers
1	There is a single nominal monarch
2	There is a monarch and several under-kings
3	There is a group of approximate equals
4	There are a large number of small rulers

The Ruling Class

Where are these rulers drawn from? What class or classes provide the leadership of the nation? This limitation may be a formal law or custom, or it may just be a de facto reality based on the local political situation.

d12	Example Ruling Classes
1	Hereditary nobility of blood
2	Powerful merchant-princes and oligarchs
3	Sorcerers and the arcanely skilled
4	Magically-empowered bloodlines
5	Proletariat peasantry or artisans
6	Minority ethnicity of long historical rule
7	Clergy of one or more local faiths
8	Citizens of a special city or old homeland
9	Outsiders or nonhumans of a certain type
10	Warlords or military leaders
11	Clan heads or ethnarchs of particular groups
12	Colonizer viceroys of a foreign hegemon

The Source of Legitimacy

Why does anyone pay attention to these rulers? They may have great military might at their disposal, but continued stable rule is contingent on some degree of popular submission to their orders. What have the rulers done to earn the obedience of the people?

d12	Sources of Legitimacy
1	They've simply always been the rulers
2	They're thought wiser and more virtuous
3	Their martial prowess is awe-inspiring
4	The gods chose them as the leaders
5	They were chosen by popular will
6	They're loved for their benevolence
7	They utterly crushed the last batch of rebels
8	They brought greater prosperity to the land
9	They smashed the prior government
10	They brought order out of bloody chaos
11	They led the nation to greater glory and pride
12	They seem less bad than the alternatives

Servants of the Ruling Order

How do the rulers exert their will on the people? What institutions or functionary classes exist to make sure their commands are carried out and their laws are respected? Most nations have more than one institution that can serve to impose the ruler's will, but the one you pick or roll below may be the most powerful.

The ruler's favored enforcers often tend to subsume some of the government's power toward their own class or personal interests. Corruption among powerful government functionaries is a commonplace, and PCs can easily find that the personal trouble they have with some grandee can become a formal crime. Agents of less popular governments can come to be hated or feared by the common people, often with bloody consequences.

d12	Institutions and Agents of Control
1	Subordinate lords pledged to the ruler
2	Obedient commoner bureaucracies
3	Magically-empowered enforcers
4	A major religion allied with state power
5	A powerful and respected judiciary
6	Savage brutes on the government leash
7	Economy-controlling officialdom
8	Divine blessings and curses on the people
9	Ingrained obedience in the populace
10	Hireling enforcers employed at need
11	Sorcerers in service to the ruler
12	A specific ethnic client group of the ruler

Forms of Rulership

You may know how many major rulers there are for the nation, but how are these rulers chosen, and what is their general relationship to the rest of government? Use the table below that best fits the number of chief rulers suitable to the land.

You'll want to stick a suitable title on the ruler while you're at it, using the default aesthetic of the nation as a guide. Whether as a datu, emperor, basileus, sultana, or some other title of renown, you can fill in the names for your rulers once you know how many of them there are and how they're to be organized.

d8	Single Rulers
1	King or queen over lesser lords
2	Autocrat with non-noble officials
3	President chosen by certain electors
4	Warlord recognized as the strongest
5	Seniormost representative of the ruling class
6	Divinely-chosen leader of the land
7	Monarch for a fixed term or situation
8	Wielder of some magical legitimacy

d8	Multiple Rulers
1	Nobly-born peers of the realm
2	Seniormost figures in the ruling class
3	Elect chosen by ruling class electors
4	Hereditary heirs to their positions
5	Warlords with the strongest backing
6	Oligarchs of greatest wealth or influence
7	Divinely-chosen representatives of their class
8	Bureaucratically-chosen ministers

Diseases of Rule

The final step in creating the government is to roll or pick a substantial problem that it's facing or a driving ambition that is causing conflict within its membership. This problem will help create adventure hooks involving the government; maybe the PCs are caught up in the struggle as unhappy victims, or enlisted by a faction to help gain its end.

Remember that there will always be factions and conflicting interests in any government. Feudal lords don't want the same things that the monarchic king wants, and urban merchants haven't the same interests as rural peasantry. Even a state's main institutions of enforcement might have their own set of goals to pursue.

If you want an extra layer of complication to the situation, you can roll for an earlier problem that the government overcame… but the way in which they overcame it planted the seeds for its current dilemma. Adding historical consequences like that helps give a sense of depth to your world and its rulers.

d12	Current Struggle Within the Government
1	The ruler's trying to crush a too-powerful lord
2	Ministers are trying to usurp power
3	A grand scheme has gone terribly wrong
4	External diplomacy has bungled something
5	A usurper secretly controls a major power
6	Foreign rivals are backing malcontents
7	A different class demands a share of rule
8	The existing ruling class wants more power
9	A disfavored class is being oppressed
10	Popular discontent is destroying legitimacy
11	The prior ruler's incompetence still harms it
12	The heir is unacceptable to many

One-Roll Government Details

While the prior tables give you a basic framework for a government, it can be useful to add a few more details for spice and easier plot hook creation. The tables on this page can be used to quickly generate a few peripheral facts and situations to help flavor a GM's plans. As with the other tools in this section, a GM should simply scale the results up or down to suit the scale of the government.

Thus, if you're creating a tribal kingship where the ruler is one man and his dozen most trusted spear-brothers, a result of "Bribe-hungry and meddling magistrates" might mean that Bragi accepted a dozen sheep from a man to decide in his favor about a land dispute, and so now the victim's kindred are demanding justice. In a grand empire, that same result might speak of an entire province plagued by greedy magistrates.

d6	How Established Is the Current Ruler?
1	They're an outsider with few existing allies
2	They're newly-ascended to the throne
3	They have some basic ties with strong allies
4	They have a hard core of useful supporters
5	They have an extensive support network
6	They're practically an institution of their own

d8	What Problems do their Ministers Have?
1	Their chief schemes too much against rivals
2	They're out of touch or lazy in their work
3	They recently suffered a bloody purge
4	Enemy forces have allies among them
5	They're distracted by factional infighting
6	The leadership tends to ignore their advice
7	They tacitly usurp power from the ruler
8	They're committed to a very bad idea

d10	A Strength of the Government
1	The bureaucracy is extremely efficient
2	The military leadership is fiercely loyal
3	It has great legitimacy with the populace
4	It has firm economic control over the land
5	The populace is convinced it will bring good
6	Its diplomats are remarkably cunning
7	An expert spymaster serves it well
8	It has access to powerful sorceries
9	It's got firm ties with an important faith
10	Nobles have magic blessings or gifted blood

d4	How Stable is the Government?
1	Precarious, its authority questioned by some
2	It has significant problems, but it functions
3	Relatively stable, with strong legitimacy
4	Stable, able to endure even fierce shocks

d12	Officials Recently Causing Problems
1	Rapaciously grasping tax-farmers
2	Ill-disciplined and thieving military troops
3	Bribe-hungry and meddling magistrates
4	Ever-watchful informers among neighbors
5	Tithe-hungry collectors from the state faith
6	Corrupt and untrustworthy market officials
7	Carelessly superior nobles and their retinues
8	Thuggish constables or city guardsmen
9	Pitiless inquisitors hunting out dark magics
10	Law enforcers acting as if they are the law
11	State scholars teaching vile principles
12	Corrupt village headmen acting as tyrants

d20	Recent Governmental Event
1	A major official was executed for treason
2	A critically-necessary heir was born
3	A chief minister fell rapidly from grace
4	A high noble made rebellious noises
5	A major faith was offended by the rulers
6	An allied nation was angered by some act
7	An enemy nation's spy ring was revealed
8	A vast governmental project was announced
9	Corrupt officials plundered a great plan
10	A major new bureaucracy was formed
11	A heavy tax was levied to deal with an issue
12	A general was dismissed for incompetence
13	A folk hero rose to dangerous popularity
14	A major infrastructure project was begun
15	A fief or territory was put in new hands
16	Certain merchants were fined to beggary
17	A terrorist attack by rebels or external foes
18	A major faction of officials collapsed
19	A large bureaucracy was dissolved
20	Internal province borders were redrawn

History Construction

A GM will often need to build some sort of history for their creations, whether for current nations and groups in their campaign setting or for some long-lost fragment of ancient empire. Rather than bog down in an endlessly-unscrolling timeline of events, it can be convenient to package the past into four stages for any group: origin, rise, peak, and fall. The tables provided here give some suggestions for particulars.

Not every group will need every stage fleshed out, and not every element needs to be detailed in exhaustive fashion. A few sentences about each stage is often all that's necessary for some long-dead empire, and when building some time-lost ruin all you might care about is how the original creators fell.

You can also create epicycles inside this pattern, adding additional rises, peaks, and falls within the group's history until some final burden blots them from the memory of the world. It's generally only worth your time to do this if you plan on very carefully detailing a particular history. For less important actors, the rough outlines are usually all you need.

If you don't already know of their origins, first find out how the group came into being.

d8	How Did They Originate?
1	Aboriginal peoples united in the area
2	They were refugees from a fallen land
3	They were exiles or losers of some civil strife
4	They were colonists who became independent
5	They were magically created or shaped here
6	They all followed a faith or ideology here
7	They were a conquering army gone native
8	They migrated here for profit or plunder

Now roll or decide what became of the original inhabitants of the land, who might've been the last remnants of the former ruling power of the region or small, disorganized groups unable to successfully resist.

d10	What Became of the Original Inhabitants?
1	There were no other humans living here
2	They were wiped out in warfare
3	They were utterly assimilated
4	They were driven into exile
5	They became the ruling class
6	They became an oppressed underclass
7	They were partially assimilated
8	They retained small areas of self-rule
9	Roll 1d8 twice; both happened
10	No one can agree on what happened

Then use the table below to pick out some crisis they faced and overcame, thus instigating their rise.

d00	Historical Crises
1–4	Barbarian invasion
5–8	Colonial incursion from a greater power
9–12	Decadent society or a great social evil
13–16	Divine wrath upon them
17–20	Domineering neighbor
21–24	Economic collapse
25–28	Failed external war
29–32	Ideological divide
33–36	Incompetent governance
37–40	Internal refugees from disaster
41–44	Loss of cultural confidence
45–48	Magical calamity
49–52	Malevolent religion
53–56	Miserable poverty
57–60	Natural disasters
61–64	Noble infighting
65–68	Religious or ideological excess
69–72	Resource exhaustion
73–76	Scheming wizards
77–80	Some titanic monster
81–84	Tyrannical rule
85–88	Unsuccessful expansion
89–92	Usurpers seizing control
93–96	Vicious civil warfare
97–00	War with a stronger power

But how did they manage to overcome the crisis? What quality did they demonstrate to get through the hard times or shift the burden onto their neighbors?

d10	How Did They Overcome the Crisis?
1	A brilliant and inspirational leader arose
2	Organization and unity overcame the trouble
3	Grim determination and enduring the evil
4	Faith strengthened them against the woe
5	Skillful use of magic resolved the problem
6	Martial prowess and military cunning
7	Diplomatic ties and outside help
8	Industrious labor and tireless exertion
9	Economic brilliance and trading acumen
10	Ruthless but effective sacrifices were made

With the group at its historical peak, what particular marvels, splendid qualities, or exceptional strengths did it demonstrate? The shining peak of a provincial noble house might produce significantly less than the golden age of a world-spanning empire, but something about this period set its stamp on the group and gave them something to be proud of for the remainder of their days.

d12	What Was Great About Its Peak?
1	A terrible regional evil was driven back
2	Academies were built that are still honored
3	Ancient foes were united together
4	Grand Workings were sorcerously raised
5	It controlled the trade of the entire region
6	It was hegemon over its weaker neighbors
7	Its armies were fearsomely mighty
8	Its culture was compelling to its neighbors
9	Magnificent works of art were created
10	Numerous legendary heroes arose
11	The populace was tremendously prosperous
12	Wonderful works of architecture were built

Yet all glories must fade in time. For its fall, pick or roll another historical crisis; this time, the group was unable to rise to the occasion and collapsed due to the stress of the situation. Why couldn't it handle the crisis?

d12	Why Did It Fail At the Final Crisis?
1	Its people were too deeply divided
2	Its leadership was hopelessly inept
3	The gods cursed it to ruin
4	Decadence and self-absorption doomed it
5	It was vastly overconfident in its plans
6	Its neighbors conspired to help ruin it
7	It was actually two crises, and it was too much
8	It was culturally exhausted and apathetic
9	Some tried to take advantage of the crisis
10	Its strengths were useless against the problem
11	The crisis was far too vast and overwhelming
12	Some leaders were allied with the crisis

With the nation or group in ruins, the last step to the process is to determine what happened to the survivors that were not absorbed by the conquerors. While fantasy worlds often consign fallen empires to oblivion, historical collapsed nations tend to melt into the surrounding peoples or carry on as pockets within the new overlord's domain. In your world, it's possible that the serpent-men of the Red-Scaled Imperium were wiped out by the collapse of their thousand-year rule, but it's equally possible that they became the humble swamp-fishers that sometimes bring their catch to human villages.

d12	What Became of the Unabsorbed Survivors?
1	They fled for refuge to a neighboring nation
2	They sought to hide in a dangerous wilderness
3	They were exterminated by bitter rivals
4	They degenerated into savage remnants
5	They were enslaved by their enemies
6	They were magically transformed or twisted
7	They were shattered into pockets of survivors
8	They became a remnant shadow of themselves
9	They forcibly migrated into a weaker land
10	They formed the nucleus of a new culture
11	They split into several new, smaller groups
12	Roll twice; the resultant groups hate each other

With the basic outline of the group's history complete, you can now go on to decorate their past with other historical events, such as those given on the following pages. If you've already established a few historical events for the group as part of building a backdrop with them, you can stitch those existing events into the pattern you've generated here.

All of the results in this section should be selected with an eye for adventuring potential. The old conflicts, past prides, and present travails of a nation are meant to provide situations that the PCs can encounter, and problems that they might be called upon to intervene in. An intricate tale of a hundred-year war is all well and good, but if the story doesn't provide any adventure hooks, then it's recreational worldbuilding rather than a source of playable content.

Also keep in mind that these history tools don't need to be applied strictly to great nations or mighty tribes. Even a gentry family in some remote village might have a history patterned from this table, translated and shrunken down to the scale at which they live. The *'Barbarian Invasion* that was a tide of howling warriors to a nation might be a raucous clan of backwoods squatters laying claim to the family's best fields. In the same vein, "diplomatic ties and outside help" might've brought together a national alliance at a state level, and might've called on old marriage ties to marshal a mob of angry villagers at a more familial level. Use the results as cues and general directions rather than stiff descriptions of specific fact.

Historical Events

The events described here provide a selection of possibilities for your own history-building. When applying them to different levels of your backdrop, scale them accordingly; the *Immigrants* result rolled on a village scale might be a family of foreigners moving into an isolated farmstead, while applying it on a national scale might mean an entire barbarian tribe has marched in and requested citizenship.

Battleground: The group's territory ended up as a battleground between two stronger rival powers, and they suffered bitterly for it.

Betrayal: Either they betrayed some trusting neighbor to a foe, or were betrayed in turn by such a false friend.

Brutal Oppression: Some portion of the group was reduced to a state of wretched subservience by the rest.

Class Struggle: Different classes were in conflict, either subtle or overt, all seeking their own gain.

Consequences: Pick an event of a prior age; it had long-term consequences that were good, for a bad event, or bad, for a good event.

Decadence: Old strengths and glories crumbled away into decadent remnants, the group becoming indolent and indulgent.

Depravity: Vile debauches, unclean habits, and base hungers became commonplace among the group.

Desolation: Some portion of the group's territory was rendered uninhabitable by something, either permanently or for a long time.

Diplomatic Coup: The group achieved an extremely successful alliance or affiliation with a neighboring group that may yet persist.

Economic Boom: Circumstances produced a burst of tremendous prosperity for them.

Enemies Within: A hostile sub-group inside the group worked to do it evil, perhaps on behalf of a neighbor or due to some old grudge.

Evil Wizard: A malevolent sorcerer, arcane cult, or other powerful magical entity caused a great deal of trouble for the group.

Exodus: A significant chunk of the group packed up and left for some supposedly-superior land.

Exquisite Art: The group produced art that is revered to this day, either in general or in a specific medium or form of literature.

External War: The group faced a war with some external enemy or rival nation, with grave consequences.

Freakish Magic: A particular type of magic was developed here that is unknown elsewhere, and its practitioners keep its secrets well.

Golden Age: Everything went remarkably well for the group for an extended period of time, allowing prosperity and success.

Good Wizard: Some magic-using entity of great power protected the group, taught them magic, or otherwise assisted them.

Great Awakening: A tremendous wave of reform, purification, and re-commitment to venerable values swept through the group.

Great Builders: The group constructed a great many vast palaces, monuments, estates, or other structures of wide fame.

Great Infrastructure: Some tremendous work of infrastructure was accomplished: canals, vast walls, roads, aqueducts, mines, or the like.

Hero King: Some king or other ruler achieved legendary glory in war, diplomacy, or governance. Their name is honored even today.

Immigrants: A large group of foreigners entered the land more-or-less peacefully and may or may not have been welcomed.

Inefficient Rule: The group's governance was impractical, inefficient, or corrupt, holding to values that turned out to be unhelpful.

Internal War: A straight-up civil war was sparked in the group, one that involved all or many of its members.

Loss of Confidence: Some encounter with a new group or some shocking event made the group lose faith in its own customs and values.

Magical Disaster: Some large-scale magical disaster scarred the group, either natural in nature or the result of someone's sorcerous doings.

Magical Tech: The group developed a useful and widespread magical tech or infrastructure that may have survived into the present.

Natural Calamity: Earthquakes, multi-year droughts, tsunamis, meteor strikes, or some other ruins smote the group.

New Horizons: The group discovered new territory, whether trans-dimensional, a far terrestrial region, underground realms, or the like.

New Rulers: The group's former ruling dynasty was replaced, either peacefully, through intrigue, or perhaps through outright conquest.

Noble Function: Aside from the usual roles of nobles, their ruling class was all expected to fill some specific role: priest, mage, scholar, or the like.

Noble Strife: The group's nobility found itself embroiled in assassinations, petty wars, and mutual struggle.

Plague: A sickness of vast scope culled many of the group, and may yet linger in some form.

Poverty: Circumstances conspired to reduce the group to a state of great poverty and harsh simplicity for a time.

Power Brokers: The group was a critical regional power broker for a time, their aid or influence critical in determining who would be the hegemon.

Praetorian Coups: Soldiers or guardsmen in service to the ruler ended up becoming the ruler's electors or deposers.

Priest King: One or more religions became deeply intertwined with the legitimacy of the ruling class, priests becoming nobles and vice-versa.

d00	Historical Event	d00	Historical Event
1–2	Battleground	51–52	Loss of Confidence
3–4	Betrayal	53–54	Magical Disaster
5–6	Brutal Oppression	55–56	Magical Tech
7–8	Class Struggle	57–58	Natural Calamity
9–10	Consequences	59–60	New Horizons
11–12	Decadence	61–62	New Rulers
13–14	Depravity	63–64	Noble Function
15–16	Desolation	65–66	Noble Strife
17–18	Diplomatic Coup	67–68	Plague
19–20	Economic Boom	69–70	Poverty
21–22	Enemies Within	71–72	Power Brokers
23–24	Evil Wizard	73–74	Praetorian Coups
25–26	Exodus	75–76	Priest King
27–28	Exquisite Art	77–78	Rare Resource
29–30	External War	79–80	Religious Fall
31–32	Freakish Magic	81–82	Religious Rise
33–34	Golden Age	83–84	Resource Collapse
35–36	Good Wizard	85–86	Secession
37–38	Great Awakening	87–88	Terrain Change
39–40	Great Builders	89–90	Total Collapse
41–42	Great Infrastructure	91–92	Twist of Fate
43–44	Hero King	93–94	Urbanization
45–46	Immigrants	95–96	Weak Throne
47–48	Inefficient Rule	97–98	Xenophilia
49–50	Internal War	99–00	Xenophobia

Rare Resource: A uniquely valuable resource was found or manufactured by the group, which used or traded it to full effect.

Religious Fall: A once-honored religion collapsed, perhaps through divine displeasure, human corruption, or harsh suppression.

Religious Rise: A powerful new religion arose among the group.

Resource Collapse: Some critical resource ran short; water, arable land, timber, magical power, or the like.

Secession: A substantial portion of the group's territory tried to secede from the rest, successfully or otherwise.

Terrain Change: Some portion of the group's land slowly changed its basic ecosystem; plains to forest, desert to savanna, or the like.

Total Collapse: Whether due to war, civil strife, magical curses, or sheer decadence, the group's society collapsed into anarchistic chaos for a time.

Twist of Fate: Roll again; if the event was positive twist it to ultimately be a negative to the group, and vice-versa.

Urbanization: One or more urban sites became unusually heavily populated, growing vastly and having a wide net of supporting towns.

Weak Throne: The central government of the group became weak, and feudal lords or subsidiaries gained much effective independence.

Xenophilia: The group adopted many customs from their neighbors and many foreigners joined the group.

Xenophobia: The group conceived a strong distaste for foreign people and their customs, curtailing outside contact.

Religion Construction

While it's certainly possible to create a setting wholly devoid of anything resembling a religion, most GMs will want some manner of faith in their campaign. Note that you should only build the religions you need, the ones that will give you the most playable content and the highest number of adventure hooks. A boring faith, however important it is to the culture or society it's in, just isn't worth much of your mental effort or creative energy.

The Scope of the Faith

First, decide where this god is worshiped. It might be a local deity unknown outside a particular backwoods hamlet, or it might be the state faith of an entire kingdom or continent. Some faiths you create might be entirely dead in the modern age, existing only to help you define the particular god some ruined temple once served.

Use the scope of the faith to scale the results and decisions that follow. A religion led by a single holy prophet might amount to a village wise man for a petty rural god, while an empire's faith might be led by a pontiff hardly less powerful than the emperor.

Who Leads the Faith?

How is the religion organized, and who makes decisions about its beliefs, actions, and use of resources? When PCs interact with the clergy, who will be deciding how the faith responds to them, and who do the nobles deal with when they want divine favors for the church?

d8	Church Structures
1	Each holy man or woman is the autonomous leader of their own branch of the sect, with however many followers they can gather.
2	There are multiple pontiffs, friendly or otherwise, with subordinate clergy obedient to their own pontiff and perhaps cooperative with others.
3	There is a single pontiff with a layer of upper clergy and temple heads beneath them, who have a layer of minor clergy serving them.
4	Individual congregations are independent, with their clergy subject to the consensus will of their parishioners.
5	Powerful lay believers fund temples that are subject to their family's wishes, staffed by clergy supported by their funding.
6	There is no official clergy; some believers may take up special roles or provide teaching, but they are not qualitatively different from others.
7	The church is entirely part of the secular structure of the land, its clergy no more than officials appointed by the government to their roles.
8	Roll twice; the faith has different structures in different places or contexts.

What is the God's Origin?

Where did this deity come from? The religion may be completely wrong about the facts of the matter, but they will have some kind of explanation as to the origins of their god. This origin will tend to shape a faith's relationship with their patron; the literal hero-ancestor of a people will draw a different kind of devotion than a personified abstract principle.

d12	Where Did The God Come From?
1	It's a deified ancestor-king or progenitor
2	It's a legendary historical hero or teacher
3	It's an abstract principle reified as an entity
4	It simply always existed since creation
5	It was an apotheosized sorcerer
6	It's the genius of a particular land or location
7	It was an Outsider or alien from beyond
8	It was a personified natural phenomenon
9	It was another faith's saint turned into a god
10	It was a tamed or placated supernatural entity
11	It was an artificial construct built by humans
12	Roll twice and blend the two

Why Does This Faith Matter?

Most gods provide something important to their worshipers, be it luck, divine blessings, salvation upon death, or curses on their enemies. From a GM's perspective, however, the most important factor is how the god relates to the PCs, and what sort of playable content they bring to the campaign setting.

In some cases this will be obvious, because you're building a faith to be the state religion, or the primary source of Healers in a setting, or some other clear hook. The table below offers some suggestions for other cases.

d10	Why Does The Faith Matter?
1	It's the main purveyor of healing blessings
2	It provides magical favors to the faithful
3	It's locked in conflict with a major local power
4	It supports something the PCs love or hate
5	It's the state faith or otherwise legally important
6	It regularly hires people to do work for it
7	It's trying to expand and needs help
8	It's a huge economic player in the area
9	It plots secret sinister evils against the land
10	It has influence over important locals

What Does This Faith Want?

The religion doubtlessly wants something. Individual clerics might have their own desires and ambitions, but as an institution the faith wants something that the PCs can either help or hinder them in obtaining. Some faiths might have multiple desires, either pursued by quarreling factions within the church or as part of some larger vision.

d12	What Does The Faith Want?
1	Crush its religious rivals in the area
2	Destroy a heretical but powerful sub-sect
3	Expand the faith to a foreign land or people
4	Recover holy land or a sacred site
5	Obtain vast material wealth for the faith
6	Depose a hostile royal house or government
7	Smash a specific enemy faith or group
8	Embody their god with a mighty ritual
9	Erect a huge and imposing temple complex
10	Perform a tremendously expensive rite
11	Strengthen or protect its devout believers
12	Roll again; stop a rival from doing that

What are the Clergy Like?

What's the average cleric of this faith like? How do they present themselves to the general public, and what kind of cleric will the PCs most likely encounter if they want to deal with this religion? The more restrictive and demanding the faith is about their clerics, the rarer they will be and the more likely that lay believers handle some rituals of the faith on their own. Conversely, the more strict the qualifications, the more likely those clerics are to have special qualities or magical powers. Some faiths may have multiple kinds of clerics, either as different ranks or for serving different functions in the religion.

d8	What Are the Clerics Like?
1	Just ritual technicians trained in complex rites, with no special moral qualities.
2	Chosen from specific bloodlines or groups and trained to serve the faithful.
3	Experts in some sphere related to the god's portfolio or nature, though trained in ritual.
4	Sorcerers who serve the god as part of their magical studies or efforts.
5	Common believers chosen by their peers for their technical skill and good moral qualities.
6	Isolated ascetics or ritually-separated persons expected to keep a distance from the world.
7	Individuals who step forward and are accepted for their qualities or technical skills as priests.
8	The wealthier believers who can afford to keep up the expensive or demanding ritual practice.

What Is Their Societal Function?

While a given faith matters chiefly for what it provides by way of adventure hooks, the religion also must serve some meaningful purpose in its surrounding society. It's a common habit of world-builders to assign particular portfolios to gods and then build out their social function from that. While it's possible to do this, it's generally more efficient to reverse this process.

First you pick the function that is being served, and then you roll or choose the god's divine portfolio. The connection between the two may not seem obvious at first glance, but the society will tend to create their own explanations for any apparent incongruities. A forest god who also happens to be the favored deity of a nation's noble elite might influence their iconography, make their duels into ritual hunts, and perhaps be credited as the magical source of noble fertility or special prowess.

Most societies will have certain roles or functions that the gods need to serve. Almost every nation's farmers need to pray to *somebody* for a good harvest, and people will pray for health, luck, protection in danger, success in undertakings, and other common human desires. A GM could create gods for all the common needs listed below, but the table is mostly useful for assigning a particular social role to whatever specific gods or religions that are most relevant to your campaign's scope and your party's adventures.

d20	What Does This God Do in Society?
1	It's the war god or patron of those who fight
2	It's the favorite god of the ruling class
3	It's the patron of an important profession
4	It's a devil-figure that must be placated
5	It provides healing or protection from danger
6	It's a patron of an illegal but inevitable trade
7	It hallows the law and consecrates oaths
8	It's flatly illegal and hated by most
9	It's the protector of an ethnic minority
10	It provides good harvests or human fertility
11	It's the patron of the former rulers of the land
12	It guards particular places within the land
13	It provides wisdom and insight at need
14	It gives good luck to its petitioners
15	It's a protector of the weak and humble
16	It empowers those seeking revenge for wrongs
17	It bestows material wealth upon petitioners
18	It protects the soul in the afterlife
19	It explains the creation and order of the world
20	It prevents some type of common disaster

What Is The God's Portfolio?

Once you know what the faith's role in society is, you can pick or roll to find out what general portfolio is assigned to the deity. Powerful gods may have several spheres they are responsible for, while niche deities might be gods of only a small, specific, yet important function. The origins of the god will also flavor this choice; an ancestor-hero might have a portfolio associated with their great deeds in life, while a reified cosmic principle probably isn't considered critical to merely human processes and activities.

Remember also that gods tend to bleed into providing the services that their worshipers need from them. If a god is important to the locals, the original myths and understanding of their nature may warp over time into functions and aspects that are more important or significant to the people and their rulers. A god that once embodied a particular natural principle might later be viewed as the patron of some human concern, their original qualities reinterpreted to fit their new role.

d20	Human Concern	Natural Principle
1	A Human Vice	A Local Terrain Type
2	A Kind of Demihuman	Beasts
3	Agriculture	Beauty or Sex
4	Cities	Cosmic Law
5	Commerce	Creation
6	Crafting	Death
7	Deception	Fertility
8	Healing	Forests
9	Justice	Magic
10	Luck	Mountains
11	Marriage or Family	Night
12	Music	One or More Seasons
13	Prophecy	Pain
14	Protection	Sea or Rivers
15	Revenge	Sky
16	Ruling	Storms or Rain
17	Theft or Crime	Sun, Moon, or Stars
18	Travel or Roads	The Underworld
19	War	Time
20	Wisdom	Untamed Nature

What Are the Faith's Strictures?

A religion will make certain demands upon its faithful, with the common believers expected to keep to certain behaviors and the clergy charged with more demanding practices. These strictures and commands usually relate to actions rather than beliefs; theological disputes are meat for priests, while common believers concern themselves with the proper sacrifices, prayers, rituals, and technical procedures for winning the god's favor.

Some of these strictures will be positive, commanding the faithful to act in certain ways. Others will be negative, forbidding them from particular activities. While many faiths might have general prohibitions against blasphemy or other activities widely despised by their society, the table below focuses on special commands unique to the followers of the god.

Of course, not all followers will obey these strictures with the same zeal. Priests and the pious will usually be expected to offer at least lip service to the principles, while common believers may follow them only when their circumstances allow or they feel a special need to curry the god's favor. Nobles and other elites will often make an ostentatious show of such behavior, facilitating it with their wealth and power in order to emphasize their piety and favor with the gods. Indeed, following certain taboos may be a sign of status in a society and show the practitioner is wealthy enough to afford such limits.

d20	Particular Religious Requirements
1	Never/always associate with certain types
2	Never eat a particular common food type
3	Give a significant tithe regularly
4	Make particular sacrifices at certain times
5	Revere/hate a class or group of people
6	Forbid a certain common profession or role
7	Forbid an activity common to society
8	Give secular obedience to the clergy
9	Pray at certain fixed places or times
10	Never/always trade with certain sorts
11	Never/always live in certain places
12	Marry exclusively within the faith
13	Do something society finds repugnant
14	Hold certain places to be taboo
15	Hide the inner faith's teachings from outsiders
16	Make sacrifices that society finds hateful
17	Never/always make war on certain types
18	Honor/degrade a particular profession
19	Make certain pilgrimages to holy places
20	Never/always cooperate with a certain faith

One-Roll Temple Details

It's inevitable that the PCs are going to seek the services of a temple sooner or later, either for the sake of some magical blessing that can be had there or out of more secular interest in its wealth, employment opportunities, or suitability for plundering. The tables below allow you to roll one die of each type and assemble a serviceable shrine out of the results.

When considering the specifics of architectural design or decoration, you can lift the aesthetic of the surrounding culture and simply use that. If the faith is an export from a foreign land, however, it might use a different architectural lexicon, or use materials uncommon in the secular buildings there. Often there are particular structural quirks that quickly identify a building as sacred in its culture, such as purifying baths or ritual walls.

d6	What Do The Locals Think Of It?
1	It's held in contempt for its flaws and failings
2	Something about it is bothering the locals
3	The locals accept it as a tolerable shrine
4	It has a good and trustworthy reputation
5	It did something recently that gave it glory
6	It's held in utmost esteem by the locals

d8	Who Is In Charge There?
1	A venal time-server of desultory piety
2	A harried and inexperienced new leader
3	A dutiful minion of the local secular power
4	An incompetent shunted off to the post
5	A local prodigy of remarkable abilities
6	A grizzled and pragmatic leader
7	A charismatic but near-schismatic iconoclast
8	A practical and reasonably pious cleric

d10	What Particular Help Can It Provide?
1	They have considerable magical resources
2	They're unusually flush with cash
3	They own a lot of valuable goods or land
4	They have the ear of important locals
5	The local lord relies on them considerably
6	They have useful secular servants
7	They know a lot of useful secrets
8	They can get crimes or offenses forgiven
9	They are owed favors by other temples
10	They have a lot of well-armed followers

d4	How Big is the Temple?
1	Much smaller than most in a similar place
2	Shrunken from its former size
3	Normal for a temple of its importance
4	Unusually large or grand for its site

d12	What Problems Does It Have?
1	A rival faith is doing the temple real harm
2	The locals expect a miracle it can't provide
3	The leader is fighting with their superiors
4	A priest recently did something awful
5	The temple got into serious debt lately
6	Some disaster physically damaged the place
7	Some armed men have a grudge against it
8	The elite refuse to patronize it for some reason
9	It suffers signs of real divine displeasure
10	A sorcerer-priest is meddling with dark forces
11	A schismatic is drawing off its believers
12	Roll twice; one because of the other

d20	Particular Quirks About the Temple
1	It's built into a once-secular building
2	It's remarkably well-fortified
3	It's connected to a secular business
4	The clergy are largely related to each other
5	It's in an unusually dangerous location
6	It shares space with a friendly faith
7	It follows unusual prohibitions or rites
8	It has access to some ancient artifact
9	The library is remarkably extensive
10	It attracts prophets and religious merchants
11	It provides some illicit or scandalous service
12	It's more a merchant enterprise than a shrine
13	It's unusually beautifully-built
14	It's a shadow of a once-glorious past
15	It's unusually recent in its founding
16	The clergy generally hate each other there
17	Its leadership is foreign or demihuman
18	It deals only with the proven faithful
19	It displaced a former faith, perhaps violently
20	It actually *is* another faith, merely concealed

Evil or Antagonistic Religions

For many GMs, it hardly seems like a sword and sorcery campaign without a sprinkling of nefarious cults and a cackling evil high priest or two. Likewise, GMs of other genres often find it necessary to cook up the occasional evil deity and its host of cultist slaves.

While it's possible to create such faiths as simple plot devices, wicked for wickedness' sake and motivated by irrational zealotry alone, fleshing the faith's reasoning out a little bit further can sometimes produce more usable game content or a more abundant selection of plot hooks.

When you need an evil religion or a faith that's going to be antagonistic to the party's goals, it's worthwhile asking yourself some questions about it.

Most importantly, is this faith genuinely malevolent or is it just situationally opposed to the party's interests? The devotees of Kaaldruk the Iron-Horned might make it a point of religious zeal to murder any interloper who dares enter the taboo ruins of his sacred city, but otherwise the faith may be no more vicious or demanding than any other religion in the area. A party who finds themselves with a pack of Kaaldruk's holy slayers tracking them after their latest ruin expedition may have a negative opinion of the faith, but other locals might just shrug and figure the PCs brought it on themselves.

If the religion isn't really malicious or contrary to local moral codes then you can create it with the tools earlier in this section and just add whatever additional goals or strictures you need to put it crosswise with the PC party. If this religion really is a nefarious one, following heinous principles or obeying sinister powers, then a few more questions need to be answered.

The Rewards of Damnation

What do the cultists get out of their service? Why does it seem a good idea to worship a tentacular abomination that hates all human life? Why are these believers rejecting the morals and values of their native culture to adhere to faith that rejects everything their families and society holds dear?

The irresistible will of a dark god or the convenient insanity of mind-blasted devotees are over-worn tropes often used to answer this question. Aside from being stale, they also don't give a GM much to work with; if the cultists are worshiping this dark god because they're crazy or mind-controlled, then there's no way to rationally predict their actions or assess their logical goals.

Instead, it is often better to apply more human reasons to the cultists, and give the more comprehensible rationales for their service. PCs who can recognize the logic behind the cult's service will be in a better position to deal with them and their plans.

Human motivations are also easier to integrate with the rest of the campaign. If the religion is giving the believers something valuable, then that reward will be something others will try to eliminate, exploit, or acquire for their own use.

d12	Rewards of the Sinister Faith
1	It savagely defends an otherwise oppressed or powerless group, requiring service as a price for this aid
2	The chosen among the believers are granted magical powers or occult gifts
3	The faith can bestow wealth and material prosperity on those who serve it
4	It allows an undead or undying state of eternal life for devout servitors
5	It gives practical protection against a plague, disaster, constant environmental hazard, or other threat against its believers
6	It provides political power through blackmail, bribery, vile favors, and other works in favor of its followers
7	Its principles are the comfortably established morals and beliefs of its hereditary believers, as much as they hide them from outsiders
8	It provides intense physical pleasures or sensory delights that its believers normally would never get to taste
9	It provides muscle to its faithful followers, letting them murder, beat, or terrorize those who stand against them
10	It justifies their worst impulses and gives a divine rationale to a vicious, depraved subculture the believers belong to
11	It promises salvation from an impending catastrophe that will be unleashed on all unbelievers.
12	It gives its outcast adherents a sense of meaning, importance, and power with its terrible majesty and awful splendor

If the faith has an open, public presence in a society, it probably is offering some of the same practical benefits that a more temperate religion provides. The tables on the prior page can be used to give a hint about what the dark cult means to its more casual adherents.

A savage blood god who grants inhuman might to its fiercest devotees might simply be a useful war god to rank-and-file believers. They may not have any moral objection to the hideous rituals the elect perform to get their unholy power, but the price of it may be more than they care to pay. Instead, they simply pray to the god for success in battle.

The more widespread the faith, the more likely it is that its most extreme qualities are reserved to its clergy, its most zealous lay believers, or to the more fundamentalist sub-sects of the religion. Outer-circle believers may praise this exemplary piety, but the practical concerns of ordinary life are likely to discourage less dedicated believers from sacrificing so much to their eldritch lord.

One-Roll Malevolent Cult

Most antagonistic religions are built for a particular purpose: a GM needs sentient enemies in some ancient ruined temple, a dark mastermind is needed for some nefarious plot, or a savage land needs some suitably bloodthirsty religions for its people. The prior table can give a GM some ideas about what the faith is offering its believers, but a few more details are often needed to put something usable together.

The tables below let you roll one die of each type to get a general overview of the sinister faith. They assume that the cult is proscribed in the nation or otherwise viewed with dismay by decent people and so forced to remain in hiding. If you're generating an evil faith that can openly function in a land, then just read the table results in light of that public acceptability.

d6	What General Goal Do They Have?
1	Glorify their dark god and its vile ways
2	Expand the cult in an adjacent community
3	Destroy a powerful enemy of the cult
4	Extinguish a rival faith and their clergy
5	Perform a terrible magical ritual
6	Obtain secular control over an area

d8	What's So Horrible About the Faith?
1	Unbelievers are to be killed on principle
2	Hideous appetites of the flesh are sacred
3	Unholy entities from beyond must be called
4	Unbelievers are cattle to be used as desired
5	The world must die to make room for the god
6	Secular civilization must be destroyed
7	All law but the cult's must be overthrown
8	The god demands a terrible nourishment

d10	How Do the Clergy Enforce Their Will?
1	Magical curses scourge the disobedient
2	Blackmail and threats of social ruin
3	Murder by cult enforcers and monsters
4	Mental compulsions implanted by rituals
5	Kidnapping before a hideous ritual death
6	Traitors are betrayed to cult enemies
7	Violence against a traitor's loved ones
8	The dark god's divine wrath smites them
9	Control of an addictive thing they need
10	Lay believers gain glory by purging traitors

d4	How Unified is the Cult?
1	Completely united behind its leadership
2	Obedient to leaders who sometimes quarrel
3	Tenuously balanced factions cooperate
4	Badly fractious under many rival priests

d12	What Problems Does It Have?
1	The leadership is insane in unhelpful ways
2	It caught the eye of a dangerous enemy
3	One of its servitor monsters is out of control
4	It's running low on sacrifices and slaves
5	It's been impoverished by a recent trouble
6	There's a dangerous schism in its ranks
7	Its god is making unreasonable demands
8	The laity is demanding much from the priests
9	The enforcers are muscling their clerical lords
10	The god's influence has become distant
11	An important member has turned traitor
12	Another dark faith is warring with it

d20	Specific Traits of the Cult
1	It favors monstrous body alterations
2	It's a remnant of a now-dead culture
3	It has a variety of potent ancient artifacts
4	It's a sect of a better-known public faith
5	It cuts secret deals with the ruling class
6	It has a totemic beast or monster type
7	They live where normal people couldn't
8	They're cannibals or other gustatory deviants
9	They have agents in other religious groups
10	They were thought to be wiped out in the past
11	A subculture of the land is friendly to it
12	It employs technology-like magics
13	It has a lot of servitor monsters obedient to it
14	An area is tacitly understood to belong to it
15	It was once a public and powerful faith
16	It has open sympathizers among the great
17	It's thought to hold back some awful doom
18	They only look like humans
19	The visible part of the cult is but a fraction of it
20	They serve a purpose that no longer obtains

Placing Ruins and Points of Interest

Some campaigns revolve almost exclusively around courtly intrigue, urban adventures, or quests through uninhabited wilderness. Most, however, need at least a modest sprinkling of ruins, Deeps, lost temples, hidden lairs, and other "dungeon"-like places of adventure.

As a general rule, you should only worry about placing ruins at the kingdom level of your campaign. Famous sites of adventure might exist elsewhere in the setting, and legendary ruins might be well-known to scholars, but the only ruins you really need to worry about are the ones your players could conceivably want to go adventure in for their next session without crossing half the region to get to them. In addition, local ruins are the ones most likely to be causing problems for the natives and creating situations that require adventurers to help resolve their woes.

Establishing Ruins

As a rough guideline, start with a half-dozen ruins for the average-sized kingdom. These are not the only ancient remnants in the area, but they're the most famous or significant. There's nothing stopping you from planting a minor Deep a half-day's march outside your starting village, but places of that scale are so small or obscure that only the locals are likely to know about them. These six initial ruins are names familiar throughout the kingdom.

If you don't have your own ideas about what these ruins are, use the adjacent tables or those on page 238. GMs using the Gyre setting might roll on the Gyre-specific table, while those building for a more standard fantasy setting might use the general one.

Look at your kingdom map and identify the usual paths of travel between its major settlements. Usually this will be by water whenever practical, or along the flattest and safest land routes. Identify the empty spaces in the kingdom that lie between these major traffic routes, places where only rural villages or howling wilderness exist.

Now place each ruin in one of the empty spaces, choosing locations appropriate to their nature. A ruined city was probably on a river or coast, or else at a good ancient trade nexus. A forgotten fortress guarded a once-vital military strongpoint. A Deep might have breached the surface almost anywhere, while a raider lair is almost certainly close enough to a traffic route to pillage it. Roll a pair of Ruin Tags from page 190 to give it character.

Finally, write a sentence or two of description about the ruin. You don't actually need to flesh it out or turn it into an actual adventure site with the tools starting on page 222. All you need is to know it's there, and to think about what kind of problems or opportunities it might present to its neighbors. If the PCs decide they really want to check the place out, then you can spend the downtime between sessions turning it into a real adventure site.

d12	Places Specific to the Latter Earth
1	An abandoned Outsider outpost, possibly with a hazardous local environment
2	A Deep long since abandoned
3	An alien xenoforming complex, possibly with a surrounding *arratu*
4	A relic-palace of a vanished sorcerer-king
5	A city once inhabited by not-quite-humans
6	A megastructure of now-irrelevant purpose
7	An old stronghold of hostile Outsiders or of antagonistic demihumans
8	Massive monument complex dedicated to a vanished kingdom, god, or ethnic group
9	Fortress raised by a dead sorcerer-king, lost empire, or militant faith
10	Wizard's lair once or presently inhabited by powerful and dangerous sorcerer
11	Roll twice on 1d10; the first roll was built on top of or in the ruins of the second roll
12	Roll again, but now inhabited by bandits, exiles, hostile refugees, or other interlopers

d20	General Places of Adventure
1	A lost temple to a dead god
2	Ruins of an ancient city
3	Cavernous tunnels and strange geology
4	Ruined fortress of a former empire
5	Town ruins swept away by some disaster
6	Lair of a legendary beast or monster
7	Wizard's tower or complex
8	Failed colony or forward outpost
9	Prison-pit to shackle a dangerous power
10	Pilgrimage site for a lost religion
11	Nexus point for otherworldly powers
12	Mortuary complex for a lost people
13	Stronghold of exiles, rebels, or invaders
14	City or settlement of dangerous nonhumans
15	Subterranean settlement or complex
16	Abandoned pleasure-palace of a ruler
17	Lost fortified bridge or crossing-point
18	Sinister ruined estate of a former lord
19	Roll again; now inhabited by interlopers
20	Roll twice; one built on top of the other

Location Tags

The work of creating interesting places and memorable campaign elements can be exhausting to a GM. Even when following the pattern provided in this book, the need to generate thumbnails of a dozen different cities, ruins, wilderness features, or other places of interest can frustrate and weary a creator. It becomes difficult to come up with new ideas about each new place or give them some sense of distinction.

Tags are a creative tool meant to ease the GM's burden by assigning each point of interest a pair of characteristic qualities or tropes. These two tags are then blended together and the result gives the GM a better idea of what the place is about and what kind of adventure opportunities are to be found there. Each tag is made up of five different elements, each with three different examples provided.

Enemies are antagonists characteristic of the trope. They're exemplary villains or troublemakers that can be responsible for whatever unhappy situation exists that needs adventurers to help sort it out. They may not be the worst or more dangerous denizens of the place, but they're vexing enough to make trouble for the natives.

Friends are sympathetic or appealing NPCs that the players might be expected to want to help or cooperate with. They're the locals who are most likely to seek out adventurers for help or otherwise provide the hook for getting involved in a situation. The examples provide likely Friends for each tag, but the GM can tweak them to better suit the known interests and inclinations of the players.

Complications are particular twists or difficulties that are characteristic of the trope. They may be partial inversions of the tag, or complexities that it layers onto a situation, or subversions of likely player expectations. Complications are meant to keep problems from being too straightforward and simply resolved without having to deal with the complexities of the place.

Things are macguffins, treasures, rewards, or plunder that might be found at the site, objects that the Enemies or Friends might be fighting over or that might be part of a Complication's entanglements. While a pile of loot is usually enough to catch the eye of any adventurer, a Thing is something specific to the tag's theme.

Places are archetypal locations or characteristic structures for the tag, the kind of places you'd expect to adventure in were you in such a place. Other Places can be used as thematic backdrops for an adventure.

For each point of interest, two tags are rolled and the results are synthesized together when the GM needs a component for their adventure creation. If the tags for a community are Brilliant Innovation and Lawless Class and the GM needs an antagonist, they might pick "Cruelly indulgent elite" and "Grasping guildmaster" from those tags' Enemies lists and blend them together. Thus emerges Theophilus Crane, the ruthless, selfish Thurian guildmaster of the Arcanocaloric Guild, whose crucial advances in repairing thermal Workings have made him and his guildmates above the law in his native city. In the same vein, the "visionary supporter of the innovator" and "victim of an unpunishable crime" elements of the Friends lists can be turned into Hubert Wheelwright, Crane's brilliant apprentice and the true originator of the techniques that Crane stole, now hiding in terror from his former master's hired assassins.

Whenever you need some set dressing or adventure components for your points of interest, just go to the tags and mix up something that fits them. Some tags will be harder to mesh than others, of course. You could simply reroll them, or instead take some time to figure out a way in which the results actually do apply. Another option is to read one or both of the tags metaphorically, translating the general concept into terms applicable to the situation.

There are four different sets of tags in this section, each one aimed at a different kind of point of interest. While the sets are all aimed at their particular targets, it's quite possible for a GM to mix and match out of any of the sections, either reading them metaphorically or coming up with novel explanations for a literal interpretation. GMs who have access to other Sine Nomine games that involve tags, such as Stars Without Number, should feel free to mix them in as well if they want additional grist.

Community tags are for cities, villages, tribes, subterranean survivor bands, or other broad grouping of people. They give traits that distinguish the community from others like it; they may gesture at its organization or social structure, but the point is to explain what about the place might provide adventure grist for the GM.

Court tags are for noble courts, temple hierarchies, business enterprises, dynastic families, insular clans, or other groups where intrigue, personal relationships, and conflicting goals are apt to be found. People in a court want things and they're likely to be looking to recruit outsiders to help.

Ruin tags are for classical dungeons, lost cities, Outsider ruins, mysterious towers, or other sites where sneaking down corridors and checking for traps are usual adventurer pastimes. They'll help you add flavor to your holes in the ground or piles of cracked masonry.

Wilderness tags are for natural hazards, dangerous lands, remote motherlodes, wild beast territories, and other sorts of encounters or points of interest that might draw an adventurer's attention. They're often useful in filling up a hexcrawl, allowing a GM to plant points of interest in the deep wilderness without having to load it up with an endless parade of villages or minor dungeons.

Each section provides some additional tables and guidance, the better to assist you in using the tags to their full effect. As always, you should take what you need from those tools, using only the ones that you need and adjusting things as your creativity recommends.

Communities

While Courts provide tightly-connected webs of relationships for the PCs to entangle themselves in, Communities serve more as adventure backdrops for the heroes, or contexts in which other adventures occur. The particular heroics of the party might significantly change the Community, and the needs and situations of the place might present immediate adventure hooks to them, but the existence of a market town does not serve as the same blatant predicate for adventure that a lost Deep offers.

Most often, Communities serve as the sandboxes in which urban-focused or intrigue-based adventures can occur. For many players, the default mode of interaction in the wilderness or the underworld is combat; in a city or village, that default instinct is going to be conversation. Sudden, brutal violence is by no means alien to a city, but most PCs will be much less inclined to pull their swords on a surly town guardsman than on an Anak warrior.

The resources in this section include both a list of Community tags and a set of tables that can be used to flesh out and characterize particular settlements. While you could optionally choose to use one, both, or neither, they're built to work cooperatively.

To characterize the Community, decide whether it's best considered a rural village, a significant city, or a tribal or provisional gathering of people. Using the appropriate table, find out the basic rationale for the settlement's existence first; this will tell you a great deal about the kind of locals you'll be finding in the Community and what their chief employments and interests are likely to be.

From there, you can roll or pick to find out who actually runs the Community. This may or may not be the nominal head. The central government might say that the leader of a farming hamlet is the government-appointed headman, but everyone in the village might know that Mother Orde is the one who decides what they're going to do when a problem arises. Tension between real and nominal leadership can make for useful adventure grist.

The "significant locals" column can be used to generate a few NPC hooks for those occasions when you need a suitable local face for your adventure or an NPC you can hang a hook on. The "current pressing problem" is an immediate situation you can color with Community tags or use straight. If you mean to make an adventure hook out of it, be sure it's something the PCs can reasonably influence with their involvement.

For delivery of adventure hooks, the two bottom tables suggest potential local NPCs who might approach the party and some ideas for what the natives could offer by way of payment. These suggestions will be colored by the Community tags and the Friends or Things that are suitable to the Community's situation. As with all the tables, they should be taken as suggestions for you to shape.

Rural Villages

These tools can be used for the typical medieval-flavored village or rural hamlet beloved of many adventures. Such places are at usually at least minimally self-sufficient. Villages in relatively sophisticated nations might have permanent shops or full-time artisans working a particular trade, but most such hamlets have their entire population engaged in agriculture, with specialists doing particular crafting jobs as their neighbors might need them. Coinage is usually scarce and reserved for use with outside tax collectors and hired workers, as the local trade deals in tacitly-understood favors owed and granted.

While such villages are often very poor, it's not unknown for them to have at least some valuable goods or trades hindered by the village's great remoteness, complete lack of fame, or inability to safely get the good to a market that has a demand for it.

d12	Rationale for the Village's Existence
1	Once a garrison outpost of a nation
2	A mine or quarry, perhaps now exhausted
3	A spot where refugees of a calamity settled
4	Holy ground or a temple to a particular faith
5	A plant or animal grows very well here
6	It's a safe waypost on a trade route
7	Refuge for a despised minority or group
8	A bandit camp that went legitimate
9	A self-ruled home for demihuman residents
10	It's a safe base for salvage or ruin plundering
11	Decayed remnant of an ancient city
12	It grew up around a lordly manor or estate

Features of the Village

d12	Who Runs It?	Significant Locals	A Current Pressing Problem
1	A hereditary headman	The village harlot	Vital food stores have been lost or stolen
2	A reeve picked by a lord	The worst local bully	Two families are in a long-running feud
3	A temple representative	A gifted young peasant	A new religion is making trouble with the old
4	A council of elders	A half-savage shepherd	The lord's reeve has been given unreasonable quotas
5	A cruel and feared bully	A charismatic priest	An upstart newcomer is disrupting the native hierarchy
6	A popularly-chosen chief	A major landowner	A socially marginal family is suspected of crimes
7	A dreaded sorcerer	A youth who wants out	A dangerous beast or foe is lurking near the place
8	A pragmatic warlord	Venerable old farmer	A local bully and his friends are causing trouble
9	The richest native there	Criminal in rural hiding	The crops or herds are in very poor condition
10	A traditional squire	Native hedge mage	An ambiguous land dispute is getting bloody
11	A patriarch or matriarch	A noble's local reeve	A curse or magical woe is vexing the people
12	An organization's envoy	Important artisan	Noble quarrels have caused collateral damage

Village Involvements with Adventurers

d12	Local Likely to Interact with Adventurers	Interesting Things the Place Can Offer Heroes
1	An ambitious local who wants to get to the city	An unusually large amount of saved coinage
2	Social outcast who can't ask any local for help	Valuable local specialty product
3	Gentry who wants no local gossip about their need	Heirloom magic item passed down to the leader
4	Ex-city dweller eager for contact with the worldly	A magical service unique to a local tradition
5	Comparatively rich villager with a need	A map or secret leading to a Deep or plunder site
6	Starry-eyed young local swooning for adventurers	A temple with potent healing magics available
7	Village priest in need of outside help	A secret treasure acquired generations ago
8	Reeve who can't reasonably call on natives for a job	Large amounts of produce or local products
9	Village leader who wants expendable help	Ownership of an abandoned farm or structure
10	Burly local militiaman who watches new faces here	Contacts with rural bandits or criminal rings
11	Shifty native who wants some clueless accomplices	Favors from the lord who's very fond of the village
12	Clan patriarch who doesn't want to use their own kin	Young locals willing to take service with the party

Major Cities

A village is largely self-sufficient and organized around the production of basic necessities. A city, whether a market town or a grand megalopolis, is a place that lives off the produce of tributary communities and produces goods and services of a sophistication far beyond that possible in a small village. These tables can be used for modest market centers or major urban sites, with details being scaled to fit the size of the city.

Cities need a constant flow of food from the surrounding countryside, and not uncommonly a constant flow of new citizens from the villages to make up for the death rate brought about by plagues, malnutrition, and endemic diseases. Only the richest and most advanced urban centers can escape this entropic drain, often with the help of still-operational ancient Workings. Cities are the places most likely to still maintain these great edifices.

d12	Rationale for the City's Existence
1	It's the former seat of a vanished nation
2	It's a trade nexus that has greatly prospered
3	It's an industrial or productive center
4	There is heavy resource extraction nearby
5	It controls a vital defensive point
6	It's built around an ancient Working
7	It's a stronghold of a local subculture
8	It's a sacred city to an important faith
9	It's a shared market for many villages
10	It's a place of great beauty or healthfulness
11	It's a shelter from dangerous environs
12	The natives are somehow bound here

Features of the City

d12	Who Runs It?	Significant Locals	A Current Pressing Problem
1	Hereditary lord	Sinister crime boss	Raiders are scourging local trade routes
2	Merchant prince	Head of a major temple	Criminals have corrupted the local law enforcement
3	Council of oligarchs	Neighborhood patriarch	Displeased locals are rioting for some reason
4	Allied noble heads	Ethnic group elder	The king or local ruler is making harsh demands
5	Royal viceroy	Rich merchant	Food supplies aren't being received as they should
6	Gentry-elected mayor	Feared local mage	Urban groups are arming to resolve some dire conflict
7	Major clerical figure	City watch chief	A recent calamity has done major infrastructure damage
8	Occult power wielder	Decadent noble	A disguised monster is feeding on the city from within
9	Criminal group catspaw	Local magistrate	The rulers have gravely offended a local religion
10	Ethnic group's ruler	Outcast group leader	A rebel group denounces the city leader's legitimacy
11	Chief magistrate	Famous courtesan	A private war threatens with another major city
12	Military strongman	Demihuman enclave head	A major local industry is threatened by events

City Involvements with Adventurers

d12	Local Likely to Interact with Adventurers	Interesting Things the Place Can Offer Heroes
1	City official looking for deniable agents	Large amounts of conventional coinage
2	Wealthy merchant who wants unknown outside help	Expensive urban property
3	Newcomer peasant haplessly looking for assistance	Sophisticated and very valuable local products
4	Demimonde navigator always watching for clients	Formal citizenship and the rights of a local
5	Curious urchin who trades in local news and events	Quiet dismissal of criminal charges or sinister pasts
6	Criminal with a mind to use naive newcomers	Indulgences beyond the power a smaller place to grant
7	Desperate merchant trying to keep their business going	Services of exceptionally skilled specialist professionals
8	Guard chief suspicious of potential troublemakers	Connections with major nobility of the realm
9	Native too infamous for other locals to deal with them	Absentee ownership of rural villages or manors
10	Noble who thinks adventurers will do anything for coin	Rare occult components or magical products
11	Slumming young gentry with a taste for excitement	Blessings from major clergy or high priests
12	Foreigner looking for fellow strangers to help	Business monopolies or tax rights in certain areas

Tribes and Exiles

Not all communities are neatly delineated by fields and city walls. Nomadic tribes, scruffy bandit camps, groups of underground Deep survivors, or Blighted warbands all constitute communities. They may be far poorer and more materially primitive than even a farming village, but they have some sort of social structure and self-identity. While some may be violent by nature or habit, more peaceful interactions are usually possible for PCs.

These tables are meant for the sort of barbarian tribals, desperate bandit dregs, and subterranean survivors that an adventuring band is likely to run into at some point in their travels. The basic dynamics of these societies are usually similar, ones based on raw force, personal charisma, and the prospect of plunder or good hunting. Particular roles or details can be reskinned to fit the specifics of the tribe and its environment.

d12	Why Are They Staying Here?
1	It's an unusually well-fortified safe place
2	A charismatic leader bound them together
3	The hunting or resources are very good here
4	They were driven here by a dire enemy
5	Seers or shamans said it was ordained
6	The leadership wants to find something here
7	Their herds or prey have led them here
8	They've been trapped here by the situation
9	They're paralyzed by internal dissent
10	They've been paid or induced to be here
11	Tradition requires they come here
12	Here they can do the most damage to a foe

Features of the Tribe

d12	Who Runs It?	Significant Locals	A Current Pressing Problem
1	Bestially savage tyrant	Best hunter in the tribe	The leader is becoming weak or acting foolishly
2	Wizened elder	Wise man or woman	A settled group is hunting them as mortal foes
3	Magically-gifted chief	Seer or shaman	A curse has been laid on them for some collective sin
4	Holy man or woman	Tribal artisan	They killed someone who had very powerful allies
5	Hereditary chieftain	Skilled scout	They're impoverished and can't reach new resources
6	Outsider or alien lord	Trader with outsiders	A fearsome beast hunts them in the wilds
7	Brutal but cunning chief	Adopted member	Their gods are sending dire but obscure omens to them
8	Foreigner turned ruler	Tribal slave	The tribe threatens to split under some feud or quarrel
9	Council of the elders	Feared troublemaker	Some are seeking a redder, more powerful god to serve
10	No ruler past clan heads	Tribe's most eligible youth	A patron power is using them as expendable fodder
11	Envoy of a patron power	Barely-tolerated wretch	A sickness is raging through the tribe
12	Most charismatic native	Cunning tribal advisor	A rival group has taken over their hunting grounds

Tribal Involvements with Adventurers

d12	Local Likely to Interact with Adventurers	Interesting Things the Place Can Offer Heroes
1	Raid-taken slave looking for a way back home	Guidance and safe passage through their territory
2	Leader with a natural suspicion about outsiders	Knowledge of a hidden place of wealth
3	Low-status native trying to acquire outside support	Exotic and valuable tribal goods
4	Tribal sage who likes news of the outside world	Plunder taken from a foreigner they've killed
5	Curious young tribal interested in strangers	Inherited relic or treasure they've kept
6	Near-outcast who wants a hand with some revenge	Secret for accessing an otherwise sealed place
7	Envoy of another group suspicious of other influences	Loot won in battle against another group
8	Tribal notable who suspects the PCs as potential rivals	They'll raid the party's enemies for a share of the loot
9	Tribal trader who wants access to outside goods	A magical elixir or substance they know how to make
10	Youth determined to show how tribal ways are best	Tribal membership and a place of respect
11	Eligible native looking for new blood in a mate	Slaves they've taken in raids or tribal wars
12	Reformer or innovator whose kindred won't listen	Some young tribals willing to go with the party

Community Tags

Community tags provide adventure grist for any location where a significant number of people have to work together for survival. While the classic "grimy medieval city" or "rural dirt-farmer hamlet" are both archetypal communities, this heading could also include monasteries, isolated ideological groups, subcultures within a larger society, or any other mass of people that lack the implicit hierarchy and shared organization of a Court.

As with the other tags, Community tags should be read as broad strokes and general directions for your creativity rather than a strict description of reality. It can be useful to think about them in a metaphorical sense as well as a purely literal one; maybe the ***Monstrous Tribute*** that the community is offering is its docile sacrifice of young men to a brutal lord's meatgrinder border wars.

Two well-blended tags are usually sufficient to give character to any single community. If you're building a subculture of a particular community, you might choose to roll a third tag, pair it with one of the first two, and then pit it in some sort of opposition or conflict with the second of the original tags. This conflict or division is what gives the subculture its identity or present focus of effort.

Community tags are particularly susceptible to being altered by the actions of the PCs. It's not beyond impossibility for an adventuring band to completely overturn the power structure or internal politics of even a good-sized city, let alone a humble farming thorp. If this happens, be ready to pull the negated tag and apply something that makes sense as a consequence or derived outcome of the PCs' actions. It's almost impossible for a mere band of adventurers to quell all conflict and struggle in a human community, but they can at least shift the terms of the fights to something they find more palatable.

Major projects as described on page 336 might be used to significantly change a Community's character or situation. Careful manipulation of existing power bases and the enlisting of useful outside aid can combine with heroic deeds of might to completely alter the existing power balance of a place.

d100	Tag	d100	Tag
1–2	Ancient Infrastructure	51–52	Magical Academy
3–4	Bad Neighbors	53–54	Martial Tradition
5–6	Blood Feud	55–56	Miserable Penury
7–8	Brilliant Innovation	57–58	Mistreated Blighted
9–10	Broken Spirits	59–60	Monstrous Tribute
11–12	Corrupt Laws	61–62	Neglectful Ruler
13–14	Criminal Bosses	63–64	New Industry
15–16	Cultural Center	65–66	Pilgrimage Site
17–18	Cursed Circumstances	67–68	Plagued City
19–20	Decadent Locals	69–70	Population Boom
21–22	Decaying Working	71–72	Raider Scourge
23–24	Demihuman Populace	73–74	Rebel Stronghold
25–26	Dueling Lords	75–76	Rigid Castes
27–28	Enemy Within	77–78	Scars of War
29–30	Faded Remnant	79–80	Seat of Rule
31–32	Fallen Prosperity	81–82	Secret Treachery
33–34	Foreign Enclave	83–84	Sinking City
35–36	Guild Oligarchy	85–86	Theocratic Authorities
37–38	Heavy Fortification	87–88	Toxic Economy
39–40	Hidden Ruler	89–90	Trade Hub
41–42	Hostile Terrain	91–92	Unique Product
43–44	Incompetent Leaders	93–94	Upstart Faith
45–46	Inherited Architecture	95–96	Warring Council
47–48	Inhuman Cooperation	97–98	Widespread Prosperity
49–50	Lawless Class	99–00	Xenophobic Locals

Ancient Infrastructure

The community still has access to some sort of functioning ancient infrastructure, whether it's an array of wall-mounted arcane energy projectors, running water, moving roadways, community-wide climate control, or some other inherited luxury. This infrastructure may be the result of a still-functional Working, or it could be the product of some venerable occult engine that's still operational, or it may be the fruit of the labors of some specially-designed organism or Blighted populace.

E Abusive ruler overusing the infrastructure, Foreign agent seeking to cause havoc, Reckless sorcerer seeking to steal its power

F Harried chief of the maintainers, Fascinated foreign scholar, Merchant reliant on its use

C The infrastructure's cruelly-costly maintenance is coming up, The infrastructure is starting to fray, The infrastructure was actually meant for a much more sinister purpose

T Irreplaceable infrastructure component, Spare parts worth vast sums on the market, Secret artifact that can control the infrastructure

P Dangerously energetic working zone, Secret hideout inside the infrastructure, Sanctified and holy control center

Bad Neighbors

The community has a conflict with a neighboring community. This usually isn't part of a larger war, but is instead a personal animosity between them. It may be the community has suffered at their enemy's hands, or they may have been the ones applying the suffering. Constant low-level skirmishes and troublemaking go on between the two.

E Foreign lord profiting by the quarrel, Bitter zealot who demands violent action, Real culprit seeking to hide their offense

F Despairing peacemaker of a shared faith, Local with family from the rival, Frustrated but helpless ruler

C One side seems at fault but is actually less blameworthy, The rulers of both use the quarrel to distract their populace, It was a minor dispute that is spiraling out of control

T Proof of the culprit's guilt, Weapons cache meant to start real bloodshed, Treasure that would erase the cause of the dispute

P Dangerous no-man's-land between the communities, Burnt home of a sympathizer, Religious festival turned into a semi-riot

Blood Feud

Two or more groups of citizens within the community hate each other. Their neighbors or the local law have kept things from too-overt violence, but members of the groups will constantly interfere with their rivals and cause whatever misery they can get away with. This hate may spring from recent events, or it may be an inherited spite from old wrongs.

E Wholly unsympathetic group leader, Schemer seeking to exploit the feud, Ruler going to brutal excess to tamp it down

F Reluctant participant in the feud, Local digging for the real truth of the quarrel, Merchant who'd profit by a new peace

C The groups were formerly the closest of allies, One group is favored by local rulers, One side is getting completely out of hand

T A treasure the groups are fighting over, Object of exculpating evidence, Lost symbol of peaceful unity

P Bloody back alleyway, Sabotaged business, Group-dominated tavern

Brilliant Innovation

Some local has come up with a wonderful new idea; it may be a magical innovation, a new industrial process, a new agricultural product, a new use for what was thought to be ancient garbage, or some other very useful, profitable idea. Everyone around them is fighting for the chance to exploit this clever new plan.

E Grasping guildmaster, Overbearing local ruler, Local leader whose power is threatened by the innovation

F Visionary supporter of the innovator, Outside merchant seeking to profit by enabling the innovation, Local leader whose constituency would profit from it

C The innovation requires ingredients only adventurers can get, The innovation is riskier than it seems, The innovator is actually a con artist

T Critical component for the innovation, Trove of profit from the innovation's test run, Vital planning and design documents

P Ambitious test zone for the innovation, Guildhall of upset locals, Tavern with locals fighting over the change

Broken Spirits

The locals are in a state of despair and dull apathy. They've lost the things that used to give them pride and hope, with the best among them carrying on out of habitual duty and the worst giving ready hands to shameful deeds and ignoble acts. No one really believes the future can be better, and most seek only to satisfy immediate appetites.

E Cruel tyrant who broke them, Slaver trading on the hopeless, Merchant of despair and its costly escapes

F Determined young local leader, Proud old rememberer of better days, Furious rebel against the world

C An outside power wants to keep them safely broken, Their fall was due to their own sins and errors, They could be very dangerous if they regain their spirit

T Symbolic item of former glory, Resources to kick-start a new source of pride, Treasure laid up in splendid times

P Crumbling monument to a past victory, "Wealthy" town area that's shabby and ill-kept, Empty temple to a once-loved god

Corrupt Laws

What law exists here is for sale, or does not apply to certain favored groups or castes. While some degree of corruption and noble license exists almost everywhere, this community lacks any shred of impartiality. Strangers might be fleeced by local lawmen, evildoers can be absolved by a payment, and powerful gentry do as they please.

E Immensely venal magistrate, Local lord who fails to see any problem with the "natural" order, Crime boss taking blatant advantage of the corruption

F A crusading law enforcer, Royal investigating censor, Victim of a cruel injustice

C The favored class are vital to the community's security, The natives would rather pay predictable bribes than risk facing real justice, The real law is enforced by a secret group of natives

T An uncollected pile of bribe money, Stolen goods yet unsold, Blackmail evidence on the chief magistrate

P A courtroom where the law is sold, Crime scene with an unconcerned criminal, Site of brutal vigilante justice

Criminal Bosses

One or more crime bosses have a powerful influence on the community. They may control crime within the community itself, or they may use it simply as a safe haven from which to direct their minions elsewhere. Local law enforcement may know all about them, but lack the strength to confront them and their paid or intimidated henchmen.

E Blatantly overt criminal chief, Well-controlled head of law enforcement, Crime boss bent on using the PCs as catspaws

F Victim of an untouchable boss, Determined bounty hunter, Ambitious criminal seeking to make room above

C The crime boss' support is what keeps the community prosperous, Local government is almost openly staffed by cartel members, The locals will deal with PC troublemakers for fear of the boss' anger

T A boss' secret stash of wealth, A treasure stolen elsewhere and brought here by a boss, Evidence proving one boss is betraying another

P Uncharacteristically opulent home in the slums, Sleepy law enforcement headquarters, Dangerous tavern for local minions

Cultural Center

The community produces some wonderful cultural artifact or trains famous artists. The product might be some exceptional cloth, or artistic luxury good, or the scholarly fruits of a famous academy. Trained artists might be students of a particular school, or the apprentices of the current masters of a long artistic tradition who dwell here.

E Master artist who suffers no rivals, "Visionary" who wants to tear down the old art for their own new one, Merchant who is trying to control the production for profit

F Ambitious young artist of profound talent, Wild genius of very difficult temperament, Aged master proud of his tradition

C The art requires resources that are running low, Some other group is cheaply and poorly mimicking the art, Their main market has somehow been cut off

T A famous and ancient work of art, An art object made of some priceless substance, An art object encoded with a precious secret

P Busy studio or academy hall, Mercantile emporium where the cultural products are traded, Renegade artist's hovel

Cursed Circumstances

The community has been cursed with some blight that makes life difficult, albeit not impossible. An offended sorcerer's vengeful Working, an outraged god's wrath, a local distortion of the Legacy, or a simple history of bad feng shui in the area may have brought the curse about. If you include this tag, you'll want to devise not only the curse, but the reason why the locals haven't left for better lands.

E Charlatan offering false hope, Local demagogue blaming a useful culprit, Native profiting from the curse

F Scholar seeking details of the blight, Stubborn curse survivor, Aspiring curse-lifter with a secret weapon

C It has a profitable side effect, It was meant to be a blessing, It can be aimed by willing conspirators

T A personal anti-curse ward, Hidden wealth of a curse victim, A means to lift the curse

P Enterprise blighted by the curse, Festival held to pray for mercy, Ruin of a curse victim's home

Decaying Working

A great magical Working has been a critical part of the community since its creation, but now it's beginning to decay. It may function only intermittently, now, or its effects may have curdled into something double-edged. The locals have no idea how to fix it, and indeed, it may not be possible to repair it with modern knowledge of sorcery.

E Saboteur from an enemy community, Scavenger stealing critical components, Overconfident wizard attempting a ruinous repair

F One of the Working's hereditary keepers, Native dependent on the Working's effects, Desperate researcher of repairs

C Part of the community would greatly profit by the Working's failure, The Working risks catastrophic eruption, The rulers punish any talk of it failing

T A critical repair text for the Working, Valuable broken Working components, Precious resources crystallized from the Working's energies

P Control nexus for the Working, Enterprise dependent on the Working, Site of a Working failure or accident

Decadent Locals

The locals enjoy repulsive vices and shameful appetites. They may have religious sanction for their evils, or neighbors might trade with them for such things, or they could be followers of some ideology that blesses such pursuits. Their economy or their social organization is usually heavily reliant on such traffic, and to ensure its continuance they may have made bargains with things worse than humans.

E Trader in hideous sins, Bored gentry in search of a cruel thrill, Once-prey that has become an even worse predator

F Local who has secret doubts about the vice, Crusader from outside, Escaped victim seeking vengeance

C The victims of the vice are a class or type that their neighbors don't care about in the slightest, They have ways to make their vices give them power, Their society is attractive aside from this hideous urge

T A stolen victim of great value to someone else, Proof of an outside noble's trade with them, Precious regalia used in the vice

P Salon of hideous beauty, Stinking slave pit, Mundane locale of ordinary business tainted by their evil

Demihuman Populace

A particular breed of demihuman are either the majority here or have the dominant positions in the community. Architecture, local laws, and social customs are all tuned to suit them, and they may not be particularly forgiving or friendly to humans. Communities that are not outright independent usually make an arm's-length submission to a local lord.

E Demihuman official who grudges baselines, Baseline local who grudges the demihumans, Outsider preying on the demihumans

F Curious young native, Canny local diplomat to humans, Native with a need for baseline help

C Their human suzerain wants to erase all independence from them, Something's legal here that's forbidden in baseline communities but natural to them, Their independence is enforced with something they have

T Precious demihuman-made goods, Ancient relic revered by the natives, Wealth of a prosperous outside trader

P Holy site forbidden to humans, House built to demihuman preferences, Business unique to demihuman needs

Dueling Lords

Two different major powers are fighting over control of the community. Two rival lords, a baron and a merchant-price, the mayor and a local high priest, or some other combination struggle to achieve dominance. They may both have justifiable claim on running the community, or one may be a greedy interloper.

E Third party profiting by the strife, Traitor to one of the rivals, Outsider vulture wanting both rivals to fail

F Harried local peacemaker, Impotent judge appointed by a disinterested higher authority. Appealing partisan of one rival

C The rival with the most legitimate claim is the least suitable to rule, A vital civic task is left undone until a ruler is determined, Both rivals have terrible plans

T Token of legitimate rule, Bribe meant for a powerful local, Proof of a rival's malfeasance

P Deadlocked city hall, Site of mob violence between rival groups, Tavern full of well-armed partisans

Enemy Within

The locals are convinced that there is some terrible threat against them working from within their society. It may be a matter of dark sorcerers, foreign spies, traitorous neighbors, shapeshifting monsters, or some other hidden evil. This evil may be a recent fear, or it may be an inherited peril they've always had to guard against. The danger itself may or may not exist, or if it exists it may not justify the steps being taken.

E Local inquisitor targeting his personal enemies, Leader of the sinister evil, Traitorous local in service to the evil

F Unjustly accused victim, Local ruler trying to restrain the mob, Skilled and discerning hunter of the evil

C The evil is real but actually running the inquisition, The hunters are creating the evil whether intentionally or no, The evil really is exactly as bad as the hunters say it is

T Confession naming perpetrators of the evil, Wealth taken from condemned sinners, Resources gathered by the agents of the evil

P Confiscated home of an evildoer, Public execution site for the wicked, Courtroom where the evil is being tried

Faded Remnant

This community used to be much larger and more prosperous, but something happened relatively long ago that left it a shrunken shadow of its former self. Only a tithe of citizens remain on the site, and much of its former architecture is crumbling and abandoned. A few weathered tokens of old glory remain, and some may be jealously maintained, but there simply aren't enough locals left to keep up what they've inherited.

E Looter seeking to plunder the remains, Zealot with a plan to return to glory, Outsider strongman who wants to coerce the locals into obedience

F Learned scholar of the noble past, Hard-scrabble present survivor, New citizen who sees hope in the place

C They don't fully understand what they've inherited, They were crushed because of their past evils, They're not the actual heirs but merely squatters who moved into the empty place

T Artifact of the prior golden age, Wealth hidden away long ago, Secret key to unlocking new glory

P Near-abandoned city center, Massive decaying monument, Partially fallen town wall

Fallen Prosperity

The community used to be much richer, but something happened recently to crush its source of prosperity. Different factions of the community might be trying to grasp at the remaining dregs of wealth, others might try to restart the failed industry, and some might look for a new livelihood. Any group or entity thought responsible for the collapse is likely to be treated very harshly, and some locals might find profit in shifting the blame to their enemies.

E Outside profiteer squeezing the newly-poor, Local monopolizing the remaining income, Demagogue blaming everything on their enemy

F Plucky local trying to make a new go of things, Harried disburser of limited charity, Riches-to-rags native trying to maintain their dignity

C Their loss is a rival's gain, Someone's offering them a new industry at a terrible price, The leadership is refusing to accept the new reality

T Priceless relic of their former wealth, Supplies vital to a budding industry, Resources once held lightly that now are very precious here

P Ill-maintained but splendid public building, Mansion marked by genteel poverty, Empty shop once catering to the rich

Foreign Enclave

Either most or a substantial minority of the locals are descended from foreigners alien to their local neighbors. They may have been religious exiles, economic migrants, indigenous locals surrounded by the existing polity, or a foreign city conquered within the relatively recent past. The locals may not be enthusiastic about being ruled by others not of their kind, and their neighbors may look askance at the way foreign customs or even laws may be maintained.

E Ruthless independence fighter, Outsider ruler with no regard for the locals, Local grandee preaching contempt for outsider ways

F Peacemaking local leader, Local in love with an outsider, Pragmatic-minded outsider magistrate

C Secessionists are being supported by their co-ethnics, The polity's leaders don't want them here, They're hated by their co-ethnics for some reason

T Precious relic brought from the homeland, Wealth hidden away for fear of outsiders, Valuable good made as a cultural tradition

P Public building in an aggressively different architectural style, Outsider home surrounded by local-style buildings, Civic gathering place of a kind specific to the locals

Heavy Fortification

The community is remarkably well-fortified for a site of its size and role. Tall, stout walls, strongpoints inside the community, concentric defenses, a strategic terrain location, or a large body of standing troops might be present. Some threat is thought to exist that makes maintaining this fortification worthwhile, though it may come at a dear cost to the locals. The community's suzerain may be uncomfortable with these defenses, as they could just as easily be used to defy the ruler.

E Outside enemy seeking to pierce the defenses, Rebel trying to declare independence, Heavy-handed local ruler demanding protection money

F Industrious maintenance chief, Ruler's appointed local military commander, Local warning of some sudden impending danger

C The threat is gone but those who profit by the defenses keep them going, The defenses are impractical, The community can no longer bear the expense of the defenses

T Components of a powerful fixed weapon, Payroll for the soldiers, Precious and specialized maintenance components

P Oversized weapon emplacement, Top of a looming city wall, Stronghold keep at the center of the community

Guild Oligarchy

While the community might ostensibly be ruled by some other power, real control lies with the senior members of the local craft and labor guilds. Their decisions have the practical weight of law, and much of their time and effort is spent squeezing out competitors and parceling out economic opportunities in the community. Some guilds might have little or nothing to do with their original trade, and now exist purely as shells for political influence.

E Profoundly corrupt guild boss, Ambitious newcomer with brutal methods, Ruthless leader of a guild of criminals

F Hard-bitten elder among the workers, Outsider trying to make room here, Reformer seeking to oust the corrupt guild heads

C The guilds have intermarried or entangled themselves with the ostensible rulers, The guilds offer protection from a real or imagined threat, They guilds hate each other only slightly less than the competition

T Priceless symbolic guild regalia, Wealth hidden by the former ruler of the community, Money earned by shady business practices

P Bustling guild hall, Purely decorative ruler's court, Shabby worker's housing

Hidden Ruler

While the community has a public leader, the real authority is hidden from outsiders. This ruler may draw their authority from rationales unacceptable to outsiders, they may have cowed the public authority into obedience, or they may have a mutually beneficial private arrangement with the official ruler.

E Secret cult-backed leader, Nefarious agent of an enemy power, Minor functionary who is actually the hidden master

F Frustrated outside authority, Local seeking better government, Victim of the hidden leader's will

C Most people know that the real authority is concealed, The hidden ruler is a mortal enemy of the legitimate authority, The hidden ruler's effective authority is over a large affiliated group rather than the whole community

T Information on the hidden government, Bribe money paid to the public authority, Blackmail material on important locals

P Unassuming tavern that's a secret headquarters, Tense court of the official ruler, Hidden site where the secret government meets

Hostile Terrain

The community is surrounded by dangerous terrain: miasmatic swamps, perilous crevasses, radioactive badlands, a pocket of *arratu*, or some other harmful topography. The community might prefer the defensive potential of the terrain here, or have found a precious resource worth the danger. The terrain might have formed at some time since the founding, with the citizens struggling to make terms with the new danger.

E Bandit chief hiding in the terrain, Monstrous leader in the badlands, Local who's made a secret deal with the terrain's vile inhabitants

F Canny badland guide, Innocent researcher eager to explore, Grizzled chief engineer of the community's anti-terrain measures

C The terrain is growing somehow, The terrain offers some special profit as well as danger, The community is being crushed by the terrain

T Treasure lost within the terrain, Device that generates or protects against the terrain, Precious resource found within the terrain

P Edge of the community overtaken by the environment, Building fortified against the terrain, Tavern favored by terrain guides and explorers

Incompetent Leaders

The community is led by one or more incompetents. While they must have been very good at something to have acquired the position, they are fundamentally incapable of leading. Uncontrolled passions or lusts, commitment to a hopelessly impractical ideal, pig-headed obstinacy in the face of failure, a total lack of charisma or interpersonal skills, or profound laziness might all unfit them for their post.

E Heir who is totally unsuited to their new rule, Disinterested ruler forced on them by their overlord, Charismatic ninny with ridiculous plans

F Deposed former leader, Desperate local elder, Victim of one of their bungled plans

C An outside rival is backing the fool, The idiot has tremendous institutional legitimacy, They provide a critical skill or ability unrelated to ruling

T Embezzled funds from a failed plan, Precious artifact lost through incompetence, Regalia of critical importance to the ruler's legitimacy

P Chaotic and ill-kept court, Site of abject disaster, Plaza full of grumbling locals

Inherited Architecture

Many of the community's structures date back to the ancient past and a long-vanished culture. They have unique architectural traits, perhaps being made of some strange substance or with uncanny qualities. The locals find them too useful or too durable to destroy, but the buildings often have unpleasant little surprises in their under-explored corners, and there may be greater structures still buried by long ages beneath the community's streets.

E A Thing from Below, Outside pillager bent on sacking the structures, Reckless explorer opening up things best left sealed

F Heir to the ancient arts of maintenance, Chief of the local structure guard patrol, Keeper of a particularly useful structure

C The locals mine treasures from the buried depths, The structures were built by Outsiders, They require dark sacrifices to keep functioning

T Key to unlock a sealed structure, Artifact of the ancient lost people, Map to a hidden structure

P Mundane business in a remarkable building, Ancient structure retrofitted into a habitation, Buried ancient street within a cavern

Inhuman Cooperation

The locals have a deal with some manner of inhuman power, either remnant Outsiders, eldritch entities, nearby monstrous beings, or some other creature generally feared or hated by humans. It may actually be a peaceful exchange, but more likely it involves acts and sacrifices that other humans would refuse. If not secret, this deal is valuable enough to make the community's suzerain avert their eyes, or it may be a bargain so old that time has sanctified it to their neighbors.

E Sinister overseer of the bargain's price, Local magnate growing rich off the dark bargain, Alien entity seeking to expand the terms of the deal

F Victim of the bargain's price, Outside investigator seeking the truth, Inveterate hunter of the entity's type come to purge the evil

C The bargain is actually reasonably fair and decent, The locals don't want the bargain but their neighbors profit by it and so force them into it, However bad the creatures are they're actually better than the human lord

T Valuable alien goods, Wealth offered as a sacrifice, Treasure gained by cooperation

P Secret meeting hall for the creatures, Prosperous front business, Sinister ritual of sacrifice

Lawless Class

Some class of citizen is either tacitly or explicitly above the law. They may only be subject to punishment for crimes against their own kind, or they may be entirely immune to legal prosecution. In some cases, this immunity may be the product of official indifference rather than high status; some untouchable classes may be considered so lowly that their slaughter of each other isn't worth punishing unless it inconveniences their betters.

E Professionally immune provocateur, Cruelly indulgent elite, Grasping mercantile oligarch

F Hapless magistrate, Avenger outside the law, Victim of an unpunishable crime

C The lawless themselves enforce the law, The immune are most dangerous to each other, Special servants of the immune also are immune

T Wealth stolen from a hapless victim, Evidence that an abuser is not legitimately part of the class, Token that grants the bearer the same immunity

P Courtroom where some cases are swiftly dismissed, Site of a gaudily obvious exercise of immunity, Shop where the business was ruined by their excesses

Magical Academy

While private tutelage of worthy apprentices can sometimes be had even in remote villages, this community is unusual in that it has an actual school dedicated to teaching magic. Such schools are usually small, with no more than a few dozen pupils, most of whom will fail for lack of talent or discipline. The instructors are rarely first-rate, usually serving only for the pay and status, but sometimes a genius sorcerer will find a reason to observe likely apprentices here. Given the unfortunate accident potential of the school, it's probably isolated or well-fortified.

E Amoral headmaster, Secretly monstrous school patron, Unpleasantly talented yet vicious elite student

F Plucky young apprentice, Harried but earnest teacher, Instructor with useful side obsession

C The academy is patronized by the ruling class, The community grew around the academy, The rulers don't trust the wizards but find them too useful to get rid of them

T Long-lost grimoire of power, Brilliant artifice of a genius student, Magical key to a dark power the academy keeps locked up

P Battered magical laboratory, Architecturally impossible chamber, Grubby student lodgings

Martial Tradition

The natives have a long tradition of martial expertise. This may be a crisply-organized history of skilled native levies, or it may be a natural belligerence in the people that leaves them familiar with bloodshed. While their neighbors and liege doubtless respect their talents, this very aptitude might make them more willing to turn to steel than prudence would advise.

- **E** Ruthlessly amoral military leader, Obsessive martial academy master, Outsider using the locals as brute muscle
- **F** Determined local defender, Petitioner in need of their prowess, Keeper of the local martial way
- **C** They use weapons only they are able to employ, They've bled themselves white in gaining glory, They're eager to conquer their neighbors
- **T** Enchanted weapon related to their way, Plunder taken in a victorious war, Venerated battle harness of a legendary hero
- **P** Busy training ground, Cemetery with many memorials, City hall decorated with the banners of the vanquished

Miserable Penury

Life is hard in the Latter Earth, but it is exceptionally hard here. People are deprived of all but the barest necessities, and even the local gentry are impoverished compared to their peers elsewhere. Something is making the locals stay, however, whether fear of the alternative, hope for a better future, or a stubborn attachment to their ancestral lands.

- **E** Rapacious beggar-lord oppressing even poorer lessers, Outsider who's siphoning off wealth, Brutal gang leader determined to take what they want
- **F** Plucky young entrepreneur, Charitable cleric, Suzerain's envoy seeking to improve things
- **C** They could be richer if they abandon a defining cultural tradition, They're being bled dry by outsiders, They're hopelessly resigned
- **T** A stash of wealth that would be minor elsewhere, Desperately needed resources, A cherished relic that had to be sold for survival's sake
- **P** Miserable slum of shanties, Unprofitable fields, Tavern with only the barest minimum of fare

Mistreated Blighted

Not all Blighted are violent; many are simply cursed with disabilities or mental compulsions implanted in them by their creators. The locals here have a useful kind of Blighted that provides some valuable service; brute labor, companionship, or more awful fates for those with precious organic components. The locals treat them as nothing but expendable chattel, but the Blighted are unable to effectively defend themselves or survive without the support of their tormentors.

- **E** Bloodless local slaver, Faux-benevolent overseer, Reformer seeking a complete purge of them
- **F** Blighted leader, Troubled local, Native seeking to take over the work niche the Blighted are filling
- **C** The Blighted are emotionally addicted to this kind of servitude, The Blighted could be very dangerous if they got free, Criminals and the unwanted are transformed into the Blighted
- **T** Device that imposes the Blight on a victim, Wealth earned by Blighted suffering, Key to the method used to control the Blighted
- **P** Workhouse full of cruelly-used Blighted, Stately mansion with rigidly-disciplined Blighted servants, Sinister establishment staffed by disposable Blighted

Monstrous Tribute

The locals have cut a deal with some unspeakable entity, trading some vile tribute in exchange for the being's forbearance or assistance. Outsiders may be ignorant of the bargain, or they may know that the community is in thrall but be too fearful of its master to take action against them. The creature likely serves as a protector as well as a tyrant, so the locals may be content with the deal even if it doesn't offer any further inducement or aid.

- **E** Ancient artificial intellect-tyrant, Cruel sorcerer-lord, Monstrous quasi-god
- **F** Secret rebel against the deal, Investigator looking for evidence, Monstrous rival of the tyrant
- **C** They seize the tribute from their neighbors or enemies, The deal is getting progressively worse, Their neighbors are thinking of making their own deals
- **T** Ritual instruments forged via atrocity, Forbidden book of hideous truths, Precious resource generated by the entity
- **P** Secret shrine to their unholy master, Prison where the tribute is kept, Bustling town street full of sinister prosperity

Neglectful Ruler

The community can't rely on its ostensible suzerain. Whatever lord claims ownership of the place is indifferent to its troubles and pays no attention to its civic disorder. The lord may be incapable of giving help, or convinced their representative can handle it alone, or actively seeking to punish the community for some rebellion or failure of service.

E A viceroy sending back false reports, Local grandee seizing control by violence, Cruel local lord who keeps the ruler pacified with tax money

F Inspector from the suzerain, Local judge seeking justice, Harried representative in need of help

C The ruler has too many problems to care about this place, The ruler would actually make things worse if they paid heed, The ruler's authority is being hindered by some rival power

T Tax money not yet sent, A "gift" meant to draw the lord's help, Proof of a plot to seize control of the community

P Deserted courtroom, Street crawling with local vigilante groups, Burnt-out home of a political loser

New Industry

The natives have established a new industry here, and it's making them a great deal of profit. Old patterns of authority and wealth are being disrupted, and the old gentry are unlikely to be pleased about it. They may be trying to take over the industry, or they may have been the ones to enable it in the first place and are using it to crush the life out of any rival power bases. Outsiders might be playing a major role as well, and it could be they plot to siphon off the profits.

E Arrogant and ruthless new oligarch, Scheming old-money grandee, Grasping and heartless industrial magnate

F Hopeful new entrepreneur, Local elder trying to deal with the change, Innocently naive outside investor

C The gentry would prefer poverty to losing power, The gentry are split on the industry, The industry comes with severe and unequally-distributed downsides

T Profit from the industry, A valuable device to improve the industry, Tools of sabotage

P Retrofitted old workshop, Resource-extraction site, Crowded worker housing

Pilgrimage Site

The community is centered around a major pilgrimage site. This may be a religious location of importance to a major faith, or it may be a more secular institution that draws the traffic, like a famous academy or the remains of some wondrous ancient work. Considerable local tension likely exists over controlling the access to the site and maximizing the profits from foreign visitors.

E Outsider boss seeking to seize control of the site, Corrupt hereditary site controller, Rival saboteur bent on despoiling the site

F Well-meaning pilgrim, Scholar with dangerous historical theories, Earnest caretaker of the site

C The site can only handle so many visitors without degrading, The pilgrimage site is dangerous, The keepers don't fully understand the site

T Precious relic of the site, Beautifully-made fake of some critical relic, Secret true history of the site

P Expensive pilgrim lodgings, Street full of hawkers of pilgrimage tokens, Alien and wondrous pilgrimage site

Plagued City

The community is cursed with recurrent spells of some troublesome disease. The affliction isn't so fatal as to make living there impossible, but it adds suffering and expense to local lives. The plague might be the product of an ancient curse, the results of long-lost toxic remains, or an unavoidable byproduct of whatever industry or purpose justifies the city. It's probably not overly contagious, but visitors may be in some peril all the same.

E Charlatan selling false hope, Merciless grandee gladly worsening the plague for profit, Dark sorcerer seeking to weaponize the sickness

F Traditional healer wise in the plague's ways, Appealing waif struck down by the illness, Impassioned healer seeking a real cure

C The plague has a positive side-effect, Only certain classes suffer the plague, Passage into or out of the community is strictly controlled

T A real cure for the plague, Hidden wealth of a plague victim, The key to halting the cycle

P Worn-down sickhouse full of locals, Cemetery overflowing with the dead, Business based on providing for a sufferer's special needs

Population Boom

A vast influx of newcomers has recently rushed into the community. They may have been drawn by economic opportunities, or fled some pursuing peril, or been forcibly moved there by a ruler who wanted to dilute the existing native cohesion. The natives may not have the resources or opportunities to integrate these newcomers, and it may be that the new population has no desire to stay longer than is necessary.

E Viciously xenophobic grandee, Newcomer leader who despises the locals and their ways, Grasping merchant exploiting one or both groups

F Local trying to bridge differences, Newcomer trying to make a new life, Local official trying to keep the peace

C The newcomers act like conquerors, Their cultures are extremely imiscible, The natives are now highly dependent on newcomer industry

T Precious relic brought by the newcomers, Loot confiscated or extracted from the newcomers, Riches earned from newcomer labor

P Jarringly different newcomer quarter, Market with informally segregated areas, Tavern welcoming to only one group

Raider Scourge

Almost every community has some problem with bandits and highwaymen, but this community is seriously plagued with raiders. One or more groups of persistent plunderers are hitting the community repeatedly, and they lack the necessary resources to fend them off or protect all their holdings.

E Would-be ruler turned bandit chief, Rival agent backing the bandits, Traitorous native wielding the bandits against their enemies

F Runaway ex-bandit, Embittered victim of their plundering, Merchant desperate for help

C The bandits are cooperating with a local power bloc, The bandits are a direct consequence of some local political decision, Mustering military force would have dire political consequences

T Plunder stolen by the bandits, A shipment of some vital good that was waylaid, Evidence of corroborators or informers

P Scene of gory slaughter on the road, Burnt farmstead outside the community, Makeshift and dirty bandit camp

Rebel Stronghold

The community is in tacit or open revolt against their supposed overlord. If it's distant from their suzerain's power centers or exceptionally well-fortified, they might be an open nest of rebels and provide overt support to their ruler's enemies. More vulnerable communities will provide shelter, secret support, and a base of supply for hidden bands of insurgents. Loyalist locals must keep their sympathies hidden or suffer the consequences.

E Psychopathic but charismatic rebel leader, Savage rebel-suppressing general, Traitor leading the rebels to their doom

F Idealistic young rebel, Frightened local just trying to survive, Sympathetic outside mediator

C One side of the dispute is correct but profoundly unsympathetic, A rebel victory would ultimately be catastrophic, The lord can't afford the disruption that violent suppression would create

T Cache of valuable rebel supplies, Tax money stolen by the rebels, Secret rebel identities and plans

P Rebel base hidden outside the community, Tavern full of sympathizers, Burnt house of a loyalist

Rigid Castes

The locals are divided into several castes. They may be organized by social role, by imputed nobility of birth, by ethnic origins, or any other dividing principle, but they cannot imagine any other way of organizing themselves. A hierarchy of castes is not inevitable, but there will be social and legal limits applied to ensure that each caste remains fixed in its function. The outside world may or may not respect these distinctions when dealing with the locals.

E Conqueror seeking to impose "civilized" castes on outsiders, Impostor who'll commit any crime to conceal their true caste, Abusive upper-caste grandee

F Unfairly mistreated caste member, Determined reformer with a "better" caste plan, Outsider trying to undo the caste system

C The castes are marked by ancient physiological alterations, Even the low caste locals are convinced the tradition is right, Exceptional money or talent can change a person's caste

T Proof of a group's real caste, Goods created by a caste's unpaid labors, Sacred regalia only a certain caste can touch

P Caste-divided residential quarters, Temple dedicated to a caste, Workshop of a caste

Scars of War

The community is still bloodied by a recent violent conflict. A crushing bandit raid, a lost siege, getting caught at the periphery of a major battle, or some other calamity has inflicted severe damage on the place. Some communities may suffer a longer-term version of this, their youths lost in a grinding, endless battle against some perpetual threat.

E Savage tyrant left over from the fight, Outsider taking advantage of their weakness, Native driven to extremes by their losses

F Bedraggled survivor, Outsider who's come to help, Relative of someone lost in the battle

C The damage was mostly taken by one group, The losses have thrown the old social order into chaos, The locals are desperate to make the losses "worth it"

T Plunder taken during the fight, Wealth left behind by the dead, A cache of treasure concealed by looters

P Damaged half-occupied house, Burnt-down civil structure, Fields pocked with torched cottages

Seat of Rule

Some important ruler or leading figure resides in the community. This may be the seat of a regional lord, or it could be the traditional residence of a high priest, great magus, merchant house, or other wielder of influence. The community itself may or may not be under their direct control, but the wishes of the august figure must be acknowledged by the locals.

E Corrupted and venal ruling figure, Conspiring usurper of the role, Vicious rebel against the ruler

F Worried advisor to the ruler, Petitioner seeking help, Rebel against an unjust ruler

C The ruler is a figurehead controlled by someone else, The community is struggling to keep the seat, The ruler is not legally recognized but everyone knows the reality of their influence

T Riches brought to petition the ruler, Ancestral ruling regalia, Treasure hidden by a ruler of old

P Grand and ancient audience hall, Elaborate edifice now no longer used, Public building related to the ruler's role

Secret Treachery

The community is in secret rebellion against their ostensible liege, having cut deals with his enemies, plotted to betray him for their own gain, or bridled under his tyranny and sought a better lord. The community's leadership is all in on this plot, and outside viceroys or representatives are being kept carefully ignorant of the reality. The common folk may be oblivious to the truth, though they'll doubtless have felt the same motivations and promptings that convinced their leaders to turn traitor.

E Suspicious investigator from the tyrant, Scheming local chief who plans to be the new lord, Monstrous thing that they made a pact with

F Local being cruelly mistreated by the tyrant, Honest representative trying to resolve the tension, Local grandee trying to stay out of it all

C One of the leaders is a double agent waiting to roll all the traitors up, The leaders disagree on methods, There's more than one group of traitors who don't know about the others

T Proof of the conspiracy, Bribes intended for the leadership, Relic smuggled in by an outside supporter

P Smoky back room, Sullen public gathering, Secret chamber in a leader's home

Sinking City

The community was built atop something unstable, and now that substrate is crumbling. It may be swampy ground or a decaying coastline, or it could be an ancient buried city that's now giving way. In the case of some antique habitation, the denizens that once lived there might be boiling upward as their home is collapsing, or new opportunities may be revealed even as the community's present structure is ruined.

E Unspeakable evil from below, Ruthless local causing damage for the sake of profit, Outside exploiter preying on the displaced

F Struggling local defender, Native made homeless by the collapse, Curious explorer bent on discovering what lies beneath

C The collapse was caused by someone, Only the slums or the noble quarter collapsed, The collapse hasn't happened yet but it's going to

T Recently-uncovered treasure, Vault buried when the building became a sinkhole, Key to halt the collapse

P Pit where a manor once was, Fallen city wall, Freshly-exposed underworks

Theocratic Authorities

Religious leaders are influential in almost any community, but here they make up the final authorities. It may be an explicit theocracy, with rule by the clerics of a particular faith, or a temple might be so important and powerful that the official leaders are helpless to resist its will. The locals can be expected to be loyal adherents to the faith, or else the less pious majority is deeply intimidated by the religion's believers.

E Rebel backed by a rival religion, Heretical priest trying to usurp authority, Eldritch being masquerading as a heavenly envoy

F Well-meaning but zealous priest, Insurgent against a wicked theocracy, Harried town leader trying to please the clerics

C The theocrats are divided into struggling factions, The theocracy is the result of the former regime's complete failure, The priests don't want to lead but nobody else is acceptable to the people

T Religious relic conferring the right to rule, Precious sacred scripture, Tithe gathered for the temple

P Ornate and splendid temple, Shrine room within an ordinary house, Magistrate-priest's courtroom

Toxic Economy

The community is reliant on an industry or product that has toxic or negative side-effects as part of its production. The good is extremely valuable, or the community is extremely desperate, and the side-effects are endured as a necessary evil. It may be that their neighbors or lord are forcing them to produce the good so that they aren't the ones suffering the cost.

E Cruel sorcerer-merchant, Indifferent magnate wringing more production out of people, Trader in flesh who profits by the sick and feeble

F Healer trying to cure the side-effect, Crippled local maimed by the product, Outside trader trying to soften the consequences of the trade

C The side-effect only harms an expendable class of people, The afflicted are isolated from the healthy, The side-effect are social or economic rather than physical

T A temporary protection from the toxin, A load of the precious good, A device that worsens the toxin but creates more of the good

P Pesthouse full of the crippled, Splendid mansion built off the product's profits, Factory full of lethal fumes and effects

Trade Hub

The site is a major trade hub, connecting several important cities or resource production areas. It's probably at an important river juncture, ancient crossroads, or occupying the only safe path through some perilous wilderness. Its position may be important enough that it can survive on trade alone, despite being unable to feed itself with the surrounding land. Such hubs are usually heavily garrisoned by the lord who profits from their tariffs and taxes.

E Cheating merchant prince, Corrupt judge or trade official, Grasping ruler with heavy taxes

F Confused foreigner with strange ways, Dealer in some vital adventuring good, Exotic stranger in need of help

C The locals trade with Outsiders or other entities normally shunned by humans, The merchants effectively rule the city, There are pockets of exotic cultures found nowhere else in the kingdom

T Precious goods not produced in this land, Map to some fabulous foreign treasure, Gift intended for a local ruler

P Bazaar full of alien speech, Caravansary built in a foreign fashion, Palace of conspicuous opulence

Unique Product

The community produces something unique, a good or service that cannot be had anywhere else in the kingdom. This may be due to some unique resource found only there, or some carefully-guarded craft, or it may be a special service that can only be provided by the locals, who are somehow unique in their forms or abilities.

E Magnate forcing more production at a grim cost, Ruler demanding more tribute, Rival saboteur planning to turn the product dangerous

F Naive but superbly talented artisan, Innovator seeking to improve the product, Outside trader trying to protect their deal

C The product involves a vile component that outsiders can't accept handling, The product is extremely useful to very unpleasant entities, Multiple rulers claim rights over the community

T A cache of the product, The secret method of its production, Valuable components used to make the product

P Factory full of busy creators, Resource extraction field where a vital component is gathered, Market crowded with traders from far places

Upstart Faith

There's a relatively new religion in the community which is rapidly gaining power. It might be a sectarian offshoot of a major faith, the unique product of a new prophet, or an outside faith backed by wealthy and powerful foreign supporters. Depending on the demands made on believers, the new faith may be a matter of concern only to the existing clergy, or it might be a major flashpoint for conflict in the community.

E False prophet gathering thralls, Hostile native cleric with dark plans, Outside manipulator profiting by the strife

F Sincere new priest, Local trying to keep out of the crossfire, Existing cleric trying to make peace

C The faith has very different teachings for inner and outer members, The secular leadership backs the new faith to weaken the existing temples, The faith has both sympathetic and unpleasant traits

T Sacred relic of the new faith, Temple relic stolen by new convert to the faith, Tithe offered up by wealthy new convert

P Hastily-made new temple, Now-empty existing shrine, Market with informal religious segregation

Warring Council

There's more than one leader in the community, but at least some of them are at each other's throats. It might be a conflict between formal leadership and informal authorities, or it could be a struggle among civil officials. Their interests might diverge sharply, or it could be a personal grudge that's boiled over. Outside threats and internal problems are likely being ignored until the power struggle is resolved.

E Shadowy kingmaker bent on breaking resistance, Megalomaniacal new leader, "Owned" leader forced to fight for his backers

F Neutral leader seeking a resolution, Outside investigator looking to understand the situation, Local suffering from some trouble that's being ignored

C The most capable leader is also most at fault, The struggle is being incited by an outside rival, They're arguing over a problem that seems insoluble

T Blackmail on a leader, Treasure being fought over, Item that would resolve the struggle

P Now-abandoned council room, Site of a steadily-increasing problem, Tavern stronghold of one of the combatants

Widespread Prosperity

The community is uncommonly rich, not only for the gentry but for the common citizens as well. They may produce a valuable good, oversee precious resource extraction, have special economic favors from the ruler, or simply have inherited a vast body of infrastructure. Their neighbors likely view them with envy, and outside raiders and exploiters find them an ideal target.

E Cunning raider chieftain, Greedy overlord, Arrogant local ruler over-proud of their wealth

F Local being exploited for their wealth, Agent of the local prosperity's maintenance, Outside trader trying to make an honest profit

C The prosperity is coming at another community's cost, Their rivals claim their prosperity is wholly undeserved, The impending end of the prosperity is visible to all

T Casually-stored riches, Device that creates some critical infrastructure, Cache of weapons meant to defend the wealth

P Commoner neighborhood as opulent as that of the gentry of elsewhere, Market full of luxuries, Edifice of unusually advanced infrastructure

Xenophobic Locals

The locals despise outsiders. For some "outsiders" may be natives of foreign lands, while others might have a grudge against anyone from outside the community. Almost every community in the Latter Earth has some degree of wariness toward strangers, but these locals have an active loathing, and the few outsiders allowed to trade or interact with them do so at a heavy disadvantage.

E Utterly unfair local magistrate, Local magnate who abuses outside laborers, Leader who always paints outsiders in the worst possible light

F Secretly curious local, Cruelly mistreated outsider living there, Grudging diplomat seeking a modus vivendi

C They have a very good reason for hating strangers, Their outsider neighbors hate them just as much, They're the last remnant of their kind and fear being absorbed

T Prized symbol of their people, Wealth confiscated from an outsider, Forbidden outsider objects kept sealed away

P Cultural edifice devoted to the local past, Tightly-guarded city walls, Architecture that only makes sense to the locals

Courts

A "Court" is shorthand for a particular group of NPCs tangled in a mutually-shared enterprise. It might be a classic noble court, a large business, a patriarch-led familial clan or dynasty, a temple with its clergy, a magistrate's bureaucratic office, or any other circumstance where a number of significant NPCs have to work with each other while perhaps having contrary goals and ambitions.

Court tags are used to provide intrigue-based adventures and help a GM manage the complexity of designing and running more socially-oriented challenges. When the GM needs to generate a social situation that can't be readily solved with swords these tables and tags can provide the basic outlines for them.

Five different types of Courts are sketched on the following pages. The "major figures" for each provide a list of potential significant players in the Court's intrigue. A GM should generally pick or roll three such figures to act as the major foci of plots and schemes. "Minor figures" can be used to fill out NPCs necessary for delivering adventure hooks, local color, or agents of the major figures.

Each major figure has some sort of power source that makes their opinions and wishes relevant to the Court's actions. They can't be wholly neutralized until they're either killed or their power source is eliminated, and the former may not be a feasible option for their rivals or the PCs.

Courts are synonymous with intrigue and plotting, and the table of potential internal or external problems the Court faces can be used as seeds of conflict for inspiring these secret struggles. The Court Tags you generate for the group can flavor these results, or you can synthesize an implicit crisis in the tag with one of the results to create a hybrid situation. It may be that this conflict is merely the most immediate manifestation of the larger-scale problem represented by the Court Tags.

In all cases, a GM should be careful to provide some reason why immediate, brute-force violence is not the smartest solution for the problem. Killing major figures might bring down the kind of societal heat that even notoriously cold-blooded adventurers avoid. It's very likely that their rivals in their Court conflict don't actually want them dead, particularly if the Court is representing a normal familial clan or business.

The rewards and enticements offered by a Court for resolving its problems should tie in with the society or community it inhabits. A far-flung rural clan might not have much in the way of practical wealth, but if they've got a cousin in every village the chance to get a helpful local guide might be worth more than simple coin. A noble family might never be able to openly admit their association with the coarse PCs, but their client families might all have very remunerative work for the heroes.

Aristocratic Courts

These courts represent noble houses, monarchic courts, or other combined places of governmental power and exalted lineage. They have a great deal of secular power over some part of the region and their wishes must be respected by the common folk… or resisted with considerable effort.

Very few elites can afford to rule with complete indifference to the opinion of others, however. These courts will usually be seeking alliances with other aristocratic houses, cooperation from rich merchants, and blessings from important local faiths. In a stable region, their chief rivals will be other aristocratic courts. When the area is in turmoil or the social order is in flux, they might find themselves facing powerful commoner clans, ambitious religious organizations, or rich merchants willing to provide reliable order to society.

d12	Main Theme of the Court
1	Treachery, an air of suspicion and mistrust
2	Decadence, of excess and indulgence
3	Ennui, of exhaustion and loss of meaning
4	Ambition, of driving forward and upward
5	Resentment, bitter at their rivals' crimes
6	Nobility, a sense of obligation to their people
7	Paralysis, trapped in some internal crisis
8	Luxury, abundant in wealth and possessions
9	Tyranny, cruelly oppressing those under them
10	Dissolution, falling apart from outside stress
11	Exoticism, following strange outside ways
12	Might, flexing its power in impressive ways

People of the Court

d12	Major Figure	Minor Figure	The Source of their Power in the Court
1	Lord/Lady	Affiliated Merchant	They are the only legitimate heir to an important post
2	Ornamental Spouse	Amusing Performer	They control a large chunk of the court's income sources
3	Ruler's Mistress	Butler or Eunuch	They are widely loved and admired by the members
4	Heir Apparent	Footman	They have access to sinister sorceries or magic items
5	Spare Heir	Hanger-On	The others fear violence or brutality from them
6	Court Mage/Priest	Heir's Tutor	They have a special relationship with the nation's ruler
7	Jester or Pet Artist	Hired Assassin	They have blackmail on important members
8	Chief Steward	House Guard	Everyone acknowledges their skill and brilliance
9	Poor Relation	Lady in Waiting	They have a very effective spy ring in their service
10	Senior Relative	Pleasure Slave	They provide intimate services to an important person
11	Cadet Branch Lord	Prying Servant	They have innate magical powers or gifts
12	Lord's Main Rival	Spy for a Rival	They have the support of an important local faith

Problems of the Court

d12	Internal Conflicts	External Conflicts
1	Someone is pursuing someone else's spouse or fiance	The court somehow offended the nation's ruler
2	Someone is facing financial ruin due to a mistake	A royal advisor wants the court cut down to size
3	Two potential heirs to something are in bitter conflict	A rival court has recently gotten much stronger
4	An elder is making unreasonable demands on others	Hostile forces have attacked and ruined a court asset
5	A danger exists in or near the court's own seat	A traitor to the court is helping a rival group's attacks
6	Someone is skimming off income due others in the court	An important faith is angry with the court over something
7	A court servant is blackmailing their employer	Tenants or merchants have been upset by the court
8	A court resource or asset has been badly damaged	The local ruler has levied a harsh "gift" on the court
9	Someone wants to make a very poor marriage choice	A rival has seized control of an important court asset
10	Someone poisoned or cursed someone else in the court	A reckless member has incurred a group's anger
11	Someone got involved with a criminal organization	Doing something vital will infuriate another power
12	A rebel in the court is scheming against the crown	A rival has laid a legal claim on a court asset

Business Courts

These courts can be used to detail powerful merchant houses, business combines, or even ambitious new enterprises that play a significant role in a community.

Business courts provide at least one product or service to the people around them, one important enough or expensive enough to give them considerable influence. Given the state of most nations, every major merchant expects the local rulers to try to take his profits and claim his property sooner or later; the idea of property rights independent of the desires of the ruling class is not a familiar one most places.

The main defense a business court has is to be more valuable to the rulers intact than dismembered. Some emphasize heavy ties with local authorities, while others in wilder lands make themselves too dangerous or too vital to destroy with impunity.

d12	Relations With Their Market
1	Trusted, they're a fixture of the local market
2	Angry, they've done something to infuriate
3	Curious, they've come up with a new thing
4	Resentful, they deal harshly and graspingly
5	Suspicious, they're rumored to do vile things
6	Admired, they're well-loved by customers
7	Novel, they're new to the market here
8	Patronized, favored by the local nobility
9	Affinity, dealing with co-ethnics or believers
10	Apathetic, with customers losing interest
11	Predatory, eliminating weaker rivals
12	Shabby, their goods cheap and minimal

People of the Court

d12	Major Figure	Minor Figure	The Source of their Power in the Court
1	Business Owner	Angry Former Customer	They own rights to a critical part of the business
2	Business Partner	Best Customer	They fronted the initial investment money
3	Buyer Seeking Takeover	Business Guard	They had the idea that made the business work
4	Chief Artisan	Expensive Courtesan	They have information on the owner's criminal doings
5	Corrupt Lieutenant	Gang Extortionist	They keep the local nobility from sucking it dry
6	Head Accountant	Neighboring Businessman	They have ties to an important local faith
7	Innovative Worker	Noble Parasite	They're the only one who can handle the workers well
8	Noble Patron	Shop Clerk	Their relatives make up a lot of the workers
9	Owner's Heir	Street Informer	The business owes them a large monetary debt
10	Rival's Catspaw	Supply Vendor	The business is built on property they own or control
11	Spouse or Lover	Temporary Worker	They have vital connections with important suppliers
12	Wealthy Backer	Thieving Worker	They handle purchases for a critical customer

Problems of the Court

d12	Internal Conflicts	External Conflicts
1	Someone's been cooking the books	A competitor is trying to force a sale of the business
2	A secret flaw has been discovered in the product	They've insulted or offended the nobility somehow
3	A critical resource for making the good is running out	Their customers are furious over a recent product flaw
4	A vital worker has quit in a fury over some offense	Someone's tainting or ruining a critical resource input
5	Someone lost a large sum of funds to theft or error	A noble wants to force his own pet business into place
6	The deed to some vital property has been lost	A local religious group has become angry with them
7	A customer is proving both critical and intolerable	A holder of a vital secret has died or been kidnapped
8	A major stakeholder is coming up with terrible ideas	They're trying to swallow a rival business
9	Income is down but no one can agree on a plan	Someone's hooked them into a terribly bad deal
10	Factions are quarreling over a new product	An enemy is sabotaging an important workshop
11	A family scion is botching their work terribly	Bandits or paid thieves have plundered something
12	The owner's incapacitated and no one is in control	They've signed a deal they suddenly can't complete

Criminal Courts

Gangs, secret societies, degenerate villainous cults, and other groups of organized rebels against societal laws are represented as criminal courts. These groups all stand in opposition to some generally-accepted principle or code of laws, though many may be tacitly normalized in places.

Substantial criminal enterprises all exist in some sort of relationship with the society around them. Perhaps the locals accept them as an unpleasant inevitability, or they're too dangerous for secular rulers to meddle with them, or they prey on a population that the authorities are indifferent to.

This acceptance can vanish rapidly if the court seems to present a real threat to the government's control, however. Given their outlaw status, the common populace is unlikely to have any concerns about their brutal and extra-judicial suppression.

d12	Their Primary Mode of Crime
1	Extortion, using brute force and threats
2	Blackmail, preying on the wealthy
3	Murder, being proficient assassins
4	Smuggling, sneaking in untaxed goods
5	Black Marketeer, selling forbidden things
6	Slaving, whether legitimate or by force
7	Theft, whether burglary or banditry
8	Fraud, con artists and business cheats
9	Loans, giving high rates and harsh collection
10	Fencing, selling hot goods untraceably
11	Occult, offering forbidden magic to others
12	Piracy, or helping pirates sell their goods

People of the Court

d12	Major Figure	Minor Figure	The Source of their Power in the Court
1	Grizzled leader	Disreputable Priest	They're independently wealthy and doing it for fun
2	Leader's Concubine	Oppressed Local	They have a sinister magical gift or aptitude
3	Brutal Kneebreaker	Protected Merchant	They have a powerful or useful magical device
4	Well-Placed Spy	Shabby Local Fence	They have blackmail about the court's leadership
5	Ambitious Lieutenant	Drunken Healer	They've seduced the court's leadership
6	The Heir Apparent	Cooperative Innkeeper	Their remarkable skills bring in a lot of money
7	Corrupt Magistrate	Tired Harlot	They've special relations with the local rulers
8	Wicked Noble Patron	Would-be Client	They have a profitable front business they run
9	Incompetent Scion	Aspiring Member	They're personally terrifying and capable of murder
10	Outcast Sorcerer	Bribed Guardsman	Their charisma has gotten them a lot of supporters
11	Dangerous Rival	Criminal's Relative	They're diabolically cunning and persuasive
12	Seductive Tempter	Scabby Beggar	They have numerous criminal allies elsewhere

Problems of the Court

d12	Internal Conflicts	External Conflicts
1	Someone's knifed a fellow member again	The local law enforcement isn't staying bought
2	A deed's profits were unfairly split with the members	They're meddling with an extremely dangerous target
3	Someone's stolen court property for their own use	A rival gang or group is moving on their territory
4	The leadership is being roiled by a challenge	A traitor is in league with an enemy group
5	An important member's made a grave mistake	A sorcerer has a grudge against the group
6	Two members are fighting over another's affections	They've drawn heat from a powerful noble
7	The leader's suffering from increasing paranoia	A local religion has a particular enmity with them
8	They're overdoing the crime and drawing excess heat	They acquired something that's causing them dire woe
9	Someone's picked up a very bad habit or addiction	A court faction is getting support from a hostile rival
10	Members are employing magic against rivals	A noble or ruler wants to use them for their own ends
11	A recent catastrophe depleted the court's wealth	Their territory has become very inhospitable to them
12	A faction wants to enter a different sphere of crime	They're in a bad deal they don't dare renege on

Familial Clan Courts

Wherever masses of humans can be found, there will always be found those large, influential extended families that play an outsize role in the community's life. These major families might be characterized by a shared ethnic background, a tradition of some important skill, or an intensely cooperative clannishness in the face of outside rivals.

These tables can be used to flesh out the leading families of a farming village, the not-quite-noble gentry of a major city, or the tribal bands of a barbaric wilderness-dwelling folk. While these courts are assumed to be subordinate to some local ruler, they have enough resources and members to be a problem for nobles that mean to trample them carelessly. That power and ability to protect their neighbors' interests is often what brings them to prominence in their own community.

d12	Relations With Their Neighbors
1	Isolated, distrusted or disliked by most
2	Creditor, with many owing them payment
3	Scorned, derided for some deed or trait
4	Respected, honored for some quality
5	Newcomers, relatively new to the area
6	Loners, not disliked but not close to any
7	Feared, for past acts or present threats
8	Revered, held in dread and awe by most
9	Envied, resented by jealous neighbors
10	Loved, widely adored by other families
11	Needed, for a particular trait or person
12	Hated, barely endured by their neighbors

People of the Court

d12	Major Figure	Minor Figure	The Source of their Power in the Court
1	Adopted Member	Acquainted Noble	They hold the deed to some critical family property
2	Ambitious Scion	Blackmailer	They're the heir to the chief bloodline of the clan
3	Black Sheep	Disowned Wastrel	They're best at the skill or profession the clan practices
4	Clan Duty Keeper	Family Guard	They have considerable blackmail on their peers
5	Disowned Rebel	Family Priest	They have extensive contacts in other families
6	Favored Child	Gossipy Neighbor	They own great amounts of personal wealth
7	Oldest Elder	House Servant	They're notoriously loyal and useful to the family
8	Outsider Spouse	Moneylender	They're an intimate of the local ruler
9	Patriarch/Matriarch	Old Retainer	Everyone in the family loves them very much
10	Reckless Innovator	Secret Lover	They have many capable, loyal children
11	Stern Traditionalist	Tenant Farmer	Their capacity for violence is fearsome to others
12	Young Fosterling	Useful Tradesman	They have access to secret magical items or powers

Problems of the Court

d12	Internal Conflicts	External Conflicts
1	An important member's spouse is having an affair	There's a running feud with another family
2	The clan leader is opposed to a popular plan or goal	The local ruler doesn't like their influence and power
3	The last leader recently died without a clear heir	A member committed adultery with the wrong person
4	A member's bloodline is clouded by suspicion	Someone gravely insulted or offended another family
5	A cadet branch is fighting to seize control	The family's rights are being trod on by the nobility
6	The clan poured much wealth into a failed ambition	The family's source of influence is being subverted
7	Personal grudges have caused resentful factions	A rival family stole something very important from them
8	The new generation is ignoring old, painful duties	A diplomatic marriage has turned out very badly
9	A member is selfishly trading on the clan's reputation	Their neighbors demand they fix a local problem
10	One member is convinced another wants them dead	Their vital interests are making trouble for neighbors
11	A very important young talent has turned rebellious	Ambitious newcomers are attacking their status subtly
12	The leader is betting big on a risky, unpopular scheme	A disowned rebel is trying to usurp control of assets

Religious Courts

Temples, monasteries, seminaries, secret cults, or strictly secular academic institutions can all be represented by a religious court. Wherever a combination of intellectual rigor, obscure practice, and less-than-tangible community services are found these courts can provide structure.

Religious courts exist in the context of a larger faith, though they may not be strictly subordinate to any outside cleric depending on the structure of the religion. Whether independent or obedient to a bishop, however, they are undoubtedly under at least some pressure to cooperate with the local government. Any organization with the money, popular influence, and land holdings held by a major temple is going to have to come to some kind of terms with the local ruler. Minor shrines and remote monasteries may be able to avoid the worst of these exactions.

d12	Their Relations With the Larger Faith
1	Schismatic, despised as heretical
2	Desultory, an apathetic jobsworth sentiment
3	Carceral, a punishment-post for wrongdoers
4	Affable, courteous and cooperative
5	Populist, focusing on the poor lay believers
6	Intellectual, given to sophisticated theology
7	Occult, conducting theurgic magic studies
8	Pioneering, a new missionary establishment
9	Zealous, full of fervent believers
10	Subverted, controlled by a secular power
11	Venerable, old and greatly honored
12	Sectarian, a stronghold of a particular faction

People of the Court

d12	Major Figure	Minor Figure	The Source of their Power in the Court
1	Affiliated Noble	Cleric of Lax Morals	They are thought to produce wondrous miracles
2	Charismatic Priest	Corrupt Priest	They have acknowledged magical skills
3	Dubious Theologian	Fanatical Zealot	Their mastery of doctrine is unanswerable
4	Gifted Healer	Holy Goods Peddler	They've the backing of secret but powerful heretics
5	Guard Captain	Loud Reformer	Local lay believers support them with money and help
6	High Priest	Pious Criminal Boss	They've noble or oligarchic relatives
7	Holy Oracle	Sick Petitioner	They're an expert at seduction and manipulation
8	Richest Lay Member	Slave of the Faith	Charismatic leadership and keen insight aid them
9	Sacred Figurehead	Temple Artisan	They have a pious noble who backs them
10	Stern Inquisitor	Temple Guard	They secretly arrange criminal services for the court
11	Temple Sorcerer	Temple Prostitute	They have a particularly holy lineage or role
12	Temple Treasurer	Tenant Farmer	The upper hierarchy of the faith favors them

Problems of the Court

d12	Internal Conflicts	External Conflicts
1	Someone came up with a very seductive heresy	A popular preacher is leading lay believers astray
2	Omens of divine displeasure have manifested	A rival sect is moving on their unofficial territory
3	A vital ritual item or component has been lost	A noble believer demands an impossible miracle
4	The leader and their chief rival sabotage each other	Court property is being seized by a rival power
5	A forbidden relationship has formed among clergy	The god's power seems feeble to people lately
6	A member demands a very costly ritual be performed	The ruler wants the court to take on an unpopular role
7	Members fight over who is to conduct a great ritual	The upper hierarchy is fighting over the court somehow
8	The greater faith declared a vital activity anathema	A holy demagogue is preaching against the court
9	The clergy have taken up a costly and wicked habit	The ruler is trying to suborn control over the court
10	A zealot reformer is demanding impractical reforms	A noble adherent is demanding special concessions
11	Poverty or need is forcing them to compromise piety	An outside cleric is trying to claim leadership
12	A member is screwing up an important court duty	Rivals are blaming the court for some misfortune

Court Tags

Like the other tags in this section, Court Tags are meant to be interpreted in terms of the Court they're modifying. ***Affliction's Mark*** representing a wasting disease on a temple's senior clergy is going to have a very different flavor than the tumor eating away at a crime boss' brain. A desperate search for the crime that inflicted such a dreadful divine punishment might fit one, while a criminal gang cast into paranoid dread of the boss' mercurial temperament is more in line for the other.

Some tags come with implicit problems as part of their description; an ***Awkward Birth*** carries with it the turmoil that the Court is experiencing as it tries to deal with a child that shouldn't exist. If you're going to the trouble of generating a Court, it's probably so you can use it in an adventure, so these problems and crises should be phrased in ways that the PCs can get involved in them. The situation might be so delicately balanced between different major players in the Court that the small nudge a group of skilled outsiders can provide is just what it takes to bring the matter to a resolution.

Other tags are more descriptive in nature, and don't have an obvious built-in problem to present to the PCs. In those cases you can just use that tag to flavor the complication implied by the other, or else draw the tag to its extreme and make the Court deal with the consequences of maintaining their place or behavior in the face of an uncooperative world.

Two Court Tags are usually sufficient to give a group its own flavor and style. A royal court made up of three or four quarreling noble houses might have each of the contenders built as their own Court, each with their own pair of tags and their own internal tensions to go with their external rivalries.

Conversely, you might mix two tags for a single Court, but then roll a few more to flavor individual major figures in it, using them as metaphors or creative cues to give personality or detail to the participants in the Court's intrigues. Still, as in all sandbox affairs, don't build more than you need for your immediate content requirements. You can always add more detail later.

d100	Tag	d100	Tag
1–2	Affliction's Mark	51–52	Iron Law
3–4	Ancestral Obligation	53–54	Lost Purpose
5–6	Awesome Legitimacy	55–56	Magical Subversion
7–8	Awkward Birth	57–58	Ministerial Capture
9–10	Blandished Leadership	59–60	New Generation
11–12	Cadet Branches	61–62	New Opportunity
13–14	Capricious Orders	63–64	Outside Debts
15–16	Cultural Insignia	65–66	Overextended Grasp
17–18	Daring Ambition	67–68	Poisonous Cliques
19–20	Dark Secret	69–70	Priestly Influence
21–22	Decadent Court	71–72	Proxy Speaker
23–24	Devil's Bargain	73–74	Rampant Corruption
25–26	Diplomatic Demands	75–76	Recent Brutality
27–28	Disputed Inheritance	77–78	Regency Council
29–30	Excess Heirs	79–80	Restive Lessers
31–32	False Prize	81–82	Rival Dreams
33–34	Fatal Extravagance	83–84	Rival Power
35–36	Forbidden Romance	85–86	Ruling Regalia
37–38	Foreign Ties	87–88	Runaway Rule
39–40	Gate Keeper	89–90	Shining Successor
41–42	Hidden Blight	91–92	Splendid Seat
43–44	Hopeless Rival	93–94	Sublime Skill
45–46	Impure Blood	95–96	Sudden Strength
47–48	Inadequate Tools	97–98	Threatened Violence
49–50	Inept Ruler	99–00	Waning Wealth

Affliction's Mark

Some sort of persistent, incurable illness is gnawing at the court. The principle leader might have been felled by it, or a beloved member, or it may be a spreading curse within its circles. Acute diseases will likely have the sufferers desperate to find some cure, while chronic illnesses might need regular infusions of some costly or morally-dubious remedy.

E Manipulative quack, Amorally desperate parent, Secret spreader of plague

F Appealing victim, Struggling physician, Worried spouse-to-be of a victim

C The sickness is a direct result of their choices, A faction would profit enormously if the current victims died, The only known cure comes with a dire moral or material cost

T Palliative that can slow or ease the disease, Proof of its source or cause, The price gathered to pay for a perhaps-real cure

P Hushed and shadowed sickroom, Gathering place with an air of forced gaiety, Untouched quarters of the recently dead

Ancestral Obligation

The court was impressed with some great task, duty, or role by its founder, and much of its influence or moral authority hinges on continuing to carry out that task. Its traditions and structure revolve around being able to carry out the work. Failure means disgrace and perhaps tangible penalties as old pacts are broken. Aside from this, neglecting the duty may result in other negative consequences, perhaps to parties other than the court itself.

E Schemer who'd profit by the duty's disruption, Rebel who hates the duty and care nothing for the consequences, Tyrannical leader who forces others to bear the duty's cost

F Grimly-determined keeper, Sympathetic member who suffers from the work, Outsider desperately reliant on the work being done well

C No one fully understands the duty's meaning any more, The duty comes at a terrible cost, Recent calamity has left them too weak for the work

T Vital tool for carrying out the job, Ancient payment for the work, Key to lifting the burden

P Ancient work-chamber, Hall emblazoned with symbols of the work, Training hall for carrying on the work

Awesome Legitimacy

The things that are certain in life are death, taxes, and this court. They are important, they have always been important, and they always will be important. They may wax and wane, but no one in their society can imagine them ever ceasing to exist, and at most the locals can only think of seizing control of the court or compelling its cooperation. Its destruction is unthinkable. It may have absolute control of some critical social function, have members of legendary awe, or be viewed as the personal property of some divinity or godlike entity.

E Implacable tyrant consecrated by custom, Manipulator who cloaks his will in the court's legitimacy, Outsider who'll ruin the court despite the chaos such a thing would create

F Court member keenly aware of their responsibility, Local haplessly oppressed by the court, Outsider who deals cautiously with the court

C The court really is as indispensable as it seems, The source of its untouchability is weakening, If it goes down it's taking much of local society with it

T Regalia of ancient authority, Dusty deed to a rich property, Wealth of a failed rebel against it

P Long-forgotten spare throne room, Ancient archive, Gathering place in use for ages

Awkward Birth

A pregnancy is roiling the court and causing severe problems. It may be that a member is pregnant by the wrong man, or a pairing took place that was shocking to society, or a newly-born heir is showing signs of inherited Blight, or a new heir suddenly excludes a displeased prior incumbent. The court can't hush it forever, and abortion is either impractical, unacceptable, or too dangerous to the mother. This may not stop certain members from trying.

E Elder who would see the problem "solved", Murderously suspicious husband, Demoted heir

F Naive young lover, Desperate hidden paramour, Worried sire of the unwanted child

C Secret accusations of illegitimacy are being passed through the court, The disgraced husband's family is enraged, The pregnancy is just a tool the mother is using to get her way

T Proof of the real father, Blackmail material on the court's leadership, Wealth stolen away by the former presumptive heir

P Nursery much worse-appointed than expected, Prison-like room for the expectant mother, Stronghold estate of the disappointed former heir

Blandished Leadership

The leadership has been led astray by one or more pretty girls or boys. They dote on their paramours, granting them extravagant favors and imperiling the court with the lengths they go to in order to please their beloved. Those not given to romantic dizziness may be enraptured by more physical talents, so occupied in the business of night that nothing is done in the day.

E Rival who sent them the playthings as gifts, Ruthlessly manipulative lover, Murderously angry neglected spouse

F Sadly displaced former favorite, Frustrated underling, Disapproving moralist

C The paramours have a supernatural edge in their charms, Their spouse likes them distracted so as to carry out their own plans, The court is fighting over influence with the paramours rather than the leadership

T Priceless luxury demanded by a lover, Trinket of great worth abandoned by them, Wealth gathered to build some pleasure for them

P Seraglio of constant liveliness, Court hall abandoned by the leadership, Pleasure-garden redolent of luxury

Cadet Branches

The authority of the court is somewhat splintered, with multiple cadet branches of the family, enterprise, or department having their own share of its power. These branches are likely to struggle over control of the main court, with some of them perhaps preferring the court's dissolution rather than allowing a hated rival to gain control of it.

E Disgraced scion with a plan for revenge, Ruler who hates a particular branch, Scheming leader of a minor branch

F Bastard offspring seeking recognition, Visionary from a cadet branch, Rightful leader denied their place

C One "cadet" branch actually has a right to rule but is too weak to claim it, The main court plays the branches against each other, Outside rivals want the court to remain splintered

T Proof of a branch's illegitimacy, Bribe paid to get a branch to cooperate, Blackmail material on the main court's ruler

P Ostentatious branch estate, More modest but far older main estate, Court hall with places for all the branches

Capricious Orders

The court is issuing unreasonable orders to those under its authority, demanding excessive tribute, unreasonable obediences, or similar sacrifices. The court leader may be new and over-confident of their power, or the court may be in dire trouble and needs more resources, or rival forces may be goading or manipulating the court into overplaying its hand out of recklessness or ignorance of the true state of affairs.

E Arrogant new lord, Mentally unstable or bewitched ruler, Scheming advisor in a rival power's pay

F Mistreated subject of the court, Frustrated moderate member, Reasonable rival of the current ruler

C The demands are all to fulfill a great secret plan, The demands are punishment for a failed rebellion, The court doesn't want to make the demands but is somehow forced to do so

T Heavy load of tribute, Stolen treasure that the court demanded be produced, Privately-diverted wealth from the demands

P Angry court reception hall, Public plaza with darkly-grumbling locals, Enterprise closed down due to a failure to deliver on the demands

Cultural Insignia

The court produces some famously revered cultural product, such as literature, poetry, painting, sculpture, music, dance, or other art form. Their members may have a direct tradition of production, or they may be the critical patrons of a tradition of artists or a school that produces the product. The product wins them respect among the cultured, and many would be glad to assist them in exchange for the luster of association.

E Ruler who would crush rival schools, Chief artist gone mad with jealousy or megalomania, Rival artist determined to destroy the tradition

F Earnest young artistic genius, Poor court member determined to patronize as best they can, Unworldly aesthete concerned only with art

C The art has actual magical powers when well-made, The art encourages or glorifies some reprehensible cause, The artists are savagely factional in their different schools

T Lost legendary work of art, Proof that a famed piece of art is a forgery of the original, Hidden masterwork of a dead genius

P Salon dedicated to appreciating the art, Workshop where the art is made, Grand public structure adorned with the art

Daring Ambition

The court has a grand ambition which is driving its actions, and it's making a major bet on its ability to achieve its goal. Failure will mean catastrophe for the court, while success promises great rewards. Not all the members of the court are necessarily sharing the same risks and potential payoff, however, and some may be paying more than they'd ever profit.

E Megalomaniacal leader, Well-meaning but hopelessly optimistic ruler, Secret manipulator driving the ambition

F Sympathetic necessary sacrifice for the cause, Court member struggling to do their share, Ally who'd profit if the court succeeded

C The court thinks the ambition is one thing but the leadership knows it's another, The ambition's success would be a poisoned gift, A faction plans to monopolize the benefit or shift all the loss

T Critical material for the ambition, Costly remnants of a failed effort, A valuable result of progress in the ambition

P Enterprise or establishment dedicated to the cause, Newly-constructed edifice, Hall optimistically prepared to celebrate victory

Dark Secret

The court has a dark secret that would cost it dearly if it were to be revealed. Loss of influence, station, money, or power might all be consequent. It may involve old treacheries, hidden crimes, secret illegitimacies, dark pacts, or harsh choices that were unavoidable at the time. The uppermost ranks likely know the truth, but the lesser members may have nothing but unpleasant suspicions.

E The villain they're allied with, Ruthless keeper of secrets, Amorally villainous ruler

F Secretly worried lesser court member, Outside investigator, Bitter survivor of the court's crime

C The act was acceptable or normal at the time it was committed, Revealing it would implicate other important powers, The court's leadership has tried to quietly make amends for it

T Proof of the heinous crime, Precious treasure acquired through the sin, Valuable relic taken from a victim of the crime

P Secret archive full of dark evidence, Noble monument built on a dark substrate, Private sanctum for only the inner circle

Decadent Court

The court is too absorbed in their pleasures and indulgences. Their cooperation is purchased with coin or flesh, their disports grow ever more costly and excessive, and even the minor members are getting accustomed to shameful enjoyments. Their power is being turned toward facilitating their membership's appetites rather than fulfilling whatever role got them their status in the first place.

E Jaded and sensation-starved ruler, Cruel panderer for the court's hungers, Monstrous entity that sponsors or encourages vice

F Escaped would-be subject, Inquisitive outside investigator, Frustrated native in need of the court's execution of its duty

C The court's leadership is uninvolved and using the vices to blackmail and control their underlings, The court's trying to spread its vices in its own social stratum and profit accordingly, A faction is taking things much too far even for their brethren and involving occult powers

T Debt-slave contracts, Hideous but precious idol or art object, Valuable drug made from slaves

P Debauched salon, Court public hall made sinister, Pit where the human chattel are kept

Devil's Bargain

The court made a bargain that's now coming back to haunt them. Some pact with an outside power gave them a crucial edge or a desperately-needed boost, but now it needs to provide services, favors, or help that could end up destroying it or costing its leadership dearly. The pact was probably secret at the time, and even revealing it exists could have dire repercussions.

E Vile entity it pacted with, Ruler planning on foisting the price off on a victim, Heartless creditor who cares nothing for the damage it does

F Undeserving victim of the price, Rival who suspects something is up, Enemy of the power they pacted with

C Only a small faction of the court knows about the bargain, The current leadership didn't know about the deal until it was threatened into compliance, The power they pacted with is a mortal enemy of their society

T Blackmail material the pact granter is using to control them, Potent relic granted in the deal, Heavy tribute due to the pacting power

P Monument to the victory the pact secretly gave them, Secret chambers for the pact's granter, Shrine to the dark entity they propitiated

Diplomatic Demands

Some rival or outside power is making demands on the court that they cannot easily ignore. It might involve some prior offense in need of reparations, a past deal that's come due, or a price required for a favor that the court desperately needs. These demands are more than the court can easily pay, and determining where the burden will fall most heavily is a matter of fierce internal politics.

E Scheming shifter of burdens, Outside rival bent on beggaring the court, Incompetent diplomat who's only making things worse

F Victim of unfair exactions, Harried diplomat with no cards to play, Native who desperately needs the deal to go through

C The exactions demanded are purely punitive, There's a specific temporary reason the court has to acknowledge the demands, Another party could give a better deal if they were persuaded

T Huge down payment on the demands, The precious object the court is trying to acquire, Proof that the demands are unjustified

P Diplomatic retreat full of tense people, Site of the problem causing the demands, Hushed court hall full of whispers

Excess Heirs

While the ruler remains vigorous, they have too many legitimate heirs for the court to comfortably absorb. There's not enough wealth or power to give the losers a dignified station, or else the losing heirs may expect to be executed, or the heirs are locked in a court-disrupting battle to force their desired outcome. Various heirs might be backed by rival outside powers searching for a convenient catspaw.

E Cruel but talented crown prince, Scion in league with dark powers, Secretly murderous spare heir

F Capable but hard-pressed candidate, Hapless ruler unable to enforce a choice, Vengeful retainer of a murdered heir

C The ruler desires a Darwinian culling of heirs, The court desperately needs the heirs to cooperate to overcome a threat, Several heirs were formerly unknown

T Proof of a candidate's illegitimacy, Bribe from an enemy power, Relic meant to eliminate a rival

P Well-fortified home of an heir, Court hall where the factions are well-separated, Ritual occasion of enforced amity

Disputed Inheritance

The court's rule or property is due to pass on to the next generation, but there are multiple claimants to it. Each has some colorable legitimacy, and factions and secret supporters are doubtless rife in the court. They're well-balanced enough that brute force seems a risky route to take, though matters are rapidly coming to a head as the need to establish a new leader is intense.

E Cruel and vicious heir, Incompetent heir who has the best claim, Outside enemy backing the strife

F Most talented heir but with the worst position, Hapless heir in dire need of protection, Loyal retainer trying to avert disaster

C Legitimacy rests on possession of a now-lost relic, If the struggle lasts much longer the patrimony will be ruined or lost, A selfish regent is exploiting the court during the interregnum

T Bribe intended for the faction leaders, Precious relic of legitimacy, The real and verified will

P Tense and angry court meeting hall, Heir's country estate, Court plaza where the factions don't mingle

False Prize

The court is trying to obtain a goal or ambition that will actually be disastrous for it. Either through political miscalculation, ignorance of the truth, or willful blindness to the consequences, they're plunging headlong towards calamity. Rivals might be secretly aiding them in their purpose, while factions within the court may be uselessly protesting the danger of the path they've chosen.

E Foolhardy ruler with grand plans, Treacherous advisor encouraging disaster, Trickster leading the court to its ruin

F Clear-sighted court member who is being ignored, Victim of the danger the court is facing, Disfavored faction leader warning of peril

C The prize's benefits will attract an overwhelming foe, The prize will corrupt or ruin the court's leadership, The prize comes with secret problems or obligations that will plague the court

T Proof that the prize would be a disaster, The key to unlocking the prize, Rich reward that seems to be a foretaste of the prize's benefits

P Edifice built as part of the effort, Ruined seat of a former holder of the prize, Secret facility where terrible prices are paid in pursuit of it

Fatal Extravagance

The court is exhausting itself on luxuries or displays of magnificence that it cannot truly afford. It may feel pressured to do so in order to maintain face before its rivals, or it may over-estimate its resources, or it may be being manipulated by whatever group they're buying their luxuries from. Optimistic courts may be betting on a future windfall that may or may not come.

E Smiling merchant of addictive drugs, Grandiose ruler, Selfishly hedonistic court member

F Court member vainly trying to economize, Worried accountant, Client upset at the lack of expenditures on their vital need

C The extravagance is serving a secret magical or ritual purpose, It's being paid for with debt the court intends to never need to repay, The waste is the product of a new ruler who has different expectations of what they deserve

T Shipment of precious luxuries, Payment meant for the next round of indulgences, Precious item that is to be pawned or sold to fund the luxuries

P Gaudily-adorned court structure, Celebration of wild excess, Ostentatious and newly-built monument to their luxuries

Forbidden Romance

Someone in the court is deeply in love with someone they shouldn't be. It may be a rival from another court, a lowly commoner, an incestuous bond, an attraction to a forbidden demihuman, a fellow court member's spouse, or a spectacularly horrible person who can only bring them misery. This love may or may not be reciprocated, and it may be an open secret to others.

E Unreciprocated lover who won't take no for an answer, Cruelly manipulative object of affection, Court elder bent on terminating the relationship

F Earnest matchmaker friend, Appealing paramour, Aspiring peacemaker who wants the match

C The reasons for opposing the match are extremely good, The court member is being exploited by the paramour or their manipulators, A rival court member wants the match to go through so the court member will be disgraced

T Proof that the lover is not what they seem, A gift the enamored should not have given, A token that will legitimize the pairing

P Secret rendezvous spot, Hidden prison for a reluctant lover, Court festival where unacceptable hints are given

Foreign Ties

The court has strong ties with some foreign power or organization, one that may or may not be hostile to their greater polity. The court draws some considerable advantage from this tie, but it's also expected to assist its affiliate in their own local goals. If the affiliate is an enemy or rival of their people, this tie may be carefully hidden, or it may be a known scandal about the court.

E Foreign spymaster with demands, Rival who despises the foreign power, Court member who's a wholly-owned agent of the power

F Appealing foreign petitioner, Harried court member trying to square their obligations, Outside inquisitor into suspicious doings

C The power used to be friendly to the polity but has recently been viewed as a rival, The court is secretly reliant on the foreign power's support, The support consists of the foreign power not doing something that they could do

T Funding from the power, Precious item the court needs to turn over, The macguffin the power wants the court to obtain for them

P Court hall in an architectural style like that of the power, Home with foreign-derived elements, Archive with documents in a foreign tongue

Gate Keeper

The court controls access to some critical resource or social function. It might have an effective lock on the local law, or control the irrigation network for regional farms, or provide vital religious services to faithful believers. If it abuses this power too greatly, however, its rivals will combine against it and may seize control of the resource.

E Reckless leader who's overplaying their hand, Outside schemer planning to break their monopoly, Corrupt court member who's undermining the control for their own benefit

F Earnest outsider with a monopoly-breaking idea, Frustrated court member trying to reform the monpoly's administration, Hard-pressed local mistreated by the monopoly

C The next alternative monopolist is much worse, A monopoly-breaker has vile intentions, The monopoly rests with them for secret but very good reasons

T Some good produced by the monopoly, License or leave to violate the monopoly, Device that greatly weakens the monopoly

P Site where the monopoly is practiced, Secret wildcatter site of unlicensed production, Private production site of one of the court's elites

Hidden Blight

One or more members of the court are afflicted with the Blight, but are concealing their condition. Their particular Blight is not physically obvious to onlookers, but may have severe psychological or hidden physical manifestations. At least some of the other court members have a good reason to aid this concealment, if only to avoid the scandal of being known to carry Blighted genetics.

E Blight-demented leader being shielded by others, Ruthless investigator seeking answers, Murderous court member bent on "resolving" matters

F Blighted struggling with their curse, Court member trying to protect the secret, Blighted parent trying to help their child

C The Blight is light enough to be lifted somehow, The Blight is somehow useful to the afflicted, They disguise the Blight as a wildly excessive human inclination

T Drug that ameliorates the Blight, Proof of a Blighted lineage, Bribe paid to hush the matter

P Secret retreat for expressing Blighted urges, Hall of glorified ancestral memorials, Prison for badly-affected Blighted members

Impure Blood

Bloodline and lineage are important to the court, either because of a bloodline-dependent power or a society that places much importance on it. Despite this, the court's lineage would be considered impure by others were it fully known, perhaps due to some secret pairings in the remote past. The court might have to go to extremes in order to mimic the powers appropriate to their supposed bloodline, or else go to similar extents to crush any hint of the truth.

E Court assassin cleaning up loose ends, Rival prying into a dangerous leak, Court member making a terrible bargain to blot out the stain

F Court member undeserving of the obloquy, Innocent threatened with disaster by the truth, Hunter seeking the entity they pacted with

C The "impurity" was once celebrated in the hidden past, It's an open secret but their rivals lack actionable proof, They're privately working to overthrow the rules that would call them impure

T Proof of their impurity, Device that gives them power they wouldn't normally have, Inheritance from their hidden ancestry

P Hidden site associated with their concealed blood, Proud monument to their social station, Secret graves of their real ancestors

Hopeless Rival

The court has a rival or enemy that bears a burning desire to destroy them. Unfortunately for them, they're wholly incapable of doing so. This fanatical desire may be born of past crimes, cheated opportunities, or an ancient feud. In their desperation to strike at their enemy, it's likely the rival will go to extreme and unwise lengths, perhaps making bargains they ought not to make.

E Oft-beaten rival of the court's ruler, Disgraced court member turned renegade, Spare heir with a grudge

F Sympathetic enemy of the court, Rival's associate trying to stop them from going too far, Inquisitor looking into nefarious dealings

C The rival's hate is very justifiable, The rival's engineering a clash with a greater power, The rival is being set up as a kamikaze attack by a manipulative third party

T Doomsday tool the rival means to use, Blackmail material on the court, Precious relic the rival paid dearly to acquire

P Site of the rival's past defeat, Location related to the hate, Structure built with the fruits of the court's past victory

Inadequate Tools

The court's authority and power have been sustained for a long time by a particular set of tools and tactics, such as violence, money, blackmail, legal rights, or perhaps by particular alliances with other powers. Recent events or clumsy missteps by the court have rendered these old tools no longer effective, but the leadership doesn't have any better idea than to use them again, but harder this time.

E Manipulator goading the ruler to excesses, Frustrated ruler with no new ideas, Court member scheming to restore their old power

F Anguished victim of their overreach, Court member trying to find new footing, Member fearful of the consequences of their frustration

C The tools are "working" but are building up a ruinous debt of resentment, Their efforts are only serving to strengthen their rivals, The tools are actually going to be completely successful if the ruler's scheme to push them to an extreme works

T Relic to empower their favorite tactic, Wealth needed to fuel their plans, Priceless implement necessary to effectively use their tactics

P Structure dedicated to their favorite methods, Site where the method went awry, Site of the method currently in use

Inept Ruler

The court's ruler is incompetent or debilitated, but there's no practical way to remove them from power. The alternative might be utterly unacceptable, or the ruler's bungling might be very much to the benefit of a powerful faction in the court. Rivals are doubtless making plans to take advantage of the situation, and internal factions may well be willing to take acceptable losses in order to profit by the chaos.

E Insane ruler, Sincere but utterly unsuitable leader, Sinister manipulator influencing the puppet ruler

F Competent but unsupported alternative ruler, Victim of the ruler's bungling, Faction leader being crushed by the ruler's ineptitude

C The ruler seems like an idiot but is actually trying to achieve a secret goal with their actions, Rival courts are vigorously backing the leader, The leader's deposition would result in a ruinous state of chaos for the court

T Token that would legitimize a change of rule, Object that would cure the ruler's incapacity, Wealth that was lost by the leader's bungling

P Damaged or decrepit structure owing to the ruler's neglect, Chaotic and confused court hall, Building erected as a folly by the ruler

Lost Purpose

The court's original formation revolved around a particular duty or role that has long since been forgotten. This may be a metaphorical forgetting, like a idealistic young businessman turning to cold-hearted avarice, or it may be a literal loss of some ancient charge or consecrated role. This forgetting may have left the court with ancestral obligations they no longer understand, or resources they no longer use in the intended way.

E Leader wholly absorbed in their own ambitions, Outsider made hostile by the court's failure to do their duty, Enemy who prospers by their forgetting

F Earnest historian who knows the truth, Last stubborn upholder of the role, Petitioner who needs them to do their old duty

C The purpose was a vile and terrible one, Their current prosperity depends on ignoring the purpose, The consequences of their forgetting are going to be dire

T Proof of their original purpose, Potent artifact meant to aid their role, Treasure once given to them in repayment for their work

P Forgotten chamber for the duty, Lost site of importance, Place damaged by the forgetting

Iron Law

There are troublesome or problematic laws to the court that its members simply cannot break. They may be enforced by magical curses, by an inborn predilection of the court's members, or by a tradition that would unite all rivals against the offender. These laws are likely preventing them from resolving a problem that is currently growing worse.

E Suicidally rigid ruler, Troublemaker who exploits the law, Traitor who is somehow immune to the law's force

F Innovator trying to work around the law or repeal it, Troubled defender of the law who sees the problem, Affiliate who can't be helped because of the law

C The law is there for a good reason and breaking it would be worse than the problem, The law can be changed if a certain great deed is done, The law's enforcer is corrupt or mutable in judgment

T Key object that gives the law its force, Token that allows the bearer to ignore or lift the law, Precious treasure that is unreachable as long as the law remains in force

P Chamber of judgment, Punishment place for offenders, Site of the growing problem

Magical Subversion

Some member of the court is under magical influence by another, be it an outside enemy or internal rival. It may be mind-bending sorcery, a persistent magical curse, or an arcane blessing that will last only so long as they cooperate. The culprit has some means of ensuring this subversion is not easily detected, either through occult arts or simply ensuring that others never get curious enough to look for such things.

E Harmless-seeming member who's a secret mage, Mercenary sorcerer hired by rivals, Court favorite who induces that affection with magic

F Suspicious local mage, Relative with suspicions but no proof, Victim of uncharacteristic behavior by the subverted member

C The subversion is part of a known and accepted enchantment on the target, They'll die or suffer horribly if the subversion is lifted, They're consciously cooperating with the subverter

T Charm to lift the curse or mindbending, Proof of magical interference, The artifact being used to subvert the target

P Out-of-place location to find the target, Site that's recently been changed to fit their new demands, Sinister lair where the enchantment was wrought

Ministerial Capture

The upper functionaries or senior household servants of the court have taken effective control of it. The members may be too distracted to realize what's been done, or the servants may have irresistible blackmail on them, or they may have the unjustified but complete trust of the proper leadership. These functionaries are using the court's resources to pursue their own aggrandizement and profit.

E Colorless senior bureaucrat, Scheming butler, Spymaster or intelligence chief turned kingmaker

F Minor court member who realizes the problem, Lesser functionary upset by the corruption, Proper leader made helpless by the situation

C The ministers think the proper leadership is incompetent, The ministers are really serving a rival, The leadership honestly prefers to leave everything to the ministers

T Documentation proving ministerial malfeasance, Malversated court resources, Blackmail evidence on the court leadership

P Abandoned official audience chamber, Private residence of the ministerial kingmaker, Clerkly offices bustling with petitioners

New Generation

The court's prior leadership was recently decimated by age, sickness, misadventure, or political executions, leaving many leadership posts in the hands of much younger, less experienced members. Few of them have a firm grasp on practicalities, and they're acting with a confidence and boldness that may not necessarily be justified by their actual skills.

E Reckless spare heir turned ruler, Upstart using a role purely for their personal advantage, Outside rival pouncing on their untested leadership

F Harried senior advisor who is ignored, Baffled new ruler who doesn't understand how it works, Idealistic new office-holder with big dreams

C The new generation is being held back by ossified existing members, They have magnificent plans that will fail spectacularly, They didn't want the jobs but were forced into them by circumstances

T Lost treasure or resources the old guard hid, Ceremonial regalia that imbues legitimacy, Secret plans or archives that the former ruler hid

P Newly-remodeled court residence, Audience hall adorned with freshly-changed arms, Ministerial office full of confused and harried clerks

New Opportunity

Some special new opportunity has been presented to the court, one that offers a great deal of personal wealth or glory. Only some of the court can take advantage of it, however, and it can be easily spoiled by dissent from within; they argue now over who is to be allowed to exploit the opportunity. New unexplored lands, royal monopoly patents, the hand of a very eligible spouse, or some other limited windfall awaits the winner.

E Bitter enemy who had the opportunity taken from them and given to the court, Jealous internal spoiler who plots to ruin it, Leader who greedily seeks to keep all of it to themselves

F Talented but ill-supported candidate, Outsider who wants the opportunity handled fairly, Disenfranchised true discoverer of the opportunity

C It's a trap and will ruin those who embrace it, The ease of any one spoiler ruining it has paralyzed deliberations, The opportunity has its own ideas about who should exploit it

T Key to unlocking the opportunity, Rich treasure safeguarded by the opportunity, Token that will allow the holder to exploit the opportunity

P Site where the new chance is brightest, Camp or building for preparations, Site of a failed effort

Outside Debts

The court owes something awful to a pitiless outside power, whether a rival court, an enemy of their homeland, a vile sorcerer, a merciless banker, or a grasping lord. The consequences of failing to repay the debt would be catastrophic, but the court can't afford to do so without some members of them being ruined by the price, whether in coin, criminal conviction, disgrace, or eternal damnation.

E Ruler who means to shift the debt to another, Savage enforcer of the debt, Culprit who brought the debt on them with their ambitions

F Innocent being forced to pay the price, Suspicious investigator looking into the debt, Past victim of the creditor's cruel ways

C Revealing the debt's existence would ruin the court, The creditor completely deserves to be paid, An old rival has bought the debt and now holds it

T Riches needed to pay off the debt, Proof that the contract was invalid, The document or token that is needed to enforce the debt

P Lair of the creditor, Court holding being sold or given away to help satisfy the debt, Great court ceremony made insultingly meager to save money

Overextended Grasp

The court has seized control of land, offices, noble roles, businesses, or some other valuable holding, but they do not hold it securely. Rival forces are pressing on them and they have exhausted their resources in simply gaining the prize, and have nothing left with which to keep it in the face of resistance. The rivals may simply be fighting to determine which of them is to overthrow the overextended court's grip.

E Foolishly ambitious ruler, Schemer who has profited by the reach even if it fails, Desperate leader who is abusing the prize to help keep it

F Former holder of the prize trying to regain it, Earnest new owner in far over their head, Loyal retainer struggling with insufficient resources

C The prize is a poisoned fruit that will destroy them if they don't let it go, They gambled on support that has been somehow delayed or denied, They mean to destroy the prize rather than lose it

T Riches meant for the owner of the prize, Device or document that will destroy the prize's value, Treasure the rivals mean to use to seize the prize

P Seat of the prize's authority, Court holding that's understaffed and under-resourced, Marginal prize holding that's already been lost

Poisonous Cliques

The court is riven by at least two viciously hostile cliques, both of which are determined to ruin or kill the other. Nonaligned members of the court are forced to submit to one or the other lest they be enemies to both and all normal business of the court is paralyzed by their incessant quarreling. This hostility may be open and overt, or it may be veiled behind venomous courtesies and cruelly heartless protocols.

E Outside rival who provoked the clique formation, Traitor seeking mutual destruction, Brutal clique leader who will do anything for victory

F Unaligned member trying to stay alive, Outside ally distressed by the infighting, Weak leader unable to rein in the hostilities

C One clique is sympathetic but just as determined to attain total victory as the other, The cliques are destroying the very prize they fight over, A secret internal faction waits to pick up the pieces

T Treasure the cliques are fighting over, Tool or artifact meant to break the stalemate, Documents showing a traitor within one clique's leadership

P Well-separated court residences for the cliques, Holding ruined by their infighting, Destroyed former residence of a loser of the fighting

Priestly Influence

The court's leadership is in the thrall of a particular religion or holy figure, and their wishes are given an undue weight. This influence may be a matter of perfectly sincere faith, or the religion might have some special grip on the court due to blackmail, services rendered, or special need. Such influence often brings the hostility of rival faiths until a more equitable arrangement is made.

E Rasputin-esque holy figure, Zealously pious ruler, Spider-minded court chaplain with strings on everyone

F Court member who favors a different god, Cast-off former house priest, Client abandoned so that resources could go to the faith

C The faith is giving major help to the court, The sect the court follows is considered heretical by the main faith, The faith's opponents in the court are being backed by a hostile outside group

T Sacred relic of the faith, Costly tithe sum to be offered to the faith, Symbol of authority over the court's religious practice

P Grand newly-built chapel, Abandoned chapel of a former faith, Ritual site for a new ceremony

Proxy Speaker

The court's leader communicates only through a particular proxy, be it a chief minister, spouse, heir, concubine, confessor, or other figure of importance. The leader may be too sick or enfeebled to lead or the proxy may have systematically cut all their other lines of control. The other members of the court may vie for influence over the proxy, perhaps while ignoring their ostensible real ruler.

E Grasping favorite odalisque, Impatient heir-proxy, Scheming regent-minister

F Worried child of the leader, Cast-off former advisor, Persecuted enemy of the proxy

C The proxy is actually the cause of the leader's incapacitation, The proxy is a much better leader than the real one, The proxy is really working for a rival or enemy power

T Cure for the leader's incapacitation, Proof of the proxy's unsuitability, Wealth subverted by the proxy

P Abandoned throne room, Sick chamber of incapacitated leader, Proxy's office teeming with petitioners

Rampant Corruption

The court is so corrupt that it's crippling its ability to function. Even the most mundane exercises of authority require that the right people be bribed or induced, and its members have little or no interest in the overall good of the group. The leadership is hanging together only because the court is profitable and they will defend it only insofar as it remains so.

E Hopelessly venal ruler, Greedy kingmaker behind the scenes, Colorless head bureaucrat with sticky palms

F Member with an earnest loyalty to principle, Court member cast out for not playing along, Victim of some bribed crime the court committed

C The court's members actually desperately need the money, All the graft is going to only a few strong hands, Their enemies have multiple traitors on their payrolls

T Great hoard of extracted pelf, Inescapable proof of a leader's wrongdoing, Misdirected bribe payment

P Grimy back room where deals are made, Court salon made a market for favors, Court structure clearly starved of its supposed funds

Recent Brutality

Violence is an unfortunate commonplace in many courts, but something happened here recently that was beyond all usual bounds of polite assassination or genteel political execution. Some vast massacre of a whole family line, a berserk slaughter of an unlucky gathering, a humiliating and unthinkable execution of some grandee, or some other dramatic brutality has put everyone on edge and made many start thinking of some previously unthinkable courses of action.

E Ruler with out-of-control bloodthirst, Spree-killing spymaster, Brutal court member with no one daring to check them

F Heir to a recent victim, Helpless enforcer of the usual norms, Survivor of a recent massacre

C The victims arguably deserved it, The source of the violence is being secretly controlled by a member, Everyone else is about to embrace the new norms of violence if it's not punished soon

T Device used to enable the killing, Treasure left behind by one of the slain, List of who is to die next

P Haunted site of the killing, Secret memorial to the slain, Unbearably tense court ceremony

Regency Council

A council of powerful regents runs the court due to the youth, incapacity, or sickness of the legitimate ruler. Some of these regents may actually have the ruler's interests in mind, but others are exploiting the court's resources for their own benefit, taking it as no more than their just due for their services. Some may be making a point of ensuring that the regency is a permanent state of affairs.

E Abusive prime minister, Selfish parent- or relative-regent, Self-absorbed great noble guardian

F Loyal servant of the true ruler, Well-meaning member of the council, Deposed former regent who was too loyal

C The regents are keeping a totally disastrous ruler from taking power, The strength of the regents is direly needed right now, One or more regents is in a rival power's pay

T Proof of the council's treachery, Remedy for the ruler's incapacitation, Resources necessary to make a loyalist strong enough to take control

P Council chamber crowded with servants, Private villa for secret dealings, Ceremonial throne room where the ruler is ignored

Restive Lessers

The court's servants and lesser officials are angry with the leadership. Old privileges may have been revoked, traditional rights and fees may have been curtailed, or particular sacrifices or dire perils may have been demanded of them. The court is confident that their lessers can do nothing but obey, but the minions are very close to a dramatic response.

E Ruler who cares nothing for their displeasure, Arrogant chief minister, Outside rival backing disunity in the court

F Aggrieved lesser official, Worried grandee who sees trouble coming, Client who needs the court's unimpaired assistance

C Traditional but corrupt perquisites were reformed and the minions were deprived of them, A much loved official or leader was killed or deposed, Other courts' minions are getting perks or benefits that this court can't afford to give

T Subverted wealth traditionally due to the minions, Document proving old rights, Treasure taken from a leader of the minions

P Quietly furious servant's quarters, Ominously deserted hall, Far-too-crowded plaza where the minions gather

Rival Dreams

The court has big dreams; unfortunately, they're contradictory. Two or more major factions each have a grand plan for the court's future success, but these plans are incompatible, and the factions are struggling to determine which of them the court will follow. The leader is either incapable of breaking the deadlock or else they support one of the plans but lack sufficient allies to impose it on the unbelievers.

E Charismatic but wildly impractical dreamer-lord, Selfish purveyor of a plan that will chiefly aid them, Stubborn ruler who will brook no compromise with their dream

F Genius with poor social skills, Inheritor of a familial dream, Would-be peacemaker between the factions

C Both dreams are likely to damage the court, They agree on the goal but have contradictory ways of getting there, The dreams are irrelevant and only an excuse to eliminate a rival faction

T Vital resources to achieve a plan, Critical device needed for a plan, Proof that a plan is hopeless

P Salon or base where a faction schemes, Field where a partially-complete plan is being furthered, Half-completed monument to glory

Rival Power

The official hierarchy of the court is being challenged by a second power source within the organization, one strong enough to stymie its official lord. This may be a faction formed by a powerful lord, a charismatic religious faction, an intrusive consul of a superior power, or an impatient heir with too many friends. Neither power source can act freely while the other exists, but destroying the rival may bring down the court in the process.

E Unofficial pretender to the rulership, Secretive kingmaker, Incompetent leader with strong help

F Court member trying to make peace, Victim of the rival factions' infighting, Disillusioned former backer of a faction

C The rival power has a very good but also very self-interested reason to seek control, The rival power has all the most competent people, The legitimate lord will bring down the court with him if he's overthrown

T Tokens of legitimate authority, Blackmail sufficient to ruin a faction, Resources suborned by a faction

P Unofficial throne room of the rival faction, Court offices split into different groups, Unnaturally well-fortified country estate of a faction

Ruling Regalia

The court's rulership rests on one or more ancient, powerful relics. Quite aside from any practical use they may have, they symbolize the leader's right of rule, and any loss of them will throw the court into chaos. It's not unknown for the court's leadership to be suddenly changed when a new rival manages to seize them, whether by guile or brute force.

E Master thief in the employ of a rival, Strong-arm court member plotting their chance, Outside figure who just wants the relics' power

F Traditional guardian of the relics, Ruler too weak to reliably safeguard them, Would-be thief trying to get them from an unworthy ruler

C The relics were lost some time ago and are currently forgeries, The power of the relics is objectively necessary for the ruler to function, A bearer will die if the relics are removed for too long

T Device that will destroy or nullify a relic, Perfect forgery of a relic, Another relic perfectly identical in all ways

P Tightly-guarded repository for the relics, Ceremonial procession showing the relics, Court structure or edifice powered by the relics

Runaway Rule

Out of overwork, sloth, or carelessness, the court has devolved much of its authority on some subsidiary group or power, leaving it to do the dirty work of a critical function. That group has seized control of that authority, however, and now bids fair to claim leadership of the court itself using its newfound leverage.

E Ambitious leader of the lesser group, Indolent and careless ruler, Greedy minister profiting by the devolution

F Client suffering due to the subsidiary's actions, Minister robbed of effective power by the group, People being oppressed by the group's excesses

C The group has considerable outside backing, The group really is doing something critical to the court's function, The court is now actually incapable of handling the group's duties

T Wealth obtained by the group's actions, Treasure given to the group originally to induce them, Powerful relic obtained by the group as a tool

P Structure dedicated to the group's devolved duty, Country estate of the group's leader, Abandoned structure of the court that once handled it

Shining Successor

The impending heir to the court is a remarkable figure, gifted with tremendous aptitudes or personal capability. Everyone is convinced they will lead the court to new heights of glory, though existing powers may prefer that glory be postponed indefinitely rather than give up their current posts.

E Bitter mother of a rival heir, Ruler who refuses to admit their capability, Vengeful former heir who was put aside

F Worried mentor of the successor, Ruler who fears for their successor's safety, Loyal minion of the successor

C The successor is a genius but has truly horrible traits as well, The successor is being backed by a rival who thinks to use them, The successor's talents are vast but are precisely the wrong skills for the situation they will face

T Regalia due to the rightful heir, A marvelous work produced by the successor, Proof that the successor has no legitimate claim on rulership

P Salon where the successor shines brilliantly, Site of a grand triumph by the successor, Throne room where the successor gets more attention than the ruler

Splendid Seat

This court operates from a seat of power far beyond the splendor of their peers. It may be some ancient Working full of magical powers and benefits, or an ancestral fortress famed in song and legend, or a complex built around some source of precious material or extracted good. Much of the authority of the court might derive from their control of this seat.

E Ruler who is relying too heavily on the seat's benefits, Saboteur seeking to destroy the seat, Hostile entity bound or associated to the seat

F Caretaker of the seat's benefits, Court member fascinated with the seat's history and nature, Servant of a line with ancestral ties to the place

C The seat exacts a cost from those who dwell there, The seat's real power is misunderstood by all save the ruler's inner circle, The seat is somehow a prison as well as a throne

T Key to unlocking the seat's secret powers, Precious relic of a former age, Wealth obtained through the seat's qualities

P Strange chamber of some long-lost purpose, Hidden room deep within the structure, Grand and magnificent structure embodying the site

Sublime Skill

The court is tremendously good at a particular role or function that their society finds important. Magnificent soldiers, legendary artists, famed diplomats, pious official-priests, or some other quality of note defines them. This skill may be the product of a venerable tradition of instruction, however harsh it may be, or it could be the result of a magical bloodline or inhuman admixture.

E Ruler who takes the trait much too far in a bad direction, Renegade who uses the skill against the court, Outside power trying to manipulate the skill for their own benefits

F Unworldly but extremely talented court member, Outsider curious about the nature of the skill, Friendly rival seeking to test their skill

C The skill comes at some compensating cost, The court is fairly useless for anything but that skill, The court is abusing its skill for its own benefit

T Relic or item that can confer the skill, Wealth obtained through the skill's exercise, Magnificent trophy of some prior legendary feat of skill

P Monument to prior exercise of the skill, Training hall where the skill is honed, Memorial hall full of tokens of past glory

Sudden Strength

A grand stroke of luck, a brilliant plan, or a feat of sublime diplomacy have resulted in a great influx of wealth, influence, or support from outside the court. The group now has access to a newfound strength that may be fleeting, and not all members may have equal access to the benefits. The existing structure of authority is unlikely to be well-equipped to exert this new influence in delicate or well-considered ways.

E Power-drunk ruler pushing things to excess, Desperate rival trying to sabotage the court before it's too late, Outside patron using this new strength as a lever to control the court

F Official struggling to cope with the new situation, Old court friend now seeking help, Victim of a poorly-considered exercise of the strength

C The new strength is causing damage each time it's deployed, Their backers are just letting the court overextend itself before pulling the aid, The court's agents are taking personal advantage

T Money obtained by the good fortune, Potent relic that's part of the new strength, Secret evidence of the real purpose of the help being given

P Crushed rival's estate, Gaudily-upgraded court holding, Confused site of sudden activity

Threatened Violence

The shadow of impending death hangs over the court. The ruler may be ordering capricious executions, assassins may be active, a particularly bloody custom may be in full effect, or the court's superiors may be hunting for traitors. The court members are on edge and willing to do desperate things in order to avoid death or direct the killing toward their enemies.

E Paranoid ruler seeing knives in every shadow, Master assassin with a grudge, Renegade who's returned to take vengeance

F Survivor of a murdered member, Worried bodyguard looking for help, Frightened member convinced they're next

C The violence is being blamed on the wrong source, People are using the killings to settle private scores, The victims were all part of a secret scheme

T Poison suitable for eliminating anyone, List of those next to die, Document with information that will stop the killings

P Gory scene of death, Unbearably tense court function, Trial full of panicked participants

Waning Wealth

The court is heading towards poverty, and its members know it. The source of their wealth is under attack, either by a rival, a greedy superior, an outside enemy, or sheer misfortune. If things continue as they are the court will be unable to maintain its place, and its members are contemplating desperate measures to shore up existing holdings or acquire new ones.

E Ruler who's making unreasonable demands for member sacrifices, Sinister creditor who demands repayment, Monstrous foe who's ruining their holdings

F Harried chancellor looking for money, Client left destitute by lack of support, Former manager of a now-ruined holding

C They're cutting secret deals with enemies of their land, Unpopular members are being beggared to support the others, Their clients are being squeezed dry just to keep the court solvent

T Long-lost treasure the court is hunting, Deed to some profitable holding, Device that will revitalize or repair a ruined property

P Threadbare throne room, Meager noble dining hall, Abandoned once-profitable holding

Ruins

There's hardly an adventurer alive who doesn't like to explore an ancient ruin, so it's inevitable that you're going to be producing your fair share of crumbled keeps, stygian tunnels, and sinister lost cities. The adventure creation tables that start on page 234 can help you flesh out the details of these adventure sites, but you need to have a general framework in place before you can use them effectively.

The Ruin tags in this section are useful in situating the ruin within the context of your own campaign world. Every tumbled-down heap of stones came from somewhere, and it originally served a purpose more exalted than being looted by lawless sellswords.

The one-roll table opposite allows you to create this context for an average fantasy-world ruin. The results are generally applicable to most settings and can be flavored or tweaked to suit your own campaign's particulars.

The following pages include specific tables for six major prior periods of history in the Gyre, whether local kingdoms like the Rule of Shun or region-spanning hegemons like the Vothite Empire. While the details provided in these tables are specific to the Gyre campaign setting, you can just as easily loot their themes for your own world and use them as the models for ancient civilizations in your own setting.

The key to building interesting ruins is *context*. A random magic hole in the ground with assorted monstrous creatures in it is difficult to justify in most campaign worlds. Even if there is some conceit that makes it a normal sort of event, the sheer untethered randomness of it makes it very difficult for a GM to flesh it out in an interesting, engaging fashion. Of course, very few GMs have the time or energy to brew up a half-dozen ancient civilizations that are relevant to their current campaign only in their architectural leavings.

Fortunately, you don't have to. All you need to establish is what the structure was originally meant for, how it ended up ruined, and who if anyone is using it now. The name and particulars of the original creators don't need to be established if it's not convenient; just knowing that it was a border garrison is enough to tell you how you should design its architecture. Knowing that it was overrun by barbarians tells you what kind of damage it should have suffered and what sort of detritus and leavings might be left from that age. Knowing that it's currently a shrine to an obscene faith tells you what kind of inhabitants the PCs are going to meet if they go there and what more modern decorations might exist. Any further details can be conjured as necessary. All you really need is a basic, functional context.

One-Roll Ruin Generation

These tables can be used for general fantasy settings, as they include nothing specific to the Latter Earth. If you need a ruin and aren't entirely sure how to characterize it, a single throw of six dice will give you a basic outline to develop.

To this basic framework you can add a pair of Ruin tags and tweak the rolls to mesh accordingly. Some results might not make sense for your intended use for the ruin. You could pick different options in that case, or spend a little time thinking about how the roll might be the actual truth and thus conjure up a suitable explanation.

Fully detailing the interior of the ruin and the kind of combat or exploratory challenges that could be found within involves the tools starting on page 234.

d6	What Do The Locals Think Of It?
1	It's traditionally taboo ground to them
2	It plays a role in some important ritual
3	It and its perils are hated and feared
4	It's considered someone's private property
5	It's a lure to the greedy and reckless
6	They totally misunderstand what it really is

d8	How Did It Become Ruined?
1	It was invaded and destroyed by its enemies
2	Strife from within tore it apart
3	Some natural calamity despoiled it
4	A Working's failure or magical disaster struck
5	It was abandoned when it became useless
6	A plague or curse made it uninhabitable
7	Some dire monster or great foe smashed it
8	Its inhabitants died out or simply left it

d10	Why Hasn't It Been Plundered Bare Yet?
1	The environment around it is very dangerous
2	It's cursed, plagued, or has some miasma
3	The locals kill or drive off looters
4	The true entrance to it is unknown
5	It's physically very difficult to access
6	It's believed inhabited by fearsome things
7	Everyone thinks it's already been looted
8	It's confused with a nearby site that is looted
9	It's claimed by a powerful local authority
10	The prizes it offers aren't conventional riches

d4	How Old is the Ruin?
1	Very fresh; ruined within living memory
2	Generations old at the least
3	Part of a known prior nation or polity
4	Belonging to the unfathomable past

d12	What Basic Kind of Ruin Is It?
1	A city or other major settlement
2	Temple, monastery, or pilgrimage site
3	A vast ancient civil infrastructure center
4	Artistic monument or aesthetic structure
5	Grand private residence or manor
6	Fortress or great stronghold
7	Mine or tunnel system
8	Wizard's tower or occult stronghold
9	Border outpost, watchtower, or garrison
10	Village or small rural community
11	Nonhuman settlement or edifice
12	Tomb, necropolis, ossuary, or graveyard

d20	Who's Used The Ruin Before?
1	Rebels against the local ruler
2	Bandits or other criminal outcasts
3	Fanatical religious zealots
4	A failed pretender to the local rulership
5	Refugees and survivors from a calamity
6	A wizard of dubious habits or goals
7	A black market trader to bandits or worse
8	Overly optimistic settlers trying to reclaim it
9	A hapless garrison of local troops
10	Monstrous entities lying in wait
11	Savage beasts of a dangerous kind
12	Adventurers trying to make it a base
13	Social outcasts looking for a haven
14	Demihumans trying to avoid human places
15	Smugglers seeking a good stash spot
16	Nominal owners trying to lay claim to it
17	Heirs or survivors of the original inhabitants
18	An invading warband based here for a while
19	Intelligent monsters suited to the environment
20	Restless undead and embittered shades

Ruins of Ancient Deeps

Deeps vary enormously in size, from the innumerable small refuges that once sheltered human escapees and isolated esoteric experiments to vast delvings that sheltered a million humans or more. Most are far smaller than that, however, either due to being built for smaller, temporary populations of laborers or slaves or because their greater portions have collapsed with age or been cut off by destruction or decay.

The sophistication of a Deep varied with its creators. Those cut out by renegade humans in need of a shelter from Outsider patrols tend to be primitive holes gouged into the earth, while Outsider-fashioned Deeps are of smoothly-worked stone, imperishable structural materials, and the occasional remnants of sophisticated arcane control devices. Even so, many have been considerably altered over the ages by newer tenants.

d6	Major Types of Deeps
1	A punishment Deep to torment its inmates with miserable conditions and terrifying foes
2	A false-world Deep meant to bubble its prisoners in a sealed custom world
3	A labor Deep to produce something precious to its Outsider masters
4	A war Deep to produce slave-soldiers and military creatures for Outsider conflicts
5	A rebel Deep, where the natives somehow broke loose of their Outsider masters
6	A ritual Deep, where human thralls were used for some eldritch alien end

Ruins of the Brass Hegemony

Hegemonic ruins favor square, powerful shapes and a heavy stone construction facilitated by the might of the Black Brass Legion and vast corvee labor drafts. Right angles and squared, even interior spaces are characteristic of their architecture.

Some Hegemonic ruins were abandoned long before the present troubles, being remnants of the centuries past when the Reaping King was still forcing his way south from the coast. These forsaken places were usually stripped of their initial furnishings, but the rebels, monsters, and criminals who've made homes in them since have often left their own belongings behind.

More recent Hegemonic ruins are usually the leavings of now-powerless Adunic nobles or Hegemonic clerks and support staff that have long since departed.

d6	Characteristic Ruins
1	Pre-Hegemony ruin of a site wiped out by the Reaping King's conquest
2	Pacification garrison once manned for the subdual of newly-conquered lands
3	Absentee Adunic lord's provincial palace for the administration of now-lost lands
4	Fortified court-stronghold where a viceroy once gave instructions to native rulers
5	Well-fortified residential area for Adunic clerks and minor functionaries
6	Prison where rebels and criminals were set to work for Hegemonic masters

Ruins of the Jikegida

Ancient Jikegida did most of their construction with powerful exoskeletons fashioned of suborned alien life. These construction shells enabled the building of vast hexagonal structures in which millions of Jikegida conducted their alien debates and infested their wretched prey with new spawn.

Jikegida rooms are preferentially hexagonal, with hexagonal corridors and faceted bubble-windows. Furnishings and implements are frail and light by human standards, reflecting the weaker limbs of the average Jikegida. The acrid stench of an active Jikegida site is tremendous due to their heavy reliance on chemical communication, and some ancient ruins have this reek embedded in the very stone.

d6	Characteristic Ruins
1	A small hatching-burrow for storing torpid hosts that haven't been taken to a larger hive
2	A great shattered mother-hive of hexagonal structures, destroyed by the sorcerer-kings
3	A looming observation outpost for monitoring humanity in ancient days
4	A debate-palace meant for vast gatherings to dispute some alien philosophical point
5	A sealed relaxation dome filled with the noxious life and air enjoyed by the Jikegida
6	Parasitism outpost, once attached to a human Deep to harvest suitable hosts

Ruins of the Rule of Shun

Shunnite ruins are heavily influenced by ancient Khalan architecture. Stepped stone construction and carvings of hideous suffering and monstrous beasts decorate most of the ruins, usually depicting the enemies of Shun or the "unworthy weak" suffering assorted gruesome ends at the hands of Shun's favored and their created beasts. Shun himself is depicted only as a featureless, stylized human form.

Shun's relatively brief rule was focused around his magically-augmented "favored", men and women made stronger, more intelligent, and more magically gifted than normal humans. Their temple-palaces served as loci of worship for their sorcerer-god, administrative centers of control, and processing points for the vast numbers of "unworthy" guilty of resisting Shun's grand plans, the latter ending up as further feedstock for his research.

d6	Characteristic Ruins
1	Healing shrine with numerous recovery cells and arcano-surgical theaters
2	Arena or hall of trials where those blessed by Shun competed to ascertain excellence
3	Prison pit where victims were "cultivated" in various ways to be better research stock
4	Semi-organic structure infested by the body-warping sorceries of Shun's followers
5	Residential palace full of the insane, trapped, immortal "favored" of Shun
6	Occult research center stocked with the monstrous detritus of Shun's research

Ruins of the Vothite Empire

The Vothite Empire was built around mental influence, with thought houses dedicated to particular principles waging memetic war on their rivals via sorcery and magically-charged symbolism. Losing rarely meant physical death, but instead an indoctrination into the winner's belief system. Nobles were most vulnerable to these mental influences, and so their residences were always carefully constructed to celebrate their own house's ideals.

The actual ruins tend to have a Classical flavor, with harmonious, symmetrical construction. The chief difference is in the decoration, with slogans, once-meaningful symbols, statuary of ideological significance, and artwork dedicated to the cause all heavily adorning the structures. They almost never have anything resembling conventional fortifications, as military force was literally unthinkable.

d6	Characteristic Ruins
1	Memetic monument to a particular aesthetic ideal or abstract political concept
2	A thought noble's palace, usually closely adjoined by the humble servant lodgings
3	Rectification center, where a thought house "educated" prisoners into joining their cause
4	Concept battlefield, a structure full of conflicting, magically-potent symbology
5	Rebel hideout, stocked with now-unstable concepts and tangible mental constructs
6	Detritus of a mind-bending Working, now broken but stained by shadows of the past

Ruins of the Vothite Republic

The Vothite Republic utterly rejected imperial principles, and large-scale monuments or symbolic structures are almost never found among their ruins; even statues and non-magical insignia of belief are uncommon. The Classical lines of imperial architecture give way to a looser, more locally-influenced construction. Often the only way to tell a ruin is Republican is due to the lack of any overt symbolic adornment.

The Republic continued to use certain massive imperial structures until infrastructure decay and civil strife made them unsustainable. Huge tenements that once housed hundreds of thought house thralls were repurposed for Republic citizens, while the family seats of thought houses were taken over by fabulously wealthy senators and fortified against the newer, less stable political conditions.

d6	Characteristic Ruins
1	Overgrown forum ringed with administrative buildings for a vanished community
2	Huge Republic tenement with a maze of businesses, offices, and homes within
3	Republic wayhouse along a vanished road, for travelers, military forces, and merchants
4	Stronghold for Republic troops meant to keep provincial fighting from breaking out
5	Late-era Republic village or town, heavily fortified to no avail against its pillagers
6	Senatorial manor once built in an opulent style by a plutocratically wealthy owner

Ruin Tags

Before a GM can use the tools on page 234 to start building the individual places, foes, and treasures within a Ruin, they need to have some idea of what that Ruin is like and the overall theme of its contents. A pair of Ruin Tags from the list below can serve as the start of the process; pick or roll two, mix them together, and use the results to inform your later development.

For most of the tags, the Enemies listed can serve as inspiration for major foes within the debris or overlords who've cowed the other inhabitants of the Ruin. The Friends are usually NPCs who would have a particular interest in the Ruin, or potentially friendly Ruin inhabitants who could act as guides, interpreters, or dungeon dragomans for the PCs. If the PCs need a hook to direct them to the Ruin or a friendly face within it to discourage them from immediate assumptions of universal bloodshed, a Friend can lead the way.

Ruins are generally defined by their loss of former utility. A ruined city is no longer inhabited, a ruined fortress is no longer a point of defense, and a ruined palace is no longer occupied by human royalty. Whatever the place was originally meant to be, it no longer serves that purpose. The Ruin Tags can help detail the earlier tables and add more specifics to its historical fall or slow, inexorable decay.

Just because the Ruin is no longer used as it once was, however, it doesn't mean that it has no use at all. The architectural castoffs of countless eons of humanity often find use as dwellings or strongholds for non-human creatures, or sanctuaries for bandits and outcasts from more peaceful surroundings. Ancient infrastructure or mouldering fortifications can find new life in the re-purposing that a band of Anak raiders or a sect of persecuted cultists can make of it.

Of course, the natural hazards of the environment often do away with such interlopers, creating the potential for multiple layers of past inhabitation and use. Ancient treasures might date from more than one era, and the plunder of a lost age's bandits might be mingled with the modern possessions of hapless now-dead refugees.

d100	Tag	d100	Tag
1–2	Ancient Archives	51–52	Invincible Delusion
3–4	Aspiring Conqueror	53–54	Lethal Treasure
5–6	Automaton Servants	55–56	Limited Access
7–8	Birthing Cyst	57–58	Lingering Curse
9–10	Bitter Remnants	59–60	Living Dungeon
11–12	Civil War	61–62	Lost Colony
13–14	Cyclical Doom	63–64	Magical Wonder
15–16	Decrepit Structure	65–66	Monster Forge
17–18	Desperate Hunger	67–68	Outsider Domain
19–20	Dire Tombs	69–70	Precious Resource
21–22	Distant Gate	71–72	Raider Lair
23–24	Dungeon Heart	73–74	Recruiting Drive
25–26	Experimental Lab	75–76	Religious Zealots
27–28	Failed Intrusion	77–78	Rigid Hierarchy
29–30	Fallen Sanctuary	79–80	Royal Refuge
31–32	False Front	81–82	Sacrificial Bargain
33–34	Feral Magic	83–84	Sealed Evil
35–36	Flooded Halls	85–86	Secret Alliance
37–38	Freshly Looted	87–88	Shifting Interior
39–40	Friendly Foes	89–90	Spatial Flux
41–42	Hidden Within	91–92	Surfacer Hideout
43–44	Hiveminded Natives	93–94	Taboo Place
45–46	Hospitable Natives	95–96	Things Below
47–48	Hostile Environment	97–98	Useless Treasure
49–50	Infectious Miasma	99–00	Wizard's Lair

Ancient Archives

The site once housed archives or information that would be very interesting to certain modern powers. The utility or value of this information should be obvious to the players, even if they're initially unaware of its existence. Known archival sites might have sealed their lore behind some fearsome guardian or a "puzzle" consisting of access procedures that were self-evident in the age it was constructed in.

E Maddened archive keeper, Powerful figure who wants the information kept hidden, Secret-seeker who brooks no rivals

F Helpful ancient archive attendant, Hired investigator, Seeker of some related lore

C The information is conveyed in idioms or forms that are no longer clear, The information is very dangerous to know, The information is buried in seas of irrelevant data that need navigating

T Index to the desired information, Key to decoding the data, Cultural work that elucidates the idioms or medium being used

P Library full of not-book data storage items, Scriptorium or other scribal zone, Chamber related to the topic or field of the data involved

Aspiring Conqueror

Some power within the ruin has ambitions of conquest, and plans to use the site as a base for dominating the surrounding lands. Such a warlord might be wholly reliant on the ruin's denizens, or they could be recruiting minions from outcasts or renegades and so be willing to parley with adventurers. Not all the lieutenants of such leaders are always supportive of the plan.

E Inhuman warlord, Fanatical cult leader, Embittered outlaw-noble

F Hapless local village headman, Minion who reconsidered their allegiance, Former leader who was pushed aside by the new one

C Some of the locals honestly think the conqueror would be a better ruler, The conqueror actually has a legitimate claim on the land, The conqueror is being backed by enemies of the local ruler

T Cache of military supplies, Plunder taken from their first victims, Important hostage in their keeping

P Ruin barracks whipped into order, Training field in use, Nearby village they've crushed

Automaton Servants

The ruin is still staffed by automaton servants or other immortal minions. Aside from obviously robotic servitors, magical golems, bound spirits, undead thralls, uplifted beasts, or other subject species might be found here. Such minions are usually magically bound to their roles, which may be causing them significant problems if their roles can no longer be carried out. It's possible that some of them have re-interpreted their roles into something they can do, whether or not it's something they should do.

E Cruel immortal artificer, Automaton leader gone mad, Outsider seeking to suborn them to their sinister service

F Helpful automaton minion, Fascinated outside investigator, Local native who fears the minions

C Scrapped automatons are worth a great deal, The automatons are needed to maintain the ruin's basic physical stability, The automatons have merged with or been altered by some outside power

T Command key for the automatons, Cache of valuable spare parts, Item they desperately need in order to fulfill their function

P Automaton maintenance area, Bank of unmoving figures, Place of endless automaton toil

Birthing Cyst

A horrible thing is growing in the ruin and will eventually erupt into some catastrophic peril or awful creature. The ruin may have been originally designed to facilitate this thing's creation, or it could have been infested or perverted by some outside power. Outsiders may not realize the nature of the peril, or even mistake its growth for some positive process. The growth could be the product of ancient science, a magical ritual, or a conflux of geomantic forces.

E God-beast to be born for a long-dead faith, Obsessed ancient keeper, Outsider determined to provoke the catastrophe for their own ends

F Worried local observer, Last surviving keeper of the ruin, Survivor of an early eruption of it

C The thing's growth provides some profitable byproduct, People are completely mistaken about what's growing down there, People think it's already hatched and was dispatched

T Item needed to harm or kill the thing, Key to halt or abort the process, Precious offerings made to the unborn disaster by fearful observers

P Arcane lab where it's growing, Fortified chambers to guard it, Shrine depicting its eventual glory

Bitter Remnants

The ruin is not entirely abandoned, as a remnant of its former creators still occupies the place. These survivors are almost certainly hostile toward the outside world and the intruders who have sought to take the place or loot it for uncounted ages. They may or may not have a full understanding of their ancestors' purpose in the ruin, but they likely use any secrets they do know to best effect against invaders.

E Xenophobic remnant chief, Outside ruler determined to exterminate them, Powerful ruin rival that seeks their destruction

F Open-minded remnant member, Eager scholar seeking their secrets, Escapee from the terrible cruelties of the remnants

C The remnant society is genuinely and completely horrible, The remnants no longer or never did think like humans do, Certain outcasts have trade ties with the remnants

T Precious ancient relic they preserved, Loot taken from dead invaders, Secret history of the ruin full of useful information

P Ancient but meticulously-kept chamber, Ancestral place of rites unique to them, Maintained monument to past glory

Civil War

There are at least two organized factions within the ruin that are at war with each other. They all have motives that make simply leaving the place an unappealing prospect, and some of them might be eager to enlist outside help in ousting their rivals. Given the low population of most ruins, the war is likely a restricted one of raids, ambushes, and murders of convenience, and the traps and snares they set might catch more than their foes.

E Faction leader with dreams of conquest, Crazed warlord, Treacherous plotter who betrays their hired help

F Faction leader with benevolent aims, Innocent local caught in the crossfire, Would-be peacemaker

C They both want the same thing but in different ways, Both sides will unite swiftly against invaders, Neither side wants anything that outsiders are going to like much

T The macguffin they're fighting over, Weapon to destroy their rivals, Wealth to bribe other helpers

P Site of a vicious ambush, Defaced monument or symbol of a rival faction, Dangerous no-man's land zone within the ruin

Cyclical Doom

There's a phenomenon to the ruin that makes it tremendously dangerous at certain intervals. Fluxes of ancient radiation, swarms of quick-breeding dangerous vermin, withering geomantic conjunctions, or cyclically-awakened preserved inhabitants might make the place exceedingly deadly for intruders there at that time. The natives may or may not know about the cycle, and if it's a very long one, they might not have been around to see it happen.

E Outsider determined to trigger the cycle, Native leader who wants to weaponize it, Outside researcher with no care for the consequences

F Native aware of the impending disaster, Researcher trying to stop the cycle, Survivor of the last cycle

C The cycle leaves behind a valuable byproduct, The cycle only threatens certain occupants, Outsiders have totally misinterpreted the cycle's meaning or events

T Key to trigger or halt the cycle, Device to protect users from the cycle, Object for controlling and directing the cycle

P Place scarred by a past cycle's effects, Control or observation center, Monument obscurely referencing the cycle

Decrepit Structure

The ruin is falling apart, and is actively dangerous to its inhabitants. Navigating between areas may require careful progress, extensive rope and piton work, or avoidance of certain obvious-but-hazardous routes. Native inhabitants may have adapted to the hazards or they might be newcomers who are learning the hard way. Some areas in the ruin might provoke a general collapse if they are significantly damaged.

E Outside plunderer with no care for the consequences, Outsider actively trying to destroy the place, Berserk native trying to repair things

F Refugee forced to live there, Native dweller seeking help to fix things, Architectural researcher

C Valuable materials can be looted by those indifferent to the increasing instability, The collapse would reveal or unleash a terrible thing, Many places in it can only be visited once

T Resources that can repair the damage, Precious loot that will destabilize the place if taken, Treasure revealed by a structural collapse

P Creaking bridge or gantry, Room with numerous holes in the floor, Tower leaning at a drunken angle

Desperate Hunger

Natives of the ruin just can't get enough to eat, and their situation or the surrounding area makes it impractical to move somewhere else. Beasts may be extremely aggressive due to hunger, and intelligent natives might fight more for food than gold or glory. Many of the more savage types may have fallen back on cannibalism or hunting other sapients for food.

E Obese cannibal chieftain, Native leader who'll do anything to feed their people, Sorcerer who gives dark nourishment to their servitors

F Starved urchin-native, Anxious group leader wanting to cut a deal, Innovator trying to open up a new food source

C The overpopulation is being resolved by murder, The food-gathering areas were recently blocked off by something, Foodstuffs become toxic or inedible rapidly in the ruin

T Cache of preserved food, Key to open new hunting areas, Great treasure that's viewed as trifling compared to the worth of food

P Pit of cracked and gnawed bones, Cages of meals-to-be, Viciously desperate feeding area for a group

Distant Gate

The ruin is connected to some interesting distant location, either through a magical gate, a portal of ancient technology, forgotten tube-cars in underground tunnels, or a more mundane hidden passage into an otherwise inaccessible place. The natives may know about and exploit this quality, or the gate may be sealed until some particular procedure or object is used to activate it.

E Guardian of the gate, Hostile entity from the other side, Intruder determined to unlock the gate

F Hapless intruder from the other side, Native gate-guide, Explorer seeking a route to the gate's destination

C The gate was sealed for a very good reason, The gate is one-way, Activating the gate risks destroying the ruin

T Key to activate the gate, Codes to control its destination, Treasure from the far side of it

P Mysterious transit-chamber with symbolism related to the destination, Room with objects or remains related to the destination, Dangerously energetic gate room

Dire Tombs

The ruin is characterized by a great many tombs or burial sites and a matching profusion of undead. The revenants may be mindless husks animated by dark magic or ambient power, or they could be intentionally created to act as guards or to continue "living" according to some long-lost death-god's teachings.

E Undead lord jealous of their solitude, Ravening undead hulk-thing, Necromancer eager for the raw materials

F Descendant of the dead trying to keep them safe, Fascinated historical researcher, Undead-hunter trying to contain them

C The undead are not all of the same motives, The locals revere and venerate them as ancestors, The undead are just symptoms of something worse entombed there

T Burial goods left behind, Plunder taken from unfortunate adventurers, Once-commonplace good that's now extremely valuable

P Halls of silent coffin-niches or urns, Chapel to a god related to the burial process, Splendid tomb to a dead hero or ruler

Dungeon Heart

The ruin's physical integrity is bound with a particular creature or object within the site, and if it is destroyed or removed the place will collapse. If the destruction is immediate, this danger should be clearly conveyed to the players unless the GM wants to risk a rapid campaign end. This relationship may be derived from an ancient magical curse, a sympathetic unity of magical power, or ancient self-destruct security mechanisms.

E Outsider determined to kill or steal the heart, A heart-creature that would be very convenient or satisfying to kill, Native holding the heart hostage to force obedience

F Guardian of the heart, Native eager to warn outsiders of the truth, Explorer with dire suspicions

C The "destruction" is metaphorical or societal in nature, Only a specific part of the ruin will be destroyed, No one involved realizes that it will cause a somewhat slow-motion destruction

T Device that will undo the link, The precious object that is the heart, Relic to control the linked things

P Chamber where the heart's connection is visible, Place that shifts in sympathy to the heart, Damaged room reflecting damage to the heart

Experimental Lab

A sorcerer or ancient artificer once used this place for their experiments, most of which were the sort that would never be tolerated in civilization. They may have been sponsored by some amoral power, or been independent theurges seeking the special resources, environment, or natives of this place to assist in their studies.

E Still-surviving researcher, Hideous creation of the arcanist, Outsider bent on seizing all its dark lore

F Sympathetic creation of the sorcerer, Witch-hunter bent on destroying the secrets, Local plagued by the lab's emanations or castoffs

C The lab is still in use, The lab's patrons don't realize what's really going on there, The lab's creations have gone out of control

T Valuable research byproduct, Treasure once owned by a research victim, Potent magical lore related to the lab's focus

P Testing chamber for the lab's research, Occult and sinister laboratory, Pens for holding research stock

Failed Intrusion

The ruin recently experienced a serious incursion of outsiders, whether adventurers, bandits, government forces, angry villagers, or other hostiles. These intruders were repulsed, perhaps with significant loss of native life, and the ruin was considerably disrupted by the fighting. Important native leaders might have been killed or wounded, treasures might have been looted, or slaves and hostages might've been taken.

E Desperate intruder leader still in the ruin, Bloodthirsty native leader craving vengeance, Dead leader's heir full of terrible ideas

F Sympathetic intruder or native survivor, Escaped slave, Vengeful relative of the dead

C The intruders are too desperate to have entirely given up, The two sides basically ruined each other, Outsiders have entered to take advantage of the chaos

T Useful relic lost by the intruding forces, Stolen treasure of the natives, Tribal treasure now inaccessible due to the chief's death

P Site of a hideous battle, Larder where the dead intruders are being kept, Local beast lair full of dragged corpses

Fallen Sanctuary

The ruin was a place of security within recent memory, until some event or invasion turned it into its present state. Some of the surrounding locals might have been associated with the site during its heyday and remember interesting facts about it. Others may still nurse dreams of returning it to its former glory once its current inhabitants are slain or driven away.

E Dark warlord who overthrew the place, Traitor who arranged its downfall, Terrible creature unleashed in the site's dying throes

F Idealistic would-be reconstructor, Native trying to make peace with the locals, Aged keeper of the site's old secrets

C The site is fallen to the locals but a sanctuary now to a completely different group, The site is still dangerous and hostile to the interlopers, The locals desperately need to retake the site soon for some pressing reason

T Treasures hidden by the former owners, The dark tool used to cast the site down, Token of rightful rule seized by the invaders

P Hidden chamber unknown to invaders, Defaced and ruined room dedicated to the site's original role, Chamber re-purposed for the invaders

False Front

The site actually seems to be a completely different type of place than it really is. You might generate a second basic function for the site and bill it as its true purpose, or conceal it as a currently-functioning structure of some kind. Either it was built this way originally or more recent owners have concealed the truth about it for their own benefit. Others may not realize that the ruin they think they know is just a facade over something deeper.

E Secret master of the hidden ruin, Cruel schemer who established the false front, Monstrous foe still buried below the facade

F Clueless entrepreneur who means to exploit the false site, Explorer with curious references to the truth, Victim of something from the truth below

C The false front is a lure to bait prey, The false front is to deflect interest, The false front is meant to be useful or profitable to the true lord of the place

T Key to reveal the entrance to the real site, Incongruous treasure from below, Valuable goods used to maintain the facade

P Chamber that doesn't fit with the false front, Secret passage to the depths, Place full of costumes and props

Feral Magic

Some potent Working or other ancient magic has gone berserk or rotten in the ruin, tainting the occupants and making the place dangerous to inhabitants. Whatever the magic once did, it now does it too much, or in the wrong way, or at a grim cost to those within. The natives either cannot escape, or have no place better to go, or are somehow dependent on the twisted magic.

E Magically mutated abomination, Native chieftain full of tainted power, Outside sorcerer making reckless use of the magic

F Researcher trying to understand or fix things, Sympathetic magic-plagued native, Outside victim of the site's magic

C Valuable loot awaits those willing to break the magic further, The magic can be fixed if something dangerous is done, The decay is spreading outside the ruin

T Item to ward off the magic, Valuable sorcerous byproduct, Ancient instructions on how to fix things

P Thrumming power center of the magic, Lair of magic-twisted beasts, Native shrine to the power

Flooded Halls

The ruin is largely flooded, perhaps with water and perhaps with some worse substance. Exploring it is difficult, and the heroes constantly risk being trapped by rising waters or flow-shifted obstacles. The natives are either creatures adapted to water or desperate enough to live where few others can pursue them.

E Fish-thing with dark hungers, Cult priest of a watery evil, Chief of a piscid humanoid species

F Luckless local boater, Hermit who's tried to live there, Courageous treasure-diver

C The flooding is cyclical, Water flow can be controlled somehow inside the site, The water is fetid with disease

T Pearls or other water-fashioned valuables, Extremely precious relic that would be ruined by being soaked, Device to grant water-breathing

P Splendid chamber now crusted by slime or coral, Half-filled room with an air bubble, Space full of totally opaque silty water

Freshly Looted

The site has been recently plundered, either by adventurers, organized invaders, or a specific faction within the site itself. Many creatures are either dead or driven off, and the rewards for exploration are limited. But as the site is newly-emptied, numerous outside groups or warbands are likely in the process of moving in, cleaning out the remnants of surviving inhabitants and setting up their own bases there.

E Conquering Blighted warchief, Ruthless bandit-adventurer who likes the place, Vengeance-mad chief of a rabble of survivors

F Sympathetic native driven out of the site, Frustrated adventurer denied a chance to loot, Local official charged with investigating the place

C The looters missed the most important treasure, A native faction was working with the looters, A group of natives successfully hid from the looters

T Treasure hidden by dead natives, Relic lost by a slain looter, Valuable thing too big and heavy to carry out readily

P Empty treasure vault, Ruler's lair plundered and defaced, Hall choked with the recent dead

Friendly Foes

A group dwells here that would normally be very hostile to humans or outsiders, yet is perfectly willing to deal with adventurers. They may be an anomalous group of their kind, or have desperate need for outside help, or have religious reasons to be cooperative. Few outsiders are likely to take their friendliness at face value, but they should be given the chance to be visibly friendly by the GM so as to clue the players in to the likelihood of peaceful dealings.

E Bloodthirsty adventurer who doesn't believe them, Group leader with treacherous plans, Monstrous foe that threatens the group and outsiders both

F Friendly being from the group, Local human with secret ties to them, Earnest outside missionary

C They're friendly because of a very large misunderstanding they have, They really are totally sincere in their good intent, They've got a problem that only long-term allies can solve

T Group-made product normally never available to humans, Treasure they gathered from foes, Relic they're using as a bargaining tool

P Meeting space also furnished for humans, Separate dwelling area for outsiders, Chamber for obscure group rituals or worship

Hidden Within

The ruin is actually underneath a seemingly-ordinary structure or inhabited human settlement. Secret passages or long-forgotten portals lead down into it, and only a short space away from ordinary human life a ruin can seethe with sinister secrets. The ruin may have been built over accidentally, intentionally buried, or perhaps excavated by the current structure's original builders.

E Thing that creeps up from below at night, Long-buried evil, Reckless adventurer stirring up things beneath

F Passage-wise urchin, Architect with too much curiosity, Hapless local sewer worker

C The structure's inhabitants have a secret deal with the ruin dwellers, The ruin dwellers masquerade as the structure's inhabitants, Time-delayed catastrophe will happen after the ruin's opened

T Key to open the hidden passage below, Treasure hidden in the ruin in ages past, Ancient relic the ruin was made to contain

P Passage hidden behind now-crumbling construction, Mundane room above a monstrous evil, Secret passages that have peepholes into the structure above

Hiveminded Natives

A multi-bodied intellect exists in the ruin, whether an ancient AI, hiveminded swarm, telepathic gestalt species, unified golem force, or some other manner of creature. Some such hiveminds are inclined to "recruit" intruders, willing or otherwise. Conflict with these creatures is apt to be very dangerous, as they're capable of coordination at a level impossible to others, yet their single mind makes them more vulnerable to a single point of failure.

E Crazed ancient eidolon, Magically warped insect queen, Fungus-infected colony organism

F Escapee from the hivemind, Last survivor of a recruited group, Researcher keen to study it

C The hivemind's doubts are embodied in conflicting factions, It can focus only on so many bodies at once, It requires a connection to issue new orders

T Device to break the hivemind's control, Curative to free a recruit, Intricate treasure fabricated by unified hivemind effort

P Living quarters with no private elements, Swarming chamber full of perfectly-synchronized motion, Fetid organic queen-lair of the ruling intellect

Hospitable Natives

While not all denizens of the ruin are friendly, there's at least one faction that's known to be willing to host guests and negotiate for favors. This group may be made up of bandits, exiles, hermits, or other social outcasts who find even the most dubious human visitors preferable to their neighbors, or they might be "civilized" humanoids who find it profitable to parley as well as raid.

E Sinister chieftain with ulterior motives, Xenophobic rebel who hates outsiders, Outsider adventurer bent on exploiting their hospitality

F Wide-eyed native urchin, Outsider gone native, Outsider envoy trying to make a pact with them

C They're hospitable because they desperately need allies, They recently were betrayed by a guest, Their hospitality comes at a high price

T Trade goods gathered from the ruin, Map of the ruin interior, Key to unlock a route normally accessible only to ruin natives

P Alien but friendly meeting-chamber, Makeshift guest lodgings, Ritual room for strange rites

Hostile Environment

Ruins are seldom comfortable, but this one is actively dangerous to those who enter it. Noxious fumes, radiation, magical miasmas, contagious diseases, poisonous liquids, or some other environmental hazard makes progress very risky. Natives are either immune to the peril or have means of negating it. The extreme defensibility of the site may be the reason they continue to lair there.

E Sorcerer researching how to weaponize the hazard, Monstrous entity that emits the peril, Vile creature born of the toxic conditions

F Explorer equipped with survival tools, Friendly native guide, Entrepreneur trying to exploit it

C The hostile environment also produces a valuable resource, Surrounding locals consider it taboo because the hazard is somehow contagious, The hazard is very recent and the natives still don't know exactly how to handle it

T Protective gear against the hazard, Controls to shut off the hazard in some areas, Loot from hazard-slain intruders or natives

P Mundane location caked in the hazard, Lair of a hazard-mutated beast, Perilous path that snakes through the hazard

Infectious Miasma

A contagious disease has infected the natives and might plague any intruders as well. The sickness isn't fatal, but it may induce physical or mental changes that make life in the outside world difficult; the ruin itself might be an environment optimized for the afflicted. Conversely, the ruin might be a leprosarium or place of exile for those who catch some virulent plague or socially-despised illness.

E Tyrant physician-chief who controls treatment, Ruler maddened by the illness, Plague priest determined to spread the disease

F Innocent native suffering from the sickness, Outsider medical missionary, Hapless chieftain trying to hold things together

C The ruin has been sealed off by the outside world, The plague turns the natives into living tools or slave-entities, Cures only temporarily suppress the disease's symptoms

T Research needed for a lasting cure, Treasures left by a dead sufferer, Vital resources needed for the sick to survive

P Gathering-place full of the walking ill, Shrine to a healing god, Pits where disease-warped victims are exiled

Invincible Delusion

The natives of this ruin are totally convinced of something that is simply not the case: their ancient empire never fell, their god has commanded them to live a certain troublesome way, they are the only true humans left in the world, or some other delusion that's likely to cause problems. They've developed rationalizations to explain obvious contradictions to their error, many of which involve hostile responses to bearers of iniquitous falsehood. There may be something about the ruin that's enforcing this delusion.

E Hypnotically charismatic leader, Crazed ancient lich-ruler, Leader who knows the truth but profits by the error

F Native with suspicions, Outsider trying to convince them, Outsider whom they've mistakenly incorporated into their error

C The delusion makes an otherwise unendurable life bearable, The delusion is true in some critical ways, The delusion is somehow infectious

T Proof of the delusion's falsehood, Precious goods piled up for a lost cause, Relic of a golden age

P Ruin chamber made a pathetic mimicry of some greater place, Ritual chamber to celebrate the "truth", Archive containing troublesome records

Lethal Treasure

The ruin has or produces a very valuable good, but that good is somehow extremely dangerous to acquire or possess. It may be toxic, or cursed, or the acquisition process may be predictably lethal. This danger may be the result of the creatures who create the good, the guardians that watch over it, or the surrounding locals who kill "smugglers" or "profaners" with zeal.

E Monstrous beast that produces the good, Ancient construct guardian, Cruel tyrant who forces victims to make or acquire the good

F Desperate young adventurer, Native good-maker trying to avoid disaster, Victim of the good's hazards

C Extended exposure to the good is harmful, The good is useful but somehow morally dubious in its production or nature, The good needs to be specially processed to make it safe

T Large cache of unrefined good, Object to nullify or cure the good's danger, Loot lost in an unsuccessful attempt to buy the good

P Hellish processing or production area, Tightly-guarded vault of the good, Area made toxic by the good's effects

Limited Access

The ruin can only be accessed at certain times or with certain special keys. Any natives are cut off from the outside world for long periods, and must either have no need for sustenance or sources within the ruin. The obstacle may be magical in nature, or the only access route to the ruin may be subject to natural cycles that make it impassable at most times.

E Ruin tyrant who views all outsiders as enemies, Ruthless adventurer trying to block rivals, Mad power locked away in the ruin

F Eager young scholar, Adventurer with the key to the site, Native yearning to escape

C It's been so long since the last opening that everyone's forgotten about it, The access now opens in a very inconvenient place, The access can be forced by some terrible sacrifice

T Key to open the access, Controls that permanently open the site, Loot from the last expedition to enter the site

P Passage that opens on a time lock, Vast magical seal, Coastal portal revealed only during a particular low tide period

Lingering Curse

The ruin is cursed, and everything in it is somehow tainted or troubled by the malediction. There must be a strong reason for the natives to remain, or else the curse itself induces them to stay. The curse may be the result of some ancient crime, a Working gone wrong, a lost war against a magical foe, or a "blessing" in one age that is less appreciated in the modern day. The curse usually takes some time to trigger on intruders, but it may be induced by certain actions.

E Vile sorcerer feeding on the energies, Embittered chieftain hating all uncursed, Hapless victim made a monster by the curse

F Native sorcerer trying to lift the curse, Outside researcher investigating it, Sympathetic native struggling with the curse's effects

C The curse grants a significant advantage as well as a blight, Those cursed need something here to survive, The curse is a mark of native belonging and viewed as proof of loyalty

T Object that can lift the curse, Precious offering to the gods for mercy, Treasure left by a victim of the curse

P Shrine to some protective god, Curse-warped place of twisted mundanity, Chokingly-blighted place where the curse was first invoked

Living Dungeon

The ruin is alive, either in a literal or metaphorical sense. It may be animated by an ancient eidolon that looks through countless sensors, or infused with the spirit of some arcane mind, or made up of the tiny bodies of countless construction-organisms like some vast coral. Physical damage to the ruin usually brings some hostile response, however muted by age and disrepair, and the structure itself may be conscious enough to strike bargains with inhabitants.

E Demented ruin spirit, Sorcerer trying to bend the site to their will, Native chieftain who worships the ruin's genius as a god

F Friendly ruin sub-organism, Native ruin-keeper, Explorer avid to learn of the place

C It's a colony creature with different minds in charge, The ruin is trying to grow at all costs, The ruin went berserk after its ruination and is now acting irrationally

T Poison that can kill the ruin, Precious good created by the ruin's life processes, Indigestible treasures left by prior intruders

P Wetly organic passageway, Chamber with a giant maw for feeding, Room with tethered organic servitor-creatures

Lost Colony

The ruin was once a colony site for a now-vanished empire or people. Some of these pioneers might still survive within, albeit doubtless in much-changed form, or else their belongings might include objects or relics that would be very valuable today. The modern heirs to this lost domain might still consider the ruin to be their lawful property, and all within it to be theirs.

E Degenerate colony leader, Outside conqueror seeking to seize the site, The hideous thing that destroyed the colony

F Confused surviving pioneer-heir, New colonist trying to revive the place, Historian looking for relics

C The colonists claimed to belong to the lost kingdom but were really of a much more sinister group, Local powers quarrel over site access, Something extremely precious was lost here

T Once-commonplace item that is now precious, Ancient wealth of the colonists, Valuable goods they made before they died

P Area decorated in their ancient style, Long-abandoned massacre site, Temple to a forgotten god

Magical Wonder

An active Working in the site produces some wondrous effect; permanent summer, biological immortality, endless foodstuffs, visions of the future, or some other grand marvel. Unfortunately, it's so decayed and ill-tuned that all of these wonders come with related serious negative effects and problems, ones that the natives must struggle to deal with.

E Ancient half-mad keeper of the Working, Sorcerous monster born of the decay, Outsider determined to exploit the Working at any cost

F Adventurer who seeks the Working's benefits, Researcher who wants its secrets, Sorcerer convinced they can fix the Working

C The objects and benefits it confers don't exist outside the ruin, It will collapse disastrously if the ruin is seriously damaged, Nearby communities benefit from it and try to keep out intruders

T Device to control the Working's benefits, Ruined Working parts that are valuable still, Research notes that would allow it to be repaired

P Chamber of dangerous magical fluxes, Sorcerous emission point where the blessing flows forth, Abandoned laboratory where it was made

Monster Forge

The ruin somehow creates a particular type of monster by its simple existence. It might be an ancient spawning-pit for Blighted, a cloning facility gone berserk, an ancient agricultural complex with feral livestock, an open portal to an Iterum of monsters, a source of very infectious monster-creating plagues, or something in that vein. These monsters probably infest the surrounding area, unless something about their nature requires them to stay close to the ruin.

E Alpha monster of the horde, Sorcerous would-be tyrant over the creatures, Terrible anomaly-beast that's even worse than usual

F Victim of a monstrous rampage, Grim monster-hunter trying to hold back the tide, Local lord overcome by the wave

C The ruin has only recently started to belch forth the creatures, The monsters capture humans to make more of their kind, The monsters were once slaves or servants but have now broken free

T Implement meant to destroy or control them, Plunder brought back by raiding creatures, Treasures lost by slain adventurers

P Frenetic chamber of ever-blossoming life, Overcrowded living quarters, Re-purposed ancient chamber

Outsider Domain

This ruin was originally constructed to serve a race of Outsiders. It is possible that they were not even humanoid, and the atmosphere within the ruin may still be tainted with alien gases or hostile temperatures. The architecture and lighting was designed for alien bodies, and humans might find it difficult to navigate. Surviving inhabitants might be Outsider remnants or the alien flora and fauna that persisted long after their masters had died out.

E Still-surviving alien leader, Monstrous alien "pet", Cult priest revering the dead Outsiders

F Surviving heir of human slave-servants, Outsider-hunter seeking prey, Researcher looking for lore

C The site once produced something very important to the region at a terrible cost in lives, The alien atmosphere becomes unsurvivable in cycles, Humans Blighted by the Outsiders still live here

T Alien artifact of great value, Human treasure collected by dead Outsiders, Alien device that does something very useful to modern humans

P Inscrutably strange chamber, Living quarters re-dimensioned to fit non-humanoid bodies, "Garden" full of monstrous flora

Precious Resource

The ruin generates a resource or serves a function that is valuable to those around it. This may be a direct and literal generation, such as a Deep that still automatically extracts and refines silver, or it may be metaphorical, such as a ruin full of undead who are privy to ancient secrets sought by wizards. Completely purging the ruin of perils would probably somehow ruin the process, or else some greedy outsider would likely have cleaned it out by now.

E Grasping outsider treasure-hunter, Monster attracted by the resource, Resource-maker using it to gain sinister influence and power

F Earnest prospector, Luckless official charged with gathering the resource, Desperate fortune-hunter

C The resource is cursed or dangerous, The resource can't be accessed without some kind of agreement with the natives, The resource is sacred to the ruin's dwellers

T Hidden cache of the resource, Device that extracts it, Ultra-rare refined example of the resource

P Place where the resource is extracted, Fortified zone around the extraction, Vault for the gathered resource

Raider Lair

Some ruins are dangerous only to intruders, but this one actively sends out raiding parties to plunder the surroundings. Many such lairs prefer to go relatively far afield to obscure their origins and avoid the hostility of their immediate neighbors. Others have specific grudges to nurse, or particular targets that have incurred their wrath. Hostages might be taken back for ransom, labor, or food, depending on the nature of the inhabitants.

E Ambitious bandit chieftain, Embittered exiled lord, Monstrous ruler who hungers for outside wealth

F Relative of a kidnapped victim, Escapee from the raiders, Local reeve trying to cope with the raids

C The raiders are being backed by an outside power hostile to its neighbors, The raiders exact a brutal tribute for their "protection", The raiders had or have a sympathetic cause

T Priceless relic taken by the raiders, Cache of supplies they need badly, Loot hidden by the plunderers

P Raucous and vile raider camp, Re-purposed room turned into the chief's lair, Treasure chamber full of looted goods

Recruiting Drive

At least one group of inhabitants in the ruin are actively adding to their numbers. This may involve bribes, kidnapping, proselytization, or just the prospect of a better life than their recruits currently have. This group is likely ideological or circumstantial in their ties, like a cult, a rebel group, or a bandit clan, and so new members can be added as quickly as they prove agreeable or profitable to the whole. Those who refuse to join in tend to meet less comradely fates.

E Charismatic and ruthless conqueror, Heartless grandee hiring disposable muscle, Hypnotically persuasive cult leader

F Unwilling recruit, Rival group's leader, Local ruler worried about the new members

C The group recruits under false pretenses and then traps the new recruits in some crime, The group really is offering a better deal than most recruits have, Resentment is building between old and new group members

T Proof of some outside power's involvement, Wealth meant to use to entice recruits, Rich gift given by an eager new recruit

P Disordered and confused living quarters, Well-trod training area, Empty home of a now-vanished recruit

Religious Zealots

Almost everyone has some degree of deference to the gods, but the natives of this ruin are outright fanatics of a particular religious or philosophical cause. They may have inherited from ages of ancestors, acquired it from the teachings of a charismatic prophet, or been persuaded of it by some profitable or terrifying display of divine will. The natives likely have at least one goal that makes no logical sense, but is related to their god's nature or desires.

E Frothingly intense high priest, Holy demon or sending of the god, Monstrous entity placated by the group's worship

F Member having second thoughts, Missionary of a rival faith, Cynical group member who wants to depose the current leadership in their favor

C The god's intervention seems real on some level, Their cult is an offshoot of the locally dominant faith, They have backing from a mother temple

T Precious religious relic or regalia, Object blessed with divine powers, Wealth taken from unworthy unbelievers

P Room fitted out as an ornate shrine, Chamber carved with religious symbolism, Place dedicated to some bloody or fearsome ritual

Rigid Hierarchy

Most ruins have little organization, with various groups or lone beasts vying with each other as their strength allows. In this one, however, there is a clear and recognized hierarchy of power and authority, and lesser groups and entities are likely to obey the greater even without an immediate threat of violence. Of course, those same groups are also quite likely to conspire with outsiders to remove their vexations.

E Iron-fisted monster lord, Ambitious and scheming chieftain, Secret kingmaker working as a humble minion

F Hapless outsider slave, Minion with ambition, Bitter native seeking systemic revenge

C The current leader is the only one holding back the ruin's denizens from raiding, The groups are being organized by an outside power, The subordinate groups are extremely bitter and restive over the state of affairs

T Treasure used to pay off underlings, Potent artifact used to cow subordinates, Tribute extracted from unwilling inferiors

P Barbarically luxurious throne room, Disciplined and organized watch post, Labor zone where the inferiors toil

Royal Refuge

Some exiled noble, unsuccessful pretender, hunted wizard, or other grandee of note remained here for a time, either willingly or under duress. They and their retinue left their traces behind, and remnants of the group might still be present. The principle figure probably died here, though some kinds of creatures or wizards may have been less susceptible to time.

E Undead prince in exile, Royal agent convinced the PCs are allies of the rebel here, New usurper claiming the dead one's mantle or name

F Well-meaning servant of the royal, Local chief trying to keep his village out of the affair, Sympathetic exile in need of help

C The royal tried to make a deal with the creatures here, The royal had secret ties or perhaps even was one of the natives here, The royal's foes are in sudden need of proof of their death

T Item proving the royal's legitimacy, National treasure they stole away with them, Book full of blackmail material they recorded

P Tattered but once-ornate chamber they occupied, Cache full of carefully-preserved noble regalia, Pathetic and coarsely-monumented grave site

Sacrificial Bargain

The natives of the ruin have made some kind of pact with a dread power or sinister force, receiving support or power in exchange for some sacrifice. This sacrifice might fall directly on the natives themselves or they might plunder their neighbors for wealth, human sacrifices, or such other resources as their patron demands in payment. Failure to hold up their end of the deal may be fatal to the inhabitants.

E Malevolent high priest of a dark power, Envoy of a ruthless foe of the local inhabitants, Frantic leader driven to desperate bargains

F Sacrificial victim who escaped, Foe of the patron power searching for its catspaws, Native from a rival group that's being beaten down

C The bargain seemed an innocent one at first, They're realizing that they can't hold up the deal, The deal was made without the consent of the group's ordinary members

T Object that symbolizes and empowers the pact, Wealth granted by the patron, Precious object lost by a sacrificial victim

P Terrible chamber of ritual offering, Local homestead ravaged by raiders, Storehouse or living area made abundant by the patron

Sealed Evil

The ruin serves as a prison for some terribly dangerous entity or power. It may have been originally designed to serve such a purpose, or retrofitted by later inhabitants due to a sudden need, or possibly even mistaken for some other kind of structure by innocent discoverers of a later era. Something about the evil makes it exceptionally hard to kill or permanently destroy, so imprisoning it "forever" seemed wiser.

E Undead immortal sorcerer, Monstrous and nigh-unkillable creature, Arch-Outsider with a biology humans can't be sure is dead

F Hereditary warden of the prison, Innocently eager explorer, Ancestral hunter of the evil

C The evil was actually a benign entity or is currently mistaken for one, Those who loose it will gain enormous power, It's being tapped for power in a way that risks freeing it

T Relic of the dark power's evil, Seal on the creature that's an extremely valuable item in itself, Valuable material created or generated by the prison as a byproduct

P Exceedingly well-sealed prison area, Chamber with a temporal stasis cell, Hall full of warning iconography made inscrutable by time

Secret Alliance

The natives of the ruin have a secret deal or arrangement with some outside power, doing their bidding or providing some special service in exchange for considerations. It might be a corrupt ruler, a sinister cult, an Outsider lord, a backwater hamlet chief, or some other figure that wouldn't wish the arrangement to become public.

E Merchant with vile black market deals, Official who wants the ruin to remain a problem, Society grandee with sinister appetites

F Suspicious noble investigator, Stern inquisitor from the local temple, Local who knows too much

C The deal is maintaining a fragile peace, There's an openly-acknowledged deal with them but the real bargain is far more sinister, One side is getting ready to betray the other

T Proof of the alliance, Rich plunder taken from an ally's enemy, Relic the mutual cooperation is meant to obtain

P Secret meeting place in the wilds, Chamber for an envoy of the ally, Treasure chamber with goods from the ally

Shifting Interior

The interior of the ruin is not stable, and shifts and alters over time or through some enigmatic cycle. It may be composed of constantly-moving elements of some ancient megastructure, or be spatially distorted by a decaying Working, or infested with inhabitants that are constantly rebuilding or reworking the layout. The natives may have some key knowledge that lets them navigate the changes.

E Transdimensional intruder entity, Berserk master of the rebuilders, Sinister exile using the place as a refuge

F Friendly native guide, Relative of one lost in the labyrinth, Frustrated builder in need of help

C The shifts encode an important secret, If the shifts are interrupted a catastrophe will ensue, The shifts are under the control of the ruin's master

T Key to control the shifts, Map of the alterations, The treasure within the labyrinth's heart

P Room that's changed from the last time they saw it, Churning death zone of moving perils, Maze of twisty little passages all alike

Spatial Flux

Space within the ruin has been folded, altered, or corrupted in some way, either by ancient magics, inauspicious geomancy, the depredations of a dimensional monster, failed Workings, fumbled sorcery, or some other woe. Some creatures may use the curdled space as a refuge from their enemies, while others might use it as a gate to some stranger and more terrible place.

E Transdimensional abomination, Mad sorcerer making things worse, Obsessive seeker of some hidden grail within the spatial maze

F Friendly xenodimensional, Adventurer lost and trapped within the place, Local citizen accidentally caught in a warp

C The destinations of the warps can be controlled from within the ruin, The place's architecture is only physically possible with spatial distortions, The warps lead to different times as well as places

T Relic that creates or influences warps, Treasure shifted here from an alternate place or world, Wealth physically duplicated by the warps

P Escher-like room, Chamber with physical locations split over vast differences, Featureless hall that really never ends

Surfacer Hideout

Some surface power is using the ruin as a hideout or base of operations. While they may simply be bandits or refugees, they're more likely agents of some greater power who need a discreet base, or some cult or criminal organization that needs a safe place to hide from the law. Friendly merchants or other associates might make contact with them there to provide for necessities, or they could be working to survive entirely separate from the hostile world outside.

E Foreign spy chief, Cult high priest, Ruthless hunter of an innocent group that's hiding here

F Elder of a despised ethnic group hiding here, Government investigator of the ruin, Local who lives nearby and has seen suspicious things

C Rather than displacing the monstrous natives the surfacers have dominated or co-opted them, The surfacers were killed or driven out of the ruin very recently and their effects remain, The surfacers have hidden so well that they no longer understand the situation above

T Treasure brought from afar by the surfacers, Loot gathered up from displaced ruin natives, Some precious good crafted or extracted by surfacers

P Room reminiscent of home, Carefully-hidden entrance to their zone, Remote meeting place

Taboo Place

The locals surrounding the ruin consider it taboo, and will kill or punish anyone who enters it without their permission. This may be the product of religious reverence, or it could be a holy place of their ancestors, or it could be disputed territory, or it may be that the last time adventurers went in a catastrophe came out. Objects looted from the place will be very hard to sell discreetly anywhere near it.

E Relentless leader of the guardians, The monstrous thing within that must not be disturbed, Ruin raider who will cause chaos with their plundering

F Earnest young treasure hunter, Native who doesn't believe in the taboo, Local who desperately needs to get inside for some reason

C The locals are absolutely right that meddling with the place will bring disaster on them, The ruin somehow marks those who profane it, The ruin can be entered lawfully under some special circumstance or by certain people

T Pass to allow lawful entrance, Unsellably distinct treasure from the place, Device to overcome the watchfulness of the guardians

P Exemplary warning-pike with heads attached, Long-sealed entrance portal, Vigilant guardpost

Things Below

The ruin delved too deep, or opened too many doors to other realms, and things came boiling out that brought its destruction. Those things may have fallen asleep again, or returned to their realm, or yet remained here waiting for fresh prey. They may come and go based on particular time cycles, or when provoked by certain rituals or activities within the place.

E Lovecraftian abomination from below, Alien-minded extraplanar conqueror, Cultist leader who reveres these eldritch powers

F Historian seeking more truth about the things, Relative of a victim of the things, Eager explorer who doesn't believe in the things

C The things are associated with monstrous tides of dangerous vermin, The treasures to be had from delving are almost worth the risk, The treasures were actually living things that ruined the place

T Precious object brought from below, The treasure that they were delving up, Wealth left behind by the suddenly-slain natives

P Interrupted digging site, Vault laden with the wealth of below, Site of sudden terrible ruin

Useless Treasure

The ruin was once a carefully-guarded storehouse of some substance or information that was priceless at the time but is now largely worthless. Obscure materials, Outsider goods of no present use, exotic matter fashioned by sorcery and of forgotten purposes, and critical intelligence on empires long since dust might all be found here.

E Tireless immortal guardian, Brutally relentless treasure seeker, Maddened sorcerer trying to unlock the "real value" of the treasure

F Mistakenly optimistic adventurer, Seeker with a lost key to the wards, Native denizen who knows the treasure is worthless

C The natives may prize the stuff even if the world outside doesn't, The treasure really is valuable to the very few who know how to use it, The useless treasure is cased with then-useless material that is priceless now

T Tremendously well-guarded dross, Text showing how to use the treasure, Key for suppressing the treasure's security system

P Vast vault full of garbage, Guard post manned by undying watchers, Ancient luxury area featuring the material or the wealth it brought them

Wizard's Lair

Wizards often require an emphatic degree of privacy to ward off importunate help-seekers, witch hunters, rivals in the art, or reckless thieves. This ruin is or once was a lair to one such wizard, who probably isn't inclined to view visitors kindly. Even the dead ones may have left behind half-finished Workings and unaging automaton servitors to guard their venerable lore and precious magical relics.

E Immortal and heartless wizard, Monstrous creation of a dead mage, Modern sorcerer exploiting the lair of a dead archmage

F Well-meaning apprentice, Escapee from one of their experiments, Vengeful mage-hunter

C They perform some service vital to the locals but at a terrible price, No one's heard from them for so long that it's thought they're dead, It's actually a lair for a school or cabal of wizards

T Precious sorcerous grimoire, Magical item crafted there, Vast wealth given by petitioners

P Chamber with a half-finished and dangerous Working, Pens for alchemical monstrosities, Living quarters that are physically impossible somehow

Wilderness

It's not uncommon for GMs to have difficulty in fleshing out the wilderness parts of a hexcrawl or exploration-based campaign. One forest tends to look a lot like another, and there's only so many times one can go to the well of "inexplicable magical effect randomly occurring here" before it starts to get stale. Rural villages, lost ruins, and other social- or dungeon-esque points of interest can dot the countryside, but without something interesting in the spaces in between, mere distance fails to provide much useful adventure grist.

Wilderness tags can be used to help spark a GM's creativity and develop some worthwhile points of interest for their wilderness maps or daring forays into the unknown. When designing these points of interest, a few general guidelines are helpful.

A popular default scale for a wilderness hex map is six miles per hex. It's enough space to get lost in but small enough that a determined party could reasonably search it for points of interest in a day's marching. If you want to emphasize the interest of exploring a wilderness rather than focus on some other adventure, you might roll 1d6 for each hex and put a point of interest in it on a roll of 1, or on a larger range of results if you're feeling generous.

For this point of interest you should roll twice on the Wilderness Tags table to get a pair of tropes you can synthesize into a usable result. Make sure to tie your work together as you go; recurring NPCs, current struggles, or shared history might be reflected in multiple points of interest.

Don't try to turn each point of interest into a full-fledged adventure-worthy site. You'll exhaust yourself in short order if you try to do that. Instead, give each point a couple of sentences of rough description and leave it at that until you've fully populated the part of the map that the PCs are expecting to explore for their next session.

Then go through and pick the handful of points that you intend to turn into full adventure-worthy locations; no more than three or four at the most. Use the tools in the adventure creation chapter to flesh out these points. Don't try to turn them into mega-adventures; they don't need to eat up an entire session of play because the PCs have a whole wilderness yet to explore once they finish with a particular site.

For the rest of the points of interest, go through and give them a single, simple situation, encounter, or object for the PCs to meddle with. Use these sites as opportunities to hook or hint toward the meatier, more developed parts of the wilderness or foreshadow their significance.

Finally, be ready to recycle unused content. If the PCs never find a point of interest, save it as backup material for some later date, when you might suddenly need something to occupy the players on short notice.

WILDERNESS ENCOUNTERS

While it's useful to lay down some wilderness points of interest for a hexcrawl or wilderness exploration game, not everything needs tags and full development. Sometimes you just need a few random encounters on a list to pull from when the PCs run into something.

These tables provide suggestions for normal human encounters, nonhuman sapients, or dangerous beasts or monsters. For the nonhumans and the beasts, fill in the role with whatever kind of creature or nonhuman is appropriate to the setting; a swarm of dangerous vermin in the jungle might be an army ant column, while voracious sand shrews might erupt from the desert.

Wilderness encounters usually start at considerable range, depending on when one side first spots the other. Fleeing, negotiation, or avoidance are usually options, and not all encounters will necessarily end in bloodshed.

d12	Human Encounters
1	Hopelessly lost merchant or peddler
2	Hermit with a good reason to stay alone
3	Escaped slave or prisoner
4	Peasant perhaps moonlighting as a bandit
5	Dangerous outlaw or outcast
6	Explorer, scout, or surveyor
7	Patrol of the local authorities
8	Miners, woodsmen, hunters, or other workers
9	Common traveler, perhaps lost
10	Noble or other gentry on a journey
11	Pilgrim, perhaps of a malevolent god
12	Bandits, marauders, or other adventurers

d12	Nonhuman Sapient Encounters
1	Raiders on their way to pillage a site
2	Scouts out surveilling the territory
3	Patrol to drive off troublesome intruders
4	Campsite of the nonhumans
5	Nonhuman workers or resource gatherers
6	Religious figure conducting some rite
7	Nonhumans chasing a human escapee
8	Site of a bloody battle with nonhumans
9	Nonhuman traders with valuable goods
10	Outcast or deranged nonhuman
11	Nonhuman magic-user and attendants
12	Hunters pursuing their prey

d12	Beasts and Monsters
1	Harmless but annoying local creature
2	Hungry pack hunters
3	Stalking predator looking for an opening
4	Sick or somehow enraged predator
5	An ambush predator lying in wait
6	Large, dangerously aggressive herbivore
7	Uncanny or eldritch monster
8	A swarm of dangerous vermin
9	A flying monster or beast
10	Mated pair of team hunters
11	Ghost, animate corpse, or other undead
12	Something far too dangerous to confront

d12	What's Happening with the Sapients?
1	They're arguing hotly over something
2	They're pausing for a meal
3	They're making far too much noise for stealth
4	They're interrogating a prisoner
5	They're examining recent loot or a finding
6	They're camping here for an interval
7	They're fleeing a fearsome pursuer
8	They're looking for something to steal
9	They need healing or help with a situation
10	They're hiding from something hunting them
11	They're in an affable and friendly mood
12	They're chasing enemies of theirs

d12	What's Happening with the Beasts?
1	It's wounded from a recent hunt
2	It's magically warped somehow
3	It's being chased by something bigger
4	Remnants of its last prey are obvious nearby
5	It's attacking someone right now
6	It's well-fed and disinclined to hunt
7	It looks deceptively harmless or weak
8	It's something's pet or hunting beast
9	It's fighting over a mate
10	It's using bait to lure in humans
11	It's currently eating its last unfortunate prey
12	It's old or crippled and acting unpredictably

Wilderness Tags

These tags provide some basic tropes that you can blend together to create a wide range of potential wilderness points of interest. They assume that the wilderness has some sort of pioneer element dwelling there, and remote villages or hard-pressed hamlets of local dwellers exist to provide some oases of relative security in the wilds.

Even so, the defining characteristic of a wilderness is the absence of reliable order. Once beyond the village palisade the local lord's rule becomes a very theoretical thing, and the wilderness will attract all sorts of inhabitants that have reasons for avoiding more carefully-monitored lands. The dwellers in the area might be sturdy peasants, but they're just as likely to be refugees, rebels, bandits, displaced natives, demihumans, or sentient monsters of some kind. The "friendly" tag results below could pull any such inhabitants in, as all of them might have reasons to want to deal with a strong band of adventurers.

You should also be ready to scale tags up or down in significance depending on your particular needs. If you want to make a major base of operations for the players where they can safely rest and resupply, a ***Military Outpost*** tag might refer to a fortified keep on the borderlands with a castellan willing to trade. If all you need is a small point of interest to eat up ten minutes of table time, you might just make it a rustic cabin with a trio of trouble-making soldiers exiled to a perpetual "scouting post" by a superior who's forgotten they exist.

If you're generating a very large number of hex crawl points of interest, you might start getting duplicate combinations from a pair of the tags below. In such cases, you might add a third tag from one of the other categories here, flavoring the synthesis with a Ruin Tag or a Community Tag to add an additional twist. These additions don't need to be read literally; you can use them as metaphors or as creative prompts to add something fresh to the result.

As with any worldbuilding, take care that you tie historical events, current conflicts, and important NPC figures into multiple situations. Having the same elements show up in multiple ways helps add heft to a world.

d100	Tag	d100	Tag
1–2	Abandoned Village	51–52	Migration Path
3–4	Ancient Guardians	53–54	Military Outpost
5–6	Ancient Monument	55–56	Monstrous Beast
7–8	Arratu Land	57–58	Motherlode
9–10	Bandit Lair	59–60	Nomad Camp
11–12	Beast Swarm	61–62	Outsider Enclave
13–14	Blighted Tribe	63–64	Overgrown Tomb
15–16	Broken Infrastructure	65–66	Perilous Path
17–18	Chokepoint	67–68	Pilgrimage Site
19–20	Collapsed Deep	69–70	Precious Game
21–22	Criminal Meet	71–72	Rampant Experiment
23–24	Cryptic Art	73–74	Refugee Camp
25–26	Cursed Land	75–76	Remnant Road
27–28	Decayed Working	77–78	Remote Monastery
29–30	Demihuman Community	79–80	Ruined Fortification
31–32	Devil Grove	81–82	Savage Hamlet
33–34	Disused Mine	83–84	Sculpted Terrain
35–36	Healing Terrain	85–86	Seductive Peril
37–38	Hermitage	87–88	Taboo Territory
39–40	Historical Survival	89–90	Toxic Ruins
41–42	Isolated Academy	91–92	Treacherous Terrain
43–44	Labyrinthine Tangle	93–94	Twisted Fauna
45–46	Lost Battlefield	95–96	Uncanny Weather
47–48	Lost City	97–98	Working Wreckage
49–50	Magical Springs	99–00	Zealot Colony

Abandoned Village

Wilderness villages tend to be unstable "gold rush" settlements in the best of times, attracting those who lack any sound place elsewhere. This village failed as rapidly as it was formed. It may have been overrun by marauders, depopulated by disease, hollowed out by a failed harvest, torn apart by civil strife, or just abandoned for better prospects elsewhere.

E Bandit chief or sorcerer responsible for the ruin, Crazed village head turned hermit, Monstrous entity nesting in the remains

F Last stubborn holdout, Lord's bailiff looking for answers, Hapless pioneer who's arrived to an empty ruin

C It's now populated by something inhuman, It was built on top of a place abandoned for good reason, The wilderness is reclaiming it in a dangerous way

T Heirloom left behind in the flight, Buried treasure of the villagers, The relic that caused the ruin

P Overgrown village meeting hall, Home with everything left just as it was at that moment, Burnt-out shrine to the local god

Ancient Guardians

There are guardians in this site derived from some ancient polity, whether constructs built to protect some long-forgotten place here or the restless shades of the dead who once dwelled in the location. They may have a simple hatred towards "invaders" or they may be confused, thinking interlopers are part of some ancient enemy group. What they once guarded may not even exist any more in any perceptible way.

E Unrelenting golem leader, Maddened sorcerer-lord shade, Sinister heir seeking to suborn the guardians to their service

F Diplomatic guardian entity, Greedy treasure-hunter, Local who got trapped in the place

C The guardians are to keep something in, A local group uses the guardians as a trap for outsiders, The guardians were never meant to be harmful but what they do to intruders is very damaging

T Key to shut down or ward off the guardians, The precious relic they were guarding, Ritual garb that makes the wearer invisible to the guardians

P Place of ominously martial statuary, Ghostly street-image of a vanished place, Broken remnant of an ancient landmark

Ancient Monument

A grand monument to some ancient polity is found here. While its actual meaning and significance may be inscrutable, it's probably big enough and dramatic enough to dominate the hex, even if it's collapsed or been defaced by the ages. The remains of the civilization that raised it might be found at its base, along with whatever heirs to it remain. Some monuments still have active enchantments or guardians to prevent defacement.

E Zealous modern cultist of the vanished polity, Last bitter heir of them, Vile monster that nests in the monument

F Eager archaeologist, Weary old hereditary keeper of the place, Friendly creature that's made the monument a home

C The monument is a powerful Working, The monument served a secular or residential purpose, The bulk of the monument is underground or in an extradimensional pocket Iterum

T Costly decorations or ornaments on the monument, The precious core of the work, Ancient offerings made to it by vanished supplicants

P Before some towering megastructure-monument, Amid the cyclopean wreckage of its fall, Secret passages within the monument

Arratu Land

There is a large pocket of *arratu* at the site, even though it may be too small to show up on the hex map. Such a pocket might be the last remnant of a formerly-great swath, or it could just be a localized tumor created by an Outsider device, a malevolent sorcerer, or a magical disaster. Something about the *arratu's* placement likely forces the party to go well out of their way to bypass it safely; it might command a narrow pass or be flanked by dangerous terrain on either side.

E Outsider beast within the waste, Half-human marauder chief lairing inside, Crazed Outsider wizard who made the wasteland

F Foolish explorer who tried to cross it, Wretched slave taken by raiders, Not-too-homicidal native

C The wasteland is being contained by a potentially-breakable object here, Locals know how to get through it safely, It's a very new wasteland and the locals haven't adjusted to it yet

T Equipment to survive the hostile atmosphere within, Precious Outsider relic, Wealth seized by raiders from the waste

P Blasted village overrun by alien life, Desolate plain with an unearthly sky above, Lakeshore of a pool filled with a noxious chemical

Bandit Lair

Bandits lair in this hex, which is presumably close enough to civilized lands to serve as a base for their operations. Not every bandit lair is a hidden cave; some operate out of subverted or cowed villages, others hide among remote monasteries, and some just camp in convenient glades long enough to rest, refit, and trade with black marketeers. It might be a seasonal lair as well, with local peasants turning bandit at certain profitable times of the year.

E Ruthlessly pragmatic bandit chief, Wealthy grandee wielding the bandits against rivals, Heartless slaver gathering stock

F Hapless missionary of a kinder way, Local taken as a slave, Runaway bandit who repents

C They have a traditional prey and don't usually rob others, They're the degenerate remnants of a once-noble cause, They're a confederacy of thieving groups that often quarrel

T Loot taken from a recent success, Priceless heirloom owned by a noble-turned-bandit, Precious relic the bandits don't realize is so valuable

P Raucous glade full of drink and debauchery, Re-purposed estate, Makeshift palisaded camp

Blighted Tribe

A tribe of Blighted live in the hex. They may be violent war-creatures naturally hostile to normal humanity or beings cursed with some trait or nature that makes it impossible for them to live in civilization. Relations are unlikely to be warm in either case, but the latter might be persuaded to parley if the party can work around their limitations and win their trust.

E Brutal Blighted war-chief, Outsider using them as living tools, Human hunter bent on slaughtering inoffensive Blighted

F Native not so Blighted as their brethren, Human trader who deals with them, Local human who knows their ways

C Their blight was once very useful to the ancient polity that existed here, They're only Blighted because they lack something to temper it that this site once provided, They're dying out and desperate to win allies against their many predators

T Valuable Blighted-made product, Relics of those who twisted them, Trophies taken from their prey

P Human structure reworked to fit their nature, Site of a gruesome massacre, Shrine or monument honoring their creators

Beast Swarm

There is a swarm of some dangerous beast in the area, whether it consists of a tide of minuscule vermin or a pack of magically-warped predators. Some of these swarms may serve more as environmental hazards than monsters to be fought; sweeping carpets of mutated radioactive fire ants might be something for the PCs to dodge rather than engage. If the beasts have some mundane value, they might have attracted suitably reckless interest from the locals.

E Supernaturally intelligent god-beast, Mad wizard who spawned them, Brutal hunt master driving his wretched minions on

F Victim of a beast attack, Animal collector on a mission, Hunter in search of vengeance

C The beasts are usually harmless but have recently changed, The beasts are the only thing holding a worse peril back, The beasts gain magical powers in sufficiently large groups

T Poison that is very lethal to the beasts, Relic that can control the swarms, Priceless treasure held by a luckless hunter

P Site of a bestial massacre, Fetid den of a swarm, Overrun hunter's camp

Broken Infrastructure

There is a ruin here that once enabled some grand ancient infrastructure. A lost canal lock, irrigation control center, magical gate nexus, weather control station, underground transit station, occult communications center, or some other great function was once performed here. The ruin has been unusable for ages, but remnants of its former function might still be found in the surroundings.

E Sorcerer looting the wreckage, Monstrous remnant of the former inhabitants or guardians, Modern parasite-monster come to feed on the scraps

F Curious arcane student, Tribal who lives in the ruin, Wayfarer forced to seek refuge there

C It still works but in a dangerous and unhelpful way, It would cause a tremendous local disaster if it were re-activated, The locals are exploiting it in an unintended fashion

T Control key for the original function, Relic related to the original function that does something magical, Precious component from it

P Long-ruined control nexus, Collapsed service or operational area, Surrounding area scarred by the decayed remnants of its function

Chokepoint

There's a natural choke point in this area: a mountain pass, a land bridge, a dry ridge in a swamp, a narrow strand of untainted arratu land, a gap in a megastructure, or some other slender passage. Such a chokepoint is likely part of a feature that extends outside the hex, and it may be prohibitively difficult to cross this feature anywhere else. Such valuable, defensible areas are rarely left unoccupied.

E Bandit lord who "taxes" passersby, Monstrous creature who hunts there, Ancient guardian of a long-dead polity

F Trader in dire need, Explorer seeking a better way, Local currently inhabiting the chokepoint

C It can be opened or blocked by a controller, It's only recently become abnormally dangerous, It's known of only by those who want it kept secret

T Map of the passage, Token allowing safe passage, Key to controlling the passage

P Perfect ambush site, Natural fortress, High observation point commanding the pass

Collapsed Deep

An ancient Deep once was located here, but time, warfare, or disaster caused it to collapse. A significant portion of the surface has likely subsided to form an uneven crater. Small sections of the Deep might still be accessible from the surface, and dangerous uncollapsed passageways may still connect these smaller zones. The heirs of the survivors may still persist on the surface or they may have long since died out to natural hazards or dispersion.

E Buried undying lord, Surface looter with dreams of rule, The thing that caused the collapse

F Friendly survivor descendant, Curious explorer, Native guide to the ancient pit

C Things below are digging their way up, The Deep is leaking something dangerous, The collapse was recent and monstrous survivors still flee

T Priceless Deep treasure cast up, Exposed arcane components, Potent relic carried by survivors

P Ancient vault torn in two, Crevasse cutting through a hundred ruined levels, Buckled structure fragment jutting through the surface

Criminal Meet

This site is used as a meeting place for smugglers, bandits, illegal slavers, fences, or other criminals. Something about the place gives them a good view of any incoming strangers and discreet privacy for their dealings. Some few criminals may remain here at all times to maintain the place, or it might be used only as the situation requires. These criminals may be particular, dealing only with known associates, or they may be far enough from the law to feel comfortable about trading with adventurers.

E Corrupt merchant grandee, Sinister black market boss, Monstrous entity that enforces the meet's peace

F Theft victim searching for their goods, Frustrated local lawman, Merchant with suspicions about a fence

C The local authorities turn a knowing blind eye to it, The meet is trading in something much worse than everyone thinks it is, Significant amounts of stolen goods are stored there

T Valuable smuggled contraband, Cache of stolen goods, Precious object that's very hard to fence

P Concealed cave storehouse, Rocky observation point, Sheltered glade in a thick forest

Cryptic Art

A vast ancient work of art has been raised here, back when the wilderness was not so wild. It may be a statue or other sculpted monument, perhaps of entities in no way human, or it may be fashioned of solid light, sound, emotions, or stranger media. The intended meaning of this art is usually incomprehensible to modern humanity and the structure is too large or too difficult to harm for ordinary vandals or time to have erode it entirely. Some ancient forms of art can be dangerous or even lethal to modern humans.

E Ancient site guardian, Priest of a cult that's made a religion of the art, Sorcerer bent on suborning a magical artwork

F Reckless art connoisseur, Native living in the artwork, Historian trying to decipher it

C It has a positive or negative effect on a viewer's body or mind, It's been warped into something monstrous by time or decay, It encodes a terrible or precious secret to those who understand it

T Ancient texts that can decode the art's meaning, Precious object used in its construction, Fragment of damaged art that's still valuable

P Intended viewing site for the art, Churning inner mechanism of a complex work, Hidden chamber revealing a different perspective of the work

Cursed Land

This site has been cursed. Rather than being a simple xenoformed arratu, some malevolent magic has laid a persistent, dangerous affliction on the area. Creatures may be warped, inhabitants may be plagued, terrible luck might strike all passers-by, or natural physical processes might be perverted. There should be something valuable or attractive here, or else few people would have any reason to engage with the location.

E Vile sorcerer responsible for the curse, Hideously-warped native creature, Curse-beast that sweats the malison with its very existence

F Local curse victim, Native sorcerer trying to lift it, Hapless pioneer who didn't realize it was there

C It has a seemingly positive effect as well, The seemingly obvious source of the curse isn't at all responsible, Someone profits by the curse

T Ward to protect against the curse, Precious byproduct of the magic, Key to undoing the curse

P Warped and twisted natural feature, Nest of misshapen beasts, Field of grossly-mutated plant life

Decayed Working

There's an ancient Working in the area that is broken or decayed, and the original effect it was intended to produce has been twisted into something dangerous. Infrastructure Workings meant to provide good fortune, health, or swift travel might now create ill-luck, plagues, or vomit forth extradimensional horrors. Small Workings of private buildings might now create localized hazards. Completely destroying the Working might end the problem or create an even greater disaster from the magical fallout.

E Working-born abomination, Ancient caretaker gone berserk, Sorcerer tearing apart the Working recklessly for lore and parts

F Native who knows how to live with the blight, Ambitious would-be repairman, Curious scholar looking for details

C The decay can be contained with vile or costly rituals by the locals, The decay is endured because it fends off outsiders, A local enemy wants to worsen the effect

T Parts to repair the Working, Valuable magical byproducts, Precious Working fragments

P Decaying Working chamber, Site twisted by the magical effect, Collapsed arcane structure

Demihuman Community

There's a community of demihumans living here, likely intentionally avoiding more well-controlled lands in order to maintain their autonomy. Autonomy alone is unlikely to be all the reason they've avoided civilized lands, however, as few human rulers find it worth the trouble to demand more than a fixed tribute from demihumans, leaving them to control their own affairs. There may be something about this group that makes it impossible for them to live comfortably near humans.

E Crazed demihuman leader, Sinister demihuman cult priest, Tyrannical government viceroy

F Xenophilic local demihuman, Human trader with lasting ties, Human who's "gone native"

C They're apart to keep humans safe from them rather than them safe from humans, They're remnants of a former demihuman kingdom, They're responsible for many local wilderness dangers in order to maintain their privacy

T Precious good created by demihumans, Inherited relic of the ancestors, Tribute owed the local ruler

P Ceremonial structure of a former age, Village hidden cunningly, Well-guarded wall against outsiders

Devil Grove

While not a full-fledged *arratu*, there's a glade or zone within the hex that's infested with Outsider flora and fauna. Beasts from within prowl the surrounding area, though some circumstance is preventing the glade from growing at a very rapid pace. Some ancient Outsider device may be causing the glade, or it might be the tiny remnant of some ancient wasteland that's shrunken with time and the constraint of the Legacy.

E Hideous Outsider predator, Blighted warchief hiding in the grove, Ancient Outsider maintaining the grove

F Hard-pressed pioneer, Local hunter harried by the beasts, Adventurer seeking the grove's cause

C Local rustics sacrifice to the grove to placate its denizens, The grove is valued as a natural defense against a neighboring threat, Exiles and criminals seek refuge there

T Precious byproduct of alien life, Outsider relic in the heart of the grove, Valuable goods on a victim of the beasts

P Glen swollen with uncanny life, Windy vale streaked with plumes of alien air, Shore of a pond full of some noxious chemical

Disused Mine

A mine of some kind once existed here. While shaft mines with tunnels and galleries are the common type for present-day delvings, ancient strip mines here may have peeled off whole mountainsides or exposed some massive megastructure that was stripped for parts in a prior, lost age. The forgotten mines of a prior era might have left tailing piles or trace deposits that are valuable to a more depleted age.

E Crazed wildcat miner, Thing from delving too deep, Undead and tireless mine boss

F Eager prospector, Native dwelling in the mines, Ancient friendly mining automaton

C They were mining a buried civilization rather than ores, Groups are fighting over control of the mine, The mine was partially re-purposed for the needs of a group of natives

T Motherlode of precious materials, Storehouse of refined product, Map to a virgin strike

P Massive pitch-black subterranean gallery, Mound made of centuries worth of tailings, Still-poisoned land in a processing waste zone

Hermitage

A small hermitage was established here sometime in the past to provide solitude for some ascetic. Occasionally small clusters of hermits form around such a central point, meeting at times to check on each other or join in shared discipline. Such anchorites usually shun visitors who aren't also devotees of their path, but occasionally a hermit wins such fame for sorcery or wisdom that pilgrims seek them out. Some hermits have been known to respond with great anger toward these repeated worldly interruptions.

E Hermit sorcerer gone mad, Sinister villain hiding as a hermit, Alien hermit with inscrutably evil philosophical principles

F Worried relative of a new hermit, Petitioner seeking holy help, Hermit rethinking solitude

C The hermits have control over a local magical energy or Working, They keep themselves separate to keep others safe from them and their irrepressible powers, The hermit is hated by the local secular authorities for their aid to its foes

T Precious religious relic carried by the hermit, Cast-off worldly wealth, Map to finding them

P Austere wilderness cave, Hermit hole in a grave-mound in the swamps, Tall and narrow stone column for sitting on

Healing Terrain

This site borders a shrinking *arratu*, one being slowly driven back by the Legacy, the work of human hands, or some native life form that's capable of successfully competing with the alien life. There are usually some pioneers or scavengers trying to take advantage of the shrinking waste, either to work the newly-arable land or plunder the ruins its receding tide reveals.

E Furious and frustrated Outsider wastemaker, Monstrous beast in too small a hunting ground, Local tyrant seeking dominion over the new pioneers

F Plucky new colonist, Earnest professional mender of wastes, Luckless soldier sent to defend the new locals

C The shrinking wastes are revealing a lost human city below, As the waste shrinks its effects are getting more concentrated inside it, The receding zone is opening a safe path for old enemies to strike the new holdings

T Treasures long lost within the waste, Possessions cherished by a now-dead pioneer, Precious product of the alien flora that now grows scarce

P Half-warped glade where alien life is losing, Newly-built steading, Exposed ancient structure

Historical Survival

Some small community or remnant group of an ancient empire persists here. They may have been a colony planted before the empire's fall, an outside group that inherited the culture after conquest or subsumption, a chronological distortion cast out of time, a group held in stasis that recently awoke, or some other remnant of a greater past. They may or may not have a clear idea of the present world, but may preserve knowledge of now-lost strongholds and points of power once held by their ancestors.

E Embittered revanchist ruler, Vengeful chieftain who blames the world, Transhuman leader of incomprehensible cognition

F Heritor curious about outsiders, Desperate chief in need of outside help, Determined preserver of ancient identity

C The empire they belonged to was infamous, They're only notionally human, They make deals with rebels and exiles of neighboring lands

T Long-preserved ancient regalia, Now-lost relic in common use in their empire, Secret lore to unlock hidden storehouses of their people

P Crumbling and dilapidated public building, Crude shrine with too-advanced salvaged ornaments, Passages kept secret from the world

Isolated Academy

A school of sorcerers, esoteric artists, hermit-scholars, or other educators is in the area. The place might once have been the heart of the ancient city where the academy was founded, or it may have special magical or aesthetic traits to attract practitioners, or the topic they study might be abhorrent to civilization. The academy is likely largely self-sufficient but its students and teachers doubtless retain some ties to the outer world.

E Sinister headmaster, Powerful instructor with a dark purpose, Monstrous thing the academy serves

F Sympathetic young student, Pilgrim aspiring to be admitted, Harried instructor needing help

C It has two curricula with the second being much darker and known only to initiates, It's protected by its terrible patron power, An awful sacrifice is demanded of some or all students

T Tome of secret lore they've developed, Magical object they've created, Key to bypassing the academy's defenses

P Mundanely-impossible lecture hall, Artistic work of inhuman nature, Site scorched and blasted by their mistakes or training errors

Lost Battlefield

A terrible battle was fought here at some point in the past, perhaps before the wilderness became what it is now. The locals may or may not remember the event, but the battle left some pronounced effect on the area. Undead may be exceptionally common here, or an ancient weapon may have curdled the land, or the automatons that fought here may still be watchful for new enemies.

E Looter-archaeologist and his minions, Undying warlord, Relentless ancient automaton

F Curious scholar from afar, Heir to one of the warring sides, Ancestral caretaker of the field

C The battle is reenacted by locals either ritually or in earnest every so often, A priceless item of ruling regalia was lost here, The battlefield's full of unexploded ancient munitions

T Potent weapon of ancient days, Precious treasure carried here by a slain noble warrior, Bones of a sainted hero revered by the locals

P Hasty and makeshift tomb of a war leader, Land churned up by ancient war magic, Vast burial mound amid a bleak plain

Labyrinthine Tangle

The terrain is remarkably tangled and treacherous, such that it's almost impossible to cross it without a guide or very good map. This tangle may be the result of shifting, boggy ground, wildly overgrown forest, looming cliffs that box in travel, or magical miasmas that baffle and disorient. Some regions might have spatial distortions born of ancient magic, such that only the right keys allow outsiders to pass them.

E Sinister master of the labyrinth, Monstrous creature born of the wild, Savage exile hiding in the maze

F Helpful local guide, Hapless soul lost within it, Friendly native of the maze

C Getting lost in it can leave you very far from your entry point, An environmental hazard harms you more the longer you stay in it, Guides sacrifice certain clients to the powers within

T Map of the labyrinth, Treasure lost by a victim within it, Precious object the labyrinth guards

P Trail that looks like all the rest, Trees or cliffs too difficult to scale blocking out any distant view, Ancient megastructure with perfectly identical massive decorative fragments that form a maze

Lost City

There was a city here once and its remnants can still be found through the overgrowth. It may have been an ancient city of some lost empire, or it could be a community more recently destroyed by some event and consumed by the surrounding wilderness. In the former case it's probably forgotten by all but the wisest scholars, while in the latter there's some pressing reason that its former people don't dare approach its site any more.

E The terrible creature that destroyed it, Vengeful wraith of its last ruler, Savage chieftain who's taken it for his seat of rule

F Shy survivor of the original population, Local native who dares to enter it, Ancient city servitor who still functions

C The city is plagued with magical aftershocks of the mighty sorcery that destroyed it, The city was smashed before its inhabitants could do a great evil, It's taboo ground for the nearby locals

T Ancient city vault's treasures, Precious relic of the dead, Fragment of the thing that ruined it

P Desolate street half-buried by earth and decay, City monument worn into illegibility, Wreckage of the catastrophic death of the city

Magical Springs

There's an enchanted spring in the area, one empowered by an ancient Working or warped by ambient currents of magic. The creatures that drink from it might be blessed with some special grace, but it's just as likely that some more sinister consequence comes from imbibing its water. The animal and plant life around it have doubtless been substantially altered by its effects. Most such springwater loses its powers if separated from the main body for very long.

E Beast warped by the spring's power, Ruthless sorcerer experimenting with its effects, Barbaric chieftain using it to advance his power

F Ancestral guardian of the spring, Pioneer plagued by the spring's effects, Scholar who thinks they can fix any negative effects of the spring

C The spring grants a blessing that comes with a substantial cost, The spring's blessing becomes a curse when over-imbibed, The spring's created an entire ecosystem of servitor-addicts

T Cure for the changes the spring forces, Vessel that can hold the springwater without losing its power, Precious fragment of the original Working

P Pool of obviously uncanny water, Shore marked with the spring's effects, Weird den of a spring-touched beast

Migration Path

A fearsome migration of dangerous creatures crosses this area at certain times of the month or year. During this migration an invincible wave of these entities crosses the site, perhaps to get from one underground entrance to another, or to move from one feeding site to the next, or to immerse themselves in some critical magical aura or ancient radiation. Despite this, there must be something valuable in this area that tempts outsiders to risk being here when the living tide arrives.

E Monstrously huge alpha of the tide, Cultist who worships the creatures of the tide, Sorcerer trying to bend the swarm to his will

F Treasure seeker daring the migration schedule, Scholar of these beasts, Local trapped here at the wrong time

C The tide's schedule is dangerously unpredictable, The creatures are always present but only become dangerous during the migration, The migration path changes very often

T Precious animal byproduct of the swarm, Treasure found by a too-slow seeker, Key to predicting or controlling the swarm

P Trail stripped bare by the tide, Massive breeding ground, Island full of cowering refugees

Military Outpost

There's a military post located in this wilderness, one planted by an interested government, community, religion, or mercantile group. It may be guarding a trail through the wilds, monitoring dangerous natives, acting as a tripwire against invasion, or be a punishment post for troublesome officers. The outpost is likely to be reliant on regular shipments of goods. Sufficiently large outposts often form the nucleus of a pioneer settlement.

E Brutal martinet commander, Wrathful native leader, Crime boss who's suborned the isolated post

F Hard-used military scout, Pioneer searching for help, Native leader looking for allies

C The outpost has sparked a dispute with a bordering polity, The post is so isolated it's effectively independent, The post has been abandoned or cut off by its patron and is in dire need of supply

T Load of vital supplies, Pay for the soldiers, Weapon shipment craved by the natives

P Rough-hewn log fort, Piled stone strongpoint on a naturally-defensible site, Tall wooden tower looking over the countryside

Motherlode

Some precious ore, rare wood, magical elixir, arcanely-potent extract, or other natural product is in great supply here. Anyone capable of extracting it without interruption would become very wealthy, though the natives, the local fauna, or rival competitors may make that ambition difficult to fulfill. The motherlode might be known only to the natives, or is perhaps known to no one at all due to its concealment or exotic nature.

E Prospector devoid of moral qualms, Existing site owner who's lethally paranoid, Local lord who intends to utterly exploit the eventual site owner

F Humble laborer in the mines, Poor but talented prospector, Land-wise local who knows of it

C The substance is very hazardous to the extractor, Extracting it would break a very powerful local monopoly, It was buried or sealed away for a very good reason

T Sample proving the motherlode's worth, Ancient tools that make extraction practical, Capital needed to begin extraction

P The dangerous extraction site itself, Cave where prior extractors stored their equipment, Makeshift barracks where the laborers sleep

Monstrous Beast

Fearsome beasts are a commonplace in the wilderness of the Latter Earth, but there's something here horrible enough to be remarkable even to the natives. It may be something far too dangerous for the party to have any hope of defeating; if so, it should leave plenty of evidence of its approach or presence, and give prudent heroes the chance to flee or distract it. The natives either avoid this area or must find some way to placate the thing.

E Magical abomination born of ancient sorcery, Divinely-infused god-beast, Remnant-creature of a dead empire that still fulfills its duty

F Glory-seeking hunter, Native with a lust for vengeance against it, Rapt arcane zoologist

C The locals worship it as a god because it actually can and will help them at times, It's guarding a particular site there, Its leavings or sheddings are a precious substance

T Treasure of some luckless victim, Relic of the beast's makers, Substance or device that can repel the beast

P Site of a horrible slaughter, Monstrous lair full of remains, Gory offering-site where sacrifices are made to it

Nomad Camp

There's a regularly-used nomad camp site in the area, a stopping place for them and their kindred. The site likely has water, a defensible position, or religious significance to them. Depending on the time of year or current raiding activities the camp might be empty, but any random day presents some chance of a group of them seeking shelter here. Wandering encounters in this hex might very likely be with such nomads.

E Glory-hungry nomad raid leader, Leader who plans on turning his people into sedentary conquerors, Vision-maddened sorcerer-priest of the nomads

F Peace-minded rival of the nomad leader, Local victim of their raids, Former owner of the structure they're now using as a camp

C The nomads are raiders or traders as profit suggests, The nomads are forced to move by some outside power, The camp is desperately needed by some local group for practical or religious reasons

T Loot hidden in the camp, Trophy taken by the raiders, Tribute offered up to win their mercy

P Once-splendid chamber now scuffed and defaced, Vigilantly-guarded oasis, Makeshift shrine to the nomad god

Outsider Enclave

A group of surviving Outsiders dwells in the area, a remnant of their former age of rule. They may rely on stealth or great isolation to preserve their numbers, or they might just be able to kill anyone who gets too close. The enclave is unlikely to have real ambitions of expansion or else it would have been wiped out by now, but it may preserve ancient relics or fell powers that could wreak havoc if used recklessly.

E Bitterly vengeful Outsider leader, Human traitor in league with the enclave, Hideous thing unleashed by the enclave

F Outsider who sees profit in the PCs, Naively xenophilic human, Victim of Outsider raids

C The Outsiders want something that isn't necessarily antagonistic to the PCs, They've only recently awoken from stasis or temporal displacement and are still exploring, They're masquerading as a human group or have one as a front

T Potent alien relic, Treasure collected from human thralls, Precious regalia of an alien king

P Fetid Outsider nest with a noxious atmosphere, Eerie abandoned ruins of their former day, Maintained shrine to an Outsider god

Overgrown Tomb

A once-honored tomb lies here, forgotten or lost to the depredations of enemies. The structure is likely elaborate enough to be a building in its own right, or an excavation beneath some surface monument. The tomb may house a single glorious hero or be the resting place of an associated group, such as a particular noble lineage, the slain of a great battle, a lost city's municipal ossuary, or some like grave.

E Long-trapped undead king, Monstrous beast fat on old corpses, Necromancer jealous of his prizes

F Ancestral guardian of the tomb, Curious archaeologist, Last heir of the one entombed

C It was originally a different structure turned into a mass grave due to emergency need, It's actually just a mass casualty incident in a structure, Someone's mining the dead for their remains

T Precious funerary offerings, Regalia buried with a dead ruler, Text containing secrets lost to the present day

P Crumbling monument to the dead, Fallen-in gravesite, Forest of gravestones

Perilous Path

A danger-laden bridge, trail, skyway, spatial distortion, tunnel, ancient roadbed, or some other path in this area leads through an otherwise impenetrable obstacle or serves as the sole means of reaching some point of interest. This path should be fairly obvious to explorers, but its destination may not be clear. If the destination is inhabited, it might be guarded by the denizens, or there may be the remains of ancient wayposts that once served the traffic along the path.

E Raubritter warrior demanding a toll, Vicious monster lairing on the path, Bandit chief lying in wait to ambush travelers

F Helpful native path guide, Ancient maintenance laborer on the path, Explorer seeking the path

C The path is one-way only, The path has only recently opened up, The path can be controlled with a particular key or relic

T Map of the path, Ancient relic used by the path's builders, Key to unlock the path

P Ancient skyway stretching between mountaintops, Tunnel full of long-forgotten defensive traps, Transdimensional pathway through an eldritch wilderness

Pilgrimage Site

There is some important monument, place, or structure here that attracts pilgrims from far away. It may be a holy site beloved of a local faith, a mythic origin-point for a nearby culture, an oracle or other provider of widely-desired services, or a font of some special favor or benefit that can reward a pilgrim. The site may be under the control of a local government, or it may be too distant or dangerous to be effectively protected or administered by outsiders.

E Raider chieftain plundering the pilgrims, Zealot who has seized control of it for their own sect, Once-benevolent holy entity that has become hostile for some reason

F Desperate pilgrim from afar, Local administrator beset by woes, Young merchant providing for the pilgrims' needs

C Factions are actively struggling over the site's control, The site is being ruined by the pilgrim traffic, The site has a strategic value quite aside from its use to pilgrims

T Sacred relic of the site, Offering given by a grateful pilgrim, Token that grants access to the site's most potent reward

P Ancient temple on a holy site, Monument to a great deed, Perilous cave of an oracle

Precious Game

Some native fauna here is remarkably valuable, either for the sake of some magical blessing it grants its captor or for the benefits its flesh, pelt, or magical organs can give. Other game may be ritually important, such an animal that grants some ruling legitimacy to a successful hunter. The animal itself is probably either highly dangerous, highly rare, or carefully gamekept by some outside power if it has escaped extinction thus far.

E Bloodthirsty hunter who brooks no rivals, Game animal grown warped and lethal, Guardian of the game who kills all interlopers

F Sympathetic hunter with a good reason, Local deeply reliant on successful hunting, Zoologist seeking to study the beast

C The benefit of hunting the game is only granted if they are captured or killed in a very troublesome way, The animals are found around a different much more dangerous beast, The beasts have multiple life stages with different traits

T Trove of beast pelts, Lure for the beasts, Map to their secret breeding grounds

P Ramshackle hunting camp, Altar to the beasts, Magical site where the beasts were first made

Refugee Camp

There's a refugee camp in the area made up of people who've fled some calamity. It may be a bandit raid on their villages, an ethnic purge nearby, a religious schism they lost, the collapse of a functioning community, or some other disaster. The refugees have no better place to go or they'd have gone there by now; they're probably dying off to local hazards at a greater or lesser rate, or trying to turn the camp into a functional settlement.

E Brutal tyrant over the camp, Local marauder exploiting them, Horrible beast that hunts them

F Sympathetic young refugee, Local governmental representative who can't help much, Earnest religious leader

C The refugees are highly undesirable to the surrounding polities, They're demihuman or Blighted, The camp's a hotbed of some not-too-quickly lethal but very contagious disease

T Vital cache of supplies, Precious possessions of the refugees, Relic they stole or rescued in their flight

P Miserable camp of crude shanties, Damp refuge caverns, Ancient ruins made into a camp

Rampant Experiment

Not every Working or spell research is a success, and some effort here went drastically wrong. Some sort of rampantly overgrown flora or monstrously altered fauna roam the place, the result of magic gone awry. They probably have some quality or trait that was useful to the creator, but it was combined with so many drawbacks or dangers that the result is a menace.

E Mad sorcerer who caused it, Creature warped terribly by the experiment, Looter with no regard for the chaos their blundering is releasing

F Apologetic apprentice of the culprit, Non-hostile experimental victim, Local desperately fighting the experiments

C An outside power is promoting the disaster because it's somehow to their advantage, The experiment results seem wholly beneficial at first, The experiment's area of effect is slowly growing

T Cure or tool to halt the experiment, Precious object created by the experiment, Magical tool used in the experiment

P Sinister occult laboratory, Normal area terribly warped by the experiment, Local structure destroyed by the experiment

Remnant Road

Some long-lost empire laid a road here, along with the waystations that once served to guard it. The surviving remnant may just be a short segment, or it might still lead to whatever destination of significance it once served. Other ruins of this empire are likely positioned along the road, and modern inhabitants might still make use of it as a highway through rough terrain, or have positioned their own settlements along its length.

E Ancient creature that guards the road from "bandits", Bandit chief exploiting a ruined waypost, Local lord who collects cruel tolls

F Merchant making use of the path, Local from a colony-village set up at one end, Remnant survivor from the culture that built it

C The road is magically useful or well-maintained, The road leads through some tremendously dangerous area, The road is built as a high and stepped structure that forms a tall defensive wall on one side

T Magical pass allowing use of the road, Ancient weapon stored in a waypost, Key to unlocking a waypost's vault

P Ancient watch station, Stretch of unnaturally perfect road, Monument to a forgotten king

Remote Monastery

There is a largely self-sustaining monastery, temple, hermitage, or other religious site in the area, one inhabited by clergy who have some particular need for isolation. They may be guardians of a holy site, imprisoned heretics, wardens of some refuge for travelers, or a particularly rigorous or heretical sect. They may be willing to provide services for strangers of acceptable character, and might well have problems that their limited resources can't solve.

E Sinister-minded abbot, Demonic entity warring on the clerics, Cleric of a rival faith or sect determined to destroy them and all their allies

F Friendly if unworldly local cleric, Native who trades with the monastery, Cleric who seriously reconsiders their choice to come here

C The monastery has been taken over by zealots or an outside power, The monastery is a cover for sinister occult doings, The place isn't nearly as self-sufficient as it thought it would be

T Sacred relic of the place, Offering made by a grateful believer, Sacred text specific to their sect

P Well-guarded fields outside the walls, Heavily-fortified monastic building, Hostel for travelers kept outside the monastery itself

Ruined Fortification

This place was of great strategic importance in some prior age, and a ruined castle, outpost, waystation, or military base can be found here. It may have been destroyed by the slow march of time, or some great military catastrophe may have shattered it. The site is probably too remote or now of too little military value to attract the interest of current governments, but it may still serve as an excellent lair for a more local tyrant or bandit lord.

E Failed usurper "ruling" from this new seat, Zealous rebel chief marshaling strength here, Ghostly shade of the fortress' last commander

F Native forced to take refuge here, Remnant survivor of the original garrison, Government agent sent to investigate the site for usability

C The fortress was built to keep something in rather than out, Some political change has just made the site very valuable once more, The real bulk of the site is hidden from easy view

T Key to open restricted areas of the site, Massive fixed weapon that still works, Precious trove guarded by the fortress

P Long-broken gate, Wall slumped into a ramp, Tower snapped halfway up

Savage Hamlet

There's a village in the area, but its inhabitants are vicious or profoundly unsociable in some way. They may deal violently with outsiders, have abhorrent cultural habits, be the decadent remains of some group cast out for their evil ways, or just Blighted of a kind that get along very poorly with baselines. The party should likely have some sort of indication of their nature given to them before the first contact, or else the village should be savage in ways that don't necessarily lead to likely immediate attack.

E Brutal village chieftain, Cruel shaman of a dark god, Non-local criminal who's gone native in a bad way

F Rare better-dispositioned local, Missionary trying to civilize them, Local who sees profit in dealing with outsiders

C They are remarkably talented or learned at some activity, They appear harmless at first encounter, They have considerable virtues to go with their terrible vices

T Locally-produced good of value, Loot from their victims, Tribute given by frightened neighbors

P Fighting pit for local entertainment, Chieftain's barbaric hall, Ancient structure put to misuse

Sculpted Terrain

In a former age some tyrant or artist sculpted an entire landform here into a statue, monument, or artwork that is visible for miles. A carved mountainside, a molded hill, an intricate pattern of waterways, a mesa pierced with music-emitting tunnels, or some other huge artwork is obvious here, and probably can be seen from any point nearby. Such structures likely have some form of defense to prevent their vandalism, and may contain components that are very valuable in the present age.

E Priest of a sculpture-worshiping cult, Berserk guardian of the art, Chief of a sculpture-dwelling remnant of the original creators

F Courageous art-seeker, Artist desperately in search of inspiration, Treasure-hunter looking for the art's loot

C The art is mobile or otherwise active somehow, The art has some very dangerous effect, The art is damaged and now causes an unintended consequence nearby

T Precious fragment of the art, Magical relic used by the art, Regalia of the former keeper of the art

P Viewing-site built for the art, Damaged or defaced area of the art, Pilgrim quarters meant for those coming to see the art

Seductive Peril

There's a very appealing place, resource, or structure in the area that's actually a dangerous snare for the unwary. Pools may be laced with slow poisons, bright flora might be carnivorous, valuable natural crystals might be radioactive, or ancient pleasure-pavilions might not let revelers go. Some natives might lurk near the peril to loot its victims, while others might intentionally drive prey into it.

E Malevolent spirit of the peril, Cruel looter who uses the peril as a tool, Experimenter looking to exploit the peril

F Companion or friend of a victim, Clueless seeker of the peril's treasure, Native who knows about the peril

C Dangerous as it is the peril does offer a very real reward, The peril is worshiped by locals, The danger is unintentional and related to the peril's original function

T Loot left by victims, Valuable component of the peril, Bait placed to lure victims

P Hidden charnel pit for victims, Enticingly charming facade, Now-abandoned camp of former prey

Taboo Territory

Part of this area is strictly off-limits. It may be restricted to a particular holy priesthood, local rulers, the heirs of a particular lineage, or to everyone. The taboo may be the product of local religious beliefs, ruling edicts, or a practical realization that intruders keep stirring up perils that the locals have to deal with. Watchers likely keep guard over the area and may or may not speak up to warn off potential trespassers.

E The horrible thing within the territory, Bandit chief taking advantage of the taboo to hide there, Ancient guardian of the domain

F Explorer lacking in caution, Accidental trespasser into the zone, Local who desperately needs something from inside the area

C Entering the zone visibly marks trespassers for a time, A hostile force too strong for the warders is trying to get in or out, The taboo is rational but the reason the locals have is badly mistaken

T Treasure unplundered within the zone, The precious relic the taboo is meant to guard, Valuable plant or animal that grows undisturbed within

P Ancient ruin untouched by intruders, Watchpost with a view of the site, Sealed gate to the zone

Toxic Ruins

There's a ruin in the area, but it's poisonous or disease-infested. Such a blight may not be immediately obvious, with the effects slowly taking hold the longer an intruder remains. There's probably something about the ruin that's attractive to others, and the toxin isn't quick enough to make plundering an obviously futile effort. In other cases, the toxin might be fast, but there could be some item or magic to resist it.

E Toxin-warped beast within, Sorcerer exploring the toxin's potential, Cruel plunderer using expendable help to loot the site

F Native who knows a cure for the toxin, Explorer trapped within the ruin, Native life form that's immune to the toxin

C The toxin was a healthful atmosphere to the Outsider builder of the ruin, The toxin is radiation or some other invisible poison, The toxin is exuded by the substance or objects that are most valuable in the ruin

T Cure or protection from the poison, Incredibly toxic weapon or object, Damaged ancient relic that's causing the toxic effect

P Eerily barren land around the ruin, Camp full of poisoned explorers, A grove of unnatural life amid the toxic stew

Treacherous Terrain

A stretch of this area is naturally treacherous and dangerous in its terrain. It may be prone to sinkholes, mudslides, avalanches, quicksand, explosive flora, magical eruptions, boiling geysers, plunging crevasses, or falling stones. This terrain should block the path toward some interesting site or desired destination, or else the party likely has no reason not to simply turn around or go around it.

E Malevolent nature-spirit of the place, Vile outcast who lairs amid the terrain, Monstrous beast native to the dangerous area

F Native guide who knows a way through, Explorer fascinated by the terrain, Traveler forced to find a way through

C The perils manifest on a particular little-known schedule, The perils sometimes uncover lodes of valuable materials, The perils are an accidental legacy of an ancient malfunction

T Map of the safe way through, Device to protect against the peril, Ancient treasure hidden within the peril

P Small safe zone inside the terrain, Ruined road or path amid the peril, Site of a camp destroyed by the peril

Twisted Fauna

The fauna in the area has been warped by some power, and is now dangerous to other forms of life. A lingering curse may have twisted the beasts, as might have ancient techno-sorcerous waste, Outsider manipulation, half-faded *arratus*, mad wizardry, religious cult manipulation, or ancient artistic goals. The beasts probably have some unifying characteristic or trait imbued by the process that warped them.

E Savage beast-tamer, Hideously intelligent god-beast, The mad power that warped the beasts in the first place

F Native trying to cope with the fauna, Hunter determined to bag one, Scholar trying to find the cause of the change

C The beasts are very useful or valuable in some way, The beasts were once humans, The beasts masquerade as normal animals

T Loot of a victim of the beasts, The thing that changed them is a treasure itself, Trove coincidentally located in their territory

P Fetid lair of the beasts, Grove scarred by their activities, Tainted site that birthed them

Uncanny Weather

The area is affected by unnatural or magical weather conditions. It may be a pocket of snowy wasteland in a jungle, an area racked by cataclysmic storms, a shifted zone of space that overlaps with some alien world's atmosphere, an area of perpetual balmy summer, or some other obvious anomaly. Natives may have figured out some way to exploit this condition, or it might be too dangerous for regular occupation.

E Ruthless sorcerer bent on unlocking its secrets, Monstrous beast that thrives in the environment, Dangerous remnant of the zone's creators

F Native who's learned to live in the zone, Refugee trying to hide in it, Entrepreneur trying to profit by it

C The weather is controlled by a site or object, The change is very recent and is disrupting the locals, The weather leaves behind a valuable resource

T Ancient weather-control relic, Texts describing how to stop or control the weather, Abandoned loot from the original inhabitants of the area

P Weather-blasted natural feature, Structure built to endure the weather, Relic building from before the weather happened

Working Wreckage

A Working once was in the area, but has long since collapsed, decayed, or been destroyed by others. It's at least building-sized, with some Workings being full-scale megastructures raised by ancient empires. While the Working's original effect has long dissipated, pockets or fragments of it may still persist in the area, along with the automatons or servitor-people once charged with maintaining the site.

E Animated manifestation of the Working's power, Sorcerer-looter gutting the wreck, Brutal chief of the natives mutated by its power

F Scholar dreaming of activating it once more, Treasure-hunter eager to pick its bones,Local from the surviving caretakers

C It would cause a regional catastrophe if re-activated, Even its remnant effects have large consequences, It was ruined when it was re-tuned to create a different effect

T Key to controlling its remaining power, Spare part that's now priceless, Valuable fragment of wreckage

P Abandoned control room, Site of massive destruction from the Working's collapse, Nest or lair built into the ruin

Zealot Colony

There is a settlement of radical religious or ideological zealots here, ones too extreme to be tolerated in civilized lands. They may not necessarily be hostile, and they might have need of outside assistance, but their principles are likely to be bizarre or abhorrent to the PCs. Most such colonies are bent on creating new societies that may not actually be physically or psychologically possible for unaltered humanity.

E Charismatic demagogue, Iron-fisted hereditary dictator, Dreamer willing to break any number of eggs for their theoretical omelet

F Local who quietly wants out, Reformer trying to temper things, Relative of a now-trapped member

C They've recently acquired an object or an alliance that gives them great power, The ostensible leader is just a puppet of the real and more pragmatic boss, They're beginning to purity spiral into violent factions

T Desperately-necessary supply cache, Wealth given up for the group, Product manufactured by near-slave members

P Grand temple or ideological hall amid shanties, Mass public meeting, Prison for deviants

Using This Game in Other Settings

It's frankly expected that a lot of readers of this game won't be using it with the Latter Earth as their campaign setting. Indeed, a considerable number of you won't be using the system at all, instead taking advantage of the content creation tools in these pages to build worlds and adventures for your own favorite game. These are perfectly reasonable things to do and the game has been written to accommodate these goals as cleanly as possible.

Still, there are some extra tools and items of advice that can be given to those GMs who want to use ***Worlds Without Number*** as their system, but want to play in a more conventional fantasy setting. In particular, some GMs may want to import character classes, spells, magic items, or other content from existing old-school-compatible games and may need some advice on how to do that.

What Materials to Import

A GM can reliably import almost any material written to target the pre-third-editions of the world's most popular role-playing game. Games that target this same general material such as ***Labyrinth Lord***, ***Old School Essentials***, ***Lamentations of the Flame Princess***, ***OSRIC***, ***BFRPG***, or similar games should also translate with little or no difficulty. Importing materials from more modern editions is possible, but they would need significantly more conversion and adjustment, since the hit point and damage ranges tend to be much wider than in the older games.

Some GMs might worry about whether the balance is quite right between this game and materials built for others. While it's true that there are some differences in the prowess or survivability of ***Worlds Without Number*** characters as compared to those of older editions, the difference isn't generally enough to matter to most groups. Heroes in this game don't die immediately at zero hit points and the PCs often have more powers or tricks to play than a B/X Fighter might, but they also have to face Shock damage and generally play in smaller groups than the massive parties of yore. The resultant power match is close enough for most groups.

Importing Adventure Content

Monsters, adventures, and other such content should come through with no necessary changes in hit points, damage rolls, or other numeric details. The one big difference found in some old-school games is the use of ascending versus descending Armor Classes; in some editions, lower is better, so an AC of 0 is equal to ascending AC of 20. For these editions simply subtract the Armor Class given from 20 to find the ascending AC.

These same descending AC systems often record a creature or PC's hit bonus as the number they need to roll on a d20 in order to hit an AC of 0. To find an equivalent ***Worlds Without Number*** hit bonus for the creature, subtract this "THAC0" from 20. Thus, if it needs a 17 to hit an AC of 0, then its hit bonus is +3.

Importing Character Classes

Some GMs may want to add character classes that exist in other old-school games. Instead of making a paladin-flavored Warrior, for example, they might want to import the traditional Paladin class, or they might see some interesting new class that they want to bring into their game. In general, this is a simple process.

Overall, use the same class abilities, hit dice, and details as the original version. If the class gets the power to shapeshift at level 3, then it still gains that power at level 3 in this system. If it rolls 1d8 for its hit points, then it still rolls 1d8 for them here. If it can cast one spell a day from that game's list of magic spells, then the same spellcasting ability applies here.

If the class has special weapon or armor restrictions, they also apply in ***Worlds Without Number***. Many old-school classes are balanced around restricted access to the best armor and weapons, so it's important not to meddle with this carelessly.

To identify the class' hit bonus, check to see how many special abilities the class grants. One with very few special powers, such as an old-school Fighter or Ranger, would use the Warrior table for determining hit bonuses. One that has a significant number of special powers but doesn't actually get the spellcasting abilities of a wizard or old-school Cleric would use the Expert hit table. One that gets full spellcasting or a similarly potent array of abilities would use the Mage hit table.

Finally, check to see how many Focus picks you should peel off from the class in exchange for their special abilities. Look at the special powers the class grants and compare them to the benefits reasonable for a single Focus pick. Some "class powers" might not be very powerful at all; a classic Thief's special abilities of lockpicking and sneaking are really nothing that isn't better-represented in this game as a *Specialist* Focus in Sneak. Others might be substantially stronger than a Focus normally grants, such as an old-school Druid's shapeshifting powers. Full spellcasting is something you can set aside; the class paid for that with their shabby hit bonus and hit points, so you don't need to take away Focus picks for it.

Once you've decided how many Focus picks the class' powers are worth, then that many Focus picks are taken away from the class as they advance in experience levels. A class with a lot of special abilities might not get to pick new Foci at all when they go up in levels, simply getting the special powers of their class instead. Particularly straight-forward classes, like the old-school Fighter, might not sacrifice any Focus picks at all. All PCs should be allowed to pick at least one Focus at first level, however.

Note that many old-school games offer various different types of saving throws. For this game, it's easier to ignore those tables and simply calculate Physical, Mental, and Evasion saving throws as usual for the PC.

Reskinning Character Classes

In many cases, however, a GM will simply want to use normal ***Worlds Without Number*** classes for their own campaign. To help simplify your task, here are some recommendations for what classes to use to substitute for more "traditional" old-school professions.

Fighters are simply Warriors. ***Rangers*** and ***Paladins*** are Warriors who've invested in Survive or Pray, and possibly put some Focus specialization in bow use or dual-wielding depending on the interpretation of Ranger being used. Paladins who want some measure of miracle-invoking ability have partial-classed into the Sarulite Blood Priest class described in the deluxe edition of this book. Rangers who want a "pet" minion will have partialed into the Llaigisan Beastmaster class in the deluxe edition.

Thieves are Experts who have probably taken the *Specialist* Focus in the Sneak skill and invested their skill points in assorted larcenous talents. ***Assassins*** have taken the appropriate Focus and might've invested more heavily in combat skills; some of these might actually be Warriors with a Sneak investment.

Clerics have taken the Warrior/Sarulite Blood Priest class in the deluxe edition if they want to be a traditional head-bashing, miracle-invoking cleric. If they want actual spellcasting abilities, however, they may partial-class into an appropriate Mage tradition, and may have to take the *Armored Magic* Focus if they want to do their spellcasting while in full harness. ***Druids*** are Llaigisan Beastmasters if they want to focus on pet control and Darian Skinshifters if they want to emphasize shapeshifting. If they want to add spellcasting into the mix, they'll need to decide which aspect to forego in order to add an appropriate partial Elementalist class or the like.

Monks are Vowed, with Warrior-Vowed representing the standard punch enthusiast while Expert-Vowed make for effective ninja-flavored martial artists. Practitioners of animal-based arts might add in some bestial shapeshifting with the Darian Skinshifter partial class.

Magic-users are represented by whatever Mage class best fits the character's concept. Optionally, the GM can include some fan-favorite spells from different old-school games into the High Magic spell list if they wish, but such conversions should be done carefully, as explained below.

A GM is generally best off asking the players first what kind of PCs they want to play before going to the trouble of converting character classes or homebrewing new roles. Character classes only exist for the convenience and use of the PCs; if nobody wants to be a paladin, then there's no point in going to the effort of converting the class for this game.

In the same fashion, if you introduce some new heroic profession or role into your own campaign, don't bother to turn it into a PC class unless someone in the party actually wants to play one. You don't have to spell out everything simply for consistency's sake when your available time and effort is limited as it is.

Importing Spells and Magic

Many GMs may have an inclination to use this game with settings where magic is considerably easier to use than in the Latter Earth. Magic-users in these settings may have access to a much larger selection of spells, both to learn and to cast on a daily basis, and the spells might be much better-tuned to accomplish specific purposes. For these games, the basic idea is that the magic-user should always have something magical to do in a given situation, even if that's simply blasting magic bolts.

This is not the philosophy of ***Worlds Without Number***. Mages in this game are intended to find themselves in some situations where their magic is simply not relevant, much like a Warrior sometimes finds his sword useless or an Expert finds her skills unable to address a problem. PCs are expected to have to use their less-best options to overcome some problems or deal with certain situations. Still, this doesn't mean that GMs should never include more magic, or that they can't have their own ideas about a proper balance.

Most spells imported from existing old-school products will be significantly weaker than equivalent-level High Magic spells. There's usually no issue with simply halving their original level, rounded up, and then adding them to the High Magic spell list. The exceptions are three different classes of spells that need more careful examination.

Spells that do damage or eliminate enemies need to be toned down or made less convenient to use. Any spell that does area damage should always affect everyone in the area, friend or foe, and spells that inflict damage on a single target should always allow saving throws for half damage. Neither should ever do more than ten dice of damage, regardless of the caster's level. Spells that render a victim unable to fight should either not work on targets with more hit dice than the caster or should require more than one failed save to finally put the target down. Any spell that threatens to dethrone the Warrior's primacy in combat needs to be trimmed back.

Spells that give bonuses to hit rolls, skill checks, or other attributes should generally not be allowed. A spell that simply makes you do what you always did 10% better is a very boring spell that doesn't change the situation at all when it is used. Casters end up with a powerful inducement to simply carry a load of buffs, because they're by definition always useful whenever the buffed abilities are relevant. If the spell doesn't change the situation when it's used, it's probably not going to be a good addition to the game.

Spells that step on another PC's concept should not be allowed. If you have a stealthy, sneaky Expert in the party, don't let the wizard add spells that let them replicate or better that talent. If you have a social-master PC with heavy investment in social Foci and skills, don't let the wizard add a bunch of mindbending powers to their spell list. This limit is table-specific, because if there is no PC occupying a niche then there's much less danger in letting that niche get stepped on by the wizard.

CREATING ADVENTURES

Adventures are where all the sweat, toil, and fevered thought of the GM finally becomes something real at the table. No matter how finely-sculpted your world or inventive your fiction, if you can't deliver a playable bit of fun at the table then your job as a GM is not done.

This pressure to create the session's content and administer its play is what keeps a lot of players from ever becoming GMs. They find it too intimidating or burdensome to have such a responsibility, and it's not unreasonable that they should just want to sit down and have an evening's fun dicing with their friends.

Yet GMing does not have to be some special province of voice-acting improv artists. Almost anyone can be a perfectly good GM with the right techniques and a complementary group of players, and there are certain rewards to being a sandbox GM that can't be had from the player's side of the screen.

The GM gets to be surprised. In a traditional story-arc campaign, the GM plots the general outline of the story well in advance, and often knows the rough shape of the next several sessions. They might be surprised by how the PCs handle certain events or negotiate certain plot points, but the basic outline is not a mystery to them.

This is not the case for a GM in a sandbox campaign. Lacking any overarching plot to pursue, with no obligation to worry about the shape of a story or the consequences of an unpredictable choice, a GM has the pleasure of seeing their friends navigate the situations they've set up for them without having to worry about the consequences. A sandbox GM never has be concerned about anything in play except the immediate situation to hand. If the PCs veer off in a mad direction, nothing is lost; no future session prep is wasted and no story is derailed, because *the story is what happens.*

The GM gets to pick the situations. If you're running the campaign you can be reasonably sure that the content you create will not be boring to you. The PCs get to pick the direction of a sandbox campaign, and can decide which of your interesting situations they want to engage with, but you're ultimately the one coming up with the content they pick. If you want to run a campaign with a particular flavor, or one set in a specific fantasy world, or one that includes or excludes particular tropes, then that's what's going to happen.

Because in the end, the GM decides what kind of game is being played. The players may decide that they're not interested in the same things, and it's perfectly fair of them to decline a game that doesn't match their own tastes, but you're the one doing the heavy lifting. The games that get played are the games that have GMs, and it doesn't matter how many willing players a traditional RPG has if none of them want to GM it.

The GM always has something to do. When the session is over and the pizza is gone, that's it for the players. They might reminisce over mighty or foolish deeds, mull over what their hero plans to do next, or make plans with their fellows for some shared goal, but none of that will actually matter until the GM gavels in the next session.

The GM, on the other hand, can always go back to their campaign world and move the pieces around. They can flesh out aspects of the setting, cook up a quick mini-dungeon, paint up an NPC, work out some homebrew rules, or do other things that actually change the game. They might choose not to use a particular between-sessions creation or omit some content they brewed up, but that remains their choice. A GM can "play" the game whenever they have the time and inclination and know that their choices will matter.

Thus, this section of the book contains guidelines and techniques to help you become a good GM for a ***Worlds Without Number*** campaign.

Using Existing Adventures

This game is built on an "old school" chassis, taking many of its basic concepts from the B/X edition of the biggest role playing game of the seventies and eighties. Six attributes ranging from 3 to 18, d20 rolls to hit, armor classes, saving throws, hit points, character levels, and the like are fundamental to this gaming *lingua franca*, and while the details may differ, the chassis remains.

As a working GM, you should take ruthless advantage of this. Almost fifty years of published adventure modules and homebrew adventures exist for you to pillage for your own campaign, many of them available for free or cheaply in PDF online. Virtually any adventure published before 2000 for the world's most popular RPG can be used with ***Worlds Without Number***, with no more effort than converting descending AC and THAC0 scores to this game's scale and turning gold piece values into silver piece values. Spells used in the module that don't exist in this game can be replaced, or you could just use the original spell's effects without breaking anything important. Supplements and other old-school core games can also be looted for content that suits your tastes.

By plundering these venerable texts you can spare yourself a great amount of work, and save your effort for the parts of the adventure you *want* to work on. As a mortal human you only have so much time and creative energy. Whenever you can borrow the toil of some prior creator to spare yourself exertions that aren't fun for you, it's something to be embraced.

When looting these adventures, don't feel obliged to keep them all in one piece. You can carve out interesting situations and slice up dungeons into pieces that you can later reskin for your own creations. With some tweaked names, a change of scenery, and a scalpel taken to any recognizable intellectual property, your players will never guess that the adventure they're playing was written before most of them were born.

What GMs and Players Need to Bring

Many gaming players and GMs are familiar with the tacit expectations of their table. They know what everyone is supposed to be bringing to the session, and they know what their share of the work is supposed to be. For new players or those introduced into a new group, however, these tacit understandings might be a little *too* implicit. To help clarify these points, here are some of the basic expectations that players and GMs need to have about a standard ***Worlds Without Number*** campaign.

Duties of the Players

Players have the relatively "easy" job in a campaign, but it doesn't mean it's one they can wholly neglect. There are some things every player needs to bring to the table if everyone there is going to have a good time.

PCs need to want to work together. It doesn't matter how or why your PC wants to work with the other characters. Maybe it's a spirit of grudging cooperation, or suspicious association, or an alliance of convenience. It can be any reason that your character concept can justify, but it has to boil down to your PC wanting to help and cooperate with the other PCs. It's *your* job to explain why your PC is willing to adventure alongside the other characters. If you can't come up with a reason, it's not the GM's problem; you need to find one or make a new PC.

Note that some campaigns might be explicitly adversarial among the PCs, or involve specific contrary goals or purposes. If everyone at the table is fine with that, then that's perfectly acceptable, but the default assumption is that everyone is working together.

PCs need to have a motivation to act. Your PC need to want to interact with the world. They need a goal, or a motivation, or an inclination to *do* something. When they see adventure, they need to have a reason to jump at it. Sometimes a character concept gets created that is all about *being* something; the character is a taciturn archer, or a beautiful young priestess, or a farm-boy warrior haunted by the specter of battle. That's all well and good, but all of these concepts need a driving motivation that will get them tangled in plot hooks and seeking wild adventures.

Players need to pay attention. Put away the phones, stow the talk about the latest podcast, and listen to what the other players are doing even when it doesn't involve you. Listen to what the GM is saying, think about the choices your PC is going to make, and engage with the game as it's going on.

Players need to trust the GM. The GM is going to be making a lot of judgment calls and quick decisions during play. Not all of them are going to go your way, and some of them are inevitably going to seem downright poorly-reasoned. Still, you need to trust that the GM is doing their best to deliver a fun session for everyone. Rules disputes and other issues with the way they're running a game should be saved for after the session is over.

Duties of the GM

The GM has a heavier load than the players bear. While the players only need to worry about a single character in the world, the GM has to handle the rest of the campaign setting, ensuring that everyone there has enough material to have a good time.

A GM needs to be fair. You are not the party's adversary. You are not the party's cheerleader. You are not here to test their mettle or usher them toward their destiny. You are the indifferent prime mover of your campaign who gives the PCs the results that their efforts have earned. Tilting dice rolls to save or damn a PC is not part of your role. However heart-rending or cruel it may be, the default assumption in ***Worlds Without Number*** is that the GM does not cheat the dice when PCs are involved.

In the same vein, a GM doesn't play favorites among the players. While friendships or relationships may vary, everyone gets the same dice and the same odds at the table. Once special favors start getting handed out every decision the GM makes starts to be viewed with suspicion, whether or not it was deserved.

A GM needs to respond to the PCs. If the party decides to venture into the cursed Ashblight *arratu*, then you need to make up an adventure revolving around that expedition. If the beautiful young priestess has convinced the party to help her assassinate the leader of her temple, then you need to make an adventure about how they do or don't achieve that. On a smaller scale, when the PCs do something in the world, it should leave marks and consequences that they encounter later, even if only in passing. When the PCs do things, the GM needs to do things in response; they should feel as if their actions have actual consequences in the world.

A GM needs to account for PC goals. If the PC has a goal of accumulating vast wealth, then the GM needs to be ready to throw out hooks to adventures that promise monetary rewards. If the PC's goal is bloody vengeance on a tyrant, then hooks need to be made that involve resisting the monarch's rule. These hooks and adventures need not simply grant the PC's wish or give them a golden road to success, but if the players say they want to have adventures revolving around a topic, a GM needs to give them hooks that will get them there.

A GM needs to have an evening's adventure. At the start of the session, the GM needs to have enough material to reasonably occupy the group for however long they've decided to play. This is the most time-consuming part of a GM's job, because brewing up an adventure can take a great deal of time and effort to do well. The tools in this section are meant to help ease the GM's burden in this, however, and make it as quick and painless as possible. A prudent GM can also loot material from existing old-school adventures to fill any sudden gaps.

GM Issues and How To Handle Them

Certain topics and issues come up regularly for GMs, and it can be helpful to have some advice as to how to handle these ordinary situations. The tactics below are certainly not the only way to deal with matters, and may not be the best way for your particular group, but they've proved effective at many different tables.

Disputes During Play

It's inevitable that people at the table will eventually disagree about how a particular rule works. Often as not, this disagreement arises when it is *extremely important* to some PC's future health and well-being. This kind of tension can make for sharp disagreements, so some points should be remembered when trying to deal with the situation.

Debates are for after the session. If serious discussion of a ruling needs to happen, it should take place after the game session is over. Whatever the GM decides goes for the time being, and afterwards the player can make their case and the GM can reflect on their choices. This doesn't mean that the GM will agree even then, but the middle of the session is not the time to break out the page number arguments.

Don't sweat the small stuff. Both players and GMs shouldn't bother spending time arguing over trifles. If a ruling doesn't seriously affect a situation or a PC's health, there's no reason to give it more than ten seconds of back-and-forth. For every decision the GM makes that cuts against a PC, odds are there'll be one that grants them an edge, so it's really not worth arguing over.

This book is not holy. While this book provides a baseline set of rules and default assumptions for play, it is by no means more important than the specific mix of people, situations, and goals that a particular group has at their table. Some default rules might be genuinely terrible for a particular mix of people. Others may not satisfy their interests, or be generally disliked by those who are playing. While it's good form for a GM to discuss any house rules they'll be using and make sure all players are amenable to them, disputing these decisions because of what this book says is not particularly helpful. The GM may reconsider their decisions based on new information or new interpretations, but ultimately, it's up to them. The canonical rules are the ones the GM has decided to use. If their judgment really is no fun for the players then somebody else can do the work to create the play session.

Arguments Among Players

A little intra-party tension is normal and reasonable, and two adventurers who trust each other with their life in battle might not trust each other with their sisters in town. Sometimes this ordinary tension heats up, however, and PCs start actively working against each other. In the worst cases, this bleeds over into reality or stems from out-of-game animosity between them.

Worlds Without Number is not designed to be a good PvP game. It's not built to provide balanced conflicts between PCs, and it assumes that all the PCs will be working together or at the very least not trying to undermine each other. If the entire table is keen on the conflict and everyone trusts the GM to handle any judgment calls, then it can be used that way, but it's not a situation that the game natively supports.

If the quarrel is distracting the rest of the party, however, then the GM needs to call a time-out and get the players back on the same page. Have them decide how they work out their dispute… and they *will* work it out, because the rest of the group's fun isn't going to be held hostage by two players.

If they can't come to some *modus vivendi* and keep interfering with the rest of the group's fun, tell them that they're out of the game until they can play nicely. Their fun is not more important than the rest of the group's fun, and if they've got the bad manners to disregard the rest of the group's time and enjoyment then they're not a good match for the table.

It is nobody's obligation to play with people who aren't fun for them, and no one is obliged to justify their tastes in idle entertainment. Not everybody will be a perfect match for everyone else; the problem player of one table might be the life of the party to another. It is not cruel or selfish to restrict your efforts to those groups that reward your time and labor, and you should not feel obligated to spend your leisure hours amusing anyone who doesn't provide their own fair share of fun for you.

Rules in Ambiguous Situations

In the course of a campaign, there will be plenty of occasions when the PCs end up doing something that hasn't got a matching rule or guideline in the book. It's necessary for the GM to make an ad-hoc ruling in such cases, and in doing so a few things ought to be kept in mind.

Don't worry about large-scale balance concerns. Such extemporaneous rulings can always be changed or revised between sessions if they seem like they're going to come up again. All you need is a ruling that makes sense for this specific situation. Everyone should accept that there may be changes later if the outcome doesn't seem to make sense or if it looks likely to be a recurring issue in need of appropriate balance.

Decide based on logic rather than outcomes. If the PCs come up with a brilliant plan that totally circumvents the challenge you thought they were going to face, don't deny them their success simply because it would spoil your preparations. You may need to call a short session, or throw in some filler content as aftermath to their success, or pull out some emergency backup material to throw in another problem to keep them amused, but let them have their fairly-schemed victories. "But this would ruin the adventure" is almost never a good basis for

decision making; their course of action *is* the adventure, and a GM's job is simply to administer it fairly.

Use existing rules as guidelines. If what they just did would probably kill an ordinary person it happened to, then maybe it does 2d6 damage, because that'd usually kill an ordinary person. If the party can usually move twenty miles a day, then the expert native guide might let them cross thirty miles of terrain in her company. Grant +1 bonuses to skill checks, or +2 if the situation is extremely positive, or invert them for negative situations. Don't worry about matching everything perfectly, but instead just take your cues from what already exists.

GM Calls for Skill Checks

As a general rule of thumb, it should be the GM deciding when a skill roll is in order. There's a certain habit some players have of simply saying, "I roll Convince" or "I roll Notice" or otherwise simply pushing the button on their sheet to get a desired result. That's not generally the best way to handle the situation, because the GM has very little information on how to respond to such efforts.

Instead, the player should describe what their PC is saying, or doing, or trying to accomplish, and then the GM decides whether a skill check is in order, and if so, what the difficulty might be. If they end up saying or doing the exact right thing, or exact *wrong* thing, then there may be no need for a skill check at all. If the tactic they're choosing is exceptionally apt or unfruitful then the skill check difficulty will reflect that.

This is also important when running for players who are new to the game system, who can't be expected to know or remember all the rules. If they learn to simply say what they're trying to do and let the GM tell them what to roll, they can still play comfortably.

Skill checks should also be used sparingly in general. If nothing particular interesting hinges on the roll, there's no point in making it. Experts who use their class talent on a skill roll should be able to feel confident that its success or failure is genuinely important.

Using Social Skills

Players who invest a lot of their character concept into social skills such as Convince, Lead, and Connect have the fair expectation of being able to use those skills in play, even if they themselves aren't all that socially adroit. GMs should recognize the general level of comfort that a given player has with describing their specific words and social gambits; some players will gladly extemporize their persuasions and others will have a harder time picking their words. The latter shouldn't be penalized.

As a basic guideline, when the player wants to persuade or manipulate an NPC, they should explain what they're trying to get from them and what reasoning or motivations they're offering to get that result. They can express these elements with as much in-character persuasion as they like, but what you really need to know is what they want and why the NPC should give it.

In some cases, no skill check is then required. Either the reasoning is solid and the NPC has no cause to object to the inducement or else what the PC wants is so unreasonable or emotionally intolerable to the NPC that no plausible incitement can get it from them. If the situation falls between those two extremes, then you can call for a Convince or Lead skill check at a difficulty appropriate to the persuasiveness of the offer.

No degree of glibness or charm will persuade an NPC to do something obviously harmful unless an equal or superior reward seems promised. The smoother the talker, the more trouble the NPC may be willing to get into, but the PCs are going to need to provide very practical reasons for them to take such risks or expenses.

Remember that social skill levels, no matter how high, are not mind control. They can't get people to do things they would never normally do unless overwhelming situational pressure is involved. Conversely, they're also completely impossible to *block* with magic, so if an Expert con man can get next to an Imperator there's no magical bar or saving throw that's going to prevent him from persuading the demigod of a seemingly good idea.

PC Death and Replacement

Worlds Without Number is a relatively lethal game by default. A single good spear thrust can usually put paid to any novice adventurer and there are no easy means of reviving the dead. Shock damage from a mob, the gnashing teeth of fell beasts, or taking a sorcerer's murderous bolt of energy directly to the face can all terminate even an experienced hero's career.

It's important that the GM and the party all be on the same page about character mortality before the campaign begins. If the players are accustomed to systems with a more forgiving attitude toward character survival, or those in which heroes are protected by plot armor until they intentionally make themselves vulnerable, the shock of the difference can spoil their fun. The GM should make *abundantly clear* to the players that people with big knives are dangerous in this game and that combat is likely to get novice heroes killed if it's not approached with a maximum of tactical advantage.

Given a long enough campaign, it's likely that even a storied hero of numerous adventures is going to make one gamble too many and end up dead from one cause or another. The default assumption of the game is that the players salute the departed legend, perhaps arrange for a tasteful monument, emotional drinking binge, or pragmatic corpse looting, and roll up a replacement. If the GM is feeling charitable then the replacement might be no more than a couple adventures' worth of experience points behind the deceased hero.

GMs should be very generous about getting fresh PCs into the action. It's bad enough that a player's PC died; they shouldn't be made to sit around for half an hour while everyone else gets to have fun. Let their replacement be found lost in the same Deep, or rescued from the foes the PCs just overcame, or out in the wilderness on some conveniently minor errand when the others happen to march through. Questions of trust and comradeship should also probably be glossed for playability's sake. The point is to get the player back in the game as soon as possible, because playing the game is the reason everyone is there.

While this kind of character fragility can be dismaying to players of many modern games, there's a point to it beyond mere bravado. A character who accomplishes grand adventures and survives horrible perils this way has actually accomplished something difficult. There were no plot points in his favor, no narrative tweaks to ensure his survival, and no cushion of fate to keep him from being pulped by a bad choice.

The player made a lot of very good choices, picked the right battles to fight, and made decisions that were objectively wise if they've managed to get this far, and they've done it while absorbing the inevitable amount of bad luck that honest dice would have thrown at them. There's a genuine feeling of pride and accomplishment that comes from bringing a hero that far. The PCs that didn't make it are just proof that the game wasn't rigged in their favor.

Even so, that's not the kind of game every group wants to have. While the satisfaction of proving your skill at navigating the game world is real, some groups want to focus more on character development and following the lives of the particular PCs they want to play. Some may want to play a full-fledged story-arc campaign where the PCs explore a particular plot line, while others just don't want to deal with developing a new PC whenever their choices and their dice end up demanding it. For games like this, there are a few different options the GM can use, assuming the group is all in agreement.

Heroes never die. In these games, the PCs cannot die unless they take bad-faith advantage of this protection. So long as they behave sensibly, no combination of dice can result in their death or permanent invalidation as an adventurer. They may be knocked unconscious, thrown off cliffs, left for dead, blasted into the shrubbery by sorcery, or cursed with afflictions that don't leave them unviable for adventuring, but they won't actually die. Instead, whenever they would die, something Very Bad happens in their life as a kind of karmic balance.

Each player should tell the GM three things that their PC would hate to have happen, whether that's a ability-score-lessening wound, limb loss, death of a loved one, loss of most of their wealth, collapse of a friendship, or the like. These things might change over the course of the campaign as new factors become important to the PC. Whenever the hero would die, one of these things somehow comes to pass, through some stroke of ill-luck or consequence of their failure. Optionally, the GM might pick some other calamity, one the players don't know about until it's too late. The point is that something bad will happen, so the PCs should try very hard not to die.

Negative ten and counting. In these games, PCs are knocked unconscious at zero hit points as usual, but don't actually become Mortally Wounded until they reach -10 hit points or below. Heroes merely reduced to zero hit points will wake up at the end of the fight or scene with 1 hit point, able to act normally. This buffer ensures that a normal spear wound or ordinary bestial chomp might be able to knock a hero down, but it won't put them at immediate risk of death. Higher-level heroes facing multi-die damage sources might have more to worry about, however. Any healing applied to the downed PCs should count from zero, so a PC at -5 hit points who gets 6 points of healing from a friend can stand up with 6 hit points, not 1.

Not my time. Meant chiefly for story-arc games, each PC has a grand ambition or ultimate goal that they're destined to pursue. So long as they honestly and reasonably pursue that goal they cannot die until it has been achieved or been rendered conclusively hopeless. They might suffer the slings and arrows of misfortune, and the consequences of their failures might be dire, but so long as they have some hope of attaining their great goal and don't lose faith in the pursuit of it, they can't be permanently put down.

Planning and Running Adventures

Some experienced GMs will have their own well-tested habits for creating and running adventures for their group. Others need a little more guidance, however, and so this section explains how a GM might go about preparing an evening's adventure, and the steps such a creator will need to go through in order to brew up a suitable session's worth of fun.

Sandboxes and Story Arcs

The tools in this section are meant to support a "sandbox" style of campaigning, and for some GMs this might need a little explanation. Sandbox gaming is relatively less popular than the more prevalent "story arc" style of play, but it has a long and splendid tradition of fun behind it.

A sandbox campaign is built with no presumption of an overarching plot or direction. The PCs are not particularly chosen by destiny, and their fates are wholly undirected by narrative fiat. Each PC has their own goals, motivations, and hopes, and it is the GM's job to provide them with interesting situations and engaging adventures in which they might strive to carry out their plans. Some will succeed, and others will perish hideously, perhaps of no greater crime than sufficiently bad luck. The campaign world shifts and reacts to PC actions, and the overall goal of the party might change from one session to the next.

Story arc campaigns are built around a particular plot line or narrative thread. The campaign is about how the heroes deal with that plot and the actions they take in response to the inevitable events and situations that the narrative thrusts upon them. It's tacitly assumed that all the PCs are going to get involved in the plot and cooperate with it to at least a basic level; they won't simply decide to wash their hands of the affair and go hunt monsters two nations away.

Both styles of adventuring are perfectly valid and provide their own pleasures. A good story arc can hit narrative beats and emphasize coherent themes that would be impossible to ensure in a sandbox campaign, while a sandbox campaign allows for a refreshing amount of surprise for both players and GMs, as neither of them can be entirely sure what's going to happen in the next session. This surprise helps keep things fresh for the GM.

Worlds Without Number is built chiefly to support sandbox campaigns, but there's nothing stopping you from using its tools to help build some story arc game with a specific narrative your group wants to explore. In the same vein, there's nothing immoral about mixing the two styles in the same campaign, so long as the players know what the expectations are. The heroes might venture as their whim takes them through the Latter Earth until they find some situation that so interests them that the GM turns it into a tightly-plotted set of sessions that everyone agrees to follow to their end. The styles are simply play models to help you find the fun you like, not fealties to be pledged.

Preparing Your Adventure

When you sit down to prepare a session's adventure, you can follow the steps below to help produce something playable in a reasonable amount of time. As you grow more experienced with the process, you can start adjusting it to better fit your own interests and skills, but using it as written will work fine for first-time GMs.

Identify the purpose of the adventure. You need to know what kind of fun or opportunity this session is supposed to give to the party. If they're trying to do something, the session needs to give them a chance to further their goal. If they want a particular kind of play, then the session needs to offer them that kind of play.

If this is the first adventure of the campaign, then you need to make a short, one-session adventure that will pull the PCs together, introduce the players to the rules of the game, and give them a chance to learn about the campaign backdrop. At the end of the session, you need to throw them some obvious hooks to other potential adventures and then find out what they want to do next.

If this is a later adventure, you should've asked the players at the end of the last session what they wanted to do for the next. If they told you they wanted to explore a Deep, then you need to flesh out a local Deep and make it adventure-ready. If they wanted to get back at a tyrannical lord, then you need to give them an adventure that lets them try to take that revenge. In a sandbox campaign the goals and interests of the PCs are what drive the adventures, and so you should always be ready to simply *ask* the party what they want to do.

Pick a primary challenge for the adventure. There are four basic types of adventurous challenge: combat challenges that revolve around killing something, exploration challenges that revolve around exploring a dangerous place, investigative challenges that focus on discovering some hidden truth, and social challenges that require convincing or manipulating someone into compliance.

Pick a primary challenge that matches the party's goal. If they want to pillage a Deep, then that's basically an exploration challenge. If they want to avenge themselves on the tyrant, then that's likely going to be a combat challenge. In some cases, the party's goal might be so large or so distant that it can't reasonably be attained in a single adventure; killing the tyrant might eventually be a combat challenge, but initially it might be better represented as a social challenge to ingratiate the PCs into a cell of rebels, from which further progress can be made.

Use the challenge tools in this section to flesh it out. Each of the four types of challenge have their own section in this chapter giving tools and guidance on making a good obstacle of its type. If you're making an exploration challenge, you'll need a map, things to discover, and interesting environments to interact with.

If you're building a social challenge, you'll need to identify people who have or can do the things the party wants, and the particular problems, wants, and relationships these people have.

Add extra layers of challenges. Sometimes a very short session or an optional side-challenge might consist of nothing more than the primary challenge. It's a relatively simple situation where something needs to die, a small strange place might get explored, or a single NPC might need to be induced to cooperate.

Usually, however, you'll want to add one or more additional layers of challenges beneath the primary one. If the PCs are exploring a Deep, then there are probably major monsters in there that are worth fleshing out as combat challenges, and maybe some enigmatic ancient mysteries that could qualify as investigation challenges. There might even be some not-necessarily-hostile powers in there that could be amenable to being a social challenge. If they're trying to persuade an NPC as part of a social challenge, a means to induce them might be to kill a dangerous rival, or dig up well-hidden blackmail on them, or find a particular relic for them in some ruin.

A GM can take this fractal down as far as they have the time and need to do so. A massive megadungeon Deep might be composed of a half-dozen layers of subzones to explore, each with their own mysteries, dire foes, and sinister bargains. A campaign-scale effort to depose a mad emperor might take a dozen sessions to work its way up to the final conflict as the PCs find secrets, fetch relics, kill loyalists, and persuade wavering neutrals.

Stitch the challenges together. If you've used multiple layers of challenges the different moving parts probably have some inkling of each other. The dire beasts in a Deep probably know about the existence of their peers, and two different society grandees that are each their own social challenge could well have their own relationship to keep in mind. If the existence of some element in your adventure would have an obvious consequence to the rest of it, make sure that consequence is accounted for by the other parts of the session. Just because only one NPC wants some treasure from a Deep doesn't mean the others don't know about it… or don't know about that NPC's desire.

Identify rewards and consequences. Finally, what do the PCs get for overcoming the challenges? Why should they actually care about any of this? Keep in mind the initial purpose of the adventure and make sure that the motivations and rewards the situation offers are ones the players are actually going to want to have. Some PCs will be easily motivated by the chance to fight for truth and justice, while other parties won't lift a finger without silver to induce them. An adventure hook that doesn't have any bait on it is unlikely to entice them.

Also keep mindful of the consequences of this adventure on the wider campaign world. You may not know exactly who will be made angry or happy by an adventure until after it's over, but it's a certainty that *somebody* is going to care about what happened.

Running Your Adventure

Once you have your adventure built, you're ready to present it to the party. Every group will have its own tastes when it comes to face-to-face play versus virtual tabletops, or the use of digital devices at the table, or who brings the snacks, and such matters are best discussed and agreed on beforehand.

Despite these universal imponderables, a GM should keep a few things in mind when actually running the adventure in a sandbox style of play.

Don't force outcomes. You're putting the heroes into an interesting situation that gives them opportunities to pursue their goals. You're not promising them any particular outcome, or any certain likelihood of success. It may further the plot wonderfully if the duke takes a shine to the party, but if they set fire to his rose garden and taunt his mother then that furtherance will not happen. *The plot is what happens*, not what anyone has planned to have happen.

Have filler ready. Sometimes the PCs will hopelessly ruin a situation or shut themselves out of success in some resounding fashion. This may be intentional as they flip the table on an unacceptable situation, or it may be the result of bad luck, poor planning, or general imprudence. You should have some light filler content you can throw in to keep them occupied for the rest of the session, such as conveniently-discovered Deep on their path of retreat, or an easily-reskinned peasant who's offering good pay for a little adventurous favor. You might generate such a filler adventure with the tools in this section and then just keep it on hand for emergencies.

Find out what they want to do next session. At the end of every session, *ask them what they want to do next*. This is absolutely crucial for saving yourself time and wasted effort and ensuring that the entire group is on the same page about the next session's general plan. They might choose to bite on a hook you've thrown out to them or come up with their own idea, but you need to know what kind of content to make for the next session.

In a sandbox campaign, you only ever need to be one session ahead of the players. You don't need to plot out vast narratives or design lands the PCs might someday reach; all you need to know is what they want to do next time, and then make your preparations accordingly. Remember, if you don't need it for the next session, and you're not having fun making it, *stop working on it*.

Update your world after the session. Heroic adventures have consequences, both on the PCs and the world around them. Small-scale heroics might only affect a small region of the campaign world, but that region matters if it's where the PCs are. Think about what the heroes have done, who profits by it, and who might be upset with their heroics.

Ideally, you can then work in some callbacks to these changes in your future adventures, letting the players feel that their actions have consequences and that their goals and plans have a meaningful effect on the campaign. Such tokens do much to encourage player engagement.

Creating Combat Challenges

Combat challenges revolve around situations where a hard fight is a likely outcome for the PCs. They may have a burning desire to murder some hated enemy, or they might be facing a creature that has no capacity for peaceful interactions, or you might simply know your party well enough to know that there's no way they're going to let a particular NPC live once they find out what they're like.

As always, you should take care not to force this outcome. Cunning PCs might manage to avoid the target entirely if their goals can be achieved without violence, and exceptionally diplomatic groups might find a way to force a more peaceful conclusion to the challenge. Smart PCs will try to avoid combat whenever it's not a direct necessity, and as the GM you should make sure that you're not forcing their hand by putting unavoidable brawls directly in their path. It's fine if the PCs decide they absolutely must kill a dragon. It's not fine if the PCs decide that all they want is its money, and yet you arrange things so that the only way to steal the dragon's hoard is to murder it in a setpiece battle.

The goal of building a combat challenge is to equip yourself with all the facts you need to run the likely fray. For minor challenges, like sorting out the likely disposition of a sullen Anak with a pastry who happens to be lurking in a Deep closet, you might need nothing more than a brief stat line to remind you of its combat statistics. For more elaborate challenges, like an attempt on a vile cult leader's life, you're going to need something more developed.

The Logical Essentials

The first step is to think about the target and any surrounding protectors or associates it might have. A rich merchant will have guards at their estate, a cult leader will have fanatical minions, and an Anak warrior is unlikely to leave his warband behind. Allied groups might also have representatives in the area, or the target might have hired or coerced others into their retinue. If you're stocking a Deep or some other lair of monsters, the creatures there are probably whatever type are common in the area or have adapted to the alien environment.

It's a great temptation to worry about "balance" when plotting out these details. If there are forty combat-capable Anak in the tribe then it is ridiculous to suppose that any ordinary band of novice heroes will be able to kill them all in a single pitched battle. As a consequence, a GM is tempted to shave down the number of foes for too-weak parties or add in extra muscle to give a "good fight" to a more experienced band. The assumption is that if there is a combat challenge in an adventure, the PCs ought to have some non-trivial chance of beating it in a fight, or a non-trivial chance of incurring grave losses.

GMs in a sandbox campaign are encouraged to fight this instinct. Your job is to make a logical, coherent world that can be engaged with by intelligent and observant players. A full Anak tribe would logically have at least forty capable warriors so there is no justification in shaving them down to match the party's capabilities. A king would naturally have ferocious bodyguards, an evil sorcerer would have inhuman minions, and the most fearsome swordsman in the kingdom is not going to be any less fearsome if the PCs encounter him at first level rather than tenth.

With that said, a GM also needs to think about the context of the adventure's purpose. If you're making a Deep for novice adventurers to explore, then at least some of the combat challenges in it should be winnable by the party should it come to blows. If there's no logical reason why it has to be full of PC-slaughtering hellbeasts, then you do no violence to the campaign's fabric by including foes both trivial and grand. The guidelines on page 295 offer suggestions on how to assess a given combat encounter's likelihood of slaughtering the PCs.

Thus, your first job in the combat challenge is to draw up a list of the creatures and NPCs involved in it. Figure out who should be there and generate or note down combat statistics for them. Don't worry about further details yet; just get the bare minimum down.

Framing the Environment

Once you know who might be involved in the fracas, you should think about the location the conflict might occur in and the kind of information you need to establish about it. A merchant's house will require a map of the grounds, a sinister high priest lurking in a Deep will necessitate a plan of the subterranean passages, and a murder in the midst of some highly-populated area will inevitably draw some sort of hue and cry from the surrounding inhabitants that needs to be kept in mind.

It's tempting to turn significant combat challenges into set-piece battles, with different environmental elements all arranged to provide tactical opportunities. Pressure plates, sheer cliffs, howling winds, fiery pits, and other traditional epic-combat battlefield decorations might be involved. While an interesting environment for a fight is always a plus, it's important to maintain the logic of the situation; most people are not going to spend much time in areas where a hideous death awaits a misplaced step or a lethal trap is waiting to spring on the first drunkard to forget to pull the disarming lever.

It's also quite possible that the heroes will not be considerate enough to fight the enemies on their chosen ground. They might draw them out to their own prepared killing field, hit them in detail, or collapse the supposed enemy lair rather than risk engaging them.

Even so, personalizing a combat challenge with the specific perils of the environment is always to be recommended. If the PCs are trying to kill a duke, then the fact that the noble is surrounded by swarms of retain-

ers and has mobs of guardsmen that will rush to any alarm is a fact the PCs need to deal with. A combat in a blizzard-prone forest of frozen alien glass is going to involve blinding winds, razor-sharp flora, and dangerous collateral damage. If the environment the combat challenge takes place in has interesting or significant qualities like this, you should note down the likely effects in your preparation.

Identifying Alternate Routes

The next step is to think about ways the PCs could engage with this challenge without drawing their blades. If it's a fearsome set of opponents, rational PCs will do their best to avoid fighting them unless there's some strong motivation to risk their lives in battle. Even if the PCs are dead set on murdering the target for one reason or another, they might end up looking for ways to do so safely, without letting the enemy strike back.

There are almost no circumstances in which you should force the PCs to engage a combat challenge directly. If the PCs are absolutely determined to draw steel on a target, then so be it, but any adventure that includes irrelevant but inevitable fights is an adventure that will probably go very badly for the party. If your adventure hinges on the assumption that the party is going to attack some particular foe head-on, or even that their interactions will inevitably be violent, then you risk railroading your players into situations that will likely get some portion of their PCs killed. Morale checks, reaction rolls, and a creature's basic inclination not to court death casually should always be kept in mind when building combat challenges.

You might choose to flesh out a social challenge associated with the subject, some angle of manipulation that might turn them from an enemy into a peaceful neutral, if not an ally. You could stick in a minor exploration challenge that rewards the PCs with a secret back door into the target's lair or a bypass that lets them skip the potential fight entirely. You should look at the environment you've designed, consider the habits and goals of the party, and think about what alternate courses they might take rather than an immediate recourse to initiative rolls.

Recognizing Consequences

The villain is dead; now what? Targets that were subordinates to some greater power are going to need to be replaced and potentially avenged, if their employer liked them very much. Those with minions of their own will now see them look for new patrons and providers. Friends and family will be infuriated at the killers, while their enemies might feel a certain gratitude toward the people who performed such a favor.

As a final step, take some time to think about the consequences for the death of the challenge's targets. They serve some purpose in the world, even if that purpose is nothing more than terrorizing a merchant road or intimidating their peers in the depths of a Deep. With them gone, that purpose is either going to cease or be filled by some other entity. It may be that the death of the bandit chief sparks fresh trade between two towns, and the local lords begin squeezing their merchants with extra taxes on their newfound wealth. The slaughter of some monstrous tyrant far below the earth might be the catalyst for massive bloodshed among the natives as they sort out a gory new pecking order below, with the losers fleeing to the surface. The players won't always know or care about the consequences of their red-handed work, but the GM should remain mindful of their fruits.

Combat Challenge Complications

Six bandits in a Deep chamber might be a combat challenge, but it doesn't give the GM much to work with when it comes time to make the encounter interesting. The tables on these pages offer complications and twists you can throw into the situation to enliven an otherwise banal brawl. Simply pick the tables that are most relevant to the situation and roll or select options to spice things up.

d12	What's Going On Right Now?
1	They lost a fight or had an accident, and are tending their wounded
2	They're absorbed in eating a meal
3	They're arguing over some pertinent matter
4	They're busy trying to repair a broken object or structure of importance to them
5	They're having some sort of religious ritual
6	They're resting after hard labor
7	They're interrogating a prisoner or suspected traitor to the group
8	They're training or practicing their skills
9	They're drinking or celebrating some win
10	There's a tense leadership showdown
11	They're lolling around in indolent idleness
12	They're conducting the business of daily life and other duties of common necessity

d12	What Problems Do They Have?
1	An ambitious underling plots against the leader or undermines their control
2	They're arguing over the fair division of some recently-gained spoils
3	Some are seriously ill with a disease
4	The leader is being foolish or irrational, driven by their own desires
5	They're overconfident and careless
6	They've lost some treasure precious to them
7	The underlings are ignoring the leader's will
8	They've been afflicted by some danger of their current environment
9	They're out of food or some other supply
10	They're being targeted by some hostile rival or dangerous local denizen
11	They've been driven from their usual home by an enemy or a natural hazard
12	Some of their members have been taken prisoner or lost.

d20	Twists About the Target or their Allies
1	They are or have access to spellcasters or mages of some kind
2	They have a useful magical power uncommon to their kind
3	An unusually strong ally serves the group's leader for its own reasons
4	The group is divided into parties or factions that cooperate poorly with each other
5	Killing them would enrage a seemingly-unrelated person or group
6	They have some reason to mistake the PCs for allies or hirelings
7	One member is a secret traitor in service to some other cause or group
8	Another group would pay very well or be very pleased at the death of the target
9	Eliminating this target would somehow release or remove a check on a dire foe
10	The target wants to get a member of their group killed in a deniable way, and will try to use the PCs to do it
11	They're religious zealots who may or may not have some blessing or affiliation that fits
12	They're searching for something that the PCs may or may not be able to help them find
13	The leader is desperately in love with one of their underlings or vice-versa
14	They're tampering with some object or structural feature that's extremely dangerous
15	They're foreign to the other examples of their creature type around here, having come from far off for their own reasons
16	They fight in an effective but abnormal way for their type or nature
17	Their leader has ensured that some dire consequence will ensue if they are killed
18	Some portion of the group would really rather not fight but are feeling compelled by their peers or the leader
19	Some other group has a spy or observer who is watching during a potential conflict
20	The leader is an impostor or catspaw of some power that would normally be their enemy, and acts as best they can to serve them

d12	What's That Bestial Monster Doing?
1	It's eaten recently and is lolling around, disinclined to hunt new prey
2	It's fighting with another of its kind over a mate
3	It's guarding cubs, eggs, or a recent kill
4	It's currently hunting something else but might choose to select the PCs as new prey
5	It's asleep or torpid, and has probably chosen a seemingly-safe spot to do so
6	It's playing after the manner of its kind
7	It's patrolling its territory to repel intruders or rivals for mates
8	It's fleeing, having been driven out by a foe or a more powerful rival
9	It licks its wounds after a hard battle, perhaps still surrounded by the corpses of its prey and their remaining belongings
10	It's digging, marking, or otherwise preparing its new lair, and may have a mate helping it do so
11	It's grooming itself or engaging in behavior specific to its type of creature
12	It's starving, and is ravenous for prey that it might not dare attack in more prosperous times

d12	Urban Dwelling Complications
1	An inquisitive neighbor is always watching the place
2	The guards are unusually vigilant and attentive to their duties for some reason
3	The target's living quarters are uncommonly difficult to access
4	There's a dangerous beast guarding the grounds of the place
5	The dwelling is unusually well-fortified
6	Servants and minions are thick in the halls
7	The owner has access to some kind of magical ward or divine blessing
8	The place is right next to a very vigilant and dangerous neighbor that will respond to alarms or disorders
9	The interior is mazey, abnormal, or difficult to navigate for some reason
10	Poor repairs or recent damage makes the place dangerous to unknowing outsiders
11	There are several traps or alarms there
12	It's connected to some kind of underground passages or ancient tunnels

d12	Wilderness Lair Complications
1	Hazardous flora make up a natural trap for those ignorant of their perils
2	Numerous deadfalls or covered pits have been placed on side paths here
3	The lair is positioned somewhere that has an excellent view of most approaches to it
4	You need to go underwater or through some noxious gas in order to reach the habitable part of the lair
5	It's surrounded by some natural peril, radioactive zone, *arratu*, or other hazard
6	There's a nest or lair of some dangerous animal obstructing easy entrance, but the occupants know how to deal with them
7	A fearsome local predator has been tamed or pacified and will attack intruders
8	The lair's built at least partially into some ancient structure or ruin
9	The lair's inside the hunting territory of some dreadful creature
10	It extremely well-concealed amid the terrain
11	Unrelated people are also living in or near it, and disturbing them would be hazardous
12	It's contaminated with soured magical energy, a damaged Working, or some other curse

d12	Deep Chamber Complications
1	A dangerous standing magical effect is present in the room
2	Part of the structure is fragile and prone to collapse if damaged
3	There's some noxious gas or substance tainting certain areas
4	A dangerous fall is possible in some part of the room
5	An ancient guardian risks being awakened by disturbances here
6	Strange ancient engines churn nearby and can cause dire injury to the careless
7	There are secret passages here
8	The room is very vertical in its shape
9	A certain path must be known to safely cross a particularly treacherous surface
10	It's somehow prone to flooding or currently a swampy mess
11	A valuable object here is extremely fragile
12	Some ancient magic or Deep functionality has been repurposed for a purpose convenient to the current occupants

Creating Exploration Challenges

Exploration challenges revolve around plumbing the mysteries of some unknown site or long-vanished ruin. Not every exploration challenge is a conventional dungeon; searching a stretch of wilderness for points of interest is just as much an occasion of exploration as crawling through the tunnels of a buried Deep. Some exploration sites teem with hostile creatures and malevolent foes, while others simply contain obscure objects or enigmatic devices that make a puzzle of their operation.

The goal of an exploration challenge is to engage the players in the setting and make them think carefully about how to navigate it and its mysteries. When building them, a GM needs to stock the area with plenty of things to manipulate, steal, prod, fight, and flee from. This section will discuss one method of creating such an exploration site; there are ten thousand other ways to do it, but this one is simple and replicable by anyone who follows the steps involved.

The style of map this procedure creates is an abstract sort of map, one focusing on particular rooms or points of interest and largely glossing over the corridors or trackless miles between them. It's taken as a tacit understanding that there will be no traps, treasures, edifices or other things of interest in these interstitial spaces, and the PCs won't be punished for not carefully mapping every ten-foot square of dungeon or surveying every furlong of wilderness. Of course, some groups do prefer the classic graph-paper dungeon-crawls for inhabited areas, so advice is given at the end for converting these abstract maps into more concrete plans.

Choose the Site Type

If you're building an exploration site centered around a structure, you may already know what kind of edifice this dungeon is. You may have already decided to build a Deep, or craft a haunted castle, or send the PCs into the sand-choked passages of a buried city. If you need further inspiration, however, you can use the table on page 238 for some suggestions or randomized results.

If you're building a "hexcrawl" wilderness exploration, your site will be the wilderness itself. It's usually best to worry about no more terrain than the PCs could cover in a single session of play. A twelve-by-twelve hex zone is usually plenty, assuming it's a standard six-mile wilderness hex. Such a zone assumes that the PCs will be searching it methodically for interesting sites rather than racing straight across it as quickly as possible.

Hexcrawls work mainly as a matrix in which the GM embeds interesting ruins, lairs, hamlets, and other points of interest as detailed on page 242.

The structure's type will help flavor the contents of the dungeon and the kind of inhabitants it might attract. It'll also help you establish what sort of locations might be found inside, and what manner of strange devices or peculiar workings might be there.

Choose Inhabitant Framework

For structure-based sites, it may be that your dungeon is entirely devoid of inhabitants, whether bestial or intelligent. Most dungeons will have something crawling around in them, and it's useful to determine the general shape of its occupants early, so as to let their presence flavor and influence your later decisions.

You can use the table on page 240 to define the general outline of the dungeon's inhabitants. A single dominant group may control the area, or there may be multiple groups with varying relations between them. Unintelligent monsters may be a major factor in the place, or they may have been driven out by the sentient occupants. If you want additional layers to the site's history, you can use the "What happened to their predecessors?" table in multiple "generations" of occupants, rerolling the framework for each period and seeing how it ended each time.

The associated tables provide suggestions for what kind of inhabitant groups might fill the various roles of the framework. If you have access to some of the copious numbers of old-school monster manuals that exist, you can also swap in assorted humanoids or monstrous beasts to fill the roles the table offers.

For wilderness exploration, you can use the same inhabitant table, but change the context to make it apply to tribes, hill clans, hidden villages, refugee encampments, or other population centers somewhere within the zone you're developing. At the same time, you should factor in any inhabitants that might already exist on the map, such as a village or border outpost you've already established as existing there.

Generate Rooms of Interest

A structure-based dungeon is built of "rooms", with each room being a particular defined location within the structure. An armory in a fortress might be a room, a carved plaza in an underground city might be another, and a monster-infested moat around a ruined watchtower might be treated as a room as well. A room is simply a place that has its own defining character and might contain something the PCs would want or need to interact with.

The tables on page 241 provide examples of different types of rooms or different overall functions and roles for a location. You should tailor these results or options to the general purpose or character of the structure; an armory in a noble lord's estate is going to be very different from the armory found in a wizard's tower or a military barracks. An "armory" in a private residence might be nothing more than the storeroom where the owner once kept their grandfather's dusty old armor.

Ten rooms of interest are usually sufficient for a small dungeon that won't eat up an entire evening's play

to explore. A twenty-room dungeon is usually enough to occupy a several-hour session, while thirty or forty rooms is probably as large as is convenient for a particular site. If a site has multiple clusters of rooms or multiple "levels", then you might assign each level or area of the dungeon its own budget of rooms.

You should assume that at least half the rooms of interest will have nothing significant in them. They may have distractors or flavor elements present, but they'll lack inhabitants, treasures, or substantial mysteries to investigate. If you pack every room with something shiny or sharp-toothed, your dungeon will tend to feel claustrophobic and overly-busy, and there won't be any periods of calm downtime to contrast with the excitement that comes from perilous encounters.

Sketch or dimension each room on an index card. The layout of these rooms is apt to be important if the heroes start fighting in them, and having a general idea of their shape and contents is critical when it comes time to describe them to the players.

For a hexcrawl, each "room" is an individual hex. Many will have nothing of special interest in them, while others might have a structure or situation worth closer inspection. You will "stock" each of these hex-rooms later in the development process.

Lay Out the Rooms

Next, for structure-based sites you need to establish the spatial relationships between rooms and identify any interesting topological features that exist in the dungeon. One of the easier ways to do this is to write each room of interest down on its own 3x5 index card, numbering all your rooms in order. Later, as you stock each room with its contents, you can write it down on the index card, adding notes in play to record any changes the party's actions may have caused.

Take your deck of index cards and pick a room to serve as the entrance into your dungeon; this is where the PCs will enter the complex. You may add additional entry points later, but just one will serve for now. Put the card down in front of you on the table.

Now roll on the table on page 243 to determine how many exits depart from this room; reroll results of zero for this first room. The table below it gives choices for the direction of each exit. If the same result is rolled twice, roll or pick again. Place a new room on the table in the indicated direction. You can mark the existence of a connection between rooms by laying a coin or counter between the two adjoining room cards.

Repeat this process for each room you lay down. If a path dead-ends with zero egresses, return to an earlier room and add a fresh connection. If the route turns back on itself so that a room opens an exit to an already-existing room, just mark it down as a loop in the dungeon. Stop adding new connections when you run out of rooms to place.

Now look at the stylized map you've made and adjust it to your liking. Maybe you've got too many connections in one place or too few in another. Maybe you want to make sure there's at least one loop in the dungeon's framework. Maybe it's too sprawling, and you want to bring it into a more condensed clump.

Wilderness hex crawls don't need to bother with this step, as only in rare cases will some hexes be physically inaccessible from neighboring areas. Crevasses, impassable mountains, ancient megastructures, or large natural features might block free travel in such cases.

Add Optional Map Features

For structure-based dungeons, you can continue on with the stylized map as it is, or you can pause to add some additional features to the map. Their exact implementation will depend on what kind of structure it is; a new ingress into a buried Deep will look different than a new ingress into a ruined city.

The section on page 243 lists a selection of possible map quirks or complications you can add. A portion of the map may be elevated, requiring the PCs to climb to get to it, while another portion might be separated by a deep crevasse, perilous environmental hazard, or rushing torrent. One exit might actually be a secret door, and another might be concealed due to debris, decay, or the work of inhabitants.

At this stage, you'll also want to add any connections to different dungeon levels or areas. Stairways down into darkness, wells that plunge into lightless zones, crumbling bridges that connect different districts in the ruined city, or other connection points need to be established here. Generally, you should put them in rooms far away from the ingress point. Don't hesitate to place more than one connection to the same area, with some perhaps being more obvious than others or leading to especially dangerous or interesting locations in the target area.

Again, wilderness hex crawls can skip this step, as they're on such a large topological scale that small details of elevation aren't generally applicable.

Stock the Rooms

For each structure-site room, decide whether a creature, a treasure, an enigma, or a distractor can be found there. Some rooms may contain several of these things, such as a creature guarding its treasure near some ancient enigma. The table on page 244 provides a way of randomly determining these things, or you can use your own good judgment.

While creatures and treasures are largely self-explanatory, an "enigma" is some mystery, secret, trap, or other gubbin that the PCs can interact with to gain a reward of treasure or knowledge or to suffer harm from its activation. A "distractor" is a piece of decor or an event in the room that is without significant peril or reward, but adds to the overall flavor of the place or reinforces the theme of the site. The tables on page 245 offer suggestions for these things.

As a general rule, no more than a third of the rooms should contain creatures, and probably less. About half

the rooms with creatures in them should have an associated treasure, while a sixth of the rooms without creatures should have something valuable or loot-worthy to be found in them. If every treasure is kept behind guardian monsters, the PCs will rapidly learn to ignore empty rooms and try to win their fortune exclusively with drawn blades.

For the inhabitants, draw creatures from the groups you established earlier. The majority of inhabitants in the dungeon should be from those groups, but you might allocate as much as a third of the results to one-off monsters, wandering intruders, or unassociated entities.

For treasures, use the table on page 256 to get an idea of the total loot that could be reasonably found in the site, based on how important it is and how powerful the inhabitants are. The mightier the occupants, the more loot they'll have likely accumulated in the course of their activities. Divide this total loot into as many portions as you have Treasure results in your site. Half the treasure should go into one or two portions representing the major troves gathered by the strongest inhabitants or locked behind some enigma left by the site's builders. The rest of the treasure should be divided up among the other Treasure results, providing an array of smaller loot opportunities for lesser foes or more minor unguarded finds.

Wilderness hex crawls use different tables on page 242 to provide potential stocking. Many hexes will be devoid of anything particularly interesting, while others may have remnant ruins, lairs of dangerous creatures, remnants of past explorers, or other gubbins for PCs to interact with. A GM can make these ruins "shallow", making them no more than a few crumbled walls or still-standing chambers that might be fleshed out with a few dungeon room content rolls, or they can develop them into their own exploration sites with these steps.

Establish Wandering Encounters

The inhabitants of a structure-dungeon are unlikely to spend every waking hour sequestered in their assigned rooms. Creatures wander, inhabitants have tasks in different places, and things happen independently of the explorations of the heroes. At this stage, you should create a table or list of potential encounters that the PCs can run into while traversing the dungeon or exploring its rooms.

A table with six entries is usually sufficient, each entry being a group of creatures or a random event appropriate to the dungeon. One entry might be 1d6 sullen bandits on an errand for their leader, while another might be a sudden blood-curdling scream echoing down the halls as a victim is cruelly done in. Not every entry has to be a mob of enemies, and perhaps a third of the entries might just be environmental events. Wandering creatures rarely have any treasure worth note, and not all will be automatically hostile. Remember to make use of reaction rolls when the PCs meet the locals.

You'll use this table during the exploration of the dungeon. Usually, after each scene or during each transit between rooms, you'll roll 1d6; on a 1, you roll on the wandering encounter table to see what happens to the PCs as they explore. The purpose of this table is to discourage time-wasting and excessive caution when exploring the dungeon. The PCs are in a potentially lethal hive of perilous foes and natural dangers, and the longer they spend in there, the more likely they are to get worn down by hostile inhabitants. If they can safely camp out in any random room they'll be tempted to spend hours carefully inspecting everything or recuperating overnight after every minor fray.

For hexcrawls, the same sort of wandering encounter table is necessary to reflect the beasts of the wilderness and the roaming sentient inhabitants to be found there. An encounter check can be made each time the PCs spend a day in a single hex and each time they spend a night camping in the wilderness. If they're crossing the wilds rapidly and not pausing to search a place they usually need to make only one check per day's travel or night's camping.

Establish Daily Life

Now that you know who is where in a site-based dungeon, take a moment to think about their interactions and relationships. The initial inhabitant framework rolls may have given you some clues about how these groups relate to each other, but here you should nail down the specifics. If the Anak warband squatting in the old amphitheater hates the human bandits that fortified the ruined caravansary, then you can expect that they'll keep a distance from each other when not fighting. If the dungeon is a subterranean Deep, how do the occupants get food and water, and what do they do with their time? Do any of the inhabitants venture out of their home areas, and if so, where do they go?

Make some notes in each room about what the inhabitants are likely to be doing when the PCs first encounter them. Only automatons and mindless undead are likely to be standing in silence, waiting to be disturbed. Other creatures will be involved in sleeping, eating, arguing, gambling, standing watch, or doing necessary labor.

Also make some notes about what the inhabitants will do upon being disturbed. Will an attack cause some of them to run for reinforcements? Have they got some reason to be especially friendly to intruders? As the GM, you need to be careful about telegraphing a willingness to parley, as many players will just automatically reach for their swords as soon as they spot something warty and green. If you don't give the players some obvious clue that a more peaceful interaction is possible, they may not risk the attempt.

Keep in mind the general scale of the map when determining what kind of reinforcements could be summoned or what sort of notice would be taken of a fight. If the map you're making represents a single urban townhouse, then a bloody brawl in the kitchen is almost certainly going to be audible throughout the entire structure, alerting the whole dungeon. If you're mapping out a lost

city, on the other hand, the individual "rooms" might be hundreds of feet apart, and a screaming fray in one place might be wholly inaudible elsewhere.

Wilderness hex crawls can skip this step, unless there's some titanic beast in the zone with a daily routine significant enough to affect the entire area. Knowing that a dragon has a 1-in-6 chance of flying over a hex on any given day is information likely to be relevant to explorers, but tracking the daily details of an Anak camp you rolled for a particular hex is unlikely to be worth your time.

Copy the Final Map

For site-based dungeons, once you've got everything arranged on the table to your liking and have decided which rooms might be affected by optional map features, copy the map to your notes for the site. Simple dungeon room numbers and names connected by straight lines are usually sufficient, with any terrain features noted alongside the connection lines. During play, you can consult the map and then pull out the relevant room cards to handle the exploration of these individual places.

For hexcrawls, make a copy of your hex map and write in the numbers of particular hex-contents index cards into the hexes where they're found. Optionally, you can use a row-and-column grid reference for the cards instead, or use a hex map generation program that prints individual hex numbers in each hexagon.

Making a Detailed Map

For many groups, a stylized map is sufficient for exploring a structure. They really don't want to pay attention to mazey blank corridors or the twists and turns of dungeon intersections. Each room of interest's dimensions and shape are important to the encounters within, but the nebulous space between is glossed over with a few words about dank dungeon tunnels or empty streets.

Other groups want something more specific. They enjoy the process of mapping a dungeon, or the GM wants to take advantage of the kind of traps and obfuscations that work best in the connecting spaces between points of interest. In that case, the GM can take the stylized map and use it as the framework for laying in individual corridors, intersections, turns, and twists.

Using standard graph paper, start at the edge of the map and draw in a peripheral room. Working from that start, connect the various rooms with whatever twisty little passages, all different, that you wish. You might keep the overall alignment of the rooms the same as on the stylized map, or you could just use them as prompts and suggestions.

Don't hesitate to lift chunks and fragments from the innumerable host of old-school dungeons that exist in the wild. More than four decades of material has been created on the care and construction of graph-paper dungeons, and much of it is available online. It's perfectly fair to lift some dungeon map wholesale for your own table's needs and simply change the room descriptions to fit your own rooms of interest.

Types of Ruin Sites

The table below offers suggestions as to what kind of structure the exploration site might be. An initial d6 roll gives a general type of structure that you can use as grist for your inspiration, while an additional d12 can be rolled to get a specific example.

Some of the listed sites might not make sense in a particular context. While you can always just re-roll or pick something, it can sometimes be interesting to read the result metaphorically, and then put a structure in that matches the essential significance of the rolled result.

d6	Basic Type	d12	Site		Site
1	Residential Site	1	Isolated rural estate of nobility	7	Townhouse of minor gentry
		2	Massive tenement or slum tower	8	Rural grange with outbuildings
		3	Compact fortified village	9	Hidden shelter against calamity
		4	Mazey urban residential block	10	Rubble-wrought makeshift village
		5	Ancient arcology or fragment of it	11	Outpost of refugees or recluses
		6	Sprawling slum of shanties and huts	12	Inhabited natural feature or cave
2	Military Site	1	Grand fortress of major significance	7	Hidden bunker or strongpoint
		2	Remote frontier keep	8	Secret operations base
		3	Isolated watchtower	9	Battered front-line fortress
		4	Military training camp	10	Gatehouse controlling a vital pass
		5	Half-subterranean entrenchments	11	Military cache or storehouse
		6	Battlefield littered with fortifications	12	Fortified waystation
3	Production Site	1	Illicit manufactory for illegal goods	7	Mine or open pit for excavation
		2	Sacred shrine for holy product	8	Overgrown ancient plantation
		3	Destroyed camp or extraction site	9	Managed woodland gone feral
		4	Inexplicable ancient manufactory	10	Farm for now-feral valuable beasts
		5	Outsider goods production site	11	Repurposed ancient manufactory
		6	Magical production facility	12	Fishery or salt extraction site
4	Religious Site	1	Lost pilgrimage destination	7	Fortified frontier monastery
		2	Tomb of some mighty ancient	8	Prison-monastery for heretics
		3	Shrine repurposed for a newer god	9	Fragment of megastructure temple
		4	Inexplicable sacred structure	10	Place of some holy trial or test
		5	Outsider fane to an alien god	11	Prison for a sealed demonic force
		6	Pilgrim hospital or waystation	12	Holy archive or relic-fortress
5	Cultural Site	1	Inscrutable Outsider art structure	7	Library or ancient archive
		2	Ancient culture's gathering site	8	Resort for nobles at ease
		3	Monument complex to lost glories	9	Enormous musical structure
		4	Abandoned school or study center	10	Massive ceremonial structure
		5	Indoctrination camp or prison	11	Preserved "heritage" village-resort
		6	Museum of a lost nation	12	Taboo site of dark magic
6	Infrastructure Site	1	Psychic or tech communications site	7	Subterranean transit tunnels
		2	Canal or aqueduct control center	8	Weather-control Working ruin
		3	Reality-stabilizing Working ruin	9	Ancient road through an obstacle
		4	Massive bridge or tunnel	10	Huge ancient dam
		5	Ancient power production center	11	Outsider xenoforming engine
		6	Semi-ruined teleportation node	12	Now-incomprehensible wreckage

The Framework of Inhabitation

Some sites will have no significant inhabitants: no monsters, no skulking raiders, no wild beasts or abominable flora worth mentioning. Most, however, will have something dwelling in the place.

The adjacent table offers suggestions on how to structure the inhabitants. While any result might also include a scattering of randomly-chosen monsters or inhabitants, these major dwellers will be the main potential foes or subjects for parley within the ruin or wilderness.

If your structure is particularly small, such as under ten rooms, these numbers may be shrunk somewhat. Very large sites or wilderness points of interest might double the numbers to provide adequate populations.

The tables below offer optional prompts for relationships between groups and motivations for intelligent dwellers in the ruin. The following page offers tables to help determine who exactly these beings are.

d6	Important Inhabitants
1	One major monstrous beast, with the other inhabitants avoiding it or supplicating it
2	One major intelligent leader with their followers, slaves, or associates
3	1d3+1 major inhabitants, at least two of which are hostile to each other
4	A major inhabitant and the remnants of another group or pack they deposed
5	A relatively harmonious group of 1d3+1 significant figures
6	No discernible major figures, only a disorganized congery of beasts and beings

d12	Potential Reasons for Hostility
1	They raided us and stole our resources
2	They're from a rival religion
3	Our kinds naturally hate each other
4	They took advantage of us in the past
5	They're weak and ripe for plunder
6	They broke an alliance in a treacherous way
7	They caused a local disaster or problem
8	Our leader has a personal hatred for them
9	Local resources are insufficient for us both
10	They're crowding into our territory
11	They tricked us and led us into a disaster
12	They stole a treasure or an important slave

d12	Possible Causes for Alliances
1	We have a shared enemy
2	Our leaders are personal friends
3	We intermarry or have a blood relation
4	We each have goods the other needs
5	Each has skills the other lacks
6	We give protection for a tolerable price
7	We share the defense of the territory
8	We share the same religion
9	We overcame a great peril together
10	We used to be under the same leader
11	We recognize them as our rightful masters
12	We gain a great profit by mutual cooperation

d12	Why Did They Come Here?
1	Driven here by a terrible monster
2	No one remembers when they first came
3	Forced out of their old home by enemies
4	Sent out as a colony from their parent group
5	Gathered from scattered exiles and outcasts
6	Enlisted to come by a powerful leader
7	Drawn by the prospect of resources or loot
8	Making a cultural or religious pilgrimage
9	Came to fight an enemy that lairs here
10	Sent by visions, prophecy, or oracles
11	It's a refuge from some pursuing foe
12	To guard something precious here

d12	Why Are They Staying Here?
1	It's rich in resources useful to them
2	A foe outside threatens them if they leave
3	They're trying to find something specific here
4	It's simply always been their home
5	An important member is immobile somehow
6	Some drug or pleasure here has caught them
7	They've been enslaved by a power here
8	They're being paid to do so by someone
9	They haven't anywhere better to go
10	They're waiting for someone else to arrive
11	They're trapped here by something
12	Their leader has a personal reason to stay

Types of Inhabitants

These tables offer general suggestions as to what kind of inhabitants might occupy particular types of sites. Specific details of species or monstrous kind will depend on your own campaign setting, with Anak serving as hostile humanoids in the Latter Earth, while goblins or kobolds might fill the role in a more conventional setting.

The types of inhabitants rolled or chosen here reflect the major figures in a site, but they shouldn't be taken as the only creatures to inhabit the area. Some portion of a ruin or wilderness site's inhabitants should be taken from exotic beasts, unaffiliated sentients, or other figures of happenstance. Such variety helps keep foes fresh.

If you need additional monsters, virtually any old-school monster handbook should provide you with beasts you can import largely unchanged for your ***Worlds Without Number*** campaign. If you'd like to brew your own, you can reference the bestiary chapter in this book.

d12	Ancient Sorcerer-King Ruin
1	Altered human servitors of the former owner
2	Magic-forged monstrous beast
3	Adventurers searching for loot
4	Heirs of the last human inhabitants
5	Cult dedicated to a now-dead faith
6	Summoned creature that broke its fetters
7	Magical automaton servitors of the ruler
8	Decorative magic animals gone feral
9	Necromancer and their undead servitors
10	Outsider prisoners gone native here
11	Restless dead of the inhabitants
12	Zealots in service to a long-dead mage

d12	Alien *Arratu*
1	Animate and lethal plant life
2	Remnants of the Outsiders who made it
3	Adventurers daring the perilous terrain
4	Human natives trapped here for generations
5	Humanoids adapted to life there
6	Blighted raiders semi-native to the place
7	Automatons built to serve or fight the *arratu*
8	Outsider ruler still controlling a site within
9	Undead shades of swallowed cities or lands
10	Vicious alien fauna
11	Human cultist-servitors of the Outsiders
12	Explorers searching for a route through

d12	Subterranean Deep
1	Cruelly Outsider-warped original humans
2	Outsider monster that once ruled here
3	Swarm or pack of scavenger-beasts
4	Blighted intruders that sacked the Deep
5	Outsiders descended from the local lords
6	Degenerate or crazed native humans
7	Outcast surfacers lairing in the Deep
8	Non-human sentients who now live here
9	Undead relics of former inhabitants
10	Still-sane human heirs of the original folk
11	Surfacer colonists forgotten by their kin
12	Automaton servitors now lacking their lord

d12	Modern Ruin Site
1	Local bandits or highwaymen
2	Cult of some unacceptable god
3	Deposed noble and their retinue
4	Adventurers trying to plunder the place
5	Troops garrisoned there by the local ruler
6	Remnants of the original inhabitants
7	Sorcerer of detestable inclinations
8	Refugees or runaway peasants
9	Vicious local monster lairing here
10	Foreign raiders using it as a base
11	Whatever ruined the place is still here
12	Interlopers with some tie to the original place

d12	Trackless Wilderness
1	Alpha predator of the area
2	Intelligent monstrous beings
3	Swarms or packs of dangerous beasts
4	Violently reclusive local natives
5	Remnant of a destroyed state
6	Survivors of a displaced ethnic group
7	Demihumans who prefer isolation
8	Bestially savage tribals, perhaps inhuman
9	Expedition from a surrounding nation
10	Prospectors or resource-hunters
11	Spirit or elemental related to the wilderness
12	Sorcerers, cultists, or other solitude-lovers

Rooms of Interest

The table below gives different functions and specific examples of rooms that might be found in a site. You can use them verbatim when that would make sense, but you can also use the results as general metaphors, converting them into something similar that fits the site's nature.

For one technique, take your structure's general type and think of at least three rooms or locations that would be characteristic of it. Include those rooms and round out the rest of your needs from the table below, rolling or picking whatever results suit the job.

d6	Basic Function	d12	Example		Example
1	Residential Room	1	Dormitory barracks for servants	7	Meager room for minor servant
		2	The owner or ruler's bedchamber	8	Sickroom for patients
		3	High-ranking resident bedroom	9	Guest chambers for visitors
		4	Latrine or privy	10	Kitchen or dining hall
		5	Kennel or beast pen	11	Bathing chamber or washroom
		6	Prison or slave cages	12	Study or private library
2	Work Room	1	Smithy or forge	7	Alchemist's workshop
		2	Smokehouse or food preparation	8	Artisan's work area
		3	Sewing or weaving room	9	Artist's workroom
		4	Torture chamber	10	Washroom or scullery
		5	Healer's work room	11	Brewery room
		6	Arcane laboratory	12	Processing room for a raw good
3	Cultural Room	1	Plaza or meeting area	7	Garden or flowing water feature
		2	Amphitheater or recital room	8	Ornately iconographic chamber
		3	Art gallery	9	Room for a particular cultural rite
		4	Cultural monument	10	Drinking hall
		5	Grave, cemetery, or ossuary	11	Performance stage or area
		6	Library or archive	12	Drug den or place of debauchery
4	Martial Room	1	Armory or martial storage	7	Map or planning room
		2	Training area	8	War machine fabrication or storage
		3	Barracks for soldiers	9	Dueling area
		4	Guard post	10	Beast-fighting arena
		5	Parade ground	11	Strong point or fortification
		6	Commemorative hall	12	Gate or fortified entrance
5	Religious Room	1	Private shrine	7	Room for a labor holy to the god
		2	Altar room	8	Storage for religious equipage
		3	Monastic prayer cell	9	Secured chamber for holy relics
		4	Ritual chamber	10	Secret or unofficial chapel
		5	Monument to a deity	11	Priest's private chambers
		6	Ceremonial bath	12	Public area adorned with icons
6	Utility Room	1	Work materials storage	7	Concealed servant's passage
		2	Pantry or food storage	8	Domestic staff head office
		3	Storeroom for random detritus	9	Vault for valuables
		4	Furnace or boiler room	10	Secret or unobtrusive entrance
		5	Exotic ancient power or light room	11	Grand passage or ornate corridor
		6	Pool or water source room	12	Barn or fodder storage

Hex Points of Interest

For a hexcrawl, where a "room" consists of an entire hex of terrain, a point of interest is defined a little differently. First, decide how many hexes in your map should have anything particularly interesting at all. One simple way to do so is to roll one die for every hex in your map; on a roll of 1 or 2, there's something worth noticing there. Use 1d6 for the die if you want a densely-populated hexcrawl, or 1d8, 1d10, or even 1d12 if you want sparser results.

For each hex of interest, a general feature or event is selected for the terrain, and then two tags are chosen for it from the appropriate lists in the world-building chapter. A crumbling ancient watchtower might use two Ruin tags, while a backwater village might pull a pair from Community, an isolated monastery might take two from the Court list, and an enchanted grove might pull tags from the Wilderness section. These tags are then synthesized with the result to produce something to catch the players' interest.

Some results are "shallow" in that they consist of a fairly simple situation, enigma, or very small ruin that can easily be summed up on an index card. These shallow sites can be generated as you build the hexcrawl, and it's assumed that each one won't take more than five minutes to develop using the tags and other tools in this section. If the PCs run into one of these shallow hexes of interest, they can explore or engage with the feature immediately.

Other hexes of interest are "deep" in that they involve substantial ruins, complex situations, or significant communities. If you've got a half-dozen of these on your hexcrawl, how do you handle them in play? It would be exhausting to flesh out several entire dungeons on the off chance that the PCs will find one and want to explore it.

For deep sites, prepare only the most superficial external details, the sort of thing the PCs would notice only at their first encounter with the site. If they decide to explore it further, just explain to them that you'll need prep time to bring it into adventuring order and that if they really do decide to investigate it, you can have it ready for the start of the next session. In the meanwhile, they can continue exploring the area.

This kind of just-in-time creation spares you the crushing burden of developing every major ruin or site of interest in a 70-mile span before the PCs even begin exploring the place. It also ensures that the site is as big as the players need it to be; if they really want to dig into a place, you can make it deep enough to reward their interest if they give you some between-session downtime.

The exception to this just-in-time rule is if you know the PCs are specifically seeking a particular site in the wilds. If you know they're looking for the Deep of the Tarnished Knife, or know that events are very likely to propel them to the site, you're justified in building that ruin out completely before the game starts.

d10	Basic Type of Feature
1–2	Roll on the Types of Ruin table on page 238
3–5	Roll on the Community Sites table below
6–7	Roll on the Court Sites table below
8–0	Roll on the Wilderness Sites table below

d10	Example Community Site
1	Village of aboriginal natives
2	Small colony of a nearby nation
3	Soldier-farmers dispatched to the wilds
4	Sectarian village of unorthodox believers
5	Demihuman enclave
6	Village of not-always-hostile monsters
7	Bandit meeting camp for trade and fun
8	Remnant of a major settlement swallowed up
9	Village of rebels or exiles from a nation
10	Oppressed group's settlement of refuge

d10	Example Court Site
1	Small group of isolated recluses
2	Monastery or hermit retreat
3	Degenerates forced out of civilized lands
4	Wizards conducting esoteric business
5	Demihumans of neutral disposition
6	Small tribal clan living in seclusion
7	Monsters not immediately hostile in nature
8	Another adventuring or explorer party
9	Traders or merchants risking the wilds
10	Miners, prospectors, or woodsmen

d10	Example Wilderness Site
1	Cavern or cave complex
2	Extreme example of the native terrain
3	Valuable natural resource site of some kind
4	Lake, spring, or major water source
5	Crevasse, rift, or broken ground
6	Megastructure remnants or fragments
7	Traces of a long-lost road or canal bed
8	Mountain, high hill, or commanding height
9	Treacherous ground suited to the terrain
10	Pocket of unusual or atypical terrain type

Room Layout and Map Features

To begin, pick a room as an ingress point, the place where the heroes will enter the site. There may be other places to get into the structure, but this is the most obvious. Place this room's index card on the table in front of you.

Then roll on the adjacent exit table to find out how many egresses exist. You might arbitrarily decide to give two or more exits to this initial room so the PCs have some decisions to make as to where to explore.

For each exit, roll on the egresses table to see what direction it runs in. If the direction is impossible, such as heading west out of a room you know is on the western edge of a structure, then flip it in the opposite direction. Take a coin or other temporary marker and put it on the index card to indicate the egress' location.

Now, for each egress, place a room's index card adjacent in the matching direction, gradually building out the site as you continue to roll exits and egresses for each.

If a room only has one exit, then it's a dead end. If the egresses fold back on the map to create a new link with an existing room, place a marker accordingly between the two cards. Keep adding cards and rolling for exits until you run out of room cards for your site.

Next, go through the map you've generated and clean up the connections. Remove excess connections between rooms or bend long strings of rooms back toward the center of the structure. Try to ensure that at least one "loop" of rooms exists, so the entire site isn't just a clump of mutually-segregated linear arms.

Lastly, sketch an outline of each room's dimensions on the index card. If there's a fight there, you'll need to know the room's shape and size to run the hostilities.

At this stage, it's possible to stock this map exactly as it is. You can copy its configuration down in your notes and then go on to add room contents to each of the index cards, with notes on the margins about exits and where they lead. If you want to add further spice to the site, you can go on to add some map layout features before you do this, however.

Map Features

At its simplest, a map layout feature is just some quirk about the site's geography that affects multiple rooms that the PCs cannot readily ignore. As examples, here are some options you can add.

Different levels exist in some ruins. Some rooms will have stairs or slopes up or down, and the cluster of rooms beyond this point will be at a higher or lower elevation. Traditionally, the lower levels of a Deep tend to contain the worst abominations and most fearsome monsters.

Rivers or streams flow through some sites, cutting off rooms on either side in the absence of a bridge or a party of brave swimmers. Monstrous life forms like to live in such rivers, and falling in might result in more conventional perils of drowning.

d8	How Many Exits	d12	Egresses
1	One	1–2	North
2	One	3	Northeast
3	Two	4–5	East
4	Two	6	Southeast
5	Three	7–8	South
6	Three	9	Southwest
7	Three	10–11	West
8	Four	12	Northwest

Crevasses and pits bisect some sites or have opened up in some rooms. Those who climb down might gain access to a whole new level of the site, or there might be creatures that travel up and down the cleft to reach their lairs or hunting grounds.

Toxic atmospheres are common in *arratus* and other xenoformed areas. They may not be poisonous enough to kill a human outright, but lingering in such places usually increases System Strain until the humans must flee or pass out. A mild *arratu* might just prevent humans from recovering System Strain while inside it, while an alien xenoforming structure might inflict a point of strain every hour. The right protective enchantments or devices might be needed to make exploration possible at all.

Timed accessibility exists in some sites, with particular areas only being accessible at particular times. They might be behind ancient time-locked doors, or it the vast swarm of man-eating vermin that blocks the only ingress into the sub-zone might go out to hunt during the day. Sometimes accessibility is predicated on having particular key objects or succeeding in an Investigation challenge to learn the proper methods to open a sealed portal.

Corridors and Detailed Maps

The maps you create with this technique are simple diagram maps, ones that focus on points of interest and handwave the corridors or tunnels between the rooms. When the party goes north out of the armory, they arrive outside the south door of the grand dining hall; the space between is unimportant.

This doesn't mean you don't need to give it even a little thought, however. If the PCs get jumped by a wandering encounter on their way between rooms you may need to improvise a section of corridor for the fight. Conversely, if the site is a single small building, there may not *be* any meaningful corridors between rooms, and loud activities in the armory will be clearly audible to whatever's dwelling in the grand dining hall.

GMs for groups that prefer more concrete sites can always plunder one of the myriad dungeon maps available online, re-keying rooms to fit their needs and cutting out sections that are surplus to requirements.

Stocking Rooms

Stocking an exploration site's rooms is the most demanding part of site preparation. A ruin map can be scrawled out in moments, and deciding or randomly generating a room's purpose can take only a few minutes, but giving each such place a degree of flavor and interest is a much more challenging prospect. Fortunately, a basic system can smooth this creative work.

Rolling For Contents

First, roll 1d8 and 1d6 together and consult the adjacent table. The 1d8 will determine what's in the room; a creature, a dangerous hazard, a peculiar enigma, or a bit of distracting background flavor. About a quarter of the rooms will be entirely empty and devoid of anything worth interacting with.

The 1d6 will then indicate whether or not there's any treasure or objects of value in the room. Thus, if the 1d8 is 6 and the 1d6 is 2, you can see that there's a distractor in the room but no treasure.

It's not impossible that a creature could share the same room as a hazard, or there might be an enigma with some distractors scattered about, but if you don't want to hand-decide such instances you can go back and re-roll the 1d8 on a selection of rooms to get a second contents result.

d8	Contents	d6	Treasure?
1–2	Creature	1–3	Yes
		4–6	No
3	Hazard	1–2	Yes
		3–6	No
4	Enigma	1–2	Yes
		3–6	No
5–6	Distractor	1	Yes
		2–6	No
7–8	Empty	1	Yes
		2–6	No

Placing Creatures

If you get a creature result, place one or more of them into the room, using the inhabitants results from page 240 to guide your selection. Remember to make about a quarter or a third of the creatures inside the site unrelated to these rolls so there's some variety in the inhabitants.

If the inhabitants are living in the site, make sure there are locations designated for sleeping, cooking, latrines, and other necessities of daily life. The creatures may not be present there all the time, but the evidence of their activities should be obvious.

As for how numerous and strong the creatures should be, keep in mind the logic of the site and the needs of your upcoming session. A random minor ruin in the woods is unlikely to be housing a bandit army or a vengeful arch-wraith, and if you are intentionally creating a ruin to engage a party of novice adventurers the inhabitants shouldn't be so strong as to kill them out of hand unless there's a good reason for them to be so. You have flexibility on this count, so long as you don't contradict what your world has already established; if the PCs have learned that the Tower of Iron and Salt is the lair of a devil-god, make sure there's either a devil-god in it or a clear reason for people to think that there is.

Placing Hazards

Hazards can take the form of traditional pit traps and poisoned needles, or they might be unstable construction, dangerous miasmas, or anything else that could cause harm to PCs in the area. Most traps or snares should allow an appropriate saving throw to avoid the worst results. Poison needles or toxic clouds might inflict flat damage on a failed save, and crumbling floors might send the PCs careening into a new area entirely.

Placing Enigmas

Enigmas are any magical or mechanical oddity that might be appropriate to the site's nature. An abandoned manor in the wilderness is unlikely to have ancient megastructural power conduits flaring in its basement, but it might have a relic of the past owner's arcane experimentations or an eerie trophy taken in some former age.

An enigma result is an excuse for you to put something odd in the place, something that could perhaps help as much as harm. Complex or esoteric enigmas might take their own Investigation challenge to make them operational, with clues scattered elsewhere in the site.

Placing Distractors

Distractors are just objects or situations that the PCs can interact with and investigate, even if there's nothing particularly important about them. Use them to flavor the site and emphasize its past use and current activities.

Whatever you use for a distractor should be something the PCs can touch or otherwise interact with. Mere backstory is not a distractor; it doesn't matter what happened in a given room unless it's something that left a tangible legacy behind for the PCs to meddle with.

Placing Treasure

Once you know how many rooms in the site have treasure in them, take the total site loot you've already determined and divide it into halves. Put half the treasure into one or two major troves in appropriate locations in the site. Divide the other half of the loot among the other treasure-positive rooms, putting trifling finds in some and bigger hauls in others. You can play with these proportions as your own judgment recommends, but make sure that not all treasure requires a fight to get it.

d20	Example Types of Hazards
1	Tripwire alarm or other alerts
2	Unstable floor that crumbles under weight
3	Dangerous fumes or miasma
4	Trapped containers or portals
5	Explosive dust or gases
6	An object makes a loud noise if disturbed
7	Damaged supports that give way in combat
8	Dangerously high or deep water
9	Trap set on a path of travel
10	Device here is dangerously broken in use
11	Trap that seals intruders into an area
12	Treacherous footing over dangerous terrain
13	Uncontrolled flames or dangerous heat
14	Torch-extinguishing winds or vapors
15	Ordinary-seeming object harms handlers
16	Crushingly heavy object is going to tip over
17	A savage foe can be attracted by accident
18	Something here is cursed by dark powers
19	Seeming treasure is used as bait for a trap
20	A contagious disease is on something here

d20	Example Enigmas
1	Magical fountain or pool
2	Control that opens paths elsewhere
3	Spatial warp between locations
4	Enchanted statue or art object
5	Magically-animated room components
6	Substance with physically impossible traits
7	Altered or augmented gravity
8	Zone that empowers foes or magic types
9	Magical ward or seal on a summoned thing
10	Oracular object or far-scrying device
11	Standing magical effect in the area
12	Temporal distortion or visions of other times
13	Sounds being shifted over long distances
14	Zones of darkness or blinding light
15	Enchanted seals visibly locking up loot
16	Magical or elemental force emitting unit
17	Enchantment tailored to the site's original use
18	Unnatural heat or chill in an area
19	Magically-altered plant life here
20	Restorative magical device

d20	Example Distractors
1	Books or records from the site's owners
2	Unique furniture related to the site's past
3	Trophies or prizes taken by the owners
4	Portraits or tapestries related to the site's past
5	Ornate, imposing, but harmless doors
6	Daily life debris from the inhabitants
7	Worthless ancient personal effects
8	Odd-looking but normal household goods
9	Shrines or hedge ritual remains of inhabitants
10	Corpses of fallen intruders
11	Bones and other food remnants
12	Statuary or carvings related to the site
13	Signs of recent bloodshed and battle
14	Empty cabinets or containers
15	A discharged or broken trap
16	Remnants of an inhabitant social event
17	Mouldering or ruined goods or supplies
18	Half-completed work done by inhabitants
19	Once-valuable but now-ruined object
20	Broken or expended once-magical object

d20	Possible Treasure Locations
1	Stored in a visible chest or coffer
2	Hidden in a pool of liquid
3	Behind a stone in the wall
4	Underneath a floor tile
5	Hidden inside a creature's body
6	Inside an ordinary furniture drawer
7	Slid beneath a bed or other furnishing
8	Placed openly on a shelf for display
9	Hidden in a pile of other junk
10	Tucked into a secret furniture space
11	Slid behind a tapestry or painting
12	Heavy, protective locked chest or safe
13	Buried under heavy or dangerous debris
14	In the pockets of clothes stored here
15	The treasure's a creature's precious body part
16	Scattered carelessly on the floor
17	Tucked into a pillow or cushion
18	Hung on a statue or display frame
19	Hidden atop a ceiling beam
20	Resting atop a desk or table

Wandering Encounters

Once you've stocked the hexmap with points of interest or filled out the contents of the rooms of your dungeon, you need to put together a Wandering Encounter table for the region or ruin. Some situations might call for more than one table, such as a hexcrawl that covers different biomes or a Deep that has levels controlled by different groups.

The Perils of the Unknown

The ultimate rationale of a Wandering Encounter is to remind the party of the danger of their surroundings, to wear them down over time, and to penalize time-wasting or carelessness inside a dangerous area. The longer the PCs spend exploring the wilderness or delving in a Deep, the more encounters they're going to have and the more they're going to deplete their available resources.

Wandering Encounters keep the players from having full control of the pacing of their explorations. They can't simply decide to hole up in a room for 12 hours to rest up and refresh their abilities; odds are that something's going to find them, and the encounter check is the impartial mechanism that determines whether or not that happens. A party that plunges a hundred leagues into a trackless jungle may decide that they've gone far enough, but bad luck with encounter checks on the way back may teach them that they've actually gone considerably farther than they should have. The party can decide when they've had enough of danger, but the dungeon gets a vote.

Wandering Encounters may not be a good fit for story-arc games, however. If the next plot point requires the party to make it to some distant wilderness location, rolling a particularly dire encounter might disrupt that plan. A planned climax may turn out to be decidedly anticlimactic when the PCs stagger in, their resources all but gone after being spent on several unlucky encounters. A GM who wants to firmly control the pacing of challenges for one reason or another may choose not to use them.

Sourcing Your Perils

Where do the creatures that make up these encounters come from? With hexcrawl encounter tables, this isn't a difficult question to answer. The creatures are either beasts that live in the area, sentient inhabitants that have communities there, or interlopers and hermits from outside the region. It won't strain the party's suspension of disbelief if they keep running into the same kind of creatures because it's always plausible to assume that there are more of them lurking somewhere in the wilderness.

Things are different in a Deep, a ruin, or a noble's townhouse. There are only so many creatures that could reasonably be lairing there. If the PCs kill the bandit chief and drive his lieutenants out of the abandoned fortress, it doesn't make sense for them to continue to encounter bands of his minions roaming through the castle's mouldering corridors.

For these situations, where there are only a finite number of wanderers that could reasonably occupy a site, each creature entry in the table should be allowed to happen only a few times, or perhaps only once. If that same entry is rolled again, then no encounter happens. If the PCs leave the ruin long enough for the locals to regroup and reinforce their numbers, this entry might be refreshed… or reinforced, if the inhabitants are braced for another PC invasion.

Building the Tables

As a general rule, a table of six or twelve entries is usually enough to give a good variety to encounters. About half the entries should be run-ins with the usual inhabitants of the area, a quarter should be some environmental peril or complication appropriate to the surroundings, and a quarter should be false alarms, explicitly non-hostile encounters, or non-harmful environmental activity.

The creatures met in a Wandering Encounter are probably either patrolling their territory, hunting for food, or going about their daily life. Most of them are not going to be expecting imminent danger unless the site has already been alerted to intruders, in which case the encounters might be considerably reinforced with creatures drawn from the stocked areas of the site.

Wandering Encounters almost never have any loot of note aside from petty personal belongings.

Running Encounters

Outdoors, most encounters begin at the terrain's maximum sight range, with opposed Wis/Notice checks to see who spots the other first. Ambush predators, stalking hunters, or prowling scouts might engage from a much closer distance. At long range, many PC groups will have time to attempt to flee a hostile group, with escapes being handled with the flight guidelines on page 52. Mounted groups will almost always overtake unmounted groups unless they can be led into terrain unsuitable for horses.

Indoors, the usual range for first notice is 2d6 x 10 feet, assuming the site is large enough to have corridors and rooms of that scale.

Remember, all but the most mindlessly hostile creatures deserve a reaction roll as per page 296 to determine their initial disposition toward the PCs. Even a group of patrollers charged with guarding against intruders might pause long enough to simply demand the PCs leave, or find them interesting enough to offer silence in exchange for gold or favors. A high reaction roll won't turn a committed enemy into a friend, but it could be enough to defuse immediate violence, or open the door to a mutually-agreeable parley.

Dead Wandering Encounters are likely to draw the alarm of the site's inhabitants. If enough of these patrols are killed, the locals may choose to migrate elsewhere, taking their treasures with them.

EXAMPLE TABLES

The table below is an example of the kind of encounter table you might make up for a ruin or wilderness, filling in the entries with results specific to the place. To expand it or to get more ideas for complicating encounters, you can use the other tables to add some extra content. Some entries might be plausibly encountered several times, while others might be setpieces to be met only once.

d6	An Encounter Table Template
1	Dangerous animal living in the vicinity
2	Small group of local inhabitants
3	Local elite or lieutenant with retinue
4	Solitary intruder or unaffiliated creature
5	Environmental effect or ambiance
6	Sound or side-effect of inhabitant activity

d12	What Are They Trying To Do?
1	They're hunting or gathering foodstuffs
2	They're patrolling their territory
3	They're investigating other intruders
4	They're hiding a cache of wealth
5	They're raiding their rivals
6	They're escorting a wounded comrade
7	They're fleeing a worse foe
8	They've been summoned back by the chief
9	They're escorting prisoners or slaves
10	They're working at a necessary labor
11	They're repairing or maintaining the site
12	They're sneaking away from work

d12	What Mood Are They In?
1	Furious and looking to take it out on someone
2	Hungry and needing food
3	Belligerent and looking for a fight
4	Suspicious even of what they see themselves
5	Wary of strangers and their powers
6	Greedy for gold or glory
7	Spitefully angry at a rival or enemy group
8	Temperate and reluctant to fight
9	Frightened of something terrifying nearby
10	Drunken or intoxicated in some way
11	Benevolent and feeling magnanimous
12	Happy after a recent stroke of great luck

d20	Example Wilderness Events
1	A horse or pack animal goes lame
2	Cart wheel breaks or vehicle overturns
3	Sudden flash storm makes travel perilous
4	Skill check or get lost for the day
5	Find the hideous remains of a massacre
6	Landslide blocks the path
7	Dust storm or deep fog obscures everything
8	Poisonous flora force saves or debilitation
9	Mold or vermin destroy some foodstuffs
10	A piece of equipment breaks during use
11	Find the remains of a lost traveler
12	Find territory-markers of nearby natives
13	Insects or parasites; save or get sick
14	Run into a dire monster when next foraging
15	Route dead-ends, wasting a day's travel
16	Sudden great heat or cold snap
17	Steady, relentless rain halving all travel
18	Contaminated water; save or get sick
19	Maddening insects; can't sleep well
20	Find signs of a lethal predator in the area

d20	Example Dungeon Events
1	Native religious chants echo down the halls
2	Disgusting local vermin, but they're harmless
3	Spores or filth ruins some foodstuffs
4	Strong winds or heavy gases snuff flames
5	Floor or ceiling collapse in a rickety place
6	Next door or furniture touched falls apart
7	Cryptic scrawling found on something
8	Makeshift burial of an adventurer by allies
9	Dropped trinkets from the site's major loot
10	Mephitic stench from activity here
11	Pounding or booming from the deeps
12	Gravely wounded intruder begs aid
13	Tide of vermin fleeing a danger or predator
14	Prey animal fleeing nearby local hunters
15	Sound of nearby local activity
16	Piece of equipment breaks during use
17	Escaped slave or prisoner of the locals
18	Mold or noxious liquid spills on someone
19	Hidden alarm trap is in the PCs' way
20	Local being is in trouble and needs help

Creating Investigation Challenges

While most players can hum along with how an adventurous sword fight or perilous dungeon delve ought to be done, very few of them have much practical experience as private investigators. Give them a sinister pit and they'll have a list of exploration supplies drawn up in minutes, but ask them to find Leper Tom in the grim city of Gathis and they'll flail in vain. Many of them will try to move directly to Notice or Connect skill checks for lack of any better ideas.

This isn't exclusively the fault of their innocence, but also because investigations and searches are so reliant on masses of detail. Without a real scene to investigate or a real city to comb through, the players can only interact with those parts of the world that the GM describes and defines. If the GM forces them to hit the right magic pixel before they cough up some important description then the players can end up frustrated… and frustrated players tend to do very reckless things in a campaign.

It's inevitable that a GM's going to need to brew up some mystery for an adventure, or plant a sinister plot, or bring in some hidden person that the party desperately needs to find. These enigmas might be single strange rooms in ancient Deeps or they might be sprawling cultist schemes that encompass half the campaign setting. What they all have in common is that there is a secret and the PCs are expected to want to find it out.

Why Mysteries Are Hard

Enigmas are much more difficult to GM than many other common elements of play. A dungeon can be mapped and keyed with everything of significance in it. A wilderness crawl rarely involves any questions from the players until they run into an encounter, site, or situation that the GM has designed and placed on the map. Even courtly intrigues usually involve a fixed roster of characters and a limited scope of relevance that is obvious to the players.

Mysteries and investigations don't have that conveniently closed scope. Questions like "What was Irrelevant NPC #5 doing at six in the morning on that day?" or "What do I find when I investigate this dubious baker?" can come flying at a GM when the players try to follow some sudden flash of probably-erroneous insight. Anything could be relevant, so the players start to ask about anything, and it's a gifted GM that can ad-lib while keeping every fact straight. A mistake in a timeline turns into a Telling Clue, and the GM then has to pause and explain to the players that no, the butler had nothing to do with it and it was only a GM error.

It is for this reason that most GMs are best off structuring their mysteries in a less sandboxy way. It may sound heretical to suggest this, but for reasons of practical playability it can be necessary to force things into a more fixed structure and let the players explore this particular web of facts rather than risk the need to generate an endless supply of internally-coherent ad-libs.

Focal and Peripheral Mysteries

Before using the tools in this section, it's important to distinguish between those mysteries and investigations which are the focal point of the party's exertions and those plots and schemes that just happen to be going on in the area they're exploring. You only need to worry about the tools and templates in this section when you expect the players to be specifically trying to unearth a mystery. You do not need to use them if there just happens to be a sinister plot or hidden truth somewhere in the dungeon or city area they occupy.

The point of these tools is to help the GM build a session that revolves around PC investigation, and if the players aren't trying to have a session like that then you don't need to bother using them. Maybe they find out about the peripheral scheme or maybe they don't, but your content for the evening doesn't rely on that outcome so you don't have to worry about it.

Scenes and Investigations

Investigations are broken into several specific scenes. Each scene is a setpiece encounter, place, or situation that the PCs are expected to run into, either because it's logically obvious or because the GM is nudging them in that direction. It may seem blasphemous for an honest, dice-fearing sandbox GM to tilt the table in that way but it is often a practical necessity, simply because the GM can't possibly ad-lib all the coherent details that the players might demand if they had a wholly unrestrained scope.

The structure for an investigative adventure is built backwards, starting from the Resolution. This is the big moment of confrontation or revelation, the point at which the PCs discover the ultimate truth or find themselves with swords drawn, facing the sinister cultists at their hidden ritual site. Think about what the climax is likely to look like, even if that's something as simple as the PCs finding the right book on some forgotten library's shelves.

Once you have the Resolution, you need about three Investigation scenes. Each Investigation scene should give the PCs one fact they need to reach the resolution with all relevant information. To make it to the hidden cult ritual, for example, they might need to know where it will be held, when it will next happen, and what kind of defenses or preparations will be there. The necessary information to establish each of these facts is put in its own Investigation scene, where the PCs will have to either infiltrate a place to get the information, negotiate with an NPC, unearth it from a hidden location, or otherwise overcome some challenge.

With the three Investigation scenes and their rewards of information established, you pull them together into a single Introduction scene, where the PCs will be

given pointers toward each Investigation scene. They may not know anything about the challenges waiting for them there, but they have at least an actionable amount of information necessary to get to the Investigation scenes.

Finally, and optionally, you might glue on a Hook scene at the very beginning of the investigation, some event, NPC, or situation that clues in the PCs that there even is something worth investigating here. If you know that some grand mystery or sinister scheme is going on in the next place the PCs are going, you might throw them a Hook scene to establish that something pressing is going on in the area that the PCs might want to look into. In the same vein, you might throw the Hook out so the players know that choosing to spend the next session investigating it is something that will get them worthwhile adventure. If they don't bite, then you can just leave it until local events would logically come to a head.

A simple investigative adventure requires nothing more than these five or six scenes: a Resolution, three Investigations leading to that climax, an Introduction pointing to each of the three Investigations, and an optional attached Hook scene to alert the players that there's something worth looking into here. If you want to elaborate the session, you can insert additional types of scenes, or have them waiting in the wings as consequences if the PCs screw something up or draw the wrong attention.

Planning Scenes

Each scene should have very clearly-drawn boundaries around the places, people, and facts of relevance. *How* clearly will depend on the players you have; some groups will pick up on mere whispers and allusions, while others need a finely-engraved invitation to a specific place and time before their suspicions are aroused. When in doubt, err on the side of blatancy, because if they don't pick it up organically you'll need to simply tell them directly that a particular line of interest is outside the scope of the adventure.

Failure states in an investigation challenge come in two varieties, and you need to decide which state you're going to risk happening when you build your scenes.

The players miss the clue and dead-end. If they can't pick up the fact, lead, or hook the scene is trying to feed them, they simply don't get it and can't progress the investigation. Maybe they come up with some brilliant out-of-the-box solution for sidestepping the issue, but you may just have to let them know that they blew it. If you don't make their failure clear to them, they'll just keep flailing around until they get sick of trying or meet an ignominious end. This failure state accepts that some investigations are simply stillborn due to PC failure.

The players miss the clue but get it at a price. In this case you feed the party a Failsafe scene to get them the clue, hook, or lead they botched and enable them to progress the investigation. This mercy comes at a price, however, and the situation will become worse, the enemy stronger, or an ally will pay a dear price for it.

When planning your scenes, you need to decide which failure state is going to be acceptable to you and take steps accordingly. If the PCs can botch the entire job early on, then you need to have the consequences of that botch in mind and some filler content to occupy them if you want to avoid the risk of a short session. If the PCs are going to get the clue no matter what, you need a Failsafe scene or two prepped to explain how the precious datum is going to be put in their hands and the grim price that they're going to pay in getting it that way.

Once you know what the consequences of failure are for your scene, plot out at least one method in the scene that would let the PCs obtain the clue. The PCs can and probably will think of others, but you need to make sure there's at least one feasible way to succeed. Remember that the entire point of the scene is to enable the PCs to get the information; logical steps and rational efforts should be rewarded, and failing to get the data should be the result of a significant mistake rather than the default outcome without some heroic effort.

Handling Scenes in Play

Managing investigative scenes can be painful for those GMs averse to ad-libbing, but there are a few basic principles that can make your life a little easier.

Be blunt about irrelevancies. Red herrings are poison to a lot of groups, creating confusion that's delightful in a novel and often painful at the table. So long as it's just one line of investigation out of several it can be allowed to continue, but if the players really start digging into something totally outside the scope of the investigation, cut it off and feed them a lead back into the real matter.

Reward efforts with information. If they are trying something logical and rational, give them something. Even if it's just a pointer toward a more relevant topic, always let them feel as if their efforts are getting them somewhere, even if it may not be done as efficiently as they like. A reasonable plan that ends with "You learn nothing and obtain no new leads." is tremendously frustrating to a lot of groups.

Don't allow naked skill checks. You should never look kindly on an unadorned request for a skill check, but this is especially to be avoided in an investigation. If a PC wants to find someone, don't just let them roll Connect. Have them give at least a sentence or two to explain what kind of steps they're taking to find a person, and then use their efforts to sensibly inform the result of their Connect check. By knowing *how* they're doing something, you get the contextual information you need to slip them side clues and helpful pointers, even if the check itself is a failure.

Always be pushing forward. When players dead-end in an investigation, they get frustrated, and when they get frustrated, they often start doing reckless or stupid things just to get some kind of movement from the situation. The players should never be without at least one tangible lead forward, unless you're reconciled to the "allow complete failure" model of running investigations.

Resolution Scenes

As the first scene to plan, think about the final moment when the PCs finally reveal the truth, place the incontrovertible proof before authorities, confront the malefactor in their hidden lair, or otherwise bring things to a head. In some cases this resolution will be unhindered triumph; the PCs figure out how to unseal the ancient vault and plunder the wealth within. In other cases, they might just buy themselves the opportunity to face an unmasked enemy, and may or may not prevail in the end.

Make sure you have prepared any necessary combat stats, relevant maps, and notes on any likely consequent social results. If the PCs successfully resolve the investigation, who will care, and who will be upset or pleased about it? If you choose to add a twist to the situation, make sure it's foreshadowed and properly hinted earlier in the investigation.

d6	Twists to the Resolution
1	The culprit or object actually had a reason to want the mystery to be solved
2	The culprit's actions are being shaped or influenced by seemingly-uninvolved party
3	Someone who ought to be happy about the discovery will actually have cause to regret it
4	The resolution carries hints of an even larger mystery the PCs may or may not pursue
5	The resolution coincidentally entangles itself in a completely unrelated social conflict
6	The most obvious act to resolve the mystery is one that comes at some dear price

Investigation Scenes

Now pick three facts that together should give the PCs the information they need to reach the Resolution. Each one of those facts gets its own Investigation scene. Parcel out the truths to likely NPCs, particular significant places in a ruin, the abandoned homes of the long-dead secret keepers, or other people or places who ought to have the facts that the PCs want to find out.

Then put an obstacle in each between the PCs and the knowledge. The NPCs will want something in exchange, or have reason to avoid cooperating, or be people the PCs have a hard time reaching. Clues found in the environment will come with attendant dangers and perilous effort to reach them.

Avoid ambiguity in your clues, when possible. The point of the scene is to let the PCs face the challenge to get the information; don't play coy with the rewards.

d6	Possible Investigation Complications
1	The information is obviously time-sensitive, and the PCs know they have to hurry to get it
2	There's an obvious, easy way to get the information but it's morally repugnant
3	Unless obtained carefully, the info is only partial, enough to direct but missing vital bits
4	The information is of a sort the party will be absolutely certain to be unhappy to learn
5	The information is true, but deeply misleading unless the full context is investigated
6	An ally is going to be hurt if the PCs obtain the information.

Introduction Scenes

How will the PCs even know that the clues exist or where to look for them? The Introduction scene gives them directions to each of the three clues you've placed. It's unlikely to be a perfect map to the exact NPC or precise abandoned archive that has the clue, but it should give them a clear idea of where to look next. Usually, such an Introduction scene takes the form of the PCs' first encounter with the mystery and its NPC participants, with the leads being implicit in that situation's events.

Introduction scenes need to give the PCs actionable intelligence, and point them to specific directions they can take to progress the mystery. They may need to navigate dangerous social situations, search perilous Deeps, carve their way through trackless wilderness, or negotiate with less-than-trustworthy informers, but they should have an obvious "Do this next." imperative as part of the Introduction scene.

d6	Why Is the Intro Worth Following Up On?
1	Some known enemy or suspicious person clearly does not want them to follow it up
2	The manner of its discovery makes clear that somebody was trying to keep it hidden
3	An ally or existing NPC they trust has reason to vouch for its validity
4	The introduction comes with a reward or token that is enticingly valuable
5	Part of the introduction involves facts or elements that the PCs already know are true
6	The intro happens to lead them in a direction they were already planning on going

Hook Scenes

Introduction scenes are necessary to give the PCs a clear direction for their investigations. Yet for some mysteries, it might not be obvious that there is any investigation to be had at all. A glowing sphere of glyphed jade invites curiosity; a silent conspiracy of noble cultists is less obviously interesting.

The purpose of a Hook scene is simply to let the players know that there's something they might want to look into. An involved NPC can go to them, or they might stumble into the aftermath of an event related to the mystery, or an old acquaintance might seek them out for help with some seemingly-unrelated problem.

If the players have all agreed beforehand to explore the mystery, then a Hook will usually be swallowed on the spot. If that's not the case, however, be prepared with alternatives should the Hook be ignored or de-prioritized in favor of a more pressing adventure.

d6	What Makes the Hook So Enticing?
1	A great sum of wealth or the promise of rich treasures are dangled by it
2	Following the hook would clearly win great favor with an important NPC
3	An allied NPC or friendly character is appealing to them to follow it up
4	Following it would clearly hurt or discomfit a person or group the PCs hate
5	Following it offers an easy escape from some current bad situation or approaching foe
6	The hook directly ties into an ambition or goal of one of the PCs

Reaction Scenes

In active conspiracies or secret intrigues, the players aren't the only ones with volition. The participants are going to react to the PCs getting involved in their affairs, and that response may not be particularly gentle. Reaction scenes are optional scenes you can work out if you want to think about how a culprit or a conspiracy might respond to PC meddling.

Do they attempt an ambush? A sinister warning-off? A friendly spot of bribery? Do they go after sympathetic NPCs, or perhaps after those NPCs who let out their secrets in an Investigation scene? Does the reaction itself risk giving the PCs more clues about how to find the truth?

Reactions are contingent on the culprit actually realizing that they're being investigated. Sneaky and subtle PCs might do their work without ever raising suspicion.

d6	What's Their First Instinct of Reaction?
1	They invoke some kind of summoned beast or occult peril against the investigators
2	They call on favors or mundane agents to wield secular forces against the PCs
3	They put pressure on friendly NPCs or threaten allies to get the PCs to back off
4	They offer bribes that are genuinely tempting to the PCs
5	Their minions or direct servitors seek to use brute violence to quell the PCs
6	They change locations or plans in an attempt to throw the PCs off the scent

Failsafe Scenes

Sometimes the PCs just totally fail to find the clue, or else misinterpret it drastically. It's perfectly acceptable to let them botch things as a consequence and leave the mystery impenetrable. Not all adventures are a success and there's always something new to do in a sandbox.

In other cases, you'll want to make it certain that the PCs will eventually pick up the clues. A Failsafe scene allows the GM to hand the PCs a fact or realization they might have missed, though usually at some dire cost to a friendly NPC or at the risk of making the culprit all the more ready and able to deal with the investigators.

For a Failsafe, think about some way an NPC, coincidence, or misstep by the culprit could get a missed clue into the PCs' hands. At the same time, think about the kind of karmic negative consequences that might come from the need to resort to such cosmic forbearance.

d6	What's the Cost of the Clue?
1	A sympathetic or friendly NPC dies in the process of revealing the clue to the PCs
2	The coincidence that reveals the clue also greatly strengthens the culprit
3	Some portion of a treasure or reward is spoiled by the way the clue is revealed
4	A positive NPC relationship with the PCs is sacrificed by the circumstances of the scene
5	The culprit becomes acutely aware of the PCs' involvement by the way the clue is revealed
6	The clue's revelation is made contingent on the PCs making some significant sacrifice

Creating Social Challenges

In many ways, social challenges are extremely simple. The PCs want something, the NPC has it, and the PCs need to figure out some way to make the NPC give it to them. They may want favors, information, money, or some particular action on the target's part, but it's essentially a challenge revolving around making the transaction.

In other ways, social challenges are hard. How can a GM figure out what kind of deals an NPC would be willing to make, or how much payment they'll want for their help? How can social skills and powers earn their keep in such challenges without trivializing matters into a simple skill check?

Building the Target

A social challenge has a target, a particular person the PCs need to persuade or compel into doing something for them. If you're to make a good challenge out of the matter, you need to build a target that can sensibly respond to the often-exotic persuasions that PCs tend to offer to NPCs. Answer the questions below to fashion this target.

Is the desired result possible? Do the PCs want something that the target even can or would possibly be able to provide? What they want might just be beyond the power of the NPC, or so hateful to them that they'd never grant it.

If that's the case you either need to telegraph this to the PCs and prepare alternate material for when they give up, or else you need to provide a lead to some action or motivation that might change the situation enough to make the result possible. Maybe some special favor, the death of a rival, the loss of some authority, or some other twist can turn the unthinkable into the feasible.

Why won't they give it? Why won't the NPC simply grant the result for the asking or for some easily-paid price? If a modest bribe is enough to get the result the PCs want, you haven't made much of a social challenge. That might be okay for you, but you need to know it before the PCs breeze past it. Knowing why the NPC won't cooperate easily helps inform the next step.

What do they want from the PCs? What kind of favor, payment, or service do they want from the heroes that would make their desired result possible? What kind of problem does the NPC have that the PCs can plausibly resolve? It may be that nothing the PCs can do can satisfy the NPC, in which case a less equitable form of persuasion is needed.

What can the PCs do to pressure them? What levers can the PCs pull to force the NPC to cooperate? Blackmail, old friendships, naked physical force, or some other squeeze might be enough to force the NPC into accepting terms they would never consider otherwise.

How can they hurt the PCs? What qualities do they have that would make their enmity dangerous? Are they personally mighty in their combat prowess? Do they have a lot of friends at court? Are they connected with the criminal underworld? If the PCs get their way through pressure and don't intimidate the NPC so completely as to make them swear off further contact, there will likely be consequences from the NPC's enmity.

How will the PCs learn about them? A social challenge only works if the PCs know who they need to persuade. A particular crime boss might be the woman they need to win over, but if the PCs never hear about her there's not much point in prepping the challenge. Be generous about throwing hooks to the target, because the real meat of the challenge happens after they meet.

Handling Social Skills

A PC built for smooth-talking and golden persuasion should feel as good about their character choices in a social fray as a Warrior does in a melee. Their skills should give them a distinct advantage, but just like a Warrior, bare rolls shouldn't save them from bad judgment.

Make sure the rest of the party isn't left out of any negotiations. Every PC should be invited to give their own two cents at each stage. Don't penalize PCs who have players that might not be the most socially-adroit; assume whatever they say or do is taken in the spirit intended, even if it's expressed inelegantly.

When the PCs make their request, the target will usually then refuse them or demand a particular favor. At this point, most players will want to roll their social skills to persuade them otherwise or sweeten the terms.

Every player who makes such a roll needs to explain what reasons or terms their PC is giving to persuade the target. What are they offering in exchange? Only after they've made their pitch should they roll the check.

The difficulty is privately set by you based on the quality of their offering versus the magnitude of their demand. A very good offer might be difficulty 7, while a risky or dangerous deal with poor inducement might be 12 or more.

On a success, the NPC either accepts the terms outright or adds a condition that they think the PCs can reasonably accomplish. If the PCs can meet the terms they offered, they'll get what they want from the NPC, barring treachery.

On a failure, the NPC either refuses them flatly or demands some term that the PCs may not be able to meet. In this case, however, don't simply kill the negotiation. Instead, offer the PCs some hint or clue as to potential ways to pressure the NPC or change the grounds of their refusal.

A failed social negotiation should almost never end in a simple flat refusal. There should always be some way forward for the PCs, and some evident means of improving their case. They may decide that the effort is too onerous, or they may attempt it and fail, but they should never be left with nowhere to go.

One-Roll Social Challenge Targets

The tables in this section can be used to quickly generate a social challenge target by rolling one die of each type, or by picking entries from the tables to suit your needs.

The bare skeleton produced can then be dressed in the specifics of your need, with names, social roles, and particular capacities added to fit the social challenge you're creating. When possible, tie outside elements such as rivals, enemies, allies, and other connections back into your existing adventure, using other NPCs and events you've already created. Several targets can thus form a web of rivalries, friendships, and associations that can make it easier to come up with their problems and needs.

The Court generators on page 167 can also prove convenient for creating a target's social context, along with giving them minions and resources of their own.

d6	How Do The PCs Learn About Them?
1	They have a mutual acquaintance
2	They were involved in a problem the PCs had
3	Their name is widely known to the public
4	They do something that the PCs will notice
5	An NPC ally mentions them to the PCs
6	They have a reason to seek the PCs out

d8	Why Won't They Cooperate?
1	They're too absorbed in some other issue
2	They're being watched by a rival
3	They begrudge the PCs for some reason
4	They want more than the PCs can give
5	They're afraid of the consequences
6	They doubt their ability to do it
7	They think the PCs aren't worth their time
8	Someone they care about is against it

d10	What's Their Weakest Point?
1	There exists grave blackmail on them
2	They're enamored of a manipulator
3	They're a physical coward
4	They're in serious and pressing debt
5	A rival is beating them at their own game
6	They recently made a grave error of judgment
7	They're lamentably overconfident
8	Their social standing is being undermined
9	Someone they love makes horrible choices
10	An underling plots to betray them

d4	What's Their Current Mood?
1	Something good happened; they're happy
2	It's just a day like any other
3	Uncharitable, tired, bored, or irritated
4	Something bad happened that upset them

d12	What Do They Want Accomplished?
1	They want someone murdered
2	They want to make a lot of money
3	They want to discredit a rival
4	They want to help a friend or ally in trouble
5	They want a mystery solved
6	They want a monster slain
7	They want to elevate their social standing
8	They want someone subverted to their cause
9	They want a crime committed
10	They want someone to be driven away
11	They want to obtain a particular object
12	They want a matter hushed up

d20	Twists to the Negotiation
1	They're planning on reneging on the deal
2	They misunderstand what the PCs want
3	They'll deal only at a dangerous location
4	They somehow think the PCs betrayed them
5	They have a reason to want to make the deal
6	They hate to negotiate directly with the PCs
7	Someone wants to make them a better offer
8	They think too much of the PCs' capabilities
9	They think the PCs are someone else's agents
10	Payment is a ruse to cover for their real desire
11	What they want will turn out terribly for them
12	They're so open that they seem suspicious
13	They're the front man for the real target
14	Someone's tracking those they deal with
15	Their request is much harder than it seems
16	Their request has a very harsh time limit
17	Their request changes mid-stream
18	Their request hurts the PCs' interests
19	PCs need to be vouched-for to meet them
20	They're also doing favors for PC enemies

Rewards, Renown, and Experience Points

The room stocking rules on page 244 explain how to divide up an adventure's treasure, but how much should you be giving in the first place? How many experience points should the heroes get for an adventure, and how much Renown should you parcel out for their deeds? These matters will be influenced by the tastes of individual tables, but some suggestions are offered below.

Monetary Rewards and Payment

Adventurers tend to be hired by patrons to do dangerous or unpleasant tasks. The table below gives a general benchmark of what various kinds of average patrons can afford to pay for a job that is important to them.

Some portion of the reward might be offered in material goods, property, favors, noble titles, or other non-coin form, particularly if the patron is richer in such things than in silver. Jobs involving unusually great danger or that promise dire consequences for failure are worth twice as much, and if the work is so vital that they'd give everything they can scrape together on short notice, the reward is four times as much. Rewards in land or portable goods are higher too, as they're harder to sell.

There may be times when the PCs want to bribe an NPC or offer them an inducement potent enough to get them to risk major dangers. Such a price is usually equal to twice the average reward below; a peasant will risk great danger for a hundred pieces of silver, while a king might expect a hundred thousand for such a service. Such a cash inducement will be enough to get most people to accept substantial risks of harm, but they won't sign up for likely personal ruin.

Type of Patron	Reward in SP
Common peasant / Laborer	50
Prosperous farmer or artisan	300
Rural village head / Tribal chief	500
Peddler or minor trader	300
Rural Chief Priest or Abbot	1,000
Comfortable merchant	1,000
Minor mage	2,500
Rural gentry or minor noble	5,000
Urban official or minor courtier	5,000
City mayor or its local lord	10,000
Regional noble / Great mage	25,000
Chief High Priest	25,000
Monarch or Merchant Prince	50,000

Paid in land or goods, not cash	x2
Great danger or desperate need	x2
They'd give everything for this job	x4

Renown Rewards

A basic game session is worth one point of Renown for each PC, assuming they did something suitably adventurous or challenging during the evening's play. Their adventuring need not be entirely successful to get this basic point of Renown; they just have to have done their best to accomplish something worth mentioning.

If the PCs have done a significant service to some local NPC, provided useful cooperation to a local authority, or done some notable feat of helpfulness to the populace, they each get an additional point of Renown. If their adventure materially improved things for the locals or was helpful to the rulers, it's usually enough to get this bonus point.

Finally, any PC who spends at least a quarter of whatever they earned from the last adventure on carousing, local charity, benevolent tithing, holding parties, or otherwise self-indulgent or non-remunerative ends will gain one point of Renown. It's up to the GM to decide what counts as "the last adventure". Blowing the loot from the last trip down into the Deep is usually fine, even if the PCs aren't done exploring it, but if they're midway through some story-arc adventure or larger scheme the GM is justified in making them wait until they've finished with it before granting them Renown for their carousing.

These rewards assume that the PCs are letting their exploits be known by the general populace or someone in authority. Working as a secret troubleshooter squad for a local baron would still win Renown, as at least the baron knows how useful the heroes are, but a band of professionally secretive PCs who don't let anyone know what they're up to is unlikely to earn much of a name.

Aside from these basic rewards, the PCs might choose to undertake adventures tailor-made to win the hearts of the populace or the local authorities. They might perform generous deeds of heroism and fight mighty foes without asking for material reward. They might go into service with a great noble, doing their dirty work in return for the noble's cooperation in the party's own goals. When the PCs decide to aim for glory more than gold, the GM is justified in increasing the Renown reward.

For these glory-hound adventures or charitable undertakings, pick a patron reward that would fit what the job would normally earn the PCs. Then convert it to Renown using the conversion table on page 338, rounding up to the next point. Then divide the total Renown among all PCs as a bonus, rounding up for each. This reward assumes that no one is paying the PCs for their help, though they might find considerable treasures in the course of their good deeds.

Note that it is not generally possible to *lose* Renown simply by infuriating rulers or upsetting the natives. Such capriciousness is intimidating, and the PCs who are capa-

Ways to Earn Renown	Renown
Participate in a game session	1 point
Help a local NPC, aid authorities, or solve a local problem	1 point
Spend 25% of the last adventure's reward on charity or carousing	1 point
Succeed in a helpful adventure without accepting recompense	Special

ble of causing so much trouble are perhaps best placated with cooperation, at least as far as their Renown requires. There are numerous lords of the Latter Earth that do little all day but bedevil their subjects, and their minions are as eager to avoid their anger by swift obedience as to please them with their service.

For simplicity's sake, Renown is assumed to travel with the PCs wherever they may go. If they have done wonderful things in one region of the world and travel onward to another, it might take a little time for tales of their heroism to catch up with them, but once they do the impressed locals will likely be inclined to cooperate with their plans. If the PCs travel truly vast distances or adopt entirely new identities elsewhere, the GM might be justified in making them keep separate Renown totals for each of the different areas.

Experience Point Rewards

The experience point requirements for advancing a level are predicated on a certain model of play. It's assumed that PCs will rapidly advance one or two levels in their first few adventures, linger for a while in the mid levels, and then slowly advance to the campaign-crowning maximum of tenth level. The guidelines in this section presume you want to keep that pacing, and you may need to adjust things if you prefer a different speed of advancement.

There are several different ways to award experience points, depending on the kind of activities you want to prioritize in your games. You should pick one that the table can agree on, as the things that you reward with experience points are the things that are likely to form the focus of your gaming sessions.

The default system is to give each PC three experience points for each game session in which they tried to do something adventurous or in pursuit of someone's character goals. So long as their efforts involved a challenge or an attempt appropriate to their characters' capabilities, they get the full reward, even if the attempt was a failure. If they laze around the home base or spend their time squashing trifling problems then the reward is lessened or eliminated entirely. This system encourages players to go out and adventure, and it doesn't especially care what exactly they *do* in this adventure so long as they are trying to do something worthwhile.

A goal-based system is to have each player identify a short-term goal and a long-term goal for their PCs. The short-term goal should be something that could conceivably be achieved in one adventure, while the long-term one might require several. These goals could change on a session-by-session basis if it seems reasonable to the GM. Whenever a PC achieves a short-term goal, they get three experience points and every PC who helped them gets one. Whenever they manage a long-term goal, they get nine experience points and every PC who helped them gets three. To ensure every PC gets their share of the limelight, a PC can't get goal experience again until everyone else in the party has gotten it.

For this system it's entirely acceptable for the short-term goals to be something the PC could accomplish this same session. If a short-term goal is achieved every session and a long-term one achieved every three or four, the party's total advancement is only slightly slower than with the default system.

A mission-based system is to have the players all agree on a mission goal, either one given them by a patron or one derived from their own ambitions. The goal must be an honest challenge for their capabilities, but when they achieve it they each gain three experience points. If they decide the goal is too much for them, they can change it at the end of any session, giving the GM time to prepare content for the new goal. This system makes for slightly slower advancement than the default, as the PCs aren't guaranteed to achieve a new mission goal every session.

A spending-based system encourages behavior in line with classic sword and sorcery heroes who are always spending the wealth of kings on debauches, vain purchases, and casual largesse. For a campaign like this, a PC earns three experience points at the end of each session provided they spent all their accumulated liquid funds at the end of the prior session. Thus, if a bronze-thewed barbarian came into a royal ransom during the last session's adventure, he could spend all but a trifling few coins of it on whatever he wished. He'd start the next session near-penniless, but he'd receive three experience points at the end of that next session.

For this system, PCs are allowed to spend their wealth on useful things, such as equipment, or holdings, or Workings, or services from others. They are also allowed to keep magic items or objects of more than mere material value. They simply are not permitted to keep any meaningful liquid funds beyond those necessary for bare survival if they mean to gain experience points. Every session they need to go out and earn fresh rewards in order to fund their heroic lifestyle. They might choose to save up a few sessions worth of cash for a major purchase, but they'd get no experience points until they spent it.

The system to use is up to the GM and the players, and adjustments can always be made to suit the particular goals of the group. Remember that the activities that reward experience are the ones that are going to motivate the players the most, so be careful to put the focus on the kind of play and purposes you want to have. Don't hesitate to mix and match systems to find one that rewards the kind of play your group wants to engage in.

Placing Treasures

Adventurers have a habit of plunging into uncharted Deeps, mysterious ruins, lost cities, fetid jungles, and similar places where large amounts of valuable objects may have been mislaid at some point. Sometimes they are motivated by the rewards given by patrons, but often as not their own curiosity and avarice are the chief drivers. A GM will often be obliged to figure out what kind of loot might be found in a particular place.

While the adventure chapter's section on exploration sites gives guidelines on dividing up a site's treasure, a GM first needs to decide how much loot should be in the place, and what forms it should take. This amount will depend greatly on the details of the location, but there are a few basic considerations that can be kept in mind.

The table below lists various different types of sites, ruins, and treasure storehouses. Pick the most appropriate line and roll 2d6 to see which column you should use to determine the total silver piece value of the goods within the site. This is the basic cash value of the ruin once all its lost coin hoards, concealed jewels, and luxuriant ornamentation is taken into account.

This total value should be adjusted to fit the site's importance in the area and the economy of your particular setting. If you've established that adventurers have long delved into the Deep of the Waning Hour then it's probably fairly picked-over by now. The PCs are also unlikely to find all of the treasure when they investigate the place, and if they miss one of the major portions of the trove they might come away with half or less than the total.

Once you have this total value, you can start dividing it up into various troves for placement in the site, as explained on page 244 in the adventure chapter. While some treasures might consist of nothing but a pile of ancient coins, others could use more flavor in being jewelry, gemstones, or objects of art. The tables on the adjacent page offer suggestions for such items. You can assign each such item a portion of the trove's total worth.

Values for jewelry and art object are based on what they could be sold for in a major city on short notice. Merchants might be able to get far more for it with time and skill, but adventurers take what they can get.

Important figures or rich troves might have one or more magic items among the finds. Some GMs will prefer to place magic items "by hand", placing elixirs, calyxes, and more potent artifacts at the density which fits their particular idea of a good balance. Even GMs who prefer a more randomized distribution should always feel free to reach in and hand-place certain items with the creatures or plunder that ought to have them.

In other cases, the table on the facing page can be used to determine whether or not a creature or pile of loot should have a magic item. Pick the line that best describes the possessor or treasure cache that you're checking and roll 1d20. The result will indicate how many magic items are in their possession, with the table below giving a distribution of potential item types. In almost all cases an intelligent possessor should be expected to use the item if they realize its worth.

Silver Piece Value of the Site's Contents

Type of Site	2–3	4–5	6–8	9–10	11–12
Minor bandit cache or petty find	1d6	1d6 x 10	1d6 x 25	1d6 x 50	1d6 x 100
Successful bandit chief's loot	1d6 x 10	2d6 x 20	2d6 x 50	2d10 x 50	2d10 x 100
Rural noble or gentry's estate	1d6 x 100	2d6 x 100	2d10 x 100	1d4 x 1,000	1d8 x 1,000
Great noble's country estate	1d6 x 500	2d6 x 500	2d6 x 2,000	2d10 x 2,000	2d10 x 4,000
Solitary dangerous monster's loot	1d10 x 50	1d8 x 100	2d10 x 250	2d4 x 1,000	4d6 x 1,000
Solitary legendary monster's trove	1d10 x 1,000	1d8 x 10,000	3d10 x 10,000	3d6 x 20,000	2d6 x 50,000
Minor Deep or ancient ruin	1d6 x 500	1d6 x 1,000	3d6 x 1,000	2d6 x 2,000	2d6 x 5,000
Significant Deep or ancient ruin	1d6 x 1,000	1d4 x 5,000	2d4 x 10,000	2d8 x 10,000	4d6 x 10,000
Sprawling Deep or megadungeon	1d6 x 5,000	2d6 x 10,000	1d4 x 50,000	1d10 x 50,000	2d6 x 50,000
Merchant prince's estate	1d10 x 100	2d6 x 500	2d6 x 2,000	1d10 x 5,000	2d6 x 5,000
Outsider settlement or outpost	1d8 x 1,000	2d10 x 1,000	1d4 x 10,000	1d10 x 10,000	3d6 x 10,000
Outsider city or major power center	2d6 x 1,000	1d8 x 10,000	1d10 x 20,000	2d10 x 20,000	3d10 x 20,000
Ancient royal palace or seat of rule	2d6 x 1,000	1d6 x 5,000	2d6 x 10,000	1d6 x 50,000	2d6 x 50,000
Richly adorned great temple	1d6 x 1,000	2d10 x 1,000	3d6 x 5,000	2d6 x 10,000	2d6 x 20,000
Lost settlement of limited size	2d6 x 100	1d6 x 500	1d10 x 1,000	2d8 x 1,000	1d10 x 5,000
Lost city with many explorable areas	1d6 x 1,000	2d8 x 1,000	2d8 x 5,000	4d6 x 10,000	4d6 x 20,000
Great wizard's domicile	1d8 x 1,000	2d6 x 2,000	2d6 x 5,000	1d6 x 20,000	1d12 x 20,000

Type of Trove or Owner	Chance for Magic Items Rolled: No Items	One Item	Two Items	Three or More
Trove of 1 HD creature	1–19	20	N/A	N/A
Trove of 2-4 HD creature	1–18	19	20	N/A
Trove of 5-10 HD creature	1–10	11–17	18–19	20
Trove of 11+ HD creature	N/A	1–8	9–16	17–20
Minor unguarded trove	1–18	19–20	N/A	N/A
Major unguarded trove	1–5	6–18	19	20
Adventurer or noble	1–10	11–19	20	N/A
Veteran adventurer	N/A	1–5	6–15	16–20
Minor mage or shaman	1–10	11–18	19–20	N/A
Great wizard	N/A	N/A	1–5	6–20

d8	Types of Jewelry
1	Rings, whether for fingers, toes, or body parts
2	Crowns, tiaras, fillets, or headdresses
3	Piercing jewelry, perhaps non-human
4	Necklaces, torcs, or strings of jewels
5	Bracers, wristlets, anklets, or limb decorations
6	Hair ornaments, clasps, sticks, or pins
7	Jeweled clothing, straps, or meshes
8	Jewelry for non-humanoid alien bodies

d20	Type of Magic Item Found
1–6	Elixir
7	Exemplar or Grimoire
8	1d3 Ancient Salvage for modifications
9–11	Calyx
12–14	Weapon
15–16	Armor
17	Shield
18–20	Device

d20	Valuable Objects or Precious Goods
1	Spices of rare worth
2	Recreational drugs
3	Elaborately-woven or exotic textiles
4	Household goods, jeweled or in rare metals
5	Coffers, casks, or jeweled containers
6	Ornate and luxurious clothing items
7	Preserved antique gourmet foodstuffs
8	Paintings of exquisite skill
9	Carved ornaments in precious materials
10	Uncut or unset jewels
11	Ingots of rare or precious metals
12	Useful raw magical ingredients
13	Books of historical or literary value
14	Deeds of ownership or tokens of legitimacy
15	Statues or figurines of material value
16	Religious tokens in precious materials
17	Medicinal herbs or compounds
18	Liquors of rare provenance
19	Vividly illustrated ancient erotica
20	Musical instruments of precious materials

d20	Why is the Object Particularly Valuable?
1	It's contraband, forbidden by a local faith
2	The gemstones on it are very strange
3	It's made of an unearthly material
4	The workmanship is superlative
5	It's somehow related to the local rulers
6	It's abnormally large or bulky for its type
7	It's clearly sacred to a local faith
8	There's a magnificent jewel set in it
9	It figures in an important historical event
10	It has some petty enchantment on it
11	It induces a positive emotion when touched
12	It's a prized trophy taken from Outsiders
13	It has a famous maker's mark on it
14	It's a matched set of something collectible
15	Other items like it were all lost long ago
16	It's a perfect example of a particular style
17	It was part of an ancient ruler's regalia
18	It belonged to a famous ancient palace
19	It's remarkably durable and hard to harm
20	Its material can no longer be produced

Land Ownership and Domains

It's not uncommon for heroes to come into noble titles as rewards for their adventuring or to seize *de facto* control of some stretch of wilderness, and most such newly-minted lords want to know what such a promotion is worth to their purse.

Other times, the PCs might buy or earn significant holdings of agricultural land or possession of profitable businesses. These pages provide a set of simple guides meant to apply to the kind of relatively small-scale domains that PCs are likely to rule. GMs should keep in mind that the finances of major kingdoms and true empires may not scale so well to these rules.

Getting and Improving Property

Actually acquiring land and titles is generally the product of adventuring, and may come as an addition or substitute for some monetary reward. Rulers are notorious for handing off the most wretched, dangerous, worthless parts of their claimed lands to adventurers; they're ideally equipped for handling abnormal dangers, and if they fail, no one of importance will be lost. It's not unknown for kings to hand over disputed territories to such heroes, trusting in them to make the royal writ run there despite the rival claims of their foes.

To determine how much land a ruler might give as a reward in lieu of cash, assume that a full six-mile hex of wilderness with only marginal agricultural value is as good as 5,000 silver worth of cash reward. Good farmland in the wilderness is worth 15,000 a hex, and barely-habitable land is worth 2,500. Anything better than wilderness is almost certainly already in the hands of one of the lord's vassals and won't be given over unless circumstances have justified a forcible confiscation.

If the lord is granting existing farming villages, business monopolies, or other personal estates, a grant is the cash equivalent of a reward twenty times the size of its yearly income. Thus, a market village that generates 1,000 silver of profit a year is generally considered a fair equivalent to a 20,000 silver reward.

PCs with spare cash in hand might actively look for land to buy from a noble or grandee in need of quick money. Whole hexes of wilderness terrain might be sold at the prices noted above, or specific farms, businesses and granges might be purchasable at twenty times their yearly income. Better prices are not impossible for PCs who perform suitably useful favors for the seller, and some independent landowners might voluntarily enter the party's service if they can provide much-needed protection and security.

PCs may also choose to simply declare themselves the lords of a particular piece of wilderness. If it's far enough from any existing authority, they may only need to subdue or kill all potential rivals within the hex to be its nominal overlords, rather than fight off military reprisal expeditions. Their success may not actually earn them any money, however, unless colonists can be enticed to start inhabiting the hex and building up the kind of population that can be taxed or worked in corvee labor. Open conquest of cities, farming villages, mines, ports, and other profitable places is always an option as well, though such places invariably have some martial power with an interest in them.

To improve a hex, such as increasing its level of development or improving its security, the party will need to carry out a major project at a difficulty determined by the GM and the cleverness of their own plans. Affecting a six mile hex counts as a city-scale change, for a x4 multiplier, but whether the improvement they're seeking is plausible, improbable, or impossible is up to the GM. The local monsters and bandits will almost certainly act as active opposition, and greater foes may start to move if they find the prospect of PC success to be a threat.

Not every alteration in a hex or property need necessarily be about making it more profitable. PCs who want to establish military outposts, clear dangerous areas, or resolve local social problems might undertake major projects to do those things as well.

Farm and Business Income

PCs who aren't the lords of full, six-mile hex-sized domains might still own some valuable farmland or a working business. Other great nobles might own extensive personal estates in addition to their tax rights over a hex or more of land. While these rules aren't meant to be a full-scale treatment of fantasy business, they provide a simplified framework for these personal estates.

Note that it's assumed the PCs will have acquired workers and lieutenants of ordinary competence and loyalty, and that day-to-day matters will be handled by these reeves. If a problem arises as indicated by the dice the PCs might need to step in, but keeping and administering these holdings isn't usually meant to eat up much play time at the table.

A business or agricultural land will generally produce 5% of its purchase price in income each year, assuming nothing goes wrong. Thus, a 500 silver plot of farmland will produce 25 silver worth of income over the course of a year, usually mostly around harvest time. In the same way, a shipwright's factory that commands a 50,000 silver sale price would return 2,500 silver a year under ordinary circumstances. These are clear profits earned after the normal expenditures of hiring farmhands and business employees and buying materials.

Each year, the GM should roll 1d6. On a 1, something will go wrong the following year and there will be no income unless the PCs can fix whatever the problem was. If a business enterprise rolls a 1 two years in a row it will completely collapse, unless the PCs can act to save it. Agricultural land never collapses like this, barring its military loss or conversion into a wasteland.

Noble Income

For very minor lords and gentry, their yearly income is worth only what their farmland and the serfs or tenant farmers on it can generate, as noted in the farm and business income section.

For lords that rule at least one six-mile hex of land, or about 30 square miles, they usually have not only the profits of their personal estates but assorted fees, scots, tariffs, feorms, mercies, donations, tithes, and gifts that amount to a varying sum based on how developed and safe the land is, as indicated below. War-ravaged urban heartlands may be less profitable than peaceful frontiers, and the overall development and security of the hex is of great importance.

Some hexes will have minor or major cities in them, which greatly increases their value. Note that while hexes with cities in them can be very profitable, this assumes that the noble actually has taxation rights there, and that it's not a free city or under direct royal rule. If that's the case, such a hex is worth no more than the densely developed hexes with a x2 multiplier.

The multipliers listed for development and security are applied in sequence. Thus, if it's fertile farmland at 5,000 a year, with frontier population density at a x0.5 multiplier, and wilderness-grade security at a x0.25 multiplier, the yearly income is 5,000 x 0.5 x 0.25 = 625 silver. Even though a lord might own the whole hex, the bulk of his income is probably coming from his well-fortified personal estates, assuming he's managed to carve them out of the wilds.

If a noble rules only a few hexes of terrain, roll 1d6 each year for each hex to see if some calamity will prevent income from it; on a 1, it's worthless that year unless the ruler can somehow fix the problem. For rulers of very large domains, it can be easier to just subtract a sixth of their income each year and assume that they don't really have time to personally resolve all the problems in such a wide demesne.

The Owner's Perquisites

Being a lord or a landowner comes with inevitable benefits, but most of these are wrapped up in the profit produced by the fief or holding. The services and work performed by subjects or tenants should be billed at the usual rate against the holding's income, and if it's inadequate the PCs will need to bring some of their own money to the table or else the locals will be too busy looking after their own survival to be of much use.

Lords who want more reliable or elaborate benefits from their holdings should purchase buildings and hirelings from the major project section pages. Such minions and wholly-owned institutions will always be pliant towards their masters, provided those masters don't start asking unreasonable things from their servants.

Lordship may also come with more abstract benefits, such as the right to rule on legal cases or the privilege of direct audiences with rulers. The GM can specify such perks when they become relevant.

Income/Year	Hex Type
10,000	Has a major mine or rare resource
5,000	Rich agricultural land
2,000	Marginal crop or pasture land
1,000	Poor and barely-habitable terrain
0	Wastelands and barrens

	Population
x10	A major city is present there
x4	A minor city is present there
x2	Dense villages and market towns
x1	Backwater population density
x0.5	Frontier population density
x0.1	Barely-inhabited wilderness
x0	Uninhabited wilds

	Security
x2	It's unusually safe and orderly
x1	It's ordinary civilized terrain
x0.5	It's as dangerous as a frontier or borderland near hostile wilds
x0.25	It's untamed wilderness with no real law or government control
x0	Active warfare went on for at least a season within the year

Obligations of Ownership

The profits of personal estates and businesses take into account the customary taxes and duties owed the land's ultimate lord. No extra payment need normally be made to the overlord, though times of great strife or exceptionally rapacious rulers might be a different matter. A roll of 1 on the yearly peril die might mean the king has laid a special tax on the land, and only a special favor can get him to lift the exaction.

The same generally applies to the profits earned from rulership over hexes. No normal payment is required, but if a 1 is rolled on the yearly peril die the lord may have made some demand that eats up all available profit. If the nation's political or military situation is particularly dire, the overlord might demand all his nobles come to his aid to overcome the present challenge, but the GM should be light-handed about things like that. Most players have no desire to spend their adventuring time doing poorly-rewarded work for a king.

As a general rule, both landowners and lords are expected to extend the usual degrees of personal hospitality and cooperation with the agents of their overlord. Again, the GM should avoid turning this into a tool to push players into adventures unless the players do something to specifically incite it.

Handling Wealth in Your Campaign

Industrious adventurers have a habit of accumulating vast piles of coinage and heaps of glittering jewelry from their exploits. In some settings this money can be swiftly converted to magical items or personal character bonuses that directly improve the strength of the hero. In others, there is less that money alone can buy. A GM is often obliged to think about the ramifications of a party's discovery of some great hoard of wealth.

Selling Treasure

Gemstones, jewelry, and precious art objects are often a far more compact way of carrying around value than chest upon chest full of silver coins. Heroes also tend to find such shiny plunder in the depths of the earth or on the cold limbs of their slain enemies. While you may have recorded a particular necklace's worth as being 500 silver, how do the PCs go about actually turning that trinket into spendable cash?

A community has a limit on how much loot it can buy before all local purchasers are fully stocked. As a general rule of thumb, use the patron reward levels on page 254; pick the patron that best represents the richest or most influential figure in the community and figure that the place's total budget for buying loot is equal to twice their average reward. Thus, in a humble rural village whose most important figure is the village head, up to 1,000 silver coins worth of loot can be sold. At the royal capital where the king dwells, the goldsmiths and usurers can afford to buy up to 100,000 coins worth of goods. A local community's budget refreshes monthly, assuming the locals are able to sell their newfound treasures onward in the meanwhile.

For convenience's sake, the sale value of loot is assumed to include a margin for local taxes, reseller profit, and other realistic but often-tedious considerations. A group that enjoys the extra verisimilitude might have the local lord taking a tax of 10% or more of all adventuring profits within his territory in exchange for receiving the security of his courts and legal enforcers. While some lords are recklessly venal, most find no reason to pick fights with powerful adventurers by demanding more than a relatively modest due.

Selling magical items is not normally practical without a full-fledged adventure revolving around the effort. Elixirs and calyxes might possibly find a buyer at their listed creation cost, but significant artifact sales will likely draw too much attention from greedy locals or worried rulers. Few of them have any incentive to permit ordinary subjects to buy inexplicable devices of eldritch power. While it's too hazardous for most lords to dare direct confiscation of such things from experienced adventurers, only black market arrangements and private "gifts" for certain favors are likely to be feasible means of exchange.

Spending Wealth

Having made their pile of silver, what do the PCs do with it? There are several possible ways for the heroes to enjoy their hard-won plunder, assuming that mischance or dire need doesn't quickly strip them of it.

They can buy Renown to support their personal projects or goals, with the prices listed on page 338. Throwing silver at a problem is usually helpful to some degree, and some major projects could feasibly be accomplished just by buying certain properties or structures.

They can support needy NPC allies. If their friends know the PCs are rich, they're likely to make requests for help. As a GM, try to avoid having every bit character crawl out of the woodwork to beg for a handout, but NPCs you know the players are fond of might speak up or discreetly draw attention to a way in which cash might solve some problem they are currently having.

They can buy gear or property. While it's not generally possible to buy magical items, a country estate, a secure urban safehouse, a sailing ship, or a new suit of heavy armor all have their charms to an adventurer. Low-level heroes often spend much of their first profits simply in kitting themselves out fully for their trade.

They can make alliances, befriending useful NPCs with gifts or material support. In many cultures, the giving of valuable gifts may be the most fundamental way to forge an alliance and indicate a desire for cooperation. In others, it may simply be a matter of the king deciding to forget to demand an oath of fealty from the border baron who just swelled his coffers.

Too Much Money?

Many GMs get nervous about giving the heroes "too much wealth" for their current level or station. This isn't generally a major problem in ***Worlds Without Number***, because there's no easy way to turn cash into direct personal power, such as by buying magic items. Beyond a masterwork sword and a good warhorse, there's not much the extra silver can do to directly buff a PC.

If the PCs start to wonder what to do with their pelf, give them answers. Throw needy NPCs at them, or point out political alliance opportunities, or direct them to some calamity that can be solved or ameliorated with a sufficient amount of money. Give them exciting exploration possibilities that require a costly expedition to be fitted out, or let them burn their cash in excavating a path into a heretofore unreachable Deep.

Ultimately, money is a way for the PCs to control and influence the campaign setting. As the GM, you want them to do that, because the more they entangle themselves with its people, problems, and opportunities, the more likely they are to feel engaged with the campaign.

Magic Items and Enchanted Treasures

As delightful as shining silver can be, and as satisfying as it is to own rich lands and prospering enterprises, the greatest greed of most adventurers is for items of magical power. Even the most fabulous hoard of coin can buy nothing more than mortal art or cunning can make, but a magical ring or enchanted sword can grant the bearer powers wholly impossible to gain any other way. Those lucky enough to find the right mystical bauble can leap over challenges that would slaughter a less fortunate hero.

Because of this, it's common for GMs to be more anxious about the right placement and provenance of magic items than of simple coin. At the worst, too much money might trivialize a social challenge or make a major project provide less adventure grist than they hoped. The wrong magic item, however, can sometimes erase whole swaths of different challenges.

The guidelines provided earlier in the chapter are usually safe to use when placing magic items. The rewards are a little thinner than they would be in some other games, but a little GM discretion can bulk out the finds when they seem too sparse, and their rarity makes them all the more valuable. In this section, you'll be introduced to several different types of magical rewards.

Magical armor and shields are beloved of combatants the world over. Magic armor has an improved AC over its mundane brethren, and some suits have additional special defenses or powers. Magic shields don't boost the user's AC more than usual, but every one has some special power that can prove handy to the user or that will protect them from some peril in battle.

Calyxes are crystallized spells trapped in some small physical token. Even non-mages can use their powers, if they're adequately trained in the occult skills of Magic.

Grimoires and exemplars are of use only to Mages. The former contain spells that they can learn for their own use, while the latter are full of lost occult lore that can substitute for silver when doing magical works.

Magical devices make up a catch-all category for rings, staves, occult objects, or enchanted trinkets that have some special ability. Most of them have very narrow effects or benefits, but they can be extremely useful to a party that knows how to set them up for best effect.

Enchanted elixirs are among the most common magic items, each one a potion or salve that can be used once to grant some temporary magical benefit. In some campaign settings, their creation is simple and common enough that they can even be bought openly, though usually they must be pried from some lost hoard or abandoned wizard's cache.

Magical weapons are desired by anyone who swings a sword or fires a bow. Each one grants a bonus to hit and damage rolls, and can harm magical creatures that might otherwise be immune to mundane steel. The more powerful weapons have special abilities as well to aid their bearer.

The magical items in this section are but a small selection of the possibilities. Most other old-school games have lengthy lists of occult items that can be plundered for ideas, and your players themselves might come up with a charm or two they'd like their wizard to forge.

Magical Armor and Shields

Just as sorcerers have always found use in enchanting the weapons of allied warriors, magical armor is by no means unknown in the lands of the Latter Earth. Some of these suits are simply better than their mundane equivalents, while others have certain special benefits unique to their particular enchantments.

Armor and Shield Benefits

A suit of armor's enchantment is measured from +1 to +3. This bonus is added to the armor's base AC; thus, a ***war shirt +3*** would grant an effective AC of 14 to the wearer. Magical armor is almost always masterwork quality, so its effective Encumbrance is one point less than that of the base version, albeit not for purposes of the *Armored Magic* Focus' limits. Most suits of magical armor are designed to be adjustable to most humanoid wearers.

Magical shields do not have enchantment bonuses that add to the user's Armor Class. Instead, they're empowered with unique abilities or benefits that apply to the bearer. Magical shields cannot be ruined with the *Shatter Shield* combat maneuver mentioned on page 44, though they can be destroyed by intentional abuse.

Ancient Panoplies

The ancient cultures of the Latter Earth often had very exotic ideas about what armor should look like, either due to very different conditions of warfare or their ubiquitous access to magical materials. These ancient suits of armor might appear as ceremonial robes, harnesses of glass or crystalline mineral, baroquely impractical plate armors, or enchanted ornaments that cover hardly a handspan of the wearer's skin. Despite these various appearances, these ancient armors have the same statistics as the modern armors they emulate, including Encumbrance and skill check penalties. Thus, a multicolored and brocaded robe that functions as a suit of plate armor would have an Encumbrance value of 2 and apply its penalty to Sneak and Exert skill checks.

Some regions of the modern Latter Earth have preserved the techniques for fashioning armors of this kind, or have so many surviving suits that they are in common use among adventurers. Others make a point of dressing their elite guards or temple defenders in appropriate panoplies to better show their status. The presence or absence of such armor in a campaign is up to the tastes of the GM and the table; some groups love the pulp aesthetic of fur loincloths and scaled bikinis, while others prefer to rely on unisex cuirasses and rust-smelling chain hauberks.

Ancient panoplies come in both normal and enchanted versions, just like any other suit of armor. Where such armor is commonplace, normal versions cost no more than their mundane equivalents and artisans can craft them out of commonly-available components.

Creating Magical Armor

When you need to place a suit of magical armor, first decide whether it is a minor, major, or great artifact. The context will usually determine just how potent a relic you want to place, though sometimes a seemingly minor item might turn out to be unexpectedly powerful. Once you've chosen the general category, roll a d20 to find out the armor's enchantment bonus, and again to find out whether it has some special power. Magical shields never have an enchantment bonus, but always have one special power.

Armor Enchantment Bonus

Bonus	Minor	Major	Great
+1	1–16	1–5	1
+2	17–19	6–17	2–4
+3	20	18–20	5–20

How Many Special Abilities does the Armor Have?

d20	Minor	Major	Great
1–16	None	None	One
17–19	None	One	Two
20	One	Two	None

Lastly, roll to see what base type of armor or shield it is, assuming you don't have a particular type in mind.

d20	Armor Type		
1	War Shirt	11-13	Cuirass and Greaves
2-4	Buff Coat	14-15	Scaled Armor
5-6	Linothorax	16-17	Mail Hauberk
7-8	War Robe	18	Plate Armor
9	Pieced Armor	19	Great Armor
10-11	Mail Shirt	20	Grand Plate

d20	Shield Type		
1-5	Small	6-20	Large

Some special abilities might grant bonuses to skills or other numeric benefits. These bonuses don't stack with other armor or weapon powers that boost similar scores; only the best bonus is applied. In the same vein, a shield and a suit of armor that both have the same ability benefit the user only once; an *Impervious* shield and suit of armor only allow one instance of Shock to be ignored each round rather than two.

Armor and Shield Abilities

Below are merely a few of the special abilities that might be found on magical armor and shields. Other graces can be added, but should generally revolve around protective and utility functions rather than offensive magical effects.

Augmented: The bearer can carry four more points of Readied encumbrance. Once per scene, they can lift or briefly manipulate with brute strength anything a human possibly could.

Bracing: As a Move Action, the bearer can brace against one specific foe. Until they voluntarily move from their location, they're immune to Shock from that foe and cannot be forcibly moved.

Clotting: Once per day, it automatically stabilizes a Mortally Wounded bearer.

Feathery: The user is immune to falling damage and can choose a landing site within 30 feet of their target.

Feral: At the cost of one System Strain, the bearer can talk to animals for a scene, who will reply with human intellect but bestial interests and focus.

Fireproof: The bearer ignores the first 10 points of fire or heat damage they suffer each round.

Fortified: The bearer ignores the first point of System Strain they'd otherwise incur in a day.

Graceful: The bearer walks so lightly as to leave no footprints and cannot slip, trip, or be subject to forced movement by a man-sized foe.

Harmonic: An allied mage can cast a spell on it; the bearer is then immune to that spell until it is changed.

Impervious: Once per round, the bearer ignores an instance of Shock they would otherwise have suffered.

Inspiring: Allies who can see the wearer gain a +1 Morale bonus and may reroll failed Mental saves against emotion or thought-controlling effects.

Lucky: Once per day, as an Instant action, turn a failed save into a success.

Majestic: Its magnificent appearance makes it socially acceptable wear in any situation or context.

Sealed: The bearer ignores toxic atmospheres, terrestrial temperature extremes, and has no need to breathe.

Shifting: The bearer can teleport up to 30' to a visible location as a Move action.

Shining: It can emit light in a 30' radius at will. Once per day as an On Turn action, force a melee foe to make a Physical save or lose their next Main Action from being dazzled.

Silent: It applies no penalty to Sneak skill checks. If light armor or a shield, it grants a +1 bonus to the checks.

Soaring: As a Main Action, the bearer can move twice their movement rate through the air. They'll fall if they end the turn on an unsupported surface.

Sustaining: Once per day, cause the bearer to gain a point of System Strain and lose all need for sleep, food, air, or drink for the next 24 hours.

d00	Magical Armor and Shield Abilities		
1–4	Augmented	53–56	Sealed
5–8	Bracing	57–60	Shifting
9–12	Clotting	61–64	Shining
13–16	Feathery	65–68	Silent
17–20	Feral	69–72	Soaring
21–24	Fireproof	73–76	Sustaining
25–28	Fortified	77–80	Thorned
29–32	Graceful	81–84	Transient
33–36	Harmonic	85–88	Unsleeping
37–40	Impervious	89–92	Vigilant
41–44	Inspiring	93–96	Warded
45–48	Lucky	97–00	Weightless
49–52	Majestic		

Thorned: Successful grapple, unarmed or natural weapon attacks against them also inflict 1d6 damage on the attacker, plus any armor enhancement bonus.

Transient: It can vanish from its wearer or return to their person as an On Turn action once per round. It appears if they fall unconscious or die.

Unsleeping: The bearer need not sleep, but will not get the benefits of a night's rest unless they do so.

Vigilant: The bearer can see normally even in deep mists or total darkness. They cannot be surprised.

Warded: The GM chooses one weapon entry from the table on page 37. Non-magic weapons of that kind can't hurt the bearer, and magic ones do only half damage, rounded down. Neither inflicts Shock.

Weightless: It has no Encumbrance, but this benefit does not apply to the *Armored Magic* Focus' limits or the armor's usual skill check penalties.

Magical Armor Creation Costs

Crafting magical armor or shields is usually an expensive, complex process. The demands of forging powerful armor are often too great for ordinary mages of the modern day, and they might need to seek out special ingredients or particular lost tomes to lower the base difficulty.

The base creation difficulty for +1 armor is difficulty 10 and requires 25,000 silver and a masterwork suit of armor to enchant. Each additional +1 bonus adds +2 difficulty and doubles the price, up to a maximum of +3.

Adding a minor special ability with a narrowly-applicable effect to a shield or suit of armor costs 10,000 silver and adds +1 to the difficulty. Broadly-applicable or potent special abilities add +2 to the difficulty and cost 20,000 silver. If enchanting a shield, the difficulty additions of its special abilities are added to 9, so a shield with one minor and one major power would cost 30,000 silver to forge and a difficulty 12 skill check.

Grimoires, Exemplars, and Calyxes

With legions of dead sorcerers marching back into ages unnumbered, it's no wonder that the Deeps and secret places of the world are littered with their scholarly leavings. Arcane grimoires hold the secrets of their spells, occult exemplars provide insight into mysterious magical principles, and empowered calyxes preserve spells in physical objects for later use by those versed in their proper employment. Most of these items are of no use to those unable to work magic, but they have potent benefits for a mage.

Arcane Grimoires

Almost every wizard needs some sort of grimoire, tablet, portable shrine, or collection of occult paraphernalia in order to prepare their spells. The calculations required for adjusting the preparations may be too complex to be kept in mind, or they may require certain specially-purified tokens that can be kept in the book, or particular signed and sealed contracts with ineffable powers must be at hand to win the ability to wield particular spells. Whatever the particulars, a wizard cannot change their prepared spells without having their grimoire at hand.

Grimoires are not generally interchangeable. The pacts and rituals that one wizard uses to access a particular High Magic spell may not be the ones another employs, and being "gifted" the sack that holds all the former's ritual implements may not be any immediate use to the latter. It takes time, effort, and careful analysis to derive a spell from another wizard's grimoire.

If learning a spell from a grimoire or a tutor, it takes one week per spell level, less one week per level of the learner's Magic skill, down to a minimum of one day. Thus, a wizard with Magic-1 skill learning a second level High Magic spell would do it in one week. At the end of that time, they've created a preparatory ritual for the spell that will work for them, and inscribed its particulars into their own spellbook.

A cooperative wizard can teach any spell they know. If the wizard is forced to work purely from an "acquired" grimoire, however, there are inevitably critical lacunae, personalized scraps of jargon, and missing fragments that were self-evident to the original owner. This means that not every spell in the book will be complete enough to be learned without its owner's help.

A captured or found grimoire will usually have one legible spell per level or hit die of the original owner. To select these spells, start by picking a first level spell, then one of each successive level that the wizard was able to cast. Thus, if they could cast fourth-level spells, you'd pick one spell each of first, second, third, and fourth levels. Then start over at first level and repeat the process until you run out of spell picks.

You can pick spells you know the wizard knew, or randomly pick spells from the applicable lists. The table below offers some suggestions for spellbook contents if you're creating some dusty grimoire originally held by an unknown wizard. Such books are also an excellent opportunity to give a wizard access to an unusual spell that might not be one they'd otherwise choose to obtain.

Random Grimoire Contents

d20	Total Spells	Max. Spell Level
1–5	1	1
6–10	3	2
11–14	5	3
15–18	7	4
19	9	5
20	11	5

Note that it is by no means unknown for some grimoires to be guarded by curses or other magical defenses. Others contain versions of spells that worked perfectly in a former age but no longer operate reliably in the present. The GM might add a spell flaw to these from the table on page 89 to surprise the wizard once they master the flawed sorcery.

Occult Exemplars

Some ancient arcane treasures are of great value to sorcerers but do not contain magical spells. These ***exemplars*** are artifacts that provide deep insight into the workings of the Legacy, or provide a worked example of some magical process that has since been lost or degraded. A mage can come to understand deep truths about the operation of modern magic through studying an exemplar and use these insights to improve and simplify their own magical undertakings.

Exemplars usually take the form of small, wondrous objects that visibly defy the operation of normal physical laws. A sphere that forever floats six inches above its opalescent base, a mirror that gives images of some lost age, a crystalline rod that never quite reaches the floor when it's dropped, or some other seemingly trifling work of magic might all be exemplars. Other exemplars are larger and more impressive in their effects, some of which might have actual practical use. A few exemplars exist as monographs or tomes by some ancient worthy, books containing secrets and insights that modern wizards would prize.

Exemplars are usually obvious on close inspection by a PC with at least Magic-0 skill. It takes a full day of study to deduce their silver piece value, but it's immediately clear that they have something useful to impart.

Every exemplar has a value in silver pieces given by the table below, whether it's a minor, major, or great exemplar. This is not its sale price, though some wizards would pay a significant part of the sum to have it. Instead, it's the amount of aid its insights can give toward a Working, spell research, or magic item creation.

Exemplar Value in Silver Pieces

d20	Minor	Major	Great
1–7	1,000	10,000	20,000
8–13	2,000	20,000	40,000
14–17	10,000	100,000	200,000
18–19	20,000	200,000	400,000
20	50,000	500,000	1,000,000

A wizard can use an exemplar to defray the silver piece costs of any magical research or construction undertaking. If the exemplar is worth 10,000 silver, then the wizard can subtract that amount from the cost of building a Working, or devising a new spell, or forging a magic sword. The precise nature of the exemplar doesn't matter, as it's assumed the insights given can be turned usefully to whatever work the wizard wants to accomplish. The wizard must have the exemplar in their possession to gain its benefits; they can't simply copy down the insights for later. Partial exploitation of the item's secrets leaves the rest of its value intact, so an exemplar worth a million silver might be used piecemeal in a dozen projects.

Exhausting an exemplar destroys it. Magical objects may need to be disassembled in order to fully understand the principles involved, or the use of the ancient techniques might provoke a counter-reaction from the Legacy that forecloses their further use, or the object might need to be physically incorporated into a Working or magic item. Whatever the specifics, an exemplar can be used only until its silver value is exhausted.

Empowered Calyxes

A ***calyx*** is a suspended spell or magical effect, one trapped in a physical object for later use. While they take many forms, the most usual ones are those of a scroll, small grimoire, tablet, or other inscribed object. These inscriptions usually give a learned observer the details of the magic kept within and the particulars of how to direct, adjust, and target the effect. Anyone with literacy in the language of the inscription can figure out a calyx's contents. Without an inscription, it takes a day of study by someone with Magic-0 to puzzle it out.

A calyx contains one or more spells from the High Magic list or some other spell list. Each spell can be used only once, unless multiple copies are embedded in the same calyx, and they are cast at the level of the mage who inscribed them in the first place. Details of targeting, specific effects, and other decisions made at the time of casting are made by the wielder of the calyx. When the last spell in it is used the calyx collapses into dust, bursts into flame, or otherwise disintegrates.

To use a calyx, the owner must grasp it firmly and trigger it as if they were casting a spell, using a Main Action and wasting the item uselessly if they are struck or jostled during the casting process. No vocalizations or gestures are needed, however, and a calyx can be triggered while wearing armor or bearing a shield. A High Mage or other spellcaster cannot use their own arts to boost a spell embedded in a calyx, but must cast it in its normal, unmodified form.

The spells in a calyx are cast at a caster level equal to the item's creator. For randomly-found calyxes, the level is the minimum required to cast the most potent spell embedded in the calyx.

Releasing a calyx safely requires a clear understanding of its magic. A user must have a Magic skill no more than one less than the suspended spell's level in order to safely trigger it. Thus, a calyx containing a fifth level Necromancy spell requires Magic-4 skill in order to safely activate it. Anyone with the skill can use it, even non-spellcasters, provided they have enough grasp of the theory of magic. Even mages of a contrary tradition can use these spells, so a High Mage can deploy Elementalist spells from a calyx containing them.

If a wielder doesn't have a high enough Magic skill, they can attempt to use the item anyway, albeit at considerable risk. An Int/Magic or Cha/Magic skill check is needed against a difficulty of 8 plus the spell level. If it fails by one or two points, the spell fizzles and is wasted. If it fails by more than two points, it goes off, but at the wrong target or with the wrong effect at the GM's discretion. If the check succeeds, the spell goes off as intended.

Spellcasters can create their own calyxes for later use, creating them as single-use items as explained on page 92. The expense is 1,000 silver per spell level, and the difficulty is 7 plus half the spell level, rounded up. While a calyx takes only a week to inscribe, the process is exhausting, and a wizard can do it no more than once a week per spell level inscribed. Thus, after embedding a fifth level spell, they can add to or make no more calyxes for five weeks.

The table below gives some suggestions for randomly-discovered calyxes and their contents, Some calyxes may contain powers or effects that have no parallel in conventional spellcasting, being magics of a former age or more modern enchantments gone strange and sour.

Random Calyx Contents

d20	Contents
1–6	One first level spell
7–10	One second level spell
11–13	One third level spell
14–15	One fourth level spell
16	One fifth level spell
17	1d4 spell levels, none above second
18	2d4 spell levels, none above third
19	2d6 spell levels, none above fourth
20	2d8 spell levels, none above fifth

While calyxes are potent sources of magic, they are too abbreviated and summarized to be effective tutors in the spells they hold. A wizard must find a grimoire or a tutor to learn new magic; a calyx alone cannot teach them.

Magical Weapons

A lust for enchanted steel is a commonplace among warriors, and the sorcerers of the Latter Earth have not been remiss in creating wondrous weapons for their allies and patrons. Despite the inevitable losses to time, wear, and obscurity, magical weapons from countless prior ages can still be found in ruins, strongholds, and the grip of powerful warriors.

As with any magical item, GMs should remember that the weapon's current possessor will almost certainly be using it against their foes if they are able to do so.

Creating Magical Weapons

First, decide whether the weapon should be a minor, major, or great treasure. An heirloom axe of a minor knightly family might seem to be appropriate for a minor weapon, while the famed war-sword of a legendary hero is probably a great treasure. This is not a certainty; even a famous blade might actually be of relatively modest power, and a little-known spear might be a relic from a forgotten legend, but it's a good starting point for creating the weapon.

Next, roll a d20 or pick from the table below to find out the weapon's basic enchantment bonus. This bonus is added to any hit rolls, damage rolls, and Shock the weapon might do. While most magical weapons are considered masterworks of their type, the usual masterwork bonus does not stack with these enchantments.

Weapon Enchantment Bonus

Bonus	Minor	Major	Great
+1	1–16	1–5	1
+2	17–19	6–17	2–4
+3	20	18–20	5–20

Once you know the enchantment bonus, you should think about the original intended users of the weapon. Who was this magical item made for? What sort of weapons did they use, and in what context were they employed? A footman in some ancient sorcerer-king's army is going to have a very different kind of short sword than the casual sidearm carried by a noble of some vanished empire.

The adjacent table offers some suggestions as to who the original users might've been. If you've established a particular ancient empire in your campaign setting, you might credit the weapon to them, and use some recurring motifs of material, shape, or style to help emphasize the item's origins. If the weapon was instead made by some modern mage, it might include a maker's mark or other characteristic trait that could connect it to other items crafted by the wizard.

Each table entry provides some suggestions as to the types of weapons most likely for such a wielder. These favored weapons will form the bulk of the magical wargear found for them, though it could be that the item was a novelty created for an owner's special purpose.

d8	The Original Intended Users of the Weapon
1	Used by a common member of a mass infantry unit that relied on muscle-powered weapons. Favors spears, pole arms, short swords, or daggers.
2	Used by a civilian gentleman or duelist. Favors swords, daggers, hand hurlants, staffs, cane-clubs, or concealable weapons.
3	Used by a champion or heroic warrior. Favors complex, exotic, or specialist weapons, two-handed weapons, and hurlants.
4	Used by an assassin or other denied obvious weaponry. Favors daggers, claw blades, and other small concealed weapons; sometimes long hurlants or crossbows.
5	Used by knightly duelists or other heavy-armor combatants. Favors maces, hammers, two-handed weapons, stilettos, and other weapons with penetrating Shock.
6	Used by archers or ranged combatants. Favors bows, crossbows, hurlants, light spears, short swords, or daggers.
7	Used by individualistic warbands. Favors spears and short swords somewhat, but an individual warrior could use anything.
8	Used by a high-tech culture. Roll again, but replace bows and crossbows with hurlants, and melee weapons will have advanced-tech stylings.

Use the favored weapon suggestions as guidelines for picking the precise type of weapon the artifact might be. For additional help, you can roll on the adjacent table. If the result is a "favored primary" weapon, then pick one of the favored weapons listed above that would make sense for a main armament. "Favored secondary" are usually short swords, daggers, hand hurlants, or other back-up gear appropriate to the user type. "Favored ranged" is usually a dagger, hand hurlant, light throwing spear, or other secondary ranged weapon, though archers and gunners might prefer heavier weaponry.

The tables lean towards certain weapons that have always been common and favored throughout martial history: spears and short swords. Sorcerers who built weapons for massed bodies of troops will have favored such effective, versatile weapons. Still, the very individualistic nature of most heroic warriors and the unique tastes of prior ages can sometimes result in rather unusual weapon choices. Warriors who find such equipment must sometimes put aside more familiar gear if they mean to master their newfound treasure.

d100	Weapon	d100	Weapon
1–30	Favored primary	72–73	Hammer, War
31–40	Favored secondary	74	Hurlant, Great
41–50	Favored ranged	75	Hurlant, Hand
51–53	Axe, Hand	76	Hurlant, Long
54	Axe, War	77–78	Mace
55	Blackjack	79–80	Pike
56–58	Bow, Large	81–85	Spear, Heavy
59–61	Bow, Small	86–89	Spear, Light
62	Claw Blades	90	Throwing Blade
63	Club	91	Staff
64	Club, Great	92	Stiletto
65	Crossbow	93–94	Sword, Great
66–68	Dagger	95–97	Sword, Long
69–70	Halberd	98–00	Sword, Short
71	Hammer, Great		

Once you have the weapon enchantment, origin, and weapon type decided, you'll want to decide whether or not the weapon might have one or more special abilities. A full list of these abilities is found on the following pages, though you can always make up more of your own or loot them from other old-school compatible games. If you haven't any particular firm feelings about the topic, you can roll on the table below to find out.

Special Weapon Abilities

d12	Minor	Major	Great
1–2	None	None	None
3–4	None	None	One
5–6	None	One	Two
7	None	One	Two
8	None	One	Two
9	One	Two	Three
10	One	Two	Three
11	One	Two	Three
12	Two	Three	Three

With that set, your magical weapon is complete. You might give it some details of appearance and style to set it off, but don't worry about attaching a backstory or other elaborate history to it unless you expect it to become pertinent to your game.

Sentient Weaponry

While rare, it's not unknown for certain ancient weapons to be possessed of their own intellect and will. This will is almost inevitably directed toward carrying out a particular task chosen by its creator.

Sentient weapons always have at least one additional special ability related to their purpose, chosen by the GM. Some can vocally or telepathically communicate with their bearer, though not all speak modern languages.

Bearers who offend the weapon must make an appropriate Cha/Stab or Shoot skill check against a difficulty of 8 plus the weapon's magical bonus in order to force its obedience for the day. If the check is failed, the weapon is treated as a totally nonmagical example of its type for the rest of the day.

Weapons that have a now-impossible purpose will usually try to reinterpret their function as some kind of task that they can still pursue. While only the most fanatical will demand constant cooperation from the wielder, those bearers who do nothing to aid its purpose or who serve some contradictory power will likely have trouble wielding it.

Rumors persist of even mightier sentient weapons, some of which may not be "weapons" so much as physical manifestations of some highly destructive trans-Iteral entity. Such beings inevitably have their own plans.

d6	Example Purposes
1	Exterminate a type of creature or sentient
2	Cast down a particular nation or polity
3	Slay a type of criminal or offender
4	Protect an institution or class of being
5	Further a philosophy or religion
6	Encourage a code or behavior in the bearer

Magical Weapon Creation Costs

Like magical armor, forging magical weapons is a costly and difficult process. Certain special ingredients or the fruits of particular adventures might be used to lower the usual difficulty of an enchantment and make it more practical for a PC sorcerer.

Forging a +1 weapon requires a masterwork target object and 12,500 silver, and is done at a difficulty of 10. Each additional +1 bonus doubles the cost and adds +2 to the creation difficulty, to a maximum of +3.

Adding special powers to the weapon is also expensive, more so than imbuing a suit of armor. A minor and specific weapon power adds +1 to the difficulty and 10,000 silver to the cost, while one that's useful in most combats adds +2 difficulty and 25,000, and one that's useful in every fight adds +2 difficulty and 50,000 to the cost.

The secrets of forging self-aware blades are lost in the present day, and recovering them requires both GM agreement and a suitable amount of adventuring.

Magical Weapon Abilities

The following powers are just some of the possible enchantments that might have been wrought into the armaments of ancient days. A sufficiently skilled mage of the present day might be able to modify or add new examples of such powers at the GM's discretion using the magic item creation rules that begin on page 92.

Adamantine: The weapon is imperishable and unbreakable by all conventional and most magical means. Edged weapons never lose their keenness, bowstrings never snap, and the weapon can bear a seemingly limitless amount of weight without bending or breaking. The weapon's damage and hit bonus are both increased by +1, to a maximum of +3.

Augmented: The weapon's enchantment hit and damage bonus increase by +1, up to a maximum of +4.

Baffling: The weapon looks very strange in some way, and its operation is not obvious to onlookers. The first attack the wielder makes during a fight is an automatic hit; after that, the onlookers have seen enough to defend against it normally. The shifting configuration of the weapon allows the same bonus during the next fight, however, even if the foes have seen it in an earlier engagement.

Barring: As a Move action, the bearer can use the weapon to draw a straight, glowing line up to twenty feet long, provided one part of the line is within five feet of the bearer. Enemies must make a Mental saving throw to voluntarily cross the line from either direction with their bodies, weapons, or powers; on a failed save, their attempted action is wasted. The effect ends when a new line is draw, the scene ends, or the bearer or their allies cross the line with their own bodies, weapons, or powers.

Blighted: The weapon was created to slaughter normal human beings. Against baseline humans, it rolls damage twice and takes the better result. It functions without issues even in the hands of a baseline wielder; its creators were as glad to see intercine strife as any other kind.

Bloodbound: The weapon forms a symbiotic bond with the wielder. So long as they are wielding the weapon, they automatically stabilize from any survivable mortal wound and automatically regenerate one hit point every hour as magical healing. Once per day, a failed Physical or Mental saving throw may be rerolled as the weapon shares the strain on the wielder.

Bloodthirsty: When the weapon's wielder reduces a creature with at least one hit die to zero hit points, they regain 1d8 plus the creature's hit dice in lost hit points. This healing cannot take them above their usual maximum hit points.

Despairing: The weapon drains a victim's courage and hope. By accepting a point of System Strain as an Instant action when they hit a target, they can force the victim to make an immediate Morale check at a -1 penalty. This effect can be applied to a given target only once per scene.

Devoted: The weapon bonds with the first possessor to pick it up after the death of their last wielder. Until the wielder dies or intentionally discards it, it remains bound to them. Under no circumstances will it or its projectiles harm its wielder, and it can be teleported back to their hand as an On Turn action. The first time the wielder would be reduced to zero hit points during a day, they may accept a point of System Strain to let the weapon leap up and block the damage, assuming the damage is the sort the weapon could block.

Devouring: The weapon bites pieces out of a victim's body or spirit. Damage inflicted by a devouring weapon cannot be healed until the end of the scene, whether by regeneration or other healing abilities. Creatures brought to zero hit points by the weapon are killed immediately and largely dismembered. Every time the weapon kills a living creature, the bearer gains twice their hit dice in points of healing.

Effortless: The weapon is supernaturally handy and easy to use. It has an effective Encumbrance of zero, cannot be unintentionally dropped or disarmed, and will hang suspended in space by the bearer for up to a minute if they should need their weapon hand free for some other purpose during a round. Large Effortless weapons will automatically compact or contort themselves to remain convenient to carry or use in even the most awkward circumstances.

Energetic: When in use, the weapon or its projectiles are wreathed in flame, lightning, killing frost, or some other form of energy. Minor energetic weapons do +2 damage on a hit, while major or great energetic weapons do 1d6+2 additional damage. This bonus doesn't add to the weapon's Shock.

Enervating: The weapon drains the vital energy from those it harms. A creature hit by the weapon must make a Physical saving throw or lose their next Move action. This draining effect can't apply more than once to a creature until their next turn.

Enraging: The weapon ignites a bloodthirsty fury in the bearer. As an On Turn action, the wielder can become enraged. While enraged, they gain a +2 bonus to hit and damage rolls, can reroll any failed Mental saving throws that would stop them from fighting, and can continue fighting for one round after being reduced to zero hit points. Enraged wielders never fail a Morale check. Every round, however, they must either attack someone, seek to get close enough to attack someone, or spend their Main Action to come out of the rage.

Forfending: The first *Screen Ally* skill check the bearer attempts each round is an automatic success. While

they are using the *Screen Ally* action, they are immune to Shock damage and gain a +2 bonus to their Armor Class.

Fortifying: The weapon has a supplementary pool of System Strain; up to three points of it can be accumulated by the weapon in place of its bearer when System Strain is incurred. This System Strain decreases by one point per night. A bearer can benefit from only one of these weapons at a time, and its pool is shared among all its potential users.

Harmonious: As an On Turn action, provided the bearer has not attacked yet this turn, the bearer may target a weapon being held by an enemy; the Harmonious weapon will instantly move to perfectly parry, deflect, or block all attacks that weapon makes against the bearer until the start of their next turn. Conversely, the Harmonious weapon cannot be used to hurt the bearer of the targeted weapon, as it is too perfectly in harmony with their movements.

Hunting: The weapon was fashioned to slay monstrous beasts. Against non-sentient foes, the weapon rolls any damage it inflicts twice and takes the higher.

Illuminating: The weapon casts light up to 60' in radius at the wielder's mental command. By accepting one point of System Strain, the bearer may make the light visible only to them and their allies; such selective light lasts for an hour.

Innervating: A wielder who uses Effort, such as a High Mage or a Vowed, may accept a point of System Strain to gain an additional bonus point of Effort for as long as they carry the weapon. This System Strain cannot be recovered until the weapon is put aside. Only one Innervating weapon can help a bearer at once. If the weapon is dropped or lost for more than an hour, the Effort and any effect it may be supporting are lost.

Longarm: A ranged weapon's effective range is doubled. If it's a melee weapon without the Long quality, it gains it, and if it already has the Long quality, it now extends out to 20 feet.

Lucky: The weapon confers an unpredictable and unreliable luck on its bearer. As an Instant action, they can call on this luck to reroll an attack roll, damage roll, or skill check made during combat, taking the better of the two rolls. They can use this ability only once per scene, and every time they use it, they must roll 1d6 as well; on a 1, the attempted roll fails or rolls minimum damage instead.

Marking: When the weapon harms or even touches a target, the wielder can choose to gain a point of System Strain and activate its marking power. For the rest of the scene, the weapon can strike the target as if they were adjacent, regardless of their distance or any intervening cover. They are also perfectly aware of the marked target's location, speech, and physical actions. The mark ends at the end of the scene, when a new target is marked, or when the marked target gets more than five hundred feet away.

d100	Ability	d100	Ability
1–2	Adamantine	51–52	Nightwalking
3–4	Augmented	53–54	Omened
5–6	Baffling	55–56	Penetrating
7–8	Barring	57–58	Phantom
9–10	Blighted	59–60	Phasing
11–12	Bloodbound	61–62	Piercing
13–14	Bloodthirsty	63–64	Radioactive
15–16	Despairing	65–66	Rampaging
17–18	Devoted	67–68	Rectifying
19–20	Devouring	69–70	Returning
21–22	Effortless	71–72	Sacrificial
23–24	Energetic	73–74	Shattering
25–26	Enervating	75–76	Shieldbreaking
27–28	Enraging	77–78	Shocking
29–30	Forfending	79–80	Shrieking
31–32	Fortifying	81–82	Skittering
33–34	Harmonious	83–84	Skytreading
35–36	Hunting	85–86	Slaughtering
37–38	Illuminating	87–88	Souleating
39–40	Innervating	89–90	Spellcleaving
41–42	Longarm	91–92	Terrifying
43–44	Lucky	93–94	Toxic
45–46	Marking	95–96	Vengeful
47–48	Merciful	97–98	Versatile
49–50	Negating	99–00	Vigilant

Merciful: The weapon never kills any target it reduces to zero hit points; instead, they are immediately stabilized and will awaken an hour later with one hit point. The damage that this weapon inflicts is completely painless and leaves no visible physical marks.

Negating: The weapon feeds on the arcane power of spells and magical weapons used against its bearer. When the bearer is targeted by a magical spell, arcane power, or the special powers of a magical weapon, they may accept a point of System Strain as an Instant action and make a Physical saving throw; on a success, they are unaffected. This save may only be attempted once per instance of effect.

Nightwalking: The weapon allows the bearer to step through shadows, entering one and appearing in another no more than a hundred feet away as a Move action. Even very small shadows will suffice, and one is generally available in any area not devoid of light or objects to cast them.

Omened: Once per day the weapon can provide a yes, no, or unclear answer to a single question asked by a wielder regarding events that could happen to the wielder within the next hour. The weapon's answer is the GM's best estimate of likelihood, and may not

be correct if events play out in an unexpected way. Thus, asking "Will I win this hand of cards?" might result in the GM dicing out the result and telling the PC yes or no based on what will happen should they play, but if the PC knifes their gambling partner partway through the draw the weapon's answer would no longer apply.

Penetrating: This weapon ignores non-magical armor, shields, or beast hides for purposes of determining Shock susceptibility.

Phantom: As an On Turn action, the bearer can turn the weapon invisible and intangible to anyone but themselves, or revert the weapon to visibility. While invisible the weapon can harm only intangible or immaterial foes, but it cannot be detected or touched by others.

Phasing: The weapon can be tuned to pass through solid obstacles, striking only those objects or targets the bearer wills. Causing the weapon to phase is an On Turn action that adds one point of System Strain to the bearer; until the end of the round, the weapon ignores any armor, cover, or barrier that interposes.

Piercing: This weapon inflicts its Shock damage on everything the wielder attacks with it, even if the target is normally immune to Shock. However, the weapon never inflicts *more* than its Shock damage, whether or not the attack roll hits. If the weapon doesn't normally do Shock, it gains a base Shock rating of 2/-.

Radioactive: The weapon emits a constant invisible radiance of toxic power. As an On Turn action the bearer can drop or restore the safeguards on the weapon. While unleashed the weapon glows deep blue and everyone within melee range of the bearer, including the bearer, will take 1d10 damage at the end of the bearer's turn each round unless somehow shielded against radioactivity. Creatures with one hit die automatically die if so poisoned, regardless of the damage roll.

Rampaging: Whenever this weapon kills a creature with at least one hit die, its bearer may immediately make another attack on any target within range. If no additional targets are available, the wielder instead gets an instant free Move action.

Rectifying: The weapon is exceptionally potent against undead, robots, and other synthetic life forms. All damage done to such creatures is rolled twice, with the better number taken. The weapon can affect even insubstantial or otherwise immune entities of that type, and an undead creature killed by this weapon is permanently put to rest barring tremendous powers of revivification or immortality.

Returning: If thrown, dropped, or disarmed, the weapon can be called back to the owner's hand as an On Turn action. A new possessor becomes the owner after carrying it for at least an hour.

Sacrificial: The weapon's violence is fueled by the wielder's own life force. As an Instant action on a hit, the wielder may accept 1d8 hit points of damage; double this damage is inflicted on the target. This damage may be enough to mortally wound the weapon's own wielder.

Shattering: The weapon can be used to smash inanimate objects and barriers. Once per scene, with one minute of careful preparation, the wielder can break a man-sized hole in a normal exterior wall or up to a foot of stone. If they accept a point of System Strain, they can do so as a Main Action instead, and may do so as often as they have System Strain available. Shattering blows inflict no special damage on animate targets.

Shieldbreaking: The weapon ignores all shields, both their Armor Class bonus and their Shock protection. Non-magical shields are destroyed by the weapon's attack, whether or not the attack hits.

Shocking: The weapon's Shock damage is increased by 2 points. If it has no natural Shock score, it gains a Shock rating of 2/AC 15.

Shrieking: At the wielder's will, the weapon emits an ear-splitting shriek while in use. The wielder and up to a dozen allies are immune to this effect, but others who are within 60 feet of the wielder are unable to hear themselves speak, and spellcasters must make Wis/Magic skill checks at a difficulty of 7 plus the spell level to successfully cast spells without fumbling the incantations. All Instinct checks made within the area suffer a -2 penalty. The shrieking is completely inaudible outside the sixty-foot radius of effect.

Skittering: When the weapon is shot or thrown at a location within sixty feet, the wielder may instantly appear where the weapon was thrown or struck as an On Turn action, provided they do so in the same round. If thrown, they appear with the weapon in their hand. This ability may be used only once per round.

Skytreading: The weapon's bearer falls gently from any height, becoming immune to falling damage. By accepting one point of System Strain as an On Turn action, they may fly at their full normal movement rate until the end of the round.

Slaughtering: The weapon hideously disjects its victims. Any target reduced to zero hit points by the weapon is immediately killed and violently dismembered. Any enemies with a Morale score of less than 12 who are within melee range of the slaughtered victim take the weapon's Shock damage as emotional trauma and horror, even if they're normally immune to Shock. Weapons that don't do Shock damage inflict 2 points of damage to these bystanders instead. This weapon cannot be used for less than lethal attacks.

Souleating: While this weapon may or may not devour the actual soul of the target, such as it may be, it channels great vital force to the wielder. Every time they kill a sentient creature with the weapon, they lose one accumulated System Strain point. This effect can trigger only once per scene.

Spellcleaving: At a cost of a Move action and one System Strain gained by the wielder, the weapon can apply an ***Extirpate Arcana*** spell effect to any target point within range of the weapon. The spell is cast as if by a tenth level High Mage with a total Int/Magic skill bonus of +3. This power can be used only once per scene.

Terrifying: The weapon is wrought with psychic distress, creating an intense burden of fear in those who oppose its wielder. Whenever the wielder does something that provokes a Morale or Instinct check, any targets who can see them must make the check at a -1 penalty. This effect does not stack with multiple weapons, nor does it affect those with Morale 12.

Toxic: The weapon sweats a potent toxin. When it hits a living target, the wielder may accept a point of System Strain to trigger the toxin's effect; the victim is racked with spasms of torment and cannot speak or cry out while they remain poisoned. Each round they take 1d8 damage at the end of their turn; they can try to throw off the poison's effects by making a successful Physical saving throw at the end of their round. A creature can only be poisoned once by this weapon at any one time.

Vengeful: The weapon will always succeed at any attack roll made against a foe who has harmed the wielder within the past round, assuming success is physically possible. Such vengeful strikes roll damage twice and take the higher roll.

Versatile: The weapon shifts forms to better suit the bearer's need. As an On Turn action, the wielder can give it one of the following qualities it doesn't already have: Subtle, Long, or Throwable. If thrown, it returns to the bearer's hand at the end of the round.

Vigilant: The weapon's bearer cannot be surprised by anyone who is carrying a manufactured weapon. The bearer does not need to sleep, though they do not recover lost hit points or accumulated System Strain without doing so.

Cursed Magical Weapons

While rare, it's not unknown for a magical weapon or other piece of occult equipment to be blighted by some curse. If a GM decides that such a risk exists for a particular find, a 1 on a 1d20 roll usually means that the weapon is cursed.

Cursed items have had their magical energies corrupted by time, decay, or the carelessness of their creator. Most of them still appear to be functional, but once used, the damage is usually obvious. A cursed item might be defective, binding, or both.

Defective items have some negative consequence for use, or their power is somehow flawed in its effects. Such items might still be retained as being worth more than their drawbacks. Binding items entwine themselves in the life energy of their wielder, their defective thaumic channels drawing their energy through the unfortunate owner. If the two are separated, the owner cannot recover System Strain and gains one more point each night until the item is returned. If their System Strain rises above their maximum, the deficiency kills them. Sometimes a simple ***Extirpate Arcana*** spell can disentangle the curse, but other times more elaborate magics or adventures are required to restore the victim's spiritual integrity.

The nature of a defective item's curse is usually something that would make the item dangerous or harmful to use, but not so awful that the party would discard it out of hand. Some suggestions are offered below.

Clumsy: If the bearer doesn't choose to act last in initiative order, they can't use this item or attack with it.

Draining: Each scene in which the item is used, the bearer gains one System Strain.

Enfeebled: The weapon never inflicts Shock, regardless of the wielder's abilities or the target's AC.

Heavy: The item is twice the usual Encumbrance cost.

Ill-Omened: Its bearer always fails saving throws on a roll of 19 or 20.

Infuriating: When carried, the bearer suffers +2 to all social check difficulties and a -1 penalty to the party's reaction rolls.

Mundane: While the weapon may have hit and damage bonuses, it isn't counted as a magical weapon for purposes of affecting mundane-immune targets.

Poisonous: Each scene the user wears or handles the item, they suffer 1d6 damage from its toxic substance or malign radiations at the end of the scene.

Refractory: At the start of each scene in which its bearer wants to use it, roll 1d6; on a 1, it refuses to work for the rest of the day.

Screaming: The item makes a tremendous amount of noise or some other disturbance when used, making stealth impossible and possibly forcing a Wandering Encounter check.

Traitorous: On a natural 1 on an attack roll, the weapon strikes its own owner. If armor is cursed this way, enemies always hit on a natural 1 on the hit roll.

Magical Devices

The ancients produced innumerable objects of wonder, the vast majority of them now so much useless arcane scrap due to the ravages of time and the shifts of the Legacy. Some items still maintain useful functionality, however, though these powers often are used in very different ways than their creators anticipated. The list provided here is only a small selection of the possibilities.

d00	Magical Devices
1–2	Guncloud
3–6	Censer of Solid Dreams
7–12	Congealed Paradox
13–16	Enough Rope
17–19	Eye of Discerning Humanity
20–23	Flask of Devils
24–26	Ghost Horse
27–31	Immanent Beacon Shard
32–35	Implacable Fist
36–39	Jewel Beyond Price
40–42	Key of the Former House
43–46	Lens of the Polychrome Lord
47–49	Lex Talionis
50	Logos
51–53	Lyre of Longing
54–57	Memorious Fragrance
58–62	Purification Salt
63–65	Rain-Beckoning Drum
66–69	Ring of the Sea Princes
70–72	Rod of Repudiation
73–77	Seed of Flesh
78–80	Staff of the Old Lords
81–84	Stonepeg
85–87	Stutterhatchet
88–91	Vessel of Hours
92–95	Vigilant Banner
96–00	Vothite Icon

Censer of Solid Dreams: When this small censer is filled with flammable substances and lit as a Main Action, it exhales a thick, opaque white smoke. The bearer of the censer can mold the smoke with mental commands, shaping it into any solid, simple object that can fit in a thirty-foot cube. This object is opaque and requires 5 hit points of damage to punch a human-sized hole directly through it. Creatures caught inside the smoke can tear through it with a Main Action. It's sturdy enough to bear the weight of horses and it lasts for the remainder of the scene. The censer can be lit only once per day.

Congealed Paradox: These thumb-sized black gemstones are mildly painful to touch or look at, as each one contains an impossible duality that has been forcibly reconciled by ancient sorcery. When gripped and broken as a Main Action, the released paradox draws the immediate repression of the Legacy as mundane reality is violently reinforced in the surrounding twenty feet. Within that radius all active magic is immediately dispelled and no further spellcasting, art use, or magical power use can be performed inside it for the rest of the scene. Powerful Workings are suppressed within this zone for the rest of the scene. Creatures reliant on magic for existence take 5d6 damage for each full round they spend inside this radius.

Enough Rope: When found, this appears to be a simple loop of slim silk rope, no more than five feet long. Whenever this rope is actually used, however, it will always be precisely long enough for the immediate task at hand, be that climbing a wall, binding enemies, casting a line over a crevasse, or some other specific use. The rope can bear up to a ton of weight and cannot be cut by non-magical weapons. So long as the owner is touching the rope, they can cause it to untie itself or retract fully back into their grip.

Eye of Discerning Humanity: A jade-colored sphere the size of an eyeball, this device may be pointed at any creature within sixty feet and activated by pressing a small stud. The target will be limned in yellow light if human, green if demihuman, and blue if non-human. The eye's categorization draws on the creator's personal taxonomy, so the result shown may not entirely agree with a user's opinion. Only the wielder can see this light, which lasts for 1d6 rounds. The eye's discernment can penetrate any mundane disguise or magical spell of third level or less. If the GM thinks the subject has a stronger kind of concealment, they may make a secret Wis/Notice skill check against an appropriate difficulty to determine if a true answer is given. The eye can be used once per scene.

Flask of Devils: This brass flask is tightly stoppered and covered with sigils of sealing and dominion. If opened, a hideous devil-thing leaps out of the bottle, having statistics equivalent to a creature called by the *Calculation of the Phantasmal Eidolon* spell on page 68. The devil will demand that its liberator give it a command; that command will be faithfully followed until the scene is over or it is completed. Once finished, the devil will be drawn back into the flask. Each use of the flask adds 1 System Strain to the user; if the devil is killed, an additional 1d3 System Strain is gained by the user and a new devil

will be summoned forth the next time the flask is opened. If this System Strain is sufficient to take the user over their maximum, they're dragged into the flask to become its new devil, lost forever without some heroic labor of rescue. The flask can be opened only once per day.

Ghost Horse: A fist-sized crystal acts as a locus for manifesting a strange, geometric-looking steed of translucent force. The ghost horse can be summoned as a Main Action, and will dutifully and fearlessly carry its summoner and up to two hundred pounds of weight or thirty-five points of encumbrance for up to twelve hours before needing an equal amount of time to recharge. A ghost horse has an effective Move of 60' per action and can cross any terrain a mountain goat or small boat could navigate, moving up to 50 miles in the course of twelve hours. Natural animals shy away from the beast. The ghost horse has an effective AC of 13, 10 hit points, and cannot fight; if destroyed, it collapses back into its locus and cannot be recalled for a week.

Guncloud: This collection of ten silvery discs is intended to be applied to up to ten hand hurlants or one-handed thrown weapons. Once affixed to the weapons, the implements spatially collapse into a single gun or weapon until at least one disc is removed. When the bearer draws the weapon, all the conjoined implements immediately fan out around them in a whirling cloud, remaining within three feet of the bearer without obstructing their actions or vision. The bearer can fire or throw any of the weapons in the cloud as if they were Readied, provided they have at least one hand free. Thrown weapons will return to the cloud after ten rounds or one minute has passed, and discharged hand hurlants will reload themselves ten rounds after being fired, assuming the wielder is carrying ammunition for them. The cloud can be returned to its collapsed state as an On Turn action by the wielder should they sheath or holster one of the weapons. Foes in melee range who want to grab or smash one of the weapons must hit an AC of 16; four points of damage will smash a weapon or knock its disc off, but the guncloud discs themselves are immune to anything short of intentional damage inflicted by a possessor.

Immanent Beacon Shard: Fragments of some unfathomable monolith of congealed natural law, these shards of faceted crystal are usually the size of a short baton. When a user presses the correct facet of the crystal and releases it, the shard remains fixed precisely in that location, even if hanging in mid-air. Absolutely no mundane force can shift or damage the crystal, and even magical powers must dispel the effect at difficulty 12 before the shard can be affected in any way. The person who placed the shard is perpetually aware of its exact location in relation to their present place, and can see and hear the area around the beacon as if they were standing there. The user can reclaim the beacon at a cost of 1 System Strain, or wait for the effect to wear out and the shard to become movable again a day later.

Implacable Fist: Appearing as a glove, gauntlet, or set of matching rings, an ***Implacable Fist*** grants its user an inhuman grip strength to the hand that wears it. With a full round to build up its force, it can crush or destroy any mundane material it grips. Magical materials force a Str/Exert skill check against a difficulty of 8 or more to be vulnerable to the fist's effects. The time necessary to focus the strength makes it impractical to use as a weapon in combat or grappling, but if the wearer somehow can get a hand on a helpless or completely restrained target, the grip will destroy any limb it grasps or kill a target whose head or viscera are crushed. The fist can be used at will, but any object carried in that hand has a 1 in 6 chance of being destroyed accidentally by the wearer's reaction to combat or other sudden stress.

Jewel Beyond Price: This small gemstone is impossible to mistake for an ordinary jewel, for it fills all onlookers with an overwhelming desire to obtain it. If found as treasure or plunder, the finders can decide calmly who is to have it, but if it is offered to a person in exchange for some favor or service that some amount of wealth could theoretically compel them to do, the would-be recipient must make a Mental saving throw or agree to perform the act in exchange for the jewel. If they receive the jewel, they will faithfully carry out the spirit of the agreement for at least a week. The jewel's full bewitchment of them will last for at most a week, after which they will be able to think clearly about whether or not the trade was reasonable and worth it.

Key of the Former House: A stylized key, this item may be used as a Main Action to create a shimmering doorway into a prior period of time in which there was an uninhabited domicile in the current location. Those who pass through the doorway enter into this place and time; if they move more than thirty feet away from the other side of the doorway, they're immediately ejected back into the present. The doorway in the present day continues to glow for five minutes after the key is triggered before fading to invisibility, though it can still be passed through from either side. The house on the other side of the doorway is abandoned or empty; it may look more or less normal, but there's a 1 in 6 chance each time this key is used that there is something dangerous there, a toxic environment, or some other hazard. The key may be used once per day, with the doorway lasting up to twenty-four hours before ejecting any remaining interlopers and closing. Each time the doorway closes, there's a 1 in 6 chance the key vanishes, seeking out a new resting place elsewhere.

Lens of the Polychrome Lord: These palm-sized lenses collect and concentrate light into a beam of lethal jewel-colored radiance. If used in direct sunlight, the beam so created does 5d6 damage to a single target within 300 feet, with an Evasion save to negate the damage. If used indoors in ordinary lighting, the effect does 3d6, and if the chamber is dark save for torches or other portable light sources the damage is a mere 1d6. If the lens is used more than once per day, there is a 1 in 4 chance it shatters after each subsequent bolt.

Lex Talionis: These rare magical weapons come in various small, concealable forms, with daggers predominating. They function as ordinary +1 magical weapons in the main, but whenever they cause harm to a target, the victim must make a Physical saving throw. On a failure, both the target and the wielder of the ***Lex Talionis*** instantly die, with no chance to stabilize. If the weapon is used as part of an Execution Attack, no saving throw is allowed. The weapon then vanishes; some say that it is destroyed by the magical discharge, while others postulate that it simply appears elsewhere to await a new avenger.

Logos: A logos usually takes the form of a fist-sized sphere of luminous crystalline matter, a constellation of tiny lights glowing within. They radiate a sense of endless possibility; no sentient can look on a logos and not recognize it as an object of tremendous power. Only archmages know the full truth of their utility, but persistent rumor speaks of them as critical ingredients in certain rituals of apotheosis, immortality, and reality-shaping. Even the dullest mage can expend a logos as a substitute for 250,000 silver pieces worth of ingredients for creating Workings or magic items. If used to fuel a magic item's creation, no further special ingredients are required.

Lyre of Longing: While these musical instruments often take the form of lyres, other manifestations have been found. When played by a competent musician for at least five minutes, all listeners within thirty feet must make a Mental saving throw or be seized by a great desire for a particular thing or purpose imagined by the player. This longing will not be enough to make them act wholly out of character, but they will perform all normally-conceivable acts in order to obtain the object of their longing, including quarreling fiercely with their fellows if this object cannot be shared among them. The enchantment lasts for the rest of the scene. The lyre can be used this way only once per day.

Memorious Fragrance: Found as an incense stick that somehow never burns out entirely, lighting the Memorious Fragrance as a Main Action allows the activator to spread a subtle haze of scented mist in a twenty-foot radius. The activator may then describe a particular memory that they wish others to have; all within twenty feet except the activator must then make a Mental saving throw or have the memory implanted in their minds. They may not even realize this memory exists unless something happens that would draw it to mind, or questions are put to them about it. The memory persists until magically dispelled. While the ***Memorious Fragrance*** can add memories, it cannot change or erase existing ones.

Purification Salt: This small bag contains a never-ending supply of spiritually-purifying salt. If the salt is used to dust an object or weapon as a Main Action, that object can interact with incorporeal entities or spirits as if they were solid for the rest of the scene. If hurled directly at a creature from melee distance, it does 3d6 damage to mages, unnatural magical creatures, or incorporeal beings. If actually consumed by a sentient creature, it fills the imbiber with a sense of guilt and acute sorrow, inflicting 3d6 emotional damage. Creatures reduced to zero hit points regain one point but will attempt suicide. One pinch of salt can be taken from the bag each scene, and any existing pinches evaporate once a new one is taken.

Rain-Beckoning Drum: Sigiled and worked with signs of rule, this hand drum will produce an immediate deluge of rain in a hundred-foot radius around the user when it is beaten rhythmically. The rain lasts no more than one round but will drop three inches of water on all surfaces within the area of effect; if used indoors, the rain issues from the room's ceiling. The drum can be used safely once per week. Each additional time it is used in the same week, it adds 1 System Strain to the user.

Ring of the Sea Princes: A lost empire of sea-going lords has left behind only these loops of polished coral. Someone who wears one will be able to breathe underwater, see clearly out to 120' when submerged regardless of the light level, and they and their belongings are impervious to the chill and crushing pressure of the depths, though not to other sources of cold damage. The wearer's swimming speed is equal to twice their usual movement rate.

Rod of Repudiation: An ancient punishment-tool, this short rod may be used to strike a target in melee as if a ***club +1*** or used against a helpless target automatically. An affected subject must make a Physical saving throw or have a dully-glowing brand appear on their face. This brand inspires universal, unreasoning loathing in humans and demihumans, causing a -2 penalty to all their reaction rolls and a -2 penalty to all Charisma-based skill checks. Friends, lovers, spouses, and others with close relationships must make a Mental saving throw on first seeing the brand or break off all association with the subject. The rod may inflict such a brand once per scene, and the curse lasts until it is dispelled or the rod is used again on the same target.

Seed of Flesh: A ball of soft, warm skin approximately four inches in diameter, the seed of flesh may be hurled at any surface within thirty feet as a Main Action. If flung with force, the seed transforms into

a perfect duplicate of the creature that threw it, albeit naked and unequipped. It uses the user's attributes, skills, Foci, and other abilities, though it has only 6 hit points and it cannot cast spells or use arts. The duplicate will obey even suicidal commands and will remain active for up to a scene before shriveling back into a ball. It can be used only once per day. If it dies while active, the seed is destroyed.

Staff of the Old Lords: These rods were once carried by certain human viceroys of the Outsider lords. So long as it is carried in one hand, it will automatically jerk to interpose itself before attacks made by human or demihuman foes, making the bearer immune to Execution Attacks or Shock and granting a +2 bonus to their Armor Class. For 24 hours after the staff is last touched, however, the bearer will find it impossible to perform a hostile act against an Outsider without first making a successful Mental save; on a failure, the action is lost. During this time any Mental saves made to resist Outsider spells or abilities must be rolled twice and the worst taken.

Stonepeg: These devices are always found in groups of 1d4+2 pegs, each one appearing to be a glyphed metal rod perhaps a foot in length with a chisel-shaped point on one end. If thrust firmly into a stone or earthen surface, the peg will effortlessly sink into the material and become as firm and fixed as if it were cemented in place. The peg can only be freely removed by the person who sank it into place, otherwise requiring that it be chiseled out with a scene's effort and the correct tools.

Stutterhatchet: This small workman's hatchet has a flat hammer-poll on its opposite side and a blade that cannot be dulled by anything short of intentional effort to damage it. It functions as a ***hand axe +1*** if used in combat, but when applied to inanimate objects its true function becomes plain. Whatever inanimate matter the stutterhatchet damages, smashes, or cuts will return to its perfect, unbroken state at the next dawn, or sooner if the flat of the axe is tapped against a fragment of it. Fragments or pieces of the object will disappear when the object reforms. If the object is broken into several pieces, it is restored around the largest one, or around the one the wielder taps with the hatchet if it's triggered early. If fragments are burned, melted, or destroyed with equivalent thoroughness they will be missing from the reformed object.

Vessel of Hours: A precious implement most often appearing as a miniature clock, hourglass, incense clock, or some other horological device, this item can wind back time by a few moments. As an Instant action, the bearer can invoke it to undo their actions and any consequences for the immediate turn, resetting their turn back to its beginning. This action cannot be taken after someone else's turn has begun. This object and others of its kind will only work once for any given user.

Vigilant Banner: These enchanted banners bear the insignia of long-vanished armies, and are always found permanently attached to collapsible banner-staves that extend out to fifteen feet at most. When the banner staff is gripped in one hand and held upright, the bearer is filled with vigor and vigilant alertness. They can reroll failed Notice checks to spot approaching creatures or ambushes, they ignore normal extremes of heat or chill, they can see clearly even in perfect darkness, and they cannot be made to fall asleep or become oblivious to their surroundings by sorcery or mundane weariness. A watchman with the banner can stand their post indefinitely while gripping the banner, but they cannot lose System Strain, naturally heal hit point damage, refresh Effort, or restore spell slots for 24 hours after using it.

Vothite Icon: These small paintings, figurines, or symbolic statuettes were designed to influence the most primitive, basic levels of human cogitation in order to impress a particular complex idea on the beholder. Their effectiveness waned with human changes over the ages, but they still have a powerful ability to influence the unwary. When a human or demihuman first sees a Vothite icon within thirty feet of them, they must make a Mental saving throw; on a failure, they lose their next round of action as they struggle to comprehend the alien imperative the icon is impressing on their thoughts. These ideals are so strange and anachronistic that they are almost always rejected, but it takes the full round to do so. The same icon can't affect the same creature twice. Lifting and presenting an icon requires one hand and a Main Action.

Adding New Items

New items can be researched by PCs or drawn from other old-school compatible games with few or no changes. When importing magic items from other games, however, keep a few cautions in mind.

Don't add simple problem-solving items unless you want the problem to be permanently solved. Weightless packs, flasks of everflowing water, portable shelters that always work, and other such "utility" items erase entire categories of challenges. Don't add them unless you're willing to forego using those challenges in your own game.

Don't add simple buff items. If a magic item just adds a bonus to a stat or improves a skill roll, it's not going to induce the players to give any thought to its use or allow any new or creative situations.

Don't add easily reusable damaging items. If the magic item inflicts damage on a target, it should have very limited charges, a chance of destruction, or a strictly limited scope of function. Cheap and common magical damage devalues the martial heroes in a party.

Enchanted Elixirs

Throughout the ages, there have always been techniques for fixing sorcery inside magical potions, occult salves, breakable clay tablets, or other consumable tokens. These "elixirs" are not uncommon in the Deeps, and even modern mages can often puzzle out ways of duplicating the simpler concoctions.

Elixir Appearances

While the conventional elixir is an ounce or two of liquid in an engraved flask, ancient empires and obscure sorcerous traditions often used different methods to contain their magic. All elixirs must be consumed, applied, or destroyed as part of their activation, whether that consists of lighting an enchanted incense stick or tearing a calligraphic charm. Usually such activation takes no more than a Main Action, though some mediums may require an open flame to light them or a stationary target to rub on a salve.

The adjacent table offers some suggestions as to the basic appearance of the elixir, while the table below provides some ideas about traits that would clearly mark out an elixir as something magical or unusual. You should note down this appearance for a given type of elixir; if another dose is found made by the same creators, it probably should look similar to the first. Using a consistent style for elixirs from the same civilization or maker can help add some verisimilitude to your brewing.

d10	The Elixir's Form
1	Bottled vapor
2	Breakable token
3	Incense stick
4	Inhaler
5	Injector
6	Inked charm
7	Jarred salve
8	Liquid potion
9	Pill
10	Preserved edible

d10	The Elixir's Quirks of Appearance
1	Vividly unnatural color
2	Pungent or appealing aroma
3	Strange texture or consistency
4	Metallic or glowing appearance
5	It moves slightly of its own
6	Unnaturally heavy or light
7	Makes a very soft sound
8	Bears imprinted text
9	Abnormally hot or chilled
10	Changes shape regularly

Using Elixirs

Consuming a Readied elixir generally requires a Main Action, whether drinking it or applying it to an adjacent object or comrade. Salves and unguents cannot be applied to a hostile or resisting target.

Given the careful packing usually required to keep an elixir from becoming damaged in transit, each one counts as one item of encumbrance when Readied. The GM may allow any reasonable number of these little vials to be cased or wrapped together in a pack without encumbrance costs, but digging these stored ones out individually takes too long to be practical in combat.

Identifying Elixirs

As elixirs do not normally decay with age, there are potions from half a hundred eons to be found in the Deeps and storehouses of the Latter Earth. Identifying the precise effects of a strange salve is a challenge to the most erudite sorcerer unless the creators were kind enough to label the vial in letters that can still be understood.

Apprehending the Arcane Form can give a one-sentence description of the elixir's intended effect. Touching a single drop of the fluid against a user's tongue can sometimes give a hint as well, with a tiny flicker of its effect impressed on the user. Aside from these, someone with the Magic skill can spend a full day in careful analysis of the potion, rolling Wis/Magic or Int/Magic against the potion's creation difficulty to identify its purpose. A given investigator can make only one attempt to identify it.

Useful as these measures are not foolproof. If the potion has magically decayed or been warped by its creator's clumsiness or malice, it will still register as a potion of its apparent type. The unpleasant truth will be revealed only after it is consumed. This factor is not usually a concern for PCs, but those who seek to buy or trade potions must always be wary of false or fouled goods.

Creating and Obtaining Elixirs

The item creation rules on page 92 can be used for brewing elixirs. Average creation costs and difficulties are listed on the adjoining table, though these numbers can swell or shrink depending on the prevalence of magic in a particular campaign or region.

Most regions do not have convenient, reliable sales of elixirs. PCs who want to buy potions will usually have to have some personal relationship with a skilled brewer and give them some good reason to take the time and care necessary to concoct such a thing. Regions of firm law and order tend to have rulers that have no reason to allow ordinary people to buy magical artifacts of any kind, and those mages willing to work for coin will need to do their brewing on the black market or sell exclusively to the authorities.

Types of Elixirs

The table below provides a weighted range of different elixir types known in the Latter Earth. Others certainly exist. Base creation difficulties and silver prices for each type are also given, but may vary based on the setting.

d00	Elixir	Diff.	Cost
1–4	Anchoring Draught	9	500
5–8	Bestial Form	10	1,250
9–12	Blood of Boiling Rage	8	250
13–15	Bodily Innervation	11	2,500
16–20	Borrowed Flesh	8	500
21–24	Cold Courage	9	1,000
25–28	Congealed Winter	9	1,250
29–32	Deep Sight	10	1,250
33–38	Energetic Impermeability	9	500
39–42	Inverted Entropy	10	1,250
43–46	Murderous Anointing	9	500
47	Nectar of Immortality	12	50,000
48–49	Nepenthe	11	12,500
50–53	Omened Visions	8	375
54–58	Persistent Luminescence	8	250
59–62	Plasmic Molding	9	500
63–64	Quintessence of the Hour	10	2,500
65–68	Sacrificial Strength	9	500
69–76	Sanctified Healing	8	250
77–79	Scalding Breath	9	500
80–83	Soul Sight	8	250
84–85	Thaumic Vitality	11	2,500
86–90	The Great and the Small	10	500
91–94	Truthspeaking	10	1,250
95–00	Wrathful Detonation	9	250

Anchoring Draught: When a subject drinks this elixir, they become spatially anchored to the place at which they drank it. At any time within the following twenty-four hours, they may teleport back to this point as a Main Action, along with any objects, willing subjects, or incapacitated creatures they are carrying, provided it's within ten miles. This teleportation can be done only once, and if the target point is blocked by a solid object the shift fails.

Bestial Form: The user of this potion transforms into a normal animal of their choice no larger than a horse nor smaller than a rat. Their own attributes and statistics are retained, though they gain the chosen creature's movement modes and speed. Their belongings meld with them on the transformation, still applying their benefits, but they cannot be removed until the change ends. The transformation lasts until the user ends it as an On Turn action, they die, or the next dawn.

Blood of Boiling Rage: The imbiber of this brew is suffused with a berserk fury. For the rest of the scene, or until the potion's effect is ended, they can roll their attack and damage rolls twice, taking the better result. Every round, however, they must either attack someone physically or try to reach them in order to attack them. If all foes are downed, allies will be targeted next. If the berserker is left alone or wishes to end the rage prematurely, they must spend a Main Action fighting the fury and make a Mental saving throw to end it. On a failure, they must spend their next round raging before they can try again. Berserk subjects have enough presence of mind to use special abilities or do complicated actions in order to kill or reach a target, but they cannot cast spells.

Bodily Innervation: This rare elixir reinforces a living user's body, decreasing their current System Strain by three points. It takes three days for the potion's residue to be fully flushed from a user's system, however, and this potion cannot be used again until it is fully purged.

Borrowed Flesh: When found, these potions fill only half their vials. If several drops of blood are let into the fluid by a willing subject, the subject may transfer up to six of their hit points into the elixir, accepting the damage and healing it normally afterwards. The blood droplets congeal and begin growing into a fleshy slurry once activated. A month later the slurry is digested back into its inert, half-full state, but until that point the brew may be poured on a wounded subject to restore as many hit points as were charged into it. The flesh that mends the wounds is of the same kind and texture as the flesh of the donor, though it will assimilate within a few months afterwards.

Cold Courage: The user of this potion is filled with invincible confidence and perfect self-assurance for the rest of the scene, fighting as calmly in bloody battle as if on a sparring field. When they attack, they roll a skill check instead of an attack roll, at a difficulty equal to half the target's Armor Class, rounded down. They are also immune to any mental effect that would alter their emotions. While under the potion's influence, however, the GM keeps track of their hit points and damage taken, and the player is told only when they hit zero.

Congealed Winter: These bottles are always extremely cold and relatively fragile; even loosening the stopper provokes a warning twinge of ice in the air around it. When opened or shattered, every water-based liquid within twenty feet is instantly flash-frozen at least a foot deep, all fires are extinguished in that range, and living creatures take 2d6 damage. Against liquid or fiery creatures this damage is maximized.

Deep Sight: This substance allows an imbiber to briefly subconsciously integrate with a Deep's basic structure, gaining an insight into the general layout of proximate areas. The GM gives the PC a map of the four nearest rooms of interest to the PC and instructions on how to get to them. For places with a detailed map, a radius of 100' is discerned. Each room's original purpose is revealed in a few words, though nothing can be discerned of its contents. This elixir will work inside any structure that was intentionally constructed by an intelligent being.

Energetic Impermeability: This elixir confers a temporary immunity to the next harmful energy that would otherwise injure the imbiber within the next scene. This immunity is sufficient to protect the user from any mundane source of this energy, and subtracts fifteen points of damage from each hit by a magical source of that power. Energy forms valid for this potion are thermal, electrical, radiation, or caustic; kinetic energy is not valid, nor are purely psychic or spiritual forms of injury. This protection lasts for one scene, and does not change once it is set by the initial harm it deflected.

Inverted Entropy: This flask contains enough of this fluid to affect one man-sized object. If the target is unliving, it can be restored to full and perfect physical completeness from any degree of damage or destruction, albeit magical qualities are not restored. A living target is restored to their last condition of full physical health, but the neural tissue reset causes them to completely forget everything since that point and maximizes their System Strain. The ***Inverted Entropy*** can't revert them more than one week. This reversion does not delete experience points, magical effects, or lingering curses.

Murderous Anointing: When this potion is applied to a weapon, it gains a brief semi-sentience dedicated entirely to bloodshed. For the following scene, the wielder can accept a System Strain point to reroll a failed attack roll with the weapon, up to once per failed attack. A weapon affected by this potion cannot be used for less than lethal strikes.

Nectar of Immortality: Grandly named, this liquid offers a nominal prolongation of the subject's natural longevity. Sages speculate that it was once a reward given by the Outsiders to pliant human rulers. Each bottle consumed adds an additional 1d6 years to the subject's healthy lifespan and immediately cures all but the most sorcerously-potent diseases or sicknesses. The nectar cannot do more than double the subject's natural lifespan, however, and after each dose a 1d20 must be rolled; on a natural 1, the nectar instead causes the subject to perish in a hideous welter of cancers and rebellious growths.

Nepenthe: This liquid eases a tormented mind and can cure mental illnesses and temper the pain of past traumas. Madness induced by magical causes forces the subject to make a Mental saving throw; on a failure, the draught cannot break the curse. A subject can benefit from ***Nepenthe*** only once in their life.

Omened Visions: Often a pale blue powder meant to be inhaled, this dust allows the user to explore the immediate future. Their next fifteen minutes will play out in their visions, their actions chosen as they wish and their most probable consequences made evident in the dreamlike fugue, assuming those consequences are evident within the next fifteen minutes. While under the dust's effects the subject is oblivious to the mundane world.

Persistent Luminescence: When this liquid is applied to an object or imbibed, the target begins to glow like a lantern, shining light out to a 30' radius. This glow persists until dispelled or a week has passed.

Plasmic Molding: When applied to a non-magical object no larger than a large door the substance becomes soft and malleable as clay for one scene. At the end of the scene, the material hardens back to its original consistency in whatever form it now takes. If taken by a living creature, they may reshape their own body to a degree, taking any appearance that a creature of their species might naturally have. This alteration lasts until dispelled or the user ends it, but they can't recover System Strain while so altered.

Quintessence of the Hour: When imbibed, the user is prompted to think of a particular time and place in their own past. They are instantly whisked back to a perfect temporal parallel of that time, occupying the body they had at the time for one hour. During that hour they may do as they wish in that time and place, but if they die during that hour, they die in the present as well. At the hour's end their mind is returned to the present time. Nothing that happened in the facsimile remains or has any effect on true reality, but things they learned or observed during that hour may be retained.

Sacrificial Strength: When imbibed, the user is capable of channeling their own life force into the damage they do. One time within the next scene, as an Instant action, they may sacrifice a number of hit points of their choice when they inflict damage on a target. For every four HP sacrificed, the damage done is increased by 1d6, up to a maximum of 5d6. The user must retain at least one hit point, and the bonus damage can be applied to only one target of a damaging action.

Sanctified Healing: This healing unguent comes in dozens of different styles, as the need for it is familiar to many cultures. When applied to a target, it heals 1d6+1 hit points of damage instantly.

Scalding Breath: The creature that imbibes this fluid can exhale it again as a Main Action to do 4d6 damage plus their character level to all targets within a cone thirty feet long and wide. Victims can make an Evasion saving throw to halve the damage. Different fluids produce different noxious exhalations, though flame, frost, poison, and lethal radiation are not uncommon finds. Only one breath attack is allowed, and if not made within a scene the potion is wasted.

Soul Sight: If applied to a creature's eyes, this potion causes their vision to become hazy and indistinct, too blurry to read text or make out any details more precise than facial features, albeit not so much as to hinder their fighting ability. They are able to see living or animate entities as glowing colored outlines, however, regardless of the ambient light or their invisibility, and can identify specific individuals by the details of the image. The glow tells the user the subject's current mental state as described in one or two words. The sight lasts for six hours or until the user rinses their eyes.

Thaumic Vitality: A rare and precious potion, this elixir allows a mage to cast one prepared spell within the next scene without it counting against their allowed spells for the day. This force exerts a severe cost on their bodily constitution, however, and they gain System Strain equal to the spell's level after it is cast. If this cost is more than their Constitution can bear, they fall unconscious and wake up in fifteen minutes with maximized System Strain.

The Great and the Small: This elixir will cause the subject to either shrink or grow as they wish, compacting down to a shape no smaller than three inches or expanding to one no larger than twelve feet in height. Once their size is chosen it remains fixed for the remaining thirty-minute duration of the potion, or until they voluntarily end it. Shrunken characters have an effective Strength of 3 and can't do meaningful combat damage. Their Move rating is also cut by 90%, but they automatically pass all Sneak skill checks unless someone is actively looking for them. Large characters have an effective Strength of 18 and do double damage with melee weapons and Shock, but their large size allows all foes to roll hit rolls twice against them and take the better number. If the character expands in a location not big enough to contain them, they inflict 4d6 damage on whatever they're expanding in; if it's not enough to destroy the constriction, they are crushed to death.

Truthspeaking: This potion is meant to be applied to a restrained, willing, or helpless sentient target. The user must envision a specific query before anointing the target with the potion. The subject may make a Mental saving throw to resist; on a failure, they tell the user a truthful, undeceptive answer to their question in no more than five sentences. On a success, the user's psychic impression has tainted the elixir, and the target will instead instinctively give the answer that the user thinks is most likely or plausible in the GM's estimation. The user cannot discern the result of the save except by their own good judgment of the answer.

Wrathful Detonation: These flasks are always permanently sealed. When intentionally hurled at a location, they detonate to do 2d6 damage to all targets within 15'. The magic in the flasks ensures that they always hit the targeted point, provided it's within 60'. Accidental breakage or breakage by an object is insufficient to trigger the magic, which requires human volition to catalyze it. Only one flask can be hurled at a time or the first to detonate will ruin the rest.

CREATURES OF A FAR AGE

A hero of the Latter Earth can expect to find trouble, and that trouble often comes in the form of slavering beasts, cruel bandits, arrogant sorcerers, or monstrous entities from beyond. In this chapter the GM will be given the tools they need to fabricate these terrible enemies, along with a selection of pre-generated foes and creatures specific to the wilds of the Latter Earth.

As with any part of creating a sandbox, a GM should be careful to keep in mind the return on their investment of effort. While it can be excellent fun to generate a host of awful beasts and fell monstrosities to stock your campaign world and populate your adventures, make sure your effort is first put towards those antagonists you expect the heroes to encounter, and only afterwards should you think of fleshing out the world with other creatures and foes. You only have so much time and energy available for your creations so you need to spend it where it will do you the most good.

Fortunately, the chassis of ***Worlds Without Number*** is built to be compatible with almost fifty years of content created by professionals and enthusiasts alike. The tools in this section only scratch the surface of the possibilities before you when it comes to finding enemies to bedevil your players.

Monsters From Other Games

To accomplish this, this game uses an "old school" rules chassis that is fundamentally compatible with many other similar games. These other games may use descending Armor Classes instead of ascending or have a few other differences, but the basic framework of hit dice, Armor Class, attack rolls, damage dice, Morale, and other such numbers work on the same scale.

In particular, monsters from the B/X, BECMI, 1e, 2e, and Rules Cyclopedia editions of the world's best-selling RPG can be imported with no more effort than subtracting their Armor Class ratings from 20 to get an ascending AC and subtracting their roll to hit AC 0 from 20 to get their attack bonus.

Foes from that game's third edition, 3.5, 4e, and 5e don't translate so well due to different hit point and attack scaling, but hints can be taken from their stat blocks, or they can be used as inspirations for generating a similar creature in this game.

Other games such as ***Old School Essentials***, ***Lamentations of the Flame Princess***, ***OSRIC***, ***Swords & Wizardry***, ***ACKS***, ***Labyrinth Lord***, and other games of similar mechanics can also provide monstrous foes for your game.

And, as might be expected, creatures generated for other Sine Nomine games such as ***Stars Without Number***, ***Other Dust***, ***Silent Legions***, ***Wolves of God***, ***Spears of the Dawn***, or ***Scarlet Heroes*** can also be pulled over with no more changes than inverting the Armor Class in some cases.

Using Monsters in the Game

For many modern games, there are some basic assumptions about how a GM should use and place monsters and foes in their campaigns. While these assumptions may work perfectly well in the kinds of adventures supported by these games, those unexamined habits can be a problem in the kinds of sandboxes that ***Worlds Without Number*** encourages. A GM who's going to use this chapter to best effect needs to understand some basic rules about how monstrous foes work in this game.

There are no expected fights per day. Some games assume that the party will have X combat encounters per day, or that a given dungeon should have Y fights in it, or that it's perfectly normal to place an encounter where the PCs will have no practical solution but to fight their way through it. This is not how this game's sandboxes work.

Fighting is dangerous. Fighting can and will get PCs killed. Sometimes it is necessary, sometimes the PCs can cook the situation to give themselves a great advantage, and sometimes the PC actions leave no reasonable outcome other than a brawl, but it is always something to weigh carefully.

If you as the GM start planting inevitable fights in front of your newly-minted party, you're going to be spending a lot of time generating new PCs. An expedition where the PCs infiltrate a Deep, outfox the natives, and carry off their loot without drawing a blade isn't an anomaly, it's the picture of a triumphant success. Most adventures will involve combat, it's true, but it should be combat that the players have decided to engage in or brought on themselves by their choices, not a fight by fiat that the GM's plans inevitably push them into.

Enemies do not level scale. Just because the party is only first level doesn't mean that everything they encounter is going to be an appropriate fight for first level PCs. If they insist on going to the Ashblight and marching straight into that fungal hell they're almost certainly going to die in short order. If they're veteran sixth-level heroes then the village guards they encounter are not going to magically gain enough fighting competence to individually threaten the PCs. The world will not change to give them an appropriate fight. Part of an adventurer's art consists of judging opposition logically and reacting sensibly to threats that are too dire to be overcome.

Enemies don't want to die. Barring the occasional mindless zombie or programmed automaton, enemies have Morale and rational impulses of self-preservation. When they fight PCs, they fight for a reason: defending territory, seeking food, robbing victims, xenophobic hatred, or some other rational motive. They will not fight to the death unless they think they have no choice and they will not fight at all unless they think they can win without unacceptable casualties. And if they are mistaken, they will reconsider rapidly once the killing starts.

Creating Monsters and Foes

The first step in creating a hideous beast or assigning statistics to some human foe is identifying the particular role they need to fill in your world. What exactly do you need this creature to be? Is this supposed to be some horrifying hell-beast that's devoured a legion of would-be hunters, or do you just need a stat line for an ordinary village guardsman?

In a sandbox campaign, monsters and enemies are not measured in the context of the party. Just because the heroes are green novices at their trade doesn't mean that a monster is going to be any less ferocious, and by the same token a band of hardened veterans won't find their enemies suddenly gaining expertise to keep up with them. The creatures of a sandbox campaign don't care what your party's level is.

Instead, foes in a sandbox campaign are scaled to the world they live in. They have the hit dice, attack bonus, special powers, and general ferocity that makes sense for their place in the world. A village guardsman is rarely ever going to have more than one hit die and a monstrous hell-beast will rarely ever have fewer than eight or nine.

The opposite page includes a list of example stat lines for various kinds of people and creatures. These are not universal truths for every being in the campaign setting, but they're good baselines for what to expect from a given creature. As a first step in building a creature a GM should pick the stat line that fits best the type of foe they need, and then modify it to suit their own purposes.

Note that there's nothing stopping you from putting a guaranteed party-slaughterer in your campaign. If the situation logically requires that such a creature be present, then it ought to be there. If logic requires its existence, however, you should take pains to ensure that the PCs are not forced to actually *fight* the thing. They need to be able to get forewarnings of its presence, or opportunities to flee it, or some means to negotiate with it or hide from it. It's not unfair to populate your world with the creatures that ought to live in it, but it's decidedly unfun to shove hapless PCs face-first into certain death.

The table of example stat lines has several columns, each one listing a particular statistic for the creature.

Hit dice are a measure of the creature's general power, not unlike a level rating for PCs. For each hit die a creature has, it rolls 1d8 for its hit points. Most ordinary humans have only one hit die, while veterans of bloody struggle or ruthless court intrigue might have two, or three, or even more for the most heroic among them.

AC is for the creature's Armor Class. The higher this number, the harder it is to meaningfully hurt the thing. Monsters and wild beasts have an Armor Class appropriate to their agility and the toughness of their hide; 12 or 13 for quick things with leathery skins, up to 15 for very well-armored beasts, or even up to 20 for things with supernatural hardihood. Humans and other sentients usually have whatever Armor Class is granted by the armor they wear. Some creatures have an "a" annotation with their AC; this just means that the creature wears armor and the AC given is what their usual armor is worth.

Atk is the creature's usual total attack bonus for its hit rolls in combat. For most creatures, this is equal to its hit dice, possibly with a bonus if it's well-trained, exceptionally vicious, or supernaturally powerful. Some creatures have more than one attack, indicated by an "x2" or "x3" notation. This means the creature can attack two or three times with a single Main Action, directing them all at a single creature or splitting them up among nearby foes within reach.

Dmg is the damage done by a successful hit by the creature. If the listing says "Wpn", then it does whatever damage is usual for the weapon that it's wielding. A creature will never do less damage on a hit than it would do with its Shock score, if Shock would apply to the target.

Shock is the Shock damage inflicted by the creature and the maximum AC it affects. Thus, "3/13" means that the creature inflicts a minimum of 3 points of Shock damage on a miss to any foe with an AC of 13 or less. "Wpn" means the usual Shock damage of the weapon being used is applied. Exceptionally powerful or savage creatures might automatically apply Shock regardless of the AC of the foe; such creatures have a dash listed for the maximum AC, such as "3/-". Such damage is always applied unless the foe is immune to Shock.

Move is the distance the creature can move with a single Move action. Some creatures may fly, others swim, or still stranger means of locomotion may apply depending on the beast's nature.

ML is the creature's Morale score. Whenever a Morale check is forced by a situation, the creature must roll 2d6. If the total is greater than its Morale score, it loses its taste for the fight and will retreat, surrender, or otherwise take whatever actions seem best to get it safely away.

Inst is the creature's Instinct score. When confused, infuriated, or goaded in combat, it runs the risk of behaving according to its instincts rather than martial prudence. The details of Instinct checks are explained on page 298.

Skill is the creature's total Skill bonus for any skill checks it makes that are in line with its talents and abilities. If the creature ought to be good at something, it can add its Skill bonus to the base 2d6 skill check. If not, it adds +0, or might even take a penalty if it seems like something it would be exceptionally bad at doing.

Save is the saving throw target used by the creature whenever it's called upon to make a Physical, Mental, Evasion, or Luck saving throw. Unlike PCs, creatures only have a single save target, usually equal to 15 minus half its hit dice, rounded down. Thus, a foe with 3 hit dice usually rolls 14+ to succeed at any saving throw. This score can't be less than 2+, as a 1 on a saving throw always fails.

Normal Humans	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Peaceful Human	1	10	+0	Wpn	Wpn	30'	7	5	+1	15+
Thug or Militia	1	13a	+1	Wpn	Wpn	30'	8	4	+1	15+
Barbarian Fighter	1	13a	+2	Wpn+1	Wpn+1	30'	8	5	+1	15+
Veteran Soldier	1	13a	+2	Wpn+1	Wpn+1	30'	8	3	+1	15+
Skilled Veteran	2	15a	+3	Wpn+1	Wpn+1	30'	9	2	+1	14+
Elites or Special Guards	3	18a	+4	Wpn+2	Wpn+2	30'	10	2	+2	14+
Knight or Minor Hero	4	18a	+6	Wpn+2	Wpn+2	30'	10	1	+2	13+
Warrior Baron	6	18a	+8	Wpn+3	Wpn+3	30'	9	1	+2	12+
Barbarian Warlord	8	16a	+10 x2	Wpn+4	Wpn+4/-	30'	10	3	+2	11+
Mighty General	8	18a	+10	Wpn+4	Wpn+4/-	30'	10	1	+3	11+
Major Hero	10	18a	+12 x2	Wpn+5	Wpn+5/-	30'	10	2	+3	10+
Great Warrior King	12	18a	+14 x2	Wpn+5	Wpn+5/-	30'	10	1	+3	9+

Spellcasters	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Petty Mage	2	10	+1	Wpn	Wpn	30'	8	4	+1	14+
Tribal Shaman	4	10	+3	Wpn+1	Wpn+1	30'	9	4	+1	13+
Skilled Sorcerer	5	10	+1	Wpn	Wpn	30'	9	4	+2	13+
Master Wizard	8	13	+1	Wpn	Wpn	30'	9	3	+2	11+
Famous Arch-Mage	10	13	+2	Wpn	Wpn	30'	9	2	+3	10+

Mages generally have the spellcasting and Arts of an appropriate mage tradition at a level equal to their hit dice and Effort equal to their skill bonus plus two.

Normal Animals	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Small Pack Predator	1	12	+2	1d4	1/13	40'	7	6	+1	15+
Large Solitary Predator	5	13	+6	1d8	2/13	30'	8	6	+1	13+
Apex Predator	6	13	+6 x2	1d8	2/13	40'	8	6	+2	12+
Herd Beast	2	11	+2	1d4	None	40'	7	6	+1	14+
Vicious Large Herbivore	4	13	+5	1d10	1/13	40'	9	6	+1	13+
Elephantine Grazer	6	13	+5	2d8	None	40'	7	6	+1	12+

Unnatural Entities	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Automaton, Humanlike	2	13	+2	Wpn	Wpn	30'	12	3	+1	14+
Automaton, Laborer	2	15	+2	1d6	1/13	30'	12	3	+1	14+
Automaton, Military	4	18	+5	1d10+2	4/15	30'	12	3	+1	13+
Automaton, Warbot	10	20	+12 x3	1d12+5	7/-	40'	12	2	+2	10+
Slime or ooze	6	10	+6 x2	1d8	1/-	20'	12	5	+1	12+
Predator, Small Vicious	1	14	+1	1d4	1/13	30'	7	5	+1	15+
Predator, Large Vicious	6	13	+7 x2	2d6	2/15	40'	9	5	+2	13+
Predator, Hulking	10	15	+12 x2	2d6+3	6/15	30'	10	4	+1	10+
Predator, Hellbeast	10	18	+12 x4	1d10+5	6/-	60'	11	4	+3	10+
Unnatural Swarm	4	10	+6 x3	1d6	1/-	30'	10	5	+1	13+
Outsider Warbeast	8	15	+10 x2	2d6+4	7/15	40'	9	4	+2	11+
Legendary God-Titan	20	22	+20 x3	2d10+5	10/-	40'	10	3	+3	2+

The Blight and Its Consequences

In the age of the Latter Earth, manipulation of the mental and biological substance of living creatures has been a commonplace for all recorded history. From the most distant day of the Terran Mandate through the rule of the Outsiders and the rise of the sorcerer-kings thereafter, there have always been artificial and arcane ways to mold the offspring of living creatures and imbue them with qualities chosen by the artificer. As with any mortal power, this ability has been richly abused.

The Blight is not a single process or a specific curse. It is the term used to refer to the afflictions resting on those scarred by the malice of ancient god-mages, brutal tyrants, Outsider scientists, or sheer magical mischance. It wears many faces and is expressed in many ways, all turned toward the purposes of the creator and all indifferent to the suffering of those who bear it.

Many monsters and implacably hostile sentient species are the direct result of the Blight. Many creatures that make no evolutionary sense are products of the Blight, created in order to serve purposes that no longer obtain in the Latter Earth. Others are penal beasts shaped from the losers of wars, fallen noble houses, criminal families, disfavored polities, or those prey to the whims of some long-lost Imperator.

Intelligent Blighted usually have minds severely influenced by their curse. Martial species might have a psychopathic indifference to the suffering of others, while slave-species might find it emotionally traumatic to refuse orders. Spite-born monsters might feel visceral pleasure at torment and killing, while implement-races might be unable to feel joy at anything but their task. Blighted societies are always marked by such mental burdens.

The Blight is not perfectly consistent in its effects. While the Anak are a species of savagely violent humanoids, not every Anak is driven by the same inexorable impulse of rage and hatred for humanity, nor is every hulking Drudge equally given to stupid docility. The fate of such sports is rarely a kind one in a world little-equipped to distinguish them from their brethren.

Given the nature of players, it may be that some of them will want to cure a creature's Blight or reverse the effects of some particularly heinous curse. Such work is always difficult, demanding, and dangerous; to undo the Blight in a creature is to rebuild its mind and body from the ground up, altering it in a way just as profound as the original inherited change. Still, particularly heroic adventurers might be willing to go to the extremes necessary to find the keys needed to unlock these ancient shackles.

As the GM, you can use the Blight to explain the existence of monsters that otherwise would be very difficult to justify. Creatures of sheer inhuman hatred, monsters that feed on terrible things, and beasts that have purposes utterly inimical to humanity could all be Blighted creatures born of some ancient curse or a forgotten god-emperor's dream.

d8	What Was the Creator's Intent?
1	**Decay**: The changes were not Blighted at first, but time and decay of the Legacy has fouled them and made them a burden.
2	**Error**: The creator never intended for things to work out as they have, but was either blind to the consequences or mistaken in them.
3	**Hedonism**: The creature provided some aesthetic or sensory pleasure in its new form, despite the cruel burdens of its shape.
4	**Mischance**: There was no single creator, as the Blight was a consequence of a magical accident or unexpected environment.
5	**Punishment**: Its ancestors offended a god-like entity that laid a scourge on them and all their heirs.
6	**Sadism**: The creator simply found it funny or enjoyable to condemn the creature's lineage to everlasting suffering.
7	**Spite**: The creature was a weapon against the creator's enemies, and its own survival or happiness was of no importance.
8	**Utility**: The creature's lineage was meant to perform a kind of labor, and molded to that end with no concern for its own well-being.

d12	Example Blighted Qualities
1	It can't control a violent or destructive impulse.
2	It sickens normal creatures or has some other negative effect on them when in proximity.
3	It's unnaturally repugnant or ugly.
4	It's stupid, feeble, clumsy, or otherwise physically or mentally debilitated.
5	It has a loathsome craving or impulse that drives its actions.
6	It's helplessly obedient or submissive in a way that causes it misery.
7	It's shape has been altered to be useful for its purpose, though burdensome to it.
8	It suffers constant pain or discomfort of some sort, whether intense or minor.
9	It can reproduce only under difficult to obtain circumstances.
10	It xenoforms its surroundings to suit some long-dead creator's native world.
11	It has an intrinsic mental illness.
12	It must pursue a goal that is now impossible.

Monster Shapes and Appearances

If you don't already have a clear idea of what your monster should look like, these tables can offer some suggestions.

First, find out what animal it most resembles. If you need to fill in details of the creature's appearance, use this as a baseline default.

Next, roll or choose its basic body plan. Intelligent creatures usually have some manipulatory appendages, but they don't necessarily have to be bipedal.

Then figure out how the creature hunts in its natural habitat, if it's not intelligent and thus capable of farming or herding its prey. For monstrous creatures, you might also roll or pick to find out why it hasn't denuded its surroundings of food and starved to death yet, or why it hasn't destroyed the local ecology with its depredations.

Lastly, you can spice this basic plan up with rolls or picks from the characteristic body part table below. Feel free to mix in insectile parts on a basically serpentine creature, or blend in exotic elements into a conventional mammal. Between Outsider interference and the caprice of sorcerer-kings, all manner of forms are possible.

d10	How Does It Usually Hunt?
1	Stealthy stalking and ambush of its prey
2	It steals the kills of other creatures
3	It hunts in packs or family groups
4	It uses some unnatural power to catch prey
5	A partnership with another kind of beast
6	It feeds on carrion and the very weak
7	It chases down its prey in open pursuit
8	It disguises itself as something harmless
9	It blindly eats whatever it encounters
10	It lures in its prey with some kind of bait

d12	What Kind of Animal Is It Most Like?
1	**Apish**: Distorted humanoid outlines
2	**Arachnid**: Webs, many limbs, many eyes
3	**Avian**: Feathers, beak, talons, light weight
4	**Beetle-like**: Rounded body and armor
5	**Canine**: Muzzle, tail, paws
6	**Equine**: Hooves, speed, manes
7	**Feline**: Fangs, claws, litheness
8	**Piscene**: Googly eyes, scales, fins
9	**Reptilian**: Frills, side-slung limbs, scales
10	**Serpentine**: Limbless, venomous, slim
11	**Ursine**: Broad body, thick hide, claws
12	**Wasp-like**: Wings, narrow thorax, sting

d8	What Is Its Basic Body Plan?
1	Limbless, amorphous, or a tentacular mass
2-3	Bipedal, generally upright
4-7	Quadrupedal, perhaps able to rear up
8	Sexapedal, perhaps with wings and legs

d6	Why Isn't It Dead Yet?
1	It requires very little food for survival
2	It's poisonous and repels its predators
3	It eats something other creatures can't
4	It's newly introduced in the area
5	It doesn't need food in a normal sense
6	It exists in symbiosis with something else

Characteristic Body Parts or Creature Elements

d12	Mammalian	Insectile	Reptilian	Avian	Piscene	Exotic
1	Thick fur	Compound eyes	Poisons	Feathers	Scales	Tentacles
2	Tail	Stings	Slitted eyes	Beak	Bulging eyes	Sacs
3	Paws	Mandibles	Fangs	Talons	Fins	Wheels
4	Hooves	Spinnerets	Scaled skin	Light body	Suckers	Balloons
5	Hands	Swarms	Silence	Songs	Tentacles	Tendrils
6	Fangs	Membrane wings	Draconic wings	Bright colors	Pincers	Launchers
7	Claws	Egg sacs	Thick hide	Sharp eyes	Rubbery hide	Treads
8	Visible ears	Blood-sucking	Crawling	Eggs	Huge maws	Jets
9	Stenches	Parasitizing	Cold-blooded	Diving	Water jets	Secretions
10	Leathery hide	Larval forms	Camouflage	Flocks	Slime	Translucence
11	Bat wings	Leaping	Crushing jaws	Regurgitation	Spines	Alien smells
12	Horns	Numerous legs	Wall-climbing	Guano	Mineral deposit	Unliving matter

Monstrous Drives

What makes a creature monstrous is not necessarily what it *is*, but what it *does*. Something about the creature's behavior or wants is anathema to human interests, and its activities bring misery, suffering, and death to the people around it.

It may be that your "monster" isn't particularly dangerous to humanity. It may just be an odd creature that exists in a particular environment, of no special danger to humans who don't get in its way. There's a great deal of fun in creating strange beasts for a campaign world, and there's nothing wrong with making the occasional creature like this.

Even so, the usual point of making monsters for a game is to make problems for the players. Ravaging beasts, hideous raiders, sinister and insidious threats from within… these sort of creatures spark the conflicts, problems, and complications that make for usable adventure grist.

The table on the facing page gives twelve different kinds of malevolent drives that might motivate the creature. Bestial entities might not be capable of pursuing the more intellectual forms of evil listed there, but intelligent monsters will carry out their purpose with every ounce of wit they have. Monsters usually have some magical or unnatural power useful in fulfilling their drive, such as those discussed on page 288.

When choosing a drive, it's important to tie it back to the creature's origins and nature. Beasts formed or warped by the Outsiders might have any kind of malevolent purpose, having had it impressed upon their psyche by their embittered alien creators. Entities forged by other groups or by the whim of nature will likely have drives related to that group's purposes or the circumstances of the natural accident that created its kind.

A GM may want a monster to be somewhat ambiguous in its moral status; maybe terrible in some ways, but the kind of creature that the party could negotiate with or at least tolerate that it live. The awfulness of the drive can be toned down in such cases to a nastiness that is bearable by the players. A good deal of judgment is necessary in hitting this golden mean, however. The GM will have to keep in mind that some kinds of activities may be utterly intolerable to the party, and they might not find that out until after the adventure is underway.

A monster's drive should likely be horrible, but it's important to be careful when selecting the details of that horror. A GM should likely stay away from overtly sexual forms of monstrousness unless their group is explicitly on board with those elements in their games. Very few players are interested in participating in that kind of magical realm without clear advance sign-on, and there are plenty of other ways for a being to be awful.

Remember also that monsters rarely play well with others. Two hideous hell-beasts in the same territory either don't know the other's there, have found some *modus vivendi*, or are probably trying to kill each other.

d12	Monstrous Drives
1	**Conquest**: it needs to destroy all rivals and interlopers within its territory, which must expand with the creature's increasing might. This may be a very literal form of conquest, with the beast seeking to kill any intruder within its realm and probing outward constantly to seek new land. It may also be social or metaphorical, with the creature seeking to become the exclusive power within a social sphere, profession, guild, or skein of relationships.
2	**Construction**: it has to build something that can cause problems for humans. It might be driven to create elaborate nests, forced to foment treacherous schemes against humanity, made to build large civil structures in awkward places, manufacture a particular sort of good beyond all need, generate a toxin or miasma, xenoform terrain to fit its alien creator's home world, or some other act of troublesome creation.
3	**Consumption**: it needs to eat something that is either difficult to acquire, greatly troublesome to humanity, or magical or metaphorical in nature. It might consume loving relationships, eat youth, dine exclusively on traitors, be impossibly gluttonous, devour magical items, or need special alchemical mixes.
4	**Deception**: it must feign some harmless or innocent guise, fitting in perfectly as its adopted role. Animals may seem to be some different, more docile creature, while intelligent beings may masquerade as humans or adopt some specific social role. It must kill whatever it would replace, and destroy anything or anyone that might threaten to reveal the truth about it, showing the reality of its nature only when it feeds or enjoys the benefits of the role it has adopted.
5	**Defilement**: it must degrade and destroy those things that give hope or meaning to humanity. Corrupting religions, poisoning food crops, curdling familial love, inducing leaders to become tyrants, and withering bonds of loyalty might all be tools for such creatures. Most of them will have a particular type of good thing that their powers and nature enable them to debauch.
6	**Destruction**: it must destroy something that is useful or necessary to humans. It might blindly slaughter livestock beyond all hunting need, instinctively seek the destruction of man-made edifices, have an inherent compulsion to destroy loving relationships, eat metal tools and weapons, consume the health and luck of its prey, or otherwise take away something that humans need.
7	**Domination**: it needs to win the slavish submission of its chosen prey. Rather than killing them, they must be reduced to helpless obedience to the creature's needs and wishes. Animals may terrorize sentients until worship or tribute is offered, while intelligent beings might use social tools or threats to force compliance. Weaker creatures of its own kind might be treated with similar brutality.
8	**Parasitization**: it has to subvert and suborn humanity or something humans rely upon. This may be a physical act of parasitization on a human host, or it may be a more metaphorical leech, taking advantage of some quality of human society to feed and shelter it. Parasitized hosts may be hollowed-out skinsuits, helplessly enslaved victims, willing but foolish co-conspirators, unwitting cattle, or humans who can provide some special service or quality the creature craves.
9	**Predation**: there's something that it absolutely must hunt or kill, and pursuing them is a need at an instinctive level. This is usually something problematic for humans, such as a compulsion to hunt humans, specific types of people, livestock, particular demihumans, people who have committed a particular type of act, those who trespass on its territory, or some other type of victim.
10	**Reproduction**: it has some unique or difficult condition for reproduction that it must satisfy, such as needing large amounts of a particular substance, a properly-built nest, a difficult-to-win mate, a helpless parasitized host, the brutal conquest of its rivals, or even some magical or esoterically metaphorical condition. This condition causes problems for humanity around it.
11	**Sadism**: it was created not necessarily to kill its prey, but to torment it. Terrifying taunts, senseless cruelty, and abominably awful methods of harm are employed instinctively by this creature, and it will always prefer to leave its prey alive until every ounce of resistance has been wrung from it. It receives great delight from the suffering of others.
12	**Theft**: it has a compulsion to steal something that humans need in order to hoard or use it itself. It may compulsively steal and collect gold and other shiny objects, plunder food, carry off large amounts of some socially-necessary good, or have magical means to take away intangible qualities or social relationships. It should often be possible to recover the lost traits if the creature is subdued.

Uncanny Powers and Abilities

A basic stat line for a creature can make it a challenge in combat, but foes who can do nothing but stab, bite, claw, or shoot can become a little stale in play. More significantly, the unusual powers a creature possesses can often be the very things that make it an interesting element of a situation, allowing it to change the environment or shift the circumstances in ways that the PCs may not be equipped to handle.

Even perfectly normal humans might have "powers", in the sense that they may have specialized forms of magic, unique martial techniques, or other focused abilities that can be represented by powers. Arch-arcanists and veteran heroes might all have their own selection of special tricks to bring out, ones that the PCs may never have seen before. These abilities are usually unique to the NPCs, as they might require sacrifices or special circumstances in order to acquire them that the PCs aren't equipped to make or find. The abilities a PC gains as they develop their powers are simply one set of arts and talents in the Latter Earth, and not all NPCs will share the same rules for their own powers.

For a GM, there are two classes of powers to keep in mind when building a creature. Combat powers are those abilities that are likely to come out in a fight, the special abilities and unique martial talents that might make the creature an unusual handful during a clash. Situational powers are less combat-specific abilities that are still likely to play a role in how the creature acts or how it carries out its ambitions. The same power might have both combat and situational uses; the ability to implant overwhelming psychic urges could be handy both in a fight and when manipulating hapless NPCs in a noble's court.

When building a creature, start with its monstrous drive or the basic role it's meant to play in the world. In some cases, the creature's native abilities will be sufficient to allow it to pursue its drive; if it's a creature born to tear humans asunder, a high attack bonus and multiple attacks may be all it needs to do its job. If it's a psychic assassin programmed to fight a war that ended eons ago, however, it may need some more esoteric powers to carry out its purpose. In the same vein an ordinary village guardsman or common sorcerer might not need any special tricks, while some martial virtuoso or alien wizard might need some unique abilities to exhibit their specialness.

First, pick a power that will let them pursue their drive or demonstrate their nature. This power should be very characteristic to the creature or NPC; it should be something that really makes clear what the entity is about. This may be a situational power, if the creature's drive is more abstract or non-martial in nature, or it might be a combat power if you want to emphasize the creature's ferocity or the peril it presents.

Point Total	The Creature's Degree of Power
0	Perfectly ordinary beast or person
2	Minor hero or significant mage
3	Minor magical beast or construct
4	Species of magically-potent sentient
5	Significant magical beast or being
6	Major hero or famous mage
8	Hero of a magically-potent species
8	Regionally-significant magical beast
10	Legendary magical beast
10	Legate or famous major hero
15	Imperator or other demi-divine being

Second, pick another power that fits the creature's idiom or purpose. If the initial power you chose was a combat power, pick a situational one, or vice-versa. The goal at this point is to give the creature something remarkable it can do both in and out of combat.

Third, decide whether or not you need this creature to be a major combat foe. If you foresee a fight with this thing being a major event in an evening's play, you may wish to add one or two more combat powers to its selection, each preferably of a different kind or flavor. More than three powers are rarely useful because most fights will be resolved before a whole host of abilities can be trotted out. Even so, if you foresee the creature lasting a long time in a fight, you might add a further power or two.

The tables that follow offer some suggestions for various kinds of combat powers. Combat powers are given a point cost to reflect their general puissance; this is by no means a scientific measurement, but it can help give you a rough idea whether you're giving a weak or potent ability to a creature. For combat powers, you can use the above guidelines for determining how many total points of abilities you might add to a creature. You can ignore these guidelines whenever you have a specific need.

For situational powers, the GM should simply give the creature the ability it needs for its role, and not worry about point costs. These abilities are as strong as they need to be to let the creature fulfill its purpose. The specific details of how far they stretch should be chosen based on the creature's overall power; a minor being's mind-bending powers might extend to only one person at a time, or last only a day and a night, while some arch-abomination might be able to beguile half a city for the rest of their lives. Because these powers aren't really meant for use in combat, you don't need to worry too much about making them balanced for a fighting encounter.

Damage Infliction Powers

The creature hurls bolts of energy, wields eldritch forces, or has a remarkably unpleasant bite. As a Main Action, it can target one or more foes with some power that inflicts direct damage. In the case of venomous bites or blighting bolts of cursed energy some additional penalty might be applied, taken from the example debilitating effects later in this section. In such cases, whatever hit or save requirements that are applied to the damaging power should be applied to the debilitating power as well.

Most creatures should not have special powers that do more dice of damage than the creature has hit dice. Thus, a beast with 5 HD probably shouldn't be doing more than 5d6 damage with its flaming breath, unless you have an especially good reason to make it so.

Most damaging powers require the creature's Main Action to trigger them. If they can use it automatically in addition to its normal activities, the power is worth an additional 2 points.

A creature usually needs no more than one damage infliction power, though exceptionally powerful creatures might have one ability that works to hit a single target and another, weaker attack that affects an area. Whatever energies or forces the creature uses to hurt targets should be in line with its own nature. A martial hero might deal a crushing overhand blow, while a psychic mind-devourer might inflict lethal emotional trauma on a victim.

Points	Damage Infliction
1	A power does damage equal to a normal weapon blow
2	A power does damage of about 3d6
3	A power does damage of about 6d6
5	A power does damage of 10d6 or more
-1	The power only works in melee range
-1	The power's damage allows a save for half
x½	The power's damage allows a save for none
x2	The power's damage is done to multiple targets
x2	The power's damage is ongoing, repeating in full or part for several rounds
-1	The power's damage requires a hit roll
2	The power can be used once per round as an On Turn action

Movement Powers

The creature has a special movement ability uncommon to its nature. Any ordinary animal might have a movement rate of 40' per Move, or even 60', but this creature has a degree of speed or supernatural agility that is remarkable for something of its kind.

These movement powers aren't meant to assign costs to a creature's natural mode of movement. Birds don't need to allocate points to flying, nor do fish pay to swim.

Some traditions of lightly-armored warrior NPCs might have picked up tricks from this list, or mounted knights and heroes might have some power here so long as they remain safely on horseback. Sorcerers and arcanists might have mastered some of the more esoteric means of locomotion.

Points	Movement Powers
2	Flight ability at its movement rate, including the ability to fight on the wing
2	Passes through any solid object
1	Ignores a type of solid barrier substance
2	Extra Move action each round
1	Movement increased by 50%
1	It makes Fighting Withdrawals as On Turn actions
1	Can leap its full movement rate
1	Can swim, climb, or navigate some other usually-troublesome medium at full speed
2	It can teleport at its movement rate
2	Can teleport long distances through shadows, flame, or other characteristic substances
1	Gets a free Instant Move action when some characteristic event or circumstance obtains
1	It can split its Move action's movement around its Main Action

Debilitating Powers

The creature has some power to debuff or neutralize its enemies. While it's possible to just give a creature the power to apply a numeric penalty to people, it's often more interesting to give it the ability to cripple particular types of action or create serious trade-offs in employing common maneuvers. A serious penalty to melee strikes is more interesting than a minor penalty to hit rolls in general. The point of the debility should be to force the victim to handle the encounter in a way they may not be optimized or perfectly prepared to execute.

Debilities are usually delivered automatically as part of a successful attack by the creature or as a separate Main Action power that allows the victim a saving throw to resist or mitigate the effect. Particularly brutal debuffs might just automatically be applied to anyone near it.

Some debilities take a victim out of a fight completely. They become paralyzed, immobile, unconscious, incapable of fighting, or otherwise zeroed out of the fray. Most of these should last only 1d4 rounds unless you intend for the creature to be a potential party-killer.

Debilities normally end after the fight, but some creatures may have the power to inflict lasting curses on their enemies. Such maledictions might only be able to be lifted by the creature itself, forcing victims to either cooperate with it or suffer until they can find a mage mighty enough to undo the blight.

Points	Debilitating Power
1	Melee or ranged attacks must be rolled twice and the worst hit and damage used
1	Lose a Move action for the round
3	Suffer paralysis, unconsciousness, or other fight-ending status after being hit twice with this ability. 5 points if only one hit is needed.
2	Suffer 1d6 damage/2 HD of the creature when you do a common type of activity
2	Lose a Main action for the round
2	Become unable to cast spells or use arts for 1d4 rounds
1	Suffer double damage from the creature
+1	The power applies a -2 penalty to any saves against it.
x3	The power automatically affects all foes around it, with a save to resist
x2	The penalty lasts longer than just the scene
x½	The power is only usable 1-3 times a fight
x2	Use the power as an On Turn action once per round

Augmenting Powers

Just as some creatures can debuff their foes, others can boost their own abilities or the abilities of their allies. And likewise as with buffs, it's important that the boost be tied to some particular situation or thematic quality rather than just being a short-duration bonus the thing triggers at the start of the fight.

Augments are a chance for you to say something about the creature's nature; when it's in a particular situation or has a particular resource, it gets significantly stronger. This trigger should be something the creature can engineer or obtain, usually as part of its drive, and it should also be something that clever PCs can deprive it of or catch it away from.

Most augmenting powers last as long as the trigger is in effect. Very potent ones might last only 1d4 rounds or some other short period. Buffs applied to minions and slaves should generally be tied to their service to the creature or to their hapless submission to its will; as long as they remain slavishly bound to it, they'll get the "benefits" of its largesse.

The augmenting powers exampled here have mostly to do with combat, but there's no reason that the creature's abilities couldn't grow in less martial directions. A monster might become impossibly persuasive when it knows a guilty secret, or be able to take the face of anyone whose blood it's tasted.

Points	Augmenting Power
1	Gain an extra normal attack
1	Double an attack's normal damage or Shock
2	Gain a bonus Main Action
1	Regenerate its HD in lost hit points each round until you're slain
1	Gain a +4 bonus to AC or become immune to Shock
2	One attack per round becomes unavoidable
1	Become immune to certain general types of spells and magical effects
3	Gain an entire bonus round of action
2	Automatically succeed at one save per round
+0	The buff trigger lasts only a short while or is difficult to arrange
+1	The buff trigger either lasts a long while once achieved or is not hard to make happen
-1	The creature has to work continuously to maintain or obtain the trigger situation
x2	The buff is normally in effect, either because it's intrinsic or very easy to trigger

Intrinsic Powers

Some monsters simply have a number of special abilities by virtue of what they are. These special powers usually are applied as Main Actions, though some of them trigger automatically when they are hit or when they hit a target. Powers that harm a victim apply automatically on a hit, while those that don't require a successful hit in combat usually allow for a relevant saving throw to negate or mitigate the effect.

Spellcasting monsters that use the usual Mage rules for learning, preparing, and casting spells don't pay extra points for the ability. In order to actually use their powers in combat they're going to have to have a heavy screen of allies between them and the party's warriors, and you've probably given them fewer hit dice or a worse AC to reflect their lack of armor. Their spellcasting abilities are equal to a Mage of a level equal to their hit dice, with a maximum effective level of 10.

Some monsters use powers that simply behave like a particular spell. It's easier to say "This creature can use a power like *The Coruscating Coffin* once per scene" than to write out a lengthy description of something that works about the same way. These "spells" are bought individually based on the level of spell they emulate, and can be used once per scene. Using them more often increases their cost.

Thematic abilities related to the creature's nature may or may not merit a cost in points. Abilities the creature would need just to survive in its usual environment aren't normally worth adding a point cost. A flame spirit's immunity to fire damage, for instance, is self-evident if its natural habitat is a volcanic caldera. If the ability is a perk that they could conceivably live without, you might charge them an appropriate price.

Points	Intrinsic Power
2	Use a first or second-level spell equivalent
4	Use a third or fourth-level spell equivalent
6	Use a fifth level spell equivalent
x2	Use a given spell equivalent at will
x½	Use a given spell equivalent only when the situation is thematically appropriate or a specific trigger situation applies
+1	Use the spell equivalent as an On Turn action at most once per round
1	Use a Mage art equivalent once a scene
2	Use a Mage art equivalent at will
1	Gain the benefits of one level of a Focus
2	Be immune to a general class of weapon: piercing, slashing, crushing, or the like
3	Be immune to non-magical weapons
6	Require a specific type of weapon or form of injury to harm it
1	Be immune to an uncommon harm like poison, frost, or electricity
2	Be immune to a fairly common harm like fire or mind-affecting magic
3	Be immune to an entire large class of material, such as metal, plant matter, or directly damaging spells
1+	Inflict a particular debuff or damage on someone who hits you with a save to avoid it; add the harmful power's cost to this

Contextualizing Your Monsters

The Latter Earth is a world at the end of countless eons, a realm crushed beneath the burden of innumerable lost empires and forgotten civilizations. More conventional fantasy campaign settings often have a similar weight of age behind their present days, with glorious past kingdoms providing much of their current magic or present problems. A GM often wishes to contextualize their monsters, making them feel part of this ageless past.

The key to connecting a creature to the world is to give it context. A creature cannot borrow any sense of external meaning or significance without some kind of externality to connect to it. By itself, a dog-beast with an insatiable craving to betray and devour its owner is no more than a whimsical inversion of the loyal hound trope. If it bears the milky jade eyes of the agents of the Eternal Revolutionaries, that mere oddity now makes sense; of *course* a creature fashioned by a throne-breaking rebel uprising would behave in such a way.

The players may know nothing of the Eternal Revolutionaries. They may not ever learn anything about them, or they may not connect the similarities between the jade eyes of the dog-beasts and the perfect jade spheres they discover in the defiled resin sarcophagi of the emperor-wasp hive they're exploring. This is perfectly acceptable, so long as *you* know about the connection. If the players end up caring about it, they can investigate the matter and you can develop the connection as deeply and in as much detail as your adventuring sessions require. If they never bother, you don't need to waste your time elaborating on the link.

Whenever you create a new creature, give it some kind of link to its context. Identify the civilization or group that created it, or tie it to a particular ancient site, or weave it into the society or development of the local human communities. Connect it to something the players do or could theoretically care about. If you give your creatures some kind of coherent context within your world your players are going to notice it, even if they never probe the details of those connections.

Monsters have consequences, and those consequences should show in the world. It's all too easy to plant some hero-butchering abomination half a day's stroll from a border village and never think about how it might interact with the locals. A simple "It eats them." may be perfectly true, but how do the local humans deal with that? Do they try to placate the thing, or hunt it, or avoid its territory? Is this some inherited curse, an ancient problem that's existed for so long that the community's society has healed up around it and formed some kind of mechanism for dealing with it?

It may be that the way humans deal with a type of creature is deeply connected with some past situation. The villagers might shun the monster's territory and have a taboo against trying to hunt it because in ages past, it was actually a slave-abomination raised by a wizard in order to protect their lands from a now-long-dead enemy. The truth might have been forgotten since then, only for the PCs to discover scraps of lore that hint not only at the truth, but at the mechanisms by which control over the creature can be regained.

The adjacent tables offer some suggestions of ways to contextualize a creature, with details and connections that can be applied to tie a beast more tightly to your world. The tables are generally written to apply to particular places and situations; the locals in a different place might have a completely different reaction or relationship to the creature. Even so, a GM might take the hints from these tables and spin them out further in their campaign, creating traditional responses or socially-entrenched reactions that are common throughout a domain.

Using Existing Monsters

Because ***Worlds Without Number*** is an old-school game, it's possible to loot monster statistics from a host of other games. Virtually any system that uses the same basic chassis can be plundered for monster stat blocks or descriptions. These monsters sometimes come "attached" to particular settings, however, with a lot of strings woven into setting details that may not exist in your game. There are a few common tricks you can use to contextualize these creatures without putting yourself to much extra effort.

Remix the details. If a monster is described as a servitor-beast of a particular setting organization, import it as a slave to some similar organization in your own setting. If it hates a type of sentient not found in your world, reassign its loathing to one that does. If it serves a particular ecological function in its origin world, give it the same function in whatever habitat you place it.

Shuffle its appearance. Particularly characteristic creatures from other setting can look jarring in the Latter Earth, as it makes it too obvious that it's an import. Instead, randomly reshuffle its appearance by picking a couple of other monsters at random and mashing the components together in whatever way makes the most sense. The tables in this section can also be used to hand it some new body parts or remake existing physiology.

Make its behavior visible. Two creatures with the exact same stat block can seem completely different to the players if they have notably different behavior. Of course, this distinction is invisible unless the creature's behavior is somehow visible to the party. Think about how the creature might act out of combat, and make it particularly timid, gluttonous, curious, loud, or repulsive. Pick a quality it has and play it up to an extreme level.

If you use these techniques to "freshen up" your imports, you can borrow half the contents of the average monstrous handbook without tipping your hand. This kind of parsimony of effort is very important if you're to have the time and focus needed to run a sandbox game.

ONE-ROLL MONSTROUS CONTEXT

A quick roll of one die of each type can give your terrible beast a connection with the rest of your campaign world. Take the results lightly, and be ready to tweak and adjust things as needed to fit the rolls into the role you need the beast to play.

If you're generating horrible creatures for a particular adventure, it can be prudent to let a few initial rolls decide the general tone and theme for the whole group. If one hideous beast in the hidden Deep has rolled "A local hero has been slain by it" for the scars it's left, don't keep rolling additional horrors for the following beasts, or else the village will be a mass of ruins by the time the fifth new creature is rolled. In the same vein, if you want all the vile gribblies in a ruin to be derived from the same source, roll only once for how these creatures arose.

d6	How Much Local Contact Does It Have?
1	The locals have no idea it exists
2	The locals make wild guesses and myths of it
3	They've had a few significant encounters
4	They know it's there and a little of its wants
5	It's a regular threat they need to deal with
6	They know its nature and needs very well

d8	How Do the Locals React To Its Drive?
1	They try to placate or appease its hungers
2	They try to kill it, actively hunting it down
3	They avoid its territory out of spiritual fear
4	They accept a certain amount of loss from it
5	They build countermeasures against it
6	They try to contain it within a certain area
7	They try to use it against their enemies
8	They worship it or take it as a leader

d10	What Scars Has It Left Here?
1	Many widows and orphans of its hunters
2	A grand structure ruined by its acts
3	Land has been made worthless by its threat
4	A local hero has been slain by it
5	Local clergy have been shown as helpless
6	A local lord has lost much wealth from it
7	The poorest have suffered most from it
8	A great plan for the future was ruined by it
9	A venerated tradition was defiled by it
10	A vital good or resource was spoiled by it

d4	How Did the Monster Arise?
1	It's a relict of the malice of the Outsiders
2	It's the product of human sorcerer-kings
3	It's an accident of magic or nature
4	It's a decayed form of something once noble

d12	What Is Its Connection With the Past?
1	It's a servant of a long-dead religion
2	It's obedient to a long-gone political group
3	It's meant to target a perhaps-vanished foe
4	It needs an environment that is now rare
5	It's accepted by certain ancient defenses
6	It serves an alien or vanished aesthetic end
7	Its home was a place that is now gone
8	It seeks something that has since been lost
9	It seeks victory in a struggle that is now over
10	It's only part of something, the rest now gone
11	It serves an urge that no longer makes sense
12	It was sacred to some group that is now lost

d20	A Twist To Its Activities
1	Its activities are very useful to some group
2	It's currently hurting an unsympathetic group
3	It responds to certain ancient codes
4	It targets a group the PCs count as friends
5	It's friendly to those sharing its tie to the past
6	A byproduct of its activities is very valuable
7	It has some devotees or cowed minions
8	It hates something the PCs have or relate to
9	It was formerly benevolent or useful
10	A victim plots a desperate act of revenge
11	People think its victims somehow deserved it
12	Killing it would cause some dire consequence
13	It's being hunted by something even worse
14	It has regular cycles of activity and torpor
15	It has some defensible reason for its acts
16	It protects or spares its willing subjects
17	Someone is profiting by its depredations
18	The locals believe something very false of it
19	Its damage is insidious and slow to be seen
20	Hunters quarrel over who is to claim it

Adjusting Monster Statistics

The basic stat line for a creature is just a starting point, one meant to give a GM a general idea of where the creature stands in relation to the other entities in the world. While simply using the basic stat line is often enough for a GM, sometimes you want to fine-tune a creature to its particular place in the world. You can follow the guidelines below to tweak things accordingly.

Hit dice can usually vary by 50% greater or lesser, depending on how impressive the creature is compared to its peers. If you remove hit dice, decrease its attack bonus by an equal amount and re-calculate its saving throw. If you add hit dice, do the same, except adding the new addition to its attack bonus.

AC might shift by one or two points if the creature is very fast, unusually slow, particularly large and easy to hit, or abnormally thick-skinned. Intelligent creatures might well fashion or steal armor, giving a substantial boost to their AC. Even a peasant militiaman can be stuffed into a suit of heavy plate armor if one can be found for him.

Atk is usually equal to the creature's hit dice, or perhaps its hit dice+1 if it's got combat training. The more martially-inclined the creature is, the higher this bonus will be, but it probably won't exceed 2 or 3 points at most. You can give extra attacks to expert human warriors or dangerous beasts if you want to significantly amplify their danger. One extra attack isn't unusual, but two or even three extra strikes should be reserved for truly heroic foes or extremely dangerous monsters.

Dmg is based on the weapon an intelligent creature uses or the body weaponry possessed by a beast. For beasts, 1d4 represents small fangs and claws, 1d6 to 1d8 for larger ones, and multi-die 2d6 or more for supernaturally savage maws and huge inhuman claws. If you need a benchmark, remember that the average sturdy peasant has about 4 or 5 hit points; if the creature should expect to kill one peasant a round make sure its average damage is at least 5 points.

Powerful creatures shouldn't be doing less than 2d6 damage on a hit, or an average of 7 points. If the foe is a weapon-user and martially-focused, you can give them the equivalent of the Warrior's ***Killing Blow*** ability and add +1 to their damage and Shock totals for every 2 hit dice they have, rounded up, up to a maximum of +5. Fearsome magical beasts may have a similar bonus to their claws and fangs, so don't hesitate to give those attacks the punch they need to have.

Shock is based on the weapon for humanoid combatants. Heroic warriors may have unavoidable Shock, having powers equivalent to PC Foci that allow them to ignore AC when applying the damage. Of course, creatures or PCs who are immune to Shock via shields or Foci will still be immune to such damage. For beasts, 1/13 is the usual rating, or 2/15 for very savage animals. Higher ratings are the preserve of supernatural bestial foes, up to 5/- or so for the worst of them.

Move has 30 feet per action as the human baseline. A lot of animals will be able to move faster than that, with 40 feet being normal for them. Creatures of exceptional swiftness might get as far as 60 feet per Move action. You might give some creatures multiple movement modes, such as a winged abomination that can crawl at 20' per move or fly at 40'.

ML should be adjusted for the creature's stupidity and determination. Normal animals always have relatively low Morale because a serious injury is almost inevitably ultimately fatal to them; they'll fight only when they're confident of easy victory or forced by hunger. Humans might add 1 or 2 points if they're fanatical or desperate, while they might lose the same if they're particularly disorganized. Mindless robots or insects might have a Morale of 12, being too stupid or single-minded to avoid self-destruction.

Inst is based not only on a creature's primal instincts but also their tendency to let their passions run away with their good sense. A mighty warlord might have an Instinct score one or two points higher than usual if he has a great fondness for toying with his foes or an impulse to make grandiose declamations in the middle of a battlefield. Conversely, a coldly rational, ruthlessly disciplined fighter might have a score 1 or 2 points less.

Skill should generally range between +1 for most creatures that are good at something, up to +3 for masters of their particular trade. Skill-focused PCs will generally be better than NPCs at skill checks; this is intended, as it gets frustrating if their PC's main focus is regularly outshone by random NPCs around them.

Save rarely changes much unless you change the creature's hit dice. You might give exceptionally hardy creatures a one or two-point bonus, or give those with weak constitutions or fragile forms a similar penalty. Extremely powerful creatures might be able to automatically make the first saving throw they're called on to make during a fight.

JUDGING COMBAT CHALLENGES

It's important that the creatures and foes that inhabit a sandbox world should be logically appropriate for the setting. If encounters and enemies are scaled to the PC party, it becomes impossible to deal with the world logically; the players know that whatever they face will be something they could at least theoretically stab to death.

Yet this policy doesn't necessarily help the GM guess whether a particular encounter is likely to kill the PCs or not. A GM may want to know whether they'll need to drop warning hints or spend prep time on alternatives to combat, or they might decide that this particular encounter ought to be matched to the PCs for some reason.

It's impossible to give a simple rubric for the comparison that will hold in every situation. Monsters often have bizarre powers that can skew an encounter and PCs usually make full use of any Foci or magic they have. Even so, a GM can make a rough estimate using a simple measure.

Take the total hit dice of the opponents and multiply it by their total number of attacks. Thus, a mob of 10 Anak warriors with one hit die and one attack each would tally to 100. For the PCs, take the party's total levels and multiply it by the number of PCs, so a party of four third-level PCs would total up to 48.

If the enemy total is more than four times larger, it will probably be a rout. The PCs are going to get crushed unless they have excellent tactics, a superb position that only allows a few of the enemies to engage at once, or some magical resource that can nullify a large number of foes. Conversely, if the enemies have magical powers or special abilities of their own, it might be an even worse curb-stomping for the heroes.

If the enemy total is twice as large, the PCs are probably going to have at least one PC downed and run a good chance of a complete party wipe, assuming they engage their foes in the open with no complications.

If the enemy total is larger than the party total, the PCs might have an ally go down, but they have a decent chance of winning the fight due to their generally-superior abilities and powers.

If the enemy total is equal to or smaller than the party total, they're likely to win without anyone becoming mortally wounded.

If the enemy total is less than half the party total, it will probably be a walkover for the PCs.

These general rules don't apply to very inexperienced parties. A group of first level PCs can be taken out by almost anything if their dice are unkind, and a single errant blow can wipe out any one of them. They also don't fit so well if the enemies have unusually strong attacks, exceptionally high Armor Classes, or have powers that can directly inflict damage. In the same vein, an unusually clever or well-equipped party can sometimes pull through even the grimmest situation. These guidelines can be an initial help and hint to you, but as the GM, you will eventually have to rely on your own judgment to guess the likely outcome of a given fray.

Reaction Rolls and Parleying

Worlds Without Number is not a game that encourages constant combat encounters. Heroes are fragile, foes are dangerous, and almost every fight runs some risk of downing at least one PC. GMs or players who arrange their games as a curated sequence of battles are going to rapidly run out of luck.

GMs need to constantly recall the fact that not every hostile encounter needs to end in a massacre. The denizens of this world are just as aware of their own mortality as the PCs are, and they will not pick chance fights that they do not expect to win decisively. Even intrinsically hostile creatures such as Blighted marauders or bloodthirsty monsters will take a moment to size up a situation before they decide whether or not to attack.

Unless the situation is so patently destined for bloodshed that all negotiation is futile, a GM should always make a ***reaction roll*** whenever the PCs encounter another creature or group, whether friendly or hostile. This roll will indicate the general mood of the encounter, and whether the subjects are likely to be amenable to negotiations.

To make a reaction roll, roll 2d6 and compare it to the adjacent table. If a PC is in a position to greet the targets, add their Charisma modifier to the roll.

The higher the reaction roll, the friendlier and more helpful the NPCs will be. This doesn't mean that Anak raiders will invite the PCs to drink with them, but it does mean that otherwise violent groups might decide to demand a bribe instead, or back off rather than risk losing lives to the heroes. Conversely, a low roll means that the group is more hostile and unhelpful than they might be expected to be, given the situation.

Once a roll is made, the GM should clearly clue the PCs into its general results. If the bandits are feeling sociable, the GM needs to let the players know that they're looking relaxed and leaning on their spears. If the wild beast is getting ready to attack, it should be described as crouching and snarling as it begins to creep forward. This information needs to be given *before* the PCs choose their initial actions, or else a lot of potential parleys are going to be erased by the immediate and judicious drawing of swords.

A reaction roll applies to non-martial encounters as well. Determining the initial mood of a government clerk, the temper of a merchant, or the attitude of a noble patron can all be done by a reaction roll. This attitude will likely color the difficulty and nature of any negotiations or social skill checks the PCs might try to conduct with the target.

Reaction rolls are only the start of an encounter, not the end. Clever words, persuasive arguments, or prudent gifts can all shift the attitude of an NPC, as can insults, threats, and looking excessively tender and delicious. Provided the NPCs aren't the sort to simply attack, the PCs always have a chance to salvage a meeting.

2d6	NPC Reaction
2-	As aggressively hostile as the situation allows
3–5	More unfriendly and hostile than they'd be expected to be in the given situation
6–8	As predictably hostile or friendly as they'd usually be in this situation
9–11	More friendly and benign than you'd expect them to be, given the circumstances
12+	As friendly and helpful as their nature and the situation permits them to be

Peaceful Encounter Reactions

Suppose a GM's just rolled a 12 for the PCs' roadside encounter with a band of zealous blood cultists. The GM knows that the cultists are vicious but have no pressing reason to immediately attack the PCs, so what does "friendly" mean in such a situation? If you find yourself having to figure out plausible reactions for otherwise-hostile groups, here are some suggestions.

They demand a bribe. They'll take money, gear, food, booze, praise to their dark god, or some other currency in exchange for leaving the PCs alone. The amount they choose will be calibrated to something they think the party can afford and would rather pay than fight to retain. Haggling is likely a possibility, as well as a two-sided deal, so long as it's in their favor.

They back off. If they aren't defending their lair or carrying out some critical task, they may just decide to back away and keep their distance as the groups pass by. They may bring word of the adventurers to their comrades, but a fight under the present terms might look like a bad deal to them.

They ask for favors. Maybe they have an enemy they want killed, or a task they need done. They may trade offers of ignoring the PCs while they remain in the area in exchange for the help, or offer an outright bribe to the PCs to get them to cooperate. Even the most hostile raider group might be willing to let a few targets go in exchange for some profitable work being done.

They offer tribute. They've looked at the PCs and decided that their own lives are in danger. They'll offer wealth, information, services, or other inducements to get the PCs to leave them alone. This reaction grows more possible if the PCs have been carving a bloody swath through their surroundings.

They willingly socialize. Maybe the bandits have been out here so long that they're lonely for civilized conversation, and the PCs look too dangerous to engage. The Anak raiders might've mistaken them for allied marauders and invite them to share their camp. The vile necromancer might consider herself a perfectly respectable person who loves good dinner conversation. However it's sliced, the NPC could be willing just to have a nice chat.

Morale Checks and Prudent Retreats

Sometimes, however, combat is inevitable. The raiders swoop down on the heroes, the savage beast pounces, or the vile necromancer runs out of small talk. Even after blades are drawn, however, the hostile NPCs might come to think better of their choices when they fail a ***Morale check***.

A Morale check is made by rolling 2d6 and comparing it to the creature's Morale score. If the roll is greater than the score, the creature loses heart and will seek to flee or stop the battle. PCs never make Morale checks and will fight on until they decide to flee.

A Morale check is usually made under certain circumstances, though the GM can add to these whenever they think the situation calls for one. More than one Morale check may be needed in a fight if more than one condition occurs.

- When a non-combatant civilian is first faced with the prospect of serious physical harm.
- When the first member of a group is killed or rendered incapacitated.
- When the group starts to visibly lose the fight or see their odds of victory considerably shrink.
- When the group faces some terrifying work of magic, a horrendous slaughter, or a vastly superior foe.

The consequences of a failed Morale check will vary based on the situation and the creatures being tested. Non-combatants and undisciplined fighters will generally flee madly, dropping shields and abandoning burdens as they try to escape their doom.

Trained and experienced warriors will usually make a fighting withdrawal, trying to pull away from their enemies and escape back to safety with as many of their comrades as they can. Of course, in the face of truly devastating situations they may flee just as readily as their green compatriots.

If flight seems impossible or prohibitively dangerous, they might throw down their weapons and beg for mercy, if they think they have any chance of receiving it from their assailants. If that seems hopeless, they might just collapse in terrified despair as they pray to their gods, or fight with a renewed frenzy in a desperate attempt to cut their way out of the trap. Some may offer bribes or favors to win their lives.

In all cases, once a side has failed its Morale check, it's not going to be in a condition to fight those foes until it's had some time to recover its courage. They're not likely to engage the same enemies again until the situation has shifted markedly in their favor, either through additional reinforcements, a better tactical situation, or renewed terrorization by their iron-fisted leadership.

The Importance of Morale

It's very important that GMs keep Morale checks in mind and use them regularly during combat. Only truly abnormal creatures such as mindless undead, unthinking vermin, or command-bound automatons will fight relentlessly onward regardless of the situation. If every Anak warrior is a Spartan at Thermopylae, the PCs are going to lose a lot of comrades cleaning up fights that were clearly won five rounds ago.

Aside from that, the warriors of the Latter Earth are not fools, and they will not linger to fight battles that cannot be won and are not worth their lives. Even if they never fail a Morale check, they will not stay to die to the last man if there's no pressing reason for them to do so. Once they see that victory is a vain hope, they'll try to withdraw or to cut some kind of deal with their enemies.

Of course, not all beaten sides respond rationally. The terror of battle, the confusion of melee, and a misunderstanding of the situation might leave some few warriors battling on even when all is lost, simply because they haven't realized that all their friends are dead yet. Green troops are notorious for sometimes achieving military goals that veterans never could, because veterans would recognize certain failure much earlier. The same can sometimes apply to frenetic barbarians, savage mobs, or single-minded marauders.

And in some cases, the combatants really do have a cause that's worth their lives. Warriors defending their homes, mates, or children will fight until broken Morale sends them fleeing or some better way of saving their kin comes to light. A band of ill-trained peasants might rationally flee at the first few dead when fighting as conscripts, but with the village at their backs and their families cowering within it, they'll keep fighting until they win, they die, or their blind terror overwhelms them.

Fleeing and Escape

Whether from a failed Morale check or the PCs deciding on a prudent retreat, sometimes a side decamps the field.

If their foes are determined, the escapee with the best Dex/Exert skill or applicable NPC Skill bonus makes an opposed check against the pursuing group. They get a +1 on the roll if the escapees are fewer in number than the pursuers, and possibly another bonus if their escape plan is good. The group with the slowest member takes a -2 penalty.

On a success, the escapees eventually outpace or lose their pursuers. On a failure, they're caught somewhere along their escape route. A successful escape usually takes up one turn and leaves the escapees somewhere safe.

GMs should be charitable about allowing PCs to run away. Most pursuers have little reason to be particularly relentless, and a party should be taught that running away is a viable option and not an excuse to die tired.

Instinct Checks

Very few creatures are capable of engaging in desperate, life-or-death struggles without losing some amount of their rationality. Terror, fury, excruciating pain, and situational blindness can sometimes make a combatant do something genuinely stupid, even if they would never have made such a mistake in calmer circumstances. In the same way, wild beasts and non-sentient monsters may be driven by instinct and habit rather than logical prudence and so behave in ways that are not always tactically sound.

The ***Instinct check*** is the game's way of helping a GM take this situational chaos into account. Whenever an Instinct check is triggered, the GM rolls a 1d10. If the number rolled is equal or less than a combatant's Instinct score, measured from 1 to 10, they do something impulsive, short-sighted, instinctual, or otherwise less-than-tactically-sound. Instinct checks are rolled separately for individual combatants, though the GM can simply decide that an appropriate percentage of large groups automatically fail the check. If the creatures have an Instinct of 3, for example, the GM might just decide that 30% of them fail the check rather than dicing for every one.

PCs never make Instinct checks. Even in the grip of terror or traumatic injury they remain in control of their own choices. Heroically well-trained or tactically-expert enemies with an Instinct score of zero might likewise be immune to Instinct checks. Even martial paragons might be susceptible to Instinct, however, if they're so proud, blase, or contemptuous of their foes that they fail to fight them with their utmost cunning.

When an Instinct check is failed, a creature will do something thoughtless or sub-optimal that is in line with their natural instincts. The adjacent tables offer example suggestions for various types of creatures, but a GM can simply decide the most reasonable reaction based on the situation and the combatants. A GM should use these instances as opportunities to show off the nature of an enemy or the instincts of a bestial foe, or to set up some battlefield situation that isn't necessarily tactically-optimal for the enemy but is still troublesome for the heroes. Actions taken as a result of a failed Instinct check will usually only occupy one round worth of the creature's efforts.

Actions forced by an Instinct check failure won't necessarily be entirely useless, but they won't be the wisest or most effective use of the creature's abilities. Blindly attacking sub-optimal targets, recklessly using unarmed attacks rather than the weapon in hand, or aiming spells or shots at targets of lesser importance might all be actions taken as a result of a failed Instinct check.

Instinct checks are always optional and at the discretion of the GM. Some GMs might choose not to use them at all, judging actions strictly on what seems reasonable to them. In all cases it's the GM's final call as to whether or not to roll one.

When to Make an Instinct Check

As a general guide, a GM might make an Instinct check for a creature whenever any of the situations below are applicable, or any time the GM thinks the creature might be confused or indecisive.

- The second round of combat for mobs and undisciplined fighters. The creature could think clearly before starting the fray, but the fear and exhilaration of mortal combat might confuse it.
- The creature has just had to make a Morale check for any reason. Terror might cloud its thoughts.
- The enemy just did something confusing or disorienting. When the situation is strange, the creature might fall back on instinct.
- The enemy did something to enrage or directly intimidate it. Fury or terror might force bad decisions.
- The creature is presented with something it desires, such as dropped food, hurled money, or other inducements. It might go after the bait instead of the battle if it seems safe to do so.

Other situations might force Instinct checks as well at the GM's discretion. Indeed, some situations might be so compelling as to cause automatic check failure. Depending on the situation, the GM might decide a particular response is the only reasonable one, and not bother to randomly pick it from a table.

Assigning Instinct Scores

For non-sentient beasts, a creature's Instinct score should usually be about 5. Whenever such monsters are confused or frightened, they're very likely to fall back on their natural instincts. Those instincts tend to be violent in predators, however, and a failed Instinct check might just mean it bites the nearest target.

For non-combatant sentients and those unfamiliar with battle, Instinct should be 5 to 7. They are extremely likely to become confused and useless in a fight.

Ordinary intelligent veterans should have an Instinct of 3 or 4. They might get caught up in the confusion of battle and make some poor calls, but they're unlikely to lose their head entirely.

Hardened, battle-tested fighters might have an Instinct of only 1 or 2, being very unlikely to forget themselves in the chaos of battle.

The coldest, calmest killers would have an Instinct of 1, and may not have to make Instinct checks at all outside of the most disorienting situations. They'll fight according to the plan and won't lose track of the battle.

EXAMPLE INSTINCTIVE ACTIONS

The tables here offer some suggestions for different types of actions that different kinds of foes could take. While the actions may be sub-optimal, assume that every creature will carry them out as intelligently as they are able to. A GM should also feel perfectly free to simply decide on a creature's action, picking whatever course seems most likely for something of its motives and mentality.

d6	Non-Combatant Humans
1	Stand immobile in confusion and fear
2	Punch or kick a foe instead of using a weapon
3	Cringe, taking the **Total Defense** action
4	Panic and make a Morale check
5	Shout threats or pleas, but don't attack
6	Reposition to get close to the nearest ally

d6	Combat-Trained Humans
1	Freeze in confusion, doing nothing this round
2	Reposition to get a better place to fight from
3	Duck, taking the **Total Defense** action
4	Spend a round looking around the battlefield
5	Blindly attack the nearest enemy
6	Attack an object, barrier, or downed foe

d6	Sorcerers or Other Spellcasters
1	Freeze a round trying to pick which spell to use
2	Get further away from the nearest enemy
3	Use magic, but misjudge the aiming somehow
4	Try to hide behind something or get cover
5	Attack with punches or physical weapons
6	Ignore everyone but the nearest threat to them

d6	Ordinary Predatory Beasts
1	Snarl and growl, but don't attack anyone
2	Pull back and get away from nearby threats
3	Attack the last enemy to have hurt it
4	Attack the last enemy it managed to hurt
5	Take a bite out of a downed enemy
6	Panic and make a Morale check

d6	Viciously Violent Beasts
1	Roar savagely at the foe, but don't attack
2	Attack the last foe it hit in blind fury
3	Charge the last enemy to get its attention
4	Gnaw on a downed enemy
5	Charge the biggest cluster of targets
6	Attack the largest enemy on the field

d6	Trained Servitor Beasts
1	Seek its trainer or handler on the field
2	Repeat the last action it took, sensible or not
3	Attack the enemy closest to its handler
4	Whine in confusion and disorientation
5	Perform an inappropriate but trained action
6	Panic, attacking the nearest friend or foe

d6	Automatons
1	Do its intended purpose, even if inappropriate
2	Spend the round analyzing the situation
3	Repeat the last thing it did with blind intent
4	Attack the last target, even if it's now downed
5	Utter a warning or imperative to the foes
6	Select a new target for some reason

d6	Insects and Semi-Mindless Beasts
1	Move to help an ally encircle a target
2	Retreat from a foe for a round
3	Skitter and crawl randomly
4	Chew on the nearest organic substance
5	Charge nearest prey creature
6	Attack the smallest prey there

d6	Beings of Arrogant Might
1	Sneer at the pitiful weaklings that oppose it
2	Boast of its inevitable victory
3	Gratuitous use of a power in an unhelpful way
4	Attack the last enemy to offend it somehow
5	Urge on servitors, or demand surrender
6	Taunt the foe as it takes a **Total Defense**

d6	Hateful and Sadistic Sentients
1	Spend a round looking for a good victim
2	Attack to hurt or humiliate, doing half damage
3	Attack the weakest-looking foe present
4	Assault the enemy that most offends it
5	Slaughter a downed foe or tear a corpse
6	Spend a round making threats and vows

d6	Undead Creatures
1	Moan at the torment of their condition
2	Savagely attack the most vital, lively enemy
3	Blindly assault a downed foe or corpse
4	Seek to terrify a foe rather than directly attack
5	Target the foe with the weakest life force
6	Do nothing, instinctively craving an end

Creatures of the Latter Earth

The creatures listed here are merely a small selection of the fauna of the Latter Earth, provided largely as examples for GMs who need worked content for their adventures. These beings may or may not exist in any particular region, and you should feel free to clip or adjust them to suit your own needs.

Whatever creatures you do elect to use, make sure that they're worth the time and effort you take to include them. It can be worthwhile to sprinkle in some odd creatures for flavor and verisimilitude, like the common beasts described in the "Animals" section below, but most creatures ought to serve a very specific purpose for your adventures or setting-building. Piling up tables of common fauna for a region can add a pleasant note of verisimilitude to your game, but the work involved is often far more than the payoff in player involvement. Reserve that kind of work for times when you've already handled all of the crucial prep for the next session.

When in need of some quick bestial foe, don't hesitate to reach for the example creature stat lines on page 283 and just pick something that serves your needs. The difference between a slavering wasp-tiger that does 1d8 damage on a hit and one that does 1d10 is unlikely to be noticed by a party, and a quick stat block that roughly suits your needs is much to be preferred over a perfect one that takes you five minutes to calculate. Very few players will pay nearly as much attention to exact monster statistics as the GM will.

Aside from the monsters and entities unique to the Latter Earth, this bestiary also includes example origin Foci for demihumans common to other fantasy worlds. Traditional orcs, elves, dwarves, and other such denizens can be found on page 311 for GMs who want to use ***Worlds Without Number*** for some more orthodox fantasy setting, or one who needs some ready-made origin Foci to reskin for species of their own creation.

Animals

The Latter Earth contains most of the same animals known to modern-day Terra. Records suggest that there were extensive periods when the entire zoosphere was less familiar, including periods of reptilian, insectile, and fungal dominance, but at some point the planet was "reset" to more contemporary shapes. Survivors from these prior eras are known to persist in some areas.

For the sake of simplicity you can treat most of these latter-day animals as the equivalent of their modern breeds in behavior and appearance. Almost all of them have been altered in some way over the course of ages, but such small points are best used as flavoring and accents to the setting rather than significant differences that players will need to keep in mind. The checkerboard-coated horses of Ka-Adun and the Dry Sheep that never drink water are novel in their way, but they still act much as horses and sheep do.

When such a normal animal's combat statistics matter, you can use the table on page 283 and assign it a stat line that matches its function. Aside from such relatively normal creatures, however, there are a more than a few "mundane" animals in the Gyre that bear special mention. Below are a few of likely interest to adventurers.

Ashcrawler: One of the hideous fungal life forms that sometimes emerge from the Ashblight, an ashcrawler resembles a centipede that stands half as tall as a man and is at least ten feet long. The "chitin" of the crawler is nothing but a hardened fungal shell around the soft, damp interior of the organism. Those bitten by an ashcrawler must make a Physical save or be infected by the fungus. Without magical healing, they'll become wholly enslaved by the parasitical fungus within a week, becoming a "crawler slave" and using their own intellect and abilities to gather new prey for the creature. The stat line given for them below reflects an average unlucky peasant, but stronger slaves are possible. Crawler slaves can hide most of the infection under concealing clothing, and can only be saved by powerful healing magic at the GM's discretion.

Anak Courser: Looking much like a horse-sized hairless lion with mottled hide, a courser is a vicious pack hunter often "domesticated" as a mount for elite Anak warriors. While they can survive on plant matter, coursers much prefer meat. Even when ridden, a courser can fight independently and can leap up to 30' as a Main Action, giving the crusaders of Sarul their famous tactic of leaping over an enemy force's front lines to savage the spear wall from the rear.

Betrayer Bird: Resembling a vulture with a six-foot wingspan and razor-sharp claws, betrayer birds are encountered in small flocks of 1d6+1 birds. They seek out small or wounded parties in their territory and then try to lead predators and enemies to them in order to feast on the eventual leavings. They seem to have a positively human ability to identify suitable predators, though they fight with no more than bestial intelligence if directly attacked.

Bull Pig: As large as a small cow, the "bull pig" is a thick-skinned, long-tusked breed of porker bred for survival in the dangerous ranges of the Latter Earth. When kept by brave and capable swineherds it can be relatively safely domesticated, but wild bull pigs are as savage and ill-tempered as any boar. Some nations and exceptionally brave tribals even train them for use as battle mounts, though their habit of blind charging is difficult to control.

Dunecrawlers: Vile dog-sized scorpion-beetle hybrids found in deserts and sandy *arratus*, dunecrawlers spend most of their life cycle in nests of 3d6 insects, subsisting on solar energy and prey they can hunt individually or in groups of 1d6. Every so often, however, all the dunecrawlers in an area will form a massive swarm that sweeps over all in its path until it collapses in a welter of mating cannibalism, the survivors scattering to form their own nests.

Fleshbeast: These blind, sluglike, pig-sized crawlers are soft and harmless, snuffling at the vegetation with soft mouths that occasionally speak random phrases of the local language. They grow from spores spread during their roaming, and while their flesh is nutritious, the gelatinous consistency and unpleasantly human-like habits of speech that fleshbeasts have discourage some from eating their meat.

Horse Lizard: A feathered raptor named for its size, horse lizards hunt in packs of 1d4+1 creatures. They are unusually intelligent for animals and surprisingly disciplined in their hunts. Most are found in habitats of dense vegetation, though some have acclimated to *arratu* life.

Judas Goat: A goat the size of a cow and possessed of an elaborate fan of very sharp horns, the Judas goat is unusual in that its preferred browse is the xeno-formed plant life of an *arratu*. Over the course of decades a flock of Judas goats can gradually push back a mild *arratu's* borders. Their flesh is toxic to predators and they are highly aggressive toward anything perceived as a threat to the flock. Only their hair is of any use to humans, but unusually skilled and brave goatherds can train them as watch-beasts or even as mounts.

Mountain Crab: Thought to be a Polop war-beast that went native, the mountain crab is named for its gigantic size, the smallest being eight feet tall and twice that width when standing. It has a rubbery hide rather than a chitin shell, and its pincers and legs are of a glassy, razor-sharp mineral. Most live in shallow water, with a few venturing onto land when nearby hunting is good.

Razorhorn: A type of ancient cattle bred for the sport of long-dead nobility, a razorhorn is an aurochs-sized brute with steel horns that naturally hone to a superbly keen edge. Razorhorns breed slowly and are solitary in nature, but their tough hide and savage disposition make them dangerous even alone. Razorhorn flesh is remarkably delicious, and some lords require a tribute of it from villages located near razorhorn ranges.

Salt Devils: Found wherever brackish or befouled water is found, a salt devil resembles a pony-sized mantis shrimp with a rainbow shell. These voracious predators are almost transparent when submerged in water, but pounce to cleave prey with the huge blades of their two forelimbs.

Wailer Crane: These man-tall cranes were imbued with song by some ancient civilization, one with a completely incomprehensible musical taste. The ululating wails of these birds are thunderously loud and penetrating. When used as a Main Action attack, creatures within ten feet of the bird must make a Physical save or suffer 1d4 sonic damage. The cranes tend to form choirs of 2d4 birds that will sing for days on end and attack any creature that approaches too closely. They have a great fondness for bright trinkets, and wear them like jewelry. The crane with the most jewelry always leads the choir.

Animals	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Ashcrawler	6	13	+8 x2	1d6	-	50′	10	4	+1	12+
Ashcrawler Slave	1	13a	+2	Wpn	Wpn	30′	12	5	+1	15+
Anak Courser	4	15	+5 x2	1d8	-	60′	9	6	+1	13+
Betrayer Bird	1	13	+2	1d6	-	40′ fly	8	5	+1	15+
Bull Pig	2	13	+3	1d8	-	40′	9	6	+1	14+
Dunecrawler	1	13	+1	1d4	-	30′	9	6	+1	15+
Fleshbeast	1	10	-	-	-	30′	2	5	+0	15+
Horse Lizard	3	13	+5	1d10	-	50′	8	3	+2	14+
Judas Goat	2	12	+3	1d6	-	40′	9	5	+1	14+
Mountain Crab	8	18	+10 x2	2d6+4	4/-	40′	9	6	+1	11+
Razorhorn	4	13	+6 x2	2d6	3/15	40′	10	4	+1	13+
Salt Devil	4	15	+6 x2	1d10	4/-	40′	10	5	+2	13+
Wailer Crane	1	12	+2	1d6	-	40′ fly	8	6	+1	15+

Automatons and Eidolons

Robots, arcane automatons, occult golems, and artificial intelligences are not unknown in the Latter Earth. While most would never expect to encounter such a being in their ordinary life, they have heard tales of the false men fashioned by sorcerers in former days, and few would draw any appreciable distinction between a shape animated by sorcery and one given life by arcane science… assuming there was ever any difference between the two.

Automaton Qualities

Automatons do not need to eat, drink, or breathe, and are naturally immune to diseases, poisons, and natural climatic extremes of temperature. Most require a six-hour recharge period daily that's largely the equivalent of sleep. Surviving automatons that don't draw their power from a specific site are fueled by Legacy fluxes and don't require power cells or other special fuel.

An automaton that is "killed" is broken beyond conventional repair, while a "mortally wounded" one can still be stabilized before its internal processes spin down, if the healer knows how to do so and the automaton was crafted to be repaired in such a way. An hour's demonstration and training are enough for a sentient automaton to show a person how to handle emergency damage and use healing powers and abilities on its self-repair functions effectively. Those with the Healer class and other specialist physicians are equipped with this knowledge as part of their usual training.

Some automatons are equipped with special sensory units capable of seeing in the dark, detecting motion, observing magical energy, or other novel traits. A given automaton might have a number of attachments and improvements, depending on its intended function.

Origin Focus: Automaton

You are a self-willed automaton, gaining all the usual benefits and limitations of that state. You probably have a humanoid form; at your option, you can be human-like enough that only a close inspection reveals your nature. While you are capable of eating and drinking, it is not necessary for you.

As with other origin Foci, it's up to the GM to decide whether or not this option fits well with their campaign, and it may be disallowed at their discretion.

Level 1: You have an automaton's traits and qualities. You gain System Strain as normal for a living creature when healing or similar effects are applied to you. The long ages or questionable self-repair functions have hindered your functionality; pick one attribute and decrease its modifier by -1, to a minimum of -2.

The Black Brass Legion

Legends are unclear as to how many automatons of the Brass Legion first landed with the Reaping King, but his present forces are thought to amount to perhaps ten thousand of these tireless servants. His workshops and artificers are able to maintain this number, but they do not seem able to grow it, or at least they do not try.

The Black Brass Legion's automatons are largely humanoid in shape, appearing as harvesters clad in stylized clothing of black bronze. Their hands can manipulate human tools and they act with ordinary levels of human intelligence in pursuit of their purposes, but they require a Reeve or a human handler to direct them.

Scythemen are the line troops of the Legion, each one equipped with a large bronze scythe or iron crossbow. Cataphracts are centauroid in their outlines, with fittings for cart-pulling and other logistical hauling. They also serve as heavy shock cavalry.

Legion Hulks stand twelve feet tall, with spade-like hands and plowshare fingers fit to tear down walls, or build them up again if their handlers so instruct. The rare Reeve is a legionary with sentient self-awareness, capable of commanding its lessers and interpreting orders from its human handlers.

The human controllers of the Legion direct them by song, specific tunes and command lyrics used to give orders to the automatons. There is usually one handler for every ten automatons, all of them reporting to the unit's overall commander and all of them ritually keyed to their unit's legionaries. Without the directing songs, the legion will carry out its last orders until they appear to have been completed, after which it will return home.

The black brass shells of the legionaries are tremendously tough, and are impervious to non-magical weapons or minor environmental hazards.

Brass Legion	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Scytheman	3	18*	+5	1d10+2	5/15	30′	12	4	+1	14+
Cataphract	6	18*	+6 x2	1d10+3	5/15	60′	12	3	+1	12+
Hulk	10	16*	+10 x2	2d8+5	8/-	20′	12	4	+1	10+
Reeve	10	20*	+10 x2	1d12+5	8/-	30′	10	2	+2	9+

* All Brass Legion automatons are immune to damage from non-magical weapons or minor environmental hazards

Eidolons

Artificial minds have been created in one way or another for countless ages, the first dating back to the earliest years of the lost Terran Mandate. Every educated person in the Gyre knows that the intellect is not shackled to the flesh and that a mind can be forged out of sorcery, steel, and strange ancient components. These artificial intelligences are called "eidolons" by the learned.

Eidolons haunt specific sites, usually acting as the *genius loci* of the place and controlling whatever parts of it are still answering its commands. It sees through the ancient scrying devices of the site, speaks through whatever vocalization objects still function, and can often act through the remaining functional relic automatons.

Most eidolons were either created from an imprint of some ancient candidate's identity or fabricated whole with sorcery and arcane science. A few exist with no particular purpose, or have lost their original compulsions, but most are still tightly bound by whatever original need motivated their creation. An eidolon can bend, interpret, and prioritize its purposes but it cannot deny them for long or act directly against them.

Many eidolons have long since lost the capability to carry out their purposes, or recognize that their original goal is now hopelessly impossible. Obedience to this cause is a painful addiction to them, a gnawing suffering that can only be tamped down when they can do something that fulfills their original coding. Even if the act is ultimately futile, the need to escape the pain drives them to carry it out in any way they can. Obedience buys a little respite until the imperative goads them on again.

Eidolons can give considerable help to allied adventurers. They often know of ancient secrets and hidden sites of wealth and arcane power that have been forgotten by the modern day. Their relic automaton servitors can labor for their allies, and many eidolons are capable of fabricating functional devices that would be impossible for an ordinary crafter to devise. The sane intelligences will often offer such favors and help in exchange for an opportunity to further its goals.

Unfortunately, many eidolons are either mad or wholly alien. The constant psychic torment of their inability to carry out their purposes leaves many of them hopelessly deranged, lashing out in an attempt to provoke something into euthanizing them without directly defying its self-destruction prohibitions. Other eidolons were never templated on human minds at all, being the product of Outsiders or of transhumans too alien to be comprehended by modern humanity. These eidolons have their purposes as well, but few of them are anything a human would appreciate.

Relic Automatons

These forgotten servitors of iron, glass, and stranger substances are commonly found in ancient Deeps, lost sorcerer-king citadels, or other places once ruled by great powers. Most of them have decayed into uselessness, but a few are often still functional in such sites.

Relic automatons come in many different sizes and shapes, most related to their intended function. Humanoid models are often plainly inhuman in their appearance, sometimes due to the intentions of the builders, and other times because the "human" of their age looked nothing like those of the present day. Squat cylinders, spider-like crawlers, apish heavy haulers, and other such configurations are common for labor relics.

Security automatons are usually armed with assorted lethal weapons and will react to intruders with murderous violence. The massive ancient warbots utilized by both Outsiders and sorcerer-kings are studded over with devices of arcane and technical ruin, and it is a mercy that most have been destroyed over the ages.

Most relics are not sentient or self-aware, though some mimic it well. Each has its directive and purpose, and they are usually capable of carrying out these orders with almost human intelligence, though they are unable to generalize them easily. Few communicate in any comprehensible way, though Outsider relics understand Abased and devices of the sorcerer-kings understand the various ancient languages spoken in those days.

Relic automatons can sometimes be negotiated with if a form of communication is established. Those negotiations usually revolve around helping it carry out its purpose in exchange for some favor or concession.

Relics are rarely able to go far from their site of operation, either due to limits placed upon them at their creation or their reliance on certain energies and radiations intrinsic to such places. Skilled sorcerers or Thurian artificers can sometimes relocate relic automatons to their own lairs, though the effort required is usually considerably more than would be spent on human servants.

Automatons	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Servitor	2	13	+2	1d6	2/13	30′	12	5	+1	14+
Lesser Guardian	4	15	+5	1d10+2	2/15	30′	12	4	+1	13+
Guardian Commander	8	18	+9 x2	1d10+4	6/18	40′	12	3	+2	11+
Ancient Warbot	14	20	+15 x3	2d6+5	10/-	60′ fly	12	2	+2	8+

Blighted

Some kinds of atrocities are possible only for those with access to the vilest of tools. Those wretched demihumans known collectively as "the Blighted" are the descendants of men and women horribly warped by wielders of ancient sorcery and genetic science, people forged into tools for purposes that had no place for mercy.

There is no single source for the Blighted. Some are slave races forged by the Outsiders out of human chattel, their unlucky subjects plucked from the Deeps and molded into shapes necessary to the aliens. Others are cursed lineages dating back to the ages of the sorcerer-kings, bloodlines that incurred the anger of these living gods and whose descendants now bear the weight of their wrath. Some are unsuccessful transhuman experiments, or once-stable magical species that decayed when the Legacy was twisted, or simple products of magical accidents or malevolent sorcerous radiations.

Whatever their origins, every intentionally-created Blighted kind is marked by the purpose they were intended to fulfill. Many were warrior races, crafted to be vicious, aggressive, and intrinsically hateful toward anyone but their long-dead masters. Others were brute laborers, their minds dulled and their power to rebel taken from them. A few of the most wretched were fashioned to be playthings and toys, either for hedonistic disports or more hideous appetites still.

To baseline humanity, the horror of the Blight lies in the way that it corrupts and limits the normal human range of emotion and cognition. An Anak warrior may look somewhat like a normal human, but he is filled with an instinctive aggressiveness and cruelty found only in a tiny fraction of ordinary humanity. An Anak of truly heroic mental discipline may be able to overcome these innate urges, but living an ordinarily peaceful life for such a Blighted is as difficult as it would be for a normal human to live a life of constant ascetic celibacy. Such a being must fight their urges on a constant hour-by-hour basis to avoid extremes of violence and brutality.

Because of their curse, the Blighted have a very difficult time in normal human society. The violent and dangerous species among them usually exist as raiders and marauders, plundering each other when they can find no softer prey and building a bone-deep hatred in all who deal with them. For an ordinary human of the Latter Earth, there is no question that the only solution for these Blighted is a genocidal extermination of all their kind, before they do the same to humanity.

Those Blighted fashioned as laborers or odalisques have scarcely better a place in those lands where they are found. Often lacking the mental ability to live without oversight, they usually are left to become slaves and movable property to their keepers. In the more ethical lands, they may have meaningful protection from obvious abuse, but in many other domains their very existence is something to be granted only on sufferance.

It is the special hell of the Blighted that not all of the members of a lineage may be afflicted by the curse to the same extent. Because the medium of the Blight often works through conventional genetic influence or psychothaumaturgic flux, individual members might randomly escape the worst effects of it. While extremely rare, it's not impossible for an Anak to be born without the craving for bloodshed that his brethren know, or for a Blighted brute laborer to be born with baseline human levels of intellect.

These exceptions, of course, can expect no special treatment from those around them. The Anak must kill as his brothers kill or be slaughtered as a weakling, and the laborer will be treated as a novelty to be gawped at rather than as a being capable of the same independent living as his keeper. It's not unknown for these sports to become the nucleus of a Blighted uprising or bloody crusade as they organize other gifted Blighted into a cabal able to direct their less capable brethren.

The curse of the Blight is commonly passed on through the blood, and is often a dominant trait expressed in any offspring of a Blighted partner. Fertility tends to be high for those Blighted lineages designed as biological weapons or warrior races, while ornamental Blighted and those cursed with penal debilities are much less fecund, and some require special circumstances or stimuli to reproduce.

Cross-breeding between Blighted and baseline humans is usually possible, if the physiologies involved are compatible. If the Blight involved is not a dominant trait, it can lie dormant in the bloodline for generations, perhaps expressed in smaller or more subtle ways. Most such heirs conceal it at all cost, for to be identified as a Blighted being is an almost unavoidable sentence of second-class citizenship or worse in most lands.

Blighted in Your Campaign

Aggressive Blighted tend to be unambiguous villains and enemies in most campaigns, sentients that are genuinely incapable of living peacefully with humanity. They have been cursed from their creation with a need to kill and ruin, and while they may be blameless of the ancient sorcery that twisted them, humanity simply cannot live with them under the same sky.

Penal Blighted and servitor-species often appear as victims of cruelty and oppression, suffering due to the weaknesses and flaws impressed on them by their creators. Heroic PCs might find significant adventure grist in protecting or helping communities of these people.

Some players may find the existence of Blighted species to be a kind of teleological horror, and feel obligated to find some cure for their curse or method by which peace can be made with them. A GM who knows their players are likely to feel this way might choose to soften the mental effects of the Blight or make room for a cure.

Blighted Origins

Individual breeds of Blighted vary widely, and while this section includes some demihuman breeds specific to Latter Earth, the GM and the players may wish to make up their own as well. Five general types of Blighted origin Foci are given here as templates that players can use for their own creations. All of them assume that the PC was not so severely affected by the Blight as most, and is capable of functioning in a conventional adventuring party. A certain amount of discretion may be needed, however, if the PC's kind are feared or hated by others in the campaign area.

Chattel Blighted

Some cruel power has made your lineage one of human cattle to serve their hungers. Physically weak and unable to resist abuse, your demihuman strain was meant to exist as playthings and ornaments in the best case, and literal human livestock in less favorable lands. Most such chattel are designed to take a helpless satisfaction in their miserable condition, but you have enough self-control to plot your own course in the world, despite the awful urges that whisper in your blood.

Level 1: Pick any one non-combat, non-Magic skill as a bonus skill. Reroll your Strength attribute as 1d4+2 instead of 3d6. Choose either Constitution or Charisma; that attribute modifier is increased by +1, up to a maximum of +3. You gain a +1 bonus on all social skill checks due to your lifelong need to manage and manipulate others, but your innate mental blocks against physical violence give you a -2 hit penalty on all attack rolls.

Functionary Blighted

Your ancestors were created as tools for a specific functional purpose, one more specific than that of a general laborer. Some may have been living musical instruments, while others could be warped maintenance-drones, inhuman performers, tireless living calculators, or some similar purpose-grown organism. While you probably still look somewhat human, most such functionaries suffered significant, crippling debilities to gain their powers. These Blighted are naturally equipped with the tools and abilities necessary to carry out their role, either as physical organs, implanted devices, or innate magical powers.

Level 1: Pick any one non-combat, non-Magic skill as a bonus skill and gain the ***Specialist*** Focus in it. Pick any one attribute; it suffers a -1 penalty to its modifier, to a minimum of -2. You are capable of carrying out your intended function even without normally-necessary tools or instruments; functionaries intended to be artisans can replicate or mimic hand tools, those meant to be healers do not need medical supplies, and so forth. You gain an intrinsic +1 bonus to all skill checks related to your function.

Laborer Blighted

Your bloodline was reshaped into a caste of toilers and brute laborers for some more powerful group. While you are less badly afflicted than most of your kind, your mental faculties remain duller than most baseline humans and you have an instinctive urge to obey orders and instructions.

Level 1: Gain Exert as a bonus skill. Each of your Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma attribute modifiers suffers a -1 penalty, down to a minimum of -2, while your Strength and Constitution modifiers are improved by +1, up to a maximum of +3 for each. You require only half as much food and rest as a normal human. You suffer a -2 penalty to all Mental saving throws to resist mind-influencing effects.

Penal Blighted

Your lineage was cursed by some sadistic sorcerer-king or merciless alien artificer. Perhaps an ancestor offended them, or your people were dominated and made perpetual tools of their conquerors, or your forebears were a fallen ruling caste rendered permanently incapable of threatening the new order. You have been terribly compromised in some physical or mental way.

Despite this curse, you have somehow managed to avoid complete incapacitation from it and have done your best to compensate for your limitations.

Level 1: Choose an attribute; its modifier suffers a permanent -2 penalty, to a maximum of -3. Only one of your attribute scores can be above 13; reduce any others to no more than 13. You may pick two additional Foci to reflect the efforts you've made to overcome your natural limits. Gain a +2 bonus to all saving throws to reflect your indomitable spirit. You cannot pick the ***Developed Attribute*** Focus.

Warlike Blighted

Your kind were born to kill, whether as the slave-soldiers of some lost empire or as a living biological plague meant solely to scourge the land of all human life. You are constantly assailed by urges to slay, torment, and destroy, but unlike most of your brethren you are capable of controlling these impulses… when you must.

Level 1: Gain Stab and Punch as bonus skills and gain a natural +1 bonus on all hit rolls. Choose two attributes from Intelligence, Wisdom, and Charisma; these attribute modifiers suffer a -1 penalty, down to a -2 maximum. Increase either your Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution modifier by +1, up to a maximum of +3. You suffer a -1 penalty on all social skill checks not related to intimidation.

Anakim

Sages believe that the original Anakim were a spite-weapon created by the Outsiders when the fall of their hegemony seemed imminent. Captured rebels, still-subject Deeps, and human traitors who were no longer needed were used as the feedstock for the transformation, one intended to create a sentient bioweapon for the destruction of all human and demihuman life in the Latter Earth.

Later ages saw the Anakim modified by assorted Imperators, their original nature warped and tuned to serve the purposes of the experimenters. The resulting Anakim sub-species are sometimes drastically different from the ur-Anak, but the intrinsic selfishness, cruelty, and aggression of the base stock persist in most of them.

Anak Physiology

Anakim are divided into several sub-species and variant body plans, some more prevalent than others. The ur-Anak, or "Great Anak" is humanoid in shape, with males averaging six and a half feet in height and two hundred pounds, females being slightly smaller. Skin and hair tones vary based on the original human feedstock, but vivid and unnatural colors are introduced in some groups. Facial features and other bodily details are usually designed to play on primal human terrors, with skull-like features, claws, fangs, bestial muzzles, disease lesions, and other qualities common in different sub-strains.

"Lesser Anakim" are a common smaller variant of the ur-Anak. Their origins are disputed among the sages, some believing them the result of an Imperator's experimentations, while others crediting them as a natural evolution of the Great Anak. These creatures share many of the same features as their larger cousins, but are much smaller and spindlier in build.

"Ogres", "titans", "hulks", or "brute Anakim" are an uncommon expression of Anak nature in which one grows to a height and mass far beyond its peers, often standing as much as nine feet tall. This growth tends to come at the cost of neural development, and most hulks have the mentality of a small, particularly vicious child. While hulks breed true, their stupidity and aggression tend to control their numbers in the wild.

All types of Anakim usually breed much more quickly than humans, with females bearing litters. This fecundity is necessary to maintain their numbers, as Anakim mature only slightly more quickly than humans.

These three kinds of Anakim are merely the most common in the Latter Earth. Other varieties, including no-longer-humanoid strains are known in certain lands. Some even appear very similar to baseline humans, having a barbaric sort of handsomeness about them; most of these variants are just as vicious as their uglier brethren.

Even so, a few Anakim strains are less aggressive than their kindred, and some can even maintain a wary sort of mutual non-slaughter with human neighbors, provided a safe distance is maintained.

Anak Psychology

All Anakim are touched to a greater or lesser degree by the "Hate". This ancient Blight infects them with an overwhelming revulsion and loathing toward baseline humanity and most demihuman species. Some scholars believe that the Hate is triggered by some pheromonal marker or arcane soul-dissonance. Others believe it is keyed on physical appearance, and is simply an unbearably amplified natural response toward physical ugliness. Whatever the source, Anakim find humans and human-like demihumans to be unendurably loathsome.

This Hate is worsened by the naturally aggressive, violent, and cruel instincts implanted in them by the Blight. Most Anakim behave in ways largely identical to human psychopaths, having no innate sense of empathy and no desire to obey any principles higher than their own pleasure. They delight in torture, slaughter, and sordid excess, and other Anakim are perfectly acceptable targets.

The only effective shackle for an Anak's instinct is sheer terror. With nothing more precious to them than their own lives, a leader or opponent who can display overwhelming force and a certain ability to slaughter them will provoke a response of groveling obedience and abject submission. This submission will tend to last precisely until the Anak no longer feels this awe.

Anakim society, such that it is, is held together by brute force and temporarily-shared ambition. A chieftain or warlord will arise, murder all nearby rivals, and force the local Anakim into obedience in order to plunder and slaughter all available targets. When that warlord shows weakness, he or she will be replaced by their most ruthless underling. This churning chaos tends to limit the size of Anakim societies, with most existing on no more than a tribal basis in the absence of some overwhelming leader.

Origin Focus: Great Anak

Unlike most Anak, you are capable of functioning in human society, either through a weakened sense of Hate or an overwhelming force of will. Unless your appearance is much more human than most, however, you may have an extremely difficult time in human lands.

Level 1: Gain Stab and Punch as bonus skills. Your Strength and Constitution modifiers increase by +1, up to a maximum of +2. Your Dexterity and Charisma modifiers decrease by -1, to a minimum of -2.

Origin Focus: Lesser Anak

As with the Great Anak origin, you are an exceptionally human or humane example of your kind, and can function adequately in human society if your nature is hidden.

Level 1: Gain Stab and Sneak as bonus skills. Your Dexterity modifier increases by +1, up to a maximum of +2, and your Constitution modifier decreases by -1, to a minimum of -2.

Anakim Encounters

Most Anakim will be encountered in groups, either as scouting parties, raiding bands, or the main encampment of the tribe. Scouting parties will usually consist of 1d4+1 warriors, raiding bands might number 2d6+6, and main tribal camps might have as many as fifty or sixty combat-capable Anakim. Great warlords can weld together dozens of tribes into a single horde, as can other powerful entities capable of terrifying the Anakim.

Anakim are vicious and cruel, but they are not particularly stupid. Most tribes have the services of at least one competent sorcerer, usually the equivalent of a first or second-level Elementalist or Necromancer in their abilities, though of a very different tradition. Especially powerful tribes might have access to stronger mages. Tribes that are in service to some dark god or malevolent arch-sorcerer are particularly known for their magical prowess, with an Anak high priest sometimes attaining powers equal to sixth or even seventh level as a Mage. Were it not for the relentless backstabbing within Anakim society, it's possible that these devil-sorcerers might become as skilled as any human mage.

Despite the Hate, an encounter with Anakim does not inevitably devolve into immediate violence. An Anak loves nothing except his own life, and no warrior will fight unless victory seems assured or some present leader demands that they fight. Strong parties or those that offer some tempting inducement in place of bloodshed might be able to parley with Anakim, as some of them are known to speak Trade Cant in order to command slaves.

One particular trait of almost all Anakim tribes is the ***sacred terror***. This psychological instinct was embedded in them in order to give them some limited mechanism for direction.

When an Anak is faced with some overwhelming foe and fails a Morale check, they will either flee for their lives or immediately seek to placate and submit to the foe. Their choice will depend on whatever outcome seems most likely to keep them alive. This terror will persist until their new leader proves weak or pushes the Anak into a situation where disobedience seems more survivable than compliance. Exceptional temptations might cause temporary disobedience to the leader, however, if the Anak thinks its defiance can be hidden.

Anakim and Others

Anakim get along poorly with each other, let alone other species. Given that a single Great Anak warrior is worth almost two ordinary human soldiers, it's only this contentiousness and grasping treachery that has kept them from overwhelming many of their hated neighbors.

Few human nations have any formal relationship with the Anak raiders beyond their borders. Desperate kings may seek to bribe the tribes into a temporary peace, or make concessions until they're able to muster their defenses, but only the most brutal and iron-fisted rulers can compel a lasting obedience from the Anak tribes.

Trade with the Anakim is almost invariably viewed with horror by those subject to their raids, but that doesn't stop smugglers and grasping merchants from seeking to trade weapons and luxuries for Anak loot. Sometimes these dealers even live to spend their profits.

Anakim	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Lesser Anak Warrior	1	13a	+1	Wpn+1	Wpn+1	20′	7	4	+1	15+
Lesser Anak Witch	3	12a	+1	Wpn+1	Wpn+1	20′	8	4	+1	14+
Lesser Anak Chief	4	15a	+5	Wpn+2	Wpn+2	30′	9	3	+2	13+
Great Anak Warrior	2	14a	+3	Wpn+1	Wpn+1	30′	8	4	+1	14+
Great Anak Warlock	4	13a	+3	Wpn+1	Wpn+1	30′	9	3	+1	13+
Great Anak Warchief	8	18a	+8 x2	Wpn+4	Wpn+4/-	40′	10	3	+2	12+
Hulk	5	15a	+6	Wpn+4	Wpn+4	30′	8	5	+1	13+
Anak King	10	20a	+12 x2	Wpn+5	Wpn+5/-	40′	11	2	+3	10+
Anak High Priest	8	15a	+7	Wpn+2	Wpn+2	30′	10	2	+2	11+

Drudges

It's unclear what creators first fashioned the Blighted known as the Drudges. Any civilization powerful enough to curse an entire human lineage with this condition almost certainly had more efficient tools for manual labor, so scholars have hypothesized that the transformation was the product of some punishment or malice. In the ages since, the Drudges have spread slowly throughout Latter Earth, their docility and great strength useful to many different peoples.

A Drudge averages around seven feet in height, with a powerful build and coarse human features. Some variants have a bestial slouch to their build and arms long enough to let them rest on their knuckles, while other subtypes look almost normal save for their size and slackness of expression.

Drudges are extremely strong, hardy laborers, but they also have very limited intellects, most of them having the same mentality as an eight-year-old child. They can follow simple orders and learn basic skills, but abstract concepts and exercises of judgment are extremely difficult for them to handle.

Drudges are also given to a docile, obedient temperament, with violence almost unknown among them save in extreme self-defense. This has not prevented some groups from choosing the biggest and strongest among their Drudges and training them for war. This "training" usually consists of horrific abuse, tormenting the Drudge until it is desperate to do anything to avoid further punishment. These wretched "war Drudges" are artless and unskillful, but the strength in their limbs can pulp an ordinary man in a single blow.

Origin Focus: Drudge

You are remarkably intelligent for a Drudge, being able to understand abstract concepts, anticipate consequences, and conceive of hypothetical outcomes. You are also much more capable of violence than most of your kind.

Level 1: Gain Exert as a bonus skill. Your Strength and Constitution modifiers increase by +1, to a maximum of +2. Your Intelligence and Charisma modifiers decrease by -1, to a minimum of -2. You suffer a -2 penalty to all Mental saving throws.

Drudges	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Drudge Laborer	3	10	+1	Wpn+2	Wpn+2	30′	7	7	+0	14+
War Drudge	5	15a	+4	Wpn+3	Wpn+3	30′	8	5	+0	13+

Halfmen

The Blighted humans known as "Halfmen" have multiple origins. In some cases, their ancestors were humans who utterly rejected all the trappings of civilized humanity, seeking simplicity in bestial non-thought. Others were created as human livestock, raw materials for the horrible appetites of alien or depraved human overlords or feedstock for occult rituals.

Halfmen look to be much like normal humans, but their physical similarities are rapidly overshadowed by their behavior. Halfmen in their native habitat never wear clothing or use tools, nor do they communicate in language more complex than grunts or lowing. They are found in herds of ten to thirty members under the protection of the biggest, strongest male. They graze as beasts do, tearing the grass with their teeth.

Their minds are largely those of cattle, especially while still within their herd. A Halfman separated from his herd will gradually gain human levels of intellect over the course of a few months, though the isolation is initially traumatic for them. Halfmen can be taught the use of language, clothing, and tools, but returning them to their herd or allowing them to cluster together in similar numbers will rapidly erase these skills and dissolve any elements of their personality too complex for a beast.

Halfmen reproduce very rapidly, with infants able to walk from birth and attaining adulthood by two years of age. Unless separated from the herd, however, they rarely survive more than twenty or thirty years.

The existence of Halfman herds is partially responsible for the prevalence of maneating predators in the Latter Earth, as they condition them to hunt humans.

Origin Focus: Halfman

You have been separated from your herd. Your intellect has achieved human levels in the time since, and for whatever reason you no longer seek to return to them.

Level 1: Gain Survive as a bonus skill. Your Constitution modifier increases by +1, up to a +2 maximum. You are immune to natural extremes of heat and cold, and can digest any plant matter a normal ruminant could. Your isolation from the herd inflicts a -2 penalty on all Mental saving throws, however.

Halfmen	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Halfman Grazer	1	10	+1	1d2+1	None	30′	7	7	+1	15+
Halfman Bull	3	11	+4	1d2+3	None	30′	9	6	+1	14+

Houris

A Houri is a Blighted created for satisfying the particular physical and emotional needs of their owners. Whether male, female, or some more bespoke gender, Houris have been created almost since the first development of the arts of Blighting a line.

Houris come in innumerable flawless physical forms, usually characteristic of their particular creator's tastes and aesthetics. They usually live no longer than humans, but they preserve their exquisite beauty indefinitely, and do not grow feeble with old age.

Were they merely touched by this perfection, Houris would not be considered Blighted; what makes them objects of pity and subjection is the innate instinct of subservience woven into their psyches. Obedience to an order provides an intense wave of happiness and positive feeling to a Houri, whatever the order's nature or origin. Habitual cooperation can leave them emotionally addicted to the sensation. Many oppressed or hopeless Houris simply acquiesce to their nature and accept its rewards, trying only to resist cooperation with commands that might bring significant harm.

A few select trusted companions or superiors and allow themselves to obey only orders given by that person. Others school themselves to a ruthless disinterest in their own emotional states, seeking logical or ideological standards to guide their choices rather than their own desires, even becoming accomplished ascetics and self-deniers of unflinching discipline. The Golden Path counts several Houris among the "Liberators" of their faith for having overcome the lure of emotional attachment.

Origin Focus: Houri

You've taught yourself to resist the lure of enforced happiness and seek other forms of satisfaction or personal integrity. While you gain an emotional rush from cooperating with commands, you don't let it control your decisions.

Level 1: Gain Convince and Perform as bonus skills. Your Charisma modifier increases by +1, up to a maximum of +2. Your innate nature makes you susceptible to mental influence, however, inflicting a -2 penalty on Mental saving throws.

Houris	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Houri Concubine	1	10	+0	Wpn	Wpn	30′	7	8	+2	15+
Dispassionate One	6	11	+6	Wpn	Wpn/-	30′	12	0	+3	12+

Lifting the Blight

There's a certain kind of player who, upon discovering the existence of an irrevocably cursed species in the world, will immediately try to figure out how to lift the Blight. If a GM happens to be running a game for this kind of player, it's necessary to think carefully about the consequences of this goal.

The Blight is tremendously persistent. While it is not impossible for powerful magic and erudite sorcerous surgery to lift the Blight from individual beings or even specific bloodlines, purging it from an entire species might well be prohibitively difficult.

From a game perspective, the Blighted exist to create moral conflicts for the PCs. How should they treat people who cannot function in the same way that ordinary members of society can function? What rights should be accorded to them, and what kind of treatment is least likely to be abusive to them while still protecting them from their own debilities? If treating them exactly like baseline humans would merely ensure their exploitation and abuse, how much of their own freedoms should be curtailed for the sake of their own good, or should their inevitable mistreatment simply be accepted as the price of freedom? Or are there ways to effectively prevent abuse that won't prove impractical to implement?

Different groups will have different degrees of interest in these questions. Many of them will simply gloss over the issues, satisfied enough so long as Blighted aren't being mistreated in front of them. This is a perfectly valid way to play; even the most heroic band of adventurers can't interest themselves in every societal quandary they encounter, and most groups have much more interest in exciting adventures than meditations on social structure.

Others will be interested enough to try and eliminate the entire problem by lifting the Blight. This is one way to solve the problem; if the situation doesn't exist, it's not necessary to consider its ramifications. It's up to the group as a whole to decide whether or not this ambition is even possible in the campaign.

If it is possible, it's probably a major project of Impossible difficulty, with the scope depending on how large a population of Blighted are to be cured. Pursuing it will require vast amounts of magical equipment, Legacy alterations, arcane Workings, and perhaps even the discovery of the original documentation of the Blight that the PCs are trying to lift. If the whole group is interested in this goal, however, it's entirely acceptable for the GM to let them spend their time and efforts in seeking its glorious success.

Demihumans of the Latter Earth

The definition of "humanity" is somewhat broader in the Latter Earth than it would be in some other ages. Countless eons of sorcerous and genetic manipulation have left their mark on the modern population, and qualities that would be freakish or remarkable in other times now scarcely bear comment in most nations.

In the current age, the standard baseline human form is not unlike that of modern-day humanity. The same general build, body configuration, and range of coloration can be found in the humanity of the Latter Earth, and while other ages had somewhat different ideas about what constituted a "normal human", those that live in the current era would not look out of place on a contemporary city street.

Yet within this definition of humanity there remain some considerable variances. Odd coloration of skin, hair, and eyes is one of the smallest such quirks, a remnant of some recessive aesthetic alteration, while slight differences in body configuration are also unusual but not unknown. Remnants of some customized genders exist in some lands, while the humanity of other nations might have been subtly altered to better accommodate local environmental conditions.

Despite these small differences, such people are still generally considered "humans" by their neighbors. Some cultural adjustments may be needed to integrate the more exotic examples, but few would consider such uncommon quirks to be disqualifying for humanity.

Demihumanity

This is not the case with those known as "demihumans". The alterations they have received have been so profound and so reliably heritable that they are not considered to be quite the same as their baseline brethren. They may have radically different mentalities, significantly different physical requirements, or have mental or physical qualities that make it very difficult for them to integrate easily into baseline human societies.

At its edges, demihumanity is as much a social decision as a physiological one. Some variant lineages are considered demihuman in one land and mere exotic humanity in another. Such a difference is most significant when a society has separate rules for its human and demihuman members.

As a consequence, most demihuman lineages prefer to live in their own communities, either wholly independent or in a relationship of loose suzerainty with the local lord. There, they may live according to their own inclinations and be ruled by their own kind.

Most demihuman lineages were originally designed for a particular purpose, adjusted and augmented to serve the ends of some long-dead empire, god-king, or soulless Outsider scientist. They are often considerably more capable than baseline humanity in their special fields, but generally suffer some weakness or debility as compensation. Their fertility is usually significantly less than that of ordinary humanity, and so their numbers are correspondingly fewer.

Those wretched demihumans known as the "Blighted" are a special case in most lands. The debilities they suffer are so obvious and so severe that they often cannot live among humans without some kind of oversight. In many lands this oversight is little more than slavery, and those Blighted cursed with a violent nature are often hunted down and killed on principle.

Demihumans in the Gyre

In the Gyre region of the Latter Earth, there are no significant demihuman nations aside from the Blighted domain of Sarul, where the Anak are in the majority and the only baseline humans are a few very discreet travelers and merchants. Persistent stories speak of vast dwarven empires deep beneath the Black Spine mountains or hidden elven realms concealed within ancient parallel Iterums, but these places are more legend than daily reality.

Smaller communities and demihuman fiefs do exist throughout the region, however, usually tucked away in isolated places of little value to baseline humans. Dwarven holds and Plan-built communities are found scattered in the mountains and hills, with some ancient Deeps reclaimed entirely by a dwarf-king. Communities of transhuman elves are sometimes found in the ancient ruins of the cities they once dwelled in during former lives, and other demihuman species can sometimes be found in small regional clusters where a viable breeding population can survive.

Human rulers generally have little to do with demihuman communities, demanding more or less tribute from them but otherwise leaving them be. The cost of open hostilities is too dear for either side, and demihumans simply aren't expected to think and behave the same way baseline human subjects would.

Creating Demihuman Characters

A player who wishes to make a demihuman PC can spend their initial free Focus pick on an origin Focus appropriate to their kind. If a GM is feeling charitable and there are several demihumans in the party, the GM might allow them to simply give up their usual second-level bonus Focus instead, so that they can start play with a little more mechanical distinctiveness among them.

PCs with particular novelties of shape, cognition, or nature that have no meaningful game mechanical effect do not need to take an origin Focus to represent such cosmetic differences. Only demihuman species that have real mechanical consequences require a Focus pick.

The adjacent page includes a selection of common, traditional demihuman species for use in more traditional campaign settings. Elf and dwarf PCs in the Latter Earth would use the writeups under their bestiary entries.

DEMIHUMANS FOR OTHER SETTINGS

These Foci can be used to create PCs from variant demihuman races that may exist in a particular GM's campaign. GMs who are using ***Worlds Without Number*** as a toolset for their own campaign settings might also use them to replicate more "traditional" elves, dwarves, halflings, and other common fantasy races.

Some Foci grant bonuses or penalties to attribute modifiers. None of these modifiers can exceed +2 or fall below -2. Some Foci also allow the player to choose which attribute is to be increased or penalized, depending on their particular interpretation of the species.

Dwarves

This origin serves for the classical dwarf; short, sturdy, and given to craftsmanship and drinking.

Level 1: Gain Craft as a bonus skill. Your Constitution modifier increases by +1 and either your Dexterity or Charisma modifier decreases by -1. You can see in the dark up to sixty feet.

Elves, Civilized

This style of elf represents the city-dwelling, magic-loving, sophisticated interpretation of elvishness favored in some worlds.

Level 1: Gain Know and Magic as bonus skills. Your Dexterity or Intelligence modifier increases by +1 and your Constitution modifier decreases by -1. You can see clearly in any light level above complete darkness.

Elves, Half-Elves

Where there are both elves and humans, half-elves tend to be inevitable additions to a campaign world. This Focus follows the "between two worlds" flavor of most half-elf interpretations.

Level 1: Gain Connect and any one skill as bonus skills. You can see out to thirty feet in any light condition short of perfect darkness. At your discretion, if you take after your elven parent, you may increase your Dexterity modifier by +1 but then also take a -1 to your Constitution modifier.

Elves, Forest

This interpretation of elvishness is for those kinds given to nature-reverence, archery, and nimbleness.

Level 1: Gain Shoot and Survive as bonus skills. Your Dexterity modifier increases by +1 and your Constitution modifier decreases by -1. You can see clearly in any light level above complete darkness.

Halflings

This origin serves for a breed of bucolic and diminutive demihumans with exceptional reserves of toughness.

Level 1: Gain Sneak as a bonus skill. Your Constitution or Dexterity modifier increases by +1. You are too small to effectively use two-handed melee weapons or large bows.

Gnomes

Gnomish interpretations vary significantly, from mad tinkers to forest sprites. The origin below suits a subterranean forest-dweller; for tinkers, replace Sneak as a bonus skill with Craft.

Level 1: Gain Sneak as a bonus skill. Your Dexterity modifier increases by +1 and your Strength or Wisdom modifier decreases by -1. You can see clearly in the dark out to sixty feet.

Goblins, Tinker

This variety of goblin is for those campaign settings where they are inveterate builders.

Level 1: Gain Craft as a bonus skill. Your Dexterity or Intelligence modifier increases by +1, and your Wisdom modifier decreases by -1. You have the weapon restrictions of halflings. You can see clearly in the dark out to sixty feet.

Goblins, Savage

Feral tribe-dwelling marauders of swamp, forest, and wasteland, this style of goblin can also fill in for other small, vicious humanoids.

Level 1: Gain Sneak and Survive as bonus skills. Your Dexterity modifier increases by +1, but your Intelligence modifier decreases by -1. You have the weapon restrictions of halflings. You can see clearly in the dark out to sixty feet.

Lizardmen

Whether dressed up as dragon-folk or left as common crocodilian swamp lizardmen, this Focus can fill in the details.

Level 1: Gain Stab and Survive as bonus skills. Your Strength or Charisma modifier increases by +1, but your Dexterity or Charisma modifier decreases by -1. Your unarmored Armor Class is 13, and if you wear better armor you get a +1 bonus to its AC.

Level 2: You're some sort of dragon-man and can breathe fire, frost, or some other noxious substance. The breath can be done once per scene and affects a cone up to 15 feet long and wide at its end. All within must make an appropriate save or take 2d6 damage plus your character level. You gain immunity to the substance you exhale.

Orcs

Large, strong, brutish, and comparatively stupid; such is the standard orc of fantasy campaigns. Players who want to play such a PC can use this Focus.

Level 1: Gain Survive and Stab or Punch as bonus skills. Your Strength or Constitution modifier increases by +1, but your Intelligence modifier decreases by -1. You can see clearly in the dark out to sixty feet.

Dwarves

Reclusive, strange, and Deep-dwelling, the folk of Latter Earth known as "dwarves" are a relic of the long dark age of the Outsiders. They are living tools for the manipulation of the Legacy, beings gifted with an intuitive ability to twist and subvert that power's effects.

During the period of alien rule, the Outsiders were repeatedly stymied by failsafes and locks embedded in the Legacy, security measures that could only be overcome by humans. While individual quislings and traitors could be found in the human population, they were neither numerous nor skilled enough to accomplish the Outsiders' ends.

As a consequence, the ancestors of the dwarves were extracted from the human chattel of the aliens and altered to become living interfaces with the Legacy, sentient intrusion measures that could be directed to warp the energies of that force into the service of the Outsiders. The hubris of the aliens was such that they had not anticipated that the very abilities they had cultivated in the dwarves were the same ones they would use to break their obedience conditioning and rebel against their creators.

In the long ages since the fall of the Outsiders the dwarves have remained largely in the Deeps, obsessed with their own Great Plans and seized with an unending quest for the perfect harmony of creation. Some dwarven nations have made contact with surface-dwellers, either for trade or conquest, but the majority of dwarves found on the surface in this age are rebels or recusants from the Great Plan of their homeland. Some merely wish to be free of the burden of their ruler's dreams, while others nurse visions of their own.

Dwarven Physiology

As natives of the Deeps, dwarves are compact compared to baseline humans. Males seldom stand over four and a half feet tall, while females average four feet. Most have a powerful, broadly-built frame, though there are some substrains that are built very leanly, and a few that look like small, perfectly-proportioned humans. Facial hair is usually found only on the males, its presence or absence dictated by the fashions of their homeland.

Dwarves have an intuitive sense of their surroundings, one derived from their constant low-level integration with the Legacy. This "dwarfsight" is equivalent to monochrome human vision out to a distance of twenty feet, regardless of light levels or fogs. It cannot penetrate solid surfaces but can be aimed in any direction by the dwarf, regardless of their facing, as an On Turn action.

The harsh austerities of the Deeps have been encoded into the dwarven metabolism. Dwarves require only half the food, water, and air that standard humans do. They tend to live for considerably longer than their baseline cousins, maintaining good health into their third century before rapidly declining over a few years.

Dwarven Psychology

All dwarves have a subconscious connection with the Legacy, a product of their created purpose. This awareness tends to manifest in the form of an intense love of order and coherent structure; dwarves will build both physical objects and social structures with equal enthusiasm and show an innate talent for engineering, mathematics, and other logically-rigorous pursuits.

A dwarf wholly given to the creation of some great work or societal reformation is said to have a "Plan". A dwarven nation will invariably be fired by some high societal ideal; their envisioned utopia is said to be their "Great Plan", one which all its members are expected to embrace and assist in creating.

Unfortunately for dwarven unity, it is perfectly possible for two dwarves to have diametrically opposed ideas about what constitutes "order and coherent structure". Depending on the dissonance of their ideals, relations between dwarven groups can range from careful courtesy to genocidal hatred. Individual dwarves who cannot accept the Great Plan of their society will tend to leave it, either to become wanderers, to find a home with a small community of like-minded recusants, or to establish their own shining Plan for others to embrace.

Origin Focus: Dwarf

Your PC is a dwarf, a demihuman weapon-race devised during the ancient rule of the Outsiders. You are probably a recusant from some dwarven polity, though it could be you are a loyal believer in your homeland's ideals who simply wants to see more of the world before returning home and helping in their Great Plan.

Level 1: Gain Craft as a bonus skill. You have the dwarven surrounding-sense out to twenty feet, able to distinguish solid objects as if you were using your sense of sight. You have a natural resistance to magic, gaining a +2 bonus on all saves against hostile magical effects. You need only half the usual amount of food, water, and air and gain a +1 bonus to your hit point die at each level.

Level 2: You have such a deep connection with your dwarven nature that once per day, as an Instant action, you can simply negate an unwanted magical effect that would otherwise affect you. If you accept one System Strain point, you can use this ability to negate a magical effect you can see or otherwise sense, provided it's within one hundred feet. This ability applies only to spellcasting, relatively minor standing enchantments, and creature-generated magic; it cannot negate Workings, suppress magic items, or nullify effects created by magic items or exceptionally potent rituals. Note that NPC dwarves of more than 2 hit dice will also have this ability.

Encountering Dwarves

Most dwarves remain in the underground dwarfholds, laboring together with their like-minded brethren in subterranean clans and buried under-towns. A given hold is usually only occupied by one society of dwarves, as only the most unusually sympathetic Plans can exist in close proximity. Where more than one Plan exists in an area, the usual result is bloody warfare until the weaker is expelled, extinguished, or abandoned by its followers.

Adventurers within the Deeps sometimes stumble on dwarf-gardens of edible fungi or underherds of insectile meat-beasts shepherded by the dwarves. These agricultural efforts require very specific environments, and it's not uncommon for the dwarves to end up fighting interlopers in order to keep the best farming caves. A hungry dwarfhold must usually rely on its surface ties to buy food, or else make a desperate sally to claim new farming caves before it's too late for them.

Dwarves tend to be naturally mistrustful of strangers entering their territories, though the prospect of sharing the good news of their Plan is oftimes enough to make them open up. Many dwarfholds have active trade links with the outside world, using the contact as an opportunity to push their ideology on traders. Most merchants have the sense to sound politely interested for as long as is necessary. The dwarves are so confident of the self-evident rightness of their cause that they consider it only a matter of time before outsiders convert.

Outside of their deep holds, dwarves are found in prospecting bands, salvage crews, and military patrols. None of these groups will usually be looking for trouble, but neither will they tolerate interference.

Dwarves have numerous active magical traditions, but they rarely work in the same way as human mages. Most rely on the innate link with the Legacy that dwarves possess, and use small devices and cunningly-crafted artifacts to create magical effects. A dwarven artificer might have the equivalent magical abilities of a second or third level Mage, but their spells will be cast using devices that the artificer has crafted. Such use has the same limits and usage requirements as conventional spellcasting.

Some dwarves are outcasts or renegades against the Plan of their home community. These wanderers vary wildly in temperament; some are fanatics with a different Plan in mind, while others are bandits, raiders, lunatics, or incurably curious voyagers. In rare cases, a particularly charismatic dwarf might establish an entire village of such exiles. Discussions of the merits of individual Plans there are usually vigorously discouraged.

Dwarves in the Gyre

Like other demihuman species, dwarves are uncommon in the Gyre. There are no major dwarven states on the surface or significant regional powers to compare with the former provinces of the Brass Hegemony. In many parts of the Gyre, dwarves are nothing more than a name known to scholars and wanderers, and a dwarf who ventured there would probably be treated as nothing but a short, squat human.

Small dwarven domains do exist in certain lands, however, with some being found in the hills of Thur, beneath the sprawling exurban growth of the New City in Ka-Adun, or in old settlements within the Black Spine mountain range. These domains usually consist of nothing more than a single hold or community that shares a single Plan, with those recusants unable to agree with it left to wander the world alone and friendless. As the work of a Plan can only be carried on among like-minded believers, only dwarven outcasts, merchants, mercenaries, proselytizers, and other lonesome souls have any great cause to leave their ancient homes.

Human lords with dwarven communities within their land generally follow a policy of arm's-length rule, appointing a reeve to collect taxes and relay petitions. The internal affairs of the hold are strictly ignored by all but the most megalomaniacal rulers; the cost of bringing a dwarfhold to heel would be ruinous to petty lords and unprofitable to great ones. The dwarves generally reciprocate by concerning themselves with their own affairs and avoiding entanglements with other surfacers.

Every so often, however, dwarven holds are convulsed by changes in the Plan, either because it has become impossible to further the goal or some new interpretation of order has risen among the populace. During these periods of savage civil strife, whole holds can become lost or abandoned, seeded full of traps by the warring factions or rendered hazardous by the fighting. The survivors usually migrate elsewhere to start anew, but the remains of the dwarfhold continue to draw interest from "salvagers" and outcast dwarves who want to start their own wondrous Plan there.

Much vaster dwarven kingdoms than these are said to exist deep below the surface, locked in eternal struggles with horrible creatures forgotten by the sunlit world. These deep-dwelling dwarves have no reason to bother with the surface, but every so often a story emerges of some mighty dwarf-king's relics being buried at the bottom of a great Deep or fathoms-long cave complex. Sometimes, these tales are even true.

Dwarves	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Dwarven Laborer	1	13a	+1	Wpn	Wpn	30′	9	4	+1	15+
Dwarven Veteran	2	16a	+3	Wpn+1	Wpn+1	30′	9	3	+1	14+
Dwarven Artificer	6	11	+5	Wpn	Wpn	30′	9	4	+2	12+
Dwarven Lord	10	20a	+11 x2	Wpn+5	Wpn+5/-	30′	10	2	+2	10+
Dwarven King	12	22a	+12 x2	Wpn+5	Wpn+5/-	20′	12	1	+2	9+

Elves

Death has not always been the universal fate of humanity. At some distant point in the past the rulers of Earth had managed to encode immortality into the Legacy, ensuring the deathless persistence of human identity. It's unclear whether this universal immortality was lost before the arrival of the Outsiders or as a result of the alien conquest, and some sages hypothesize that it was actually restored more than once in the ages since. In every instance, however, the decay of the Legacy or hostile interference returned the scourge of death to the world.

For all humanity, at least, except those transhumans known as "elves". For whatever inexplicable reason, these few identities were capable of evading permanent death, reincarnating with their identities at least partially intact after each physical discorporation.

Scholars argue over the true origins of the elves, some insisting that the original elves were surpassingly powerful sorcerers who forced the Legacy to grant them eternal existence. Others believe that the elves are mere mistakes in the Legacy, souls that slipped through the filter that would otherwise purge their memories of past lives. Some even say that the elves were the ones who originally restored death to the world, a band of jealous transhumans who wished to keep immortality for their own identities alone. Evidence can be marshaled for all these theories, but proof remains elusive.

Elven Physiology

Elves are usually incarnated as the children of other elves, born in ways biologically typical for humans. In some cases, however, the Legacy will instantiate a new body out of inanimate matter, forcing an elf back into existence with whatever raw materials are to hand. Such "worldborn" elves often have visible traits related to their original material, such as smooth gray skin for one born of a granite boulder, or flowered locks for one called forth from a blossoming tree.

The original transhuman nature of elves persists in their instantiated bodies. Elves are invariably well-formed beings, physically healthy and mentally unimpaired at the time of their birth. Most have taller and more slender builds than the average baseline human, and their bodies are imbued with a host of small aesthetic upgrades that tend to give them an air of flawless but alien perfection as compared to their human cousins.

While the elven body is created without significant flaws, it is no stronger, hardier, or quicker than a standard human body. Its senses are considerably sharper, however, and an elf can detect scents, sounds, and other stimuli at thresholds substantially finer than normal humans can.

Elves do not physically age beyond vigorous adulthood. The only way for them to die is through violence, poisons, or disease, after which they will be reborn to elven parents somewhere else in the Latter Earth within the next forty days.

Elven Psychology

While the baseline elven mind is similar to that of a human's, it is burdened by a tremendous weight of memory. Each rebirth crashes a tidal wave of new stimuli and sensory inputs into the elf's brain, and whatever measures the Legacy was originally intended to use to help them integrate these memories have long since decayed. Elven children recall only disjointed elements of their past.

Elves treat their past-life memories with great caution. To seek to delve too deeply in them risks the loss of their current identity as past memories crush the thoughts of their current life. Long-dead elves can end up possessing their own mental heirs, the living elf's own wishes and memories contemptuously drowned in the overwhelming stimulus of a past life.

In some cases this process is intentionally provoked by an elf in great distress, voluntarily sacrificing their present identity to welcome in the memories of a powerful prior identity. This "incarnation" is uncertain in its effects, but it's not impossible for a simple farmer to suddenly awaken the skills of a long-dead warrior king.

Some elves keenly feel the weight of their past existences, and strive to extinguish their lives permanently in order to escape a world that no longer provides them any joy. Such elves are often the prophets or proponents of faiths that reject the world, such as the Golden Path, for only a truly divine degree of power can force the Legacy to let a weary elven soul finally find its grave.

Origin Focus: Elf

You are a reincarnated transhuman, shards of your former life still lingering in your memories. The more intently you focus on developing and integrating these fragments, the more effectively you can call on them.

Elves are invariably devoid of obvious mental or physical debilities. If you have any attribute scores below 9, you must move points from your other attributes to raise the deficient ones up to a score of 9. You may decide which attribute points to shift. Afflictions incurred after play begins can lower your attributes below this floor.

If your PC is killed, it will reincarnate eventually, but it will likely be at a place far distant from the campaign. Such new incarnations are unlikely to ever be met again, and may not even remember anything particularly compelling about their most recent past life.

Level 1: Pick any skill as a bonus skill reflecting your past memories. You may reroll a failed skill check in this skill once per day. You have extremely sharp senses, gaining Notice as a bonus skill and being able to see clearly in anything short of complete darkness.

Level 2: Pick a mental attribute; gain +1 to your ability modifier in it, up to a maximum of +3 as you draw on past memories. Pick any skill as an additional bonus skill.

Encountering Elves

Most elves remain secluded in their own communities, preferring the company of those who can understand the burdens of their memories. The relative rarity of these transhumans makes elven nations few in number and small in population, but scattered elven "retreats" are not unknown in other lands, often deep within the wilderness where they will not be bothered by human rulers.

Those elves that leave their retreats generally do so for a specific reason. They may have some task left undone from a prior life, or a debt yet unpaid, or a vengeance in need of execution. A few adventure through the world simply in search of new stimuli and exciting new experiences. These elves will cheerfully cooperate with any plan that promises to give them something new to enjoy, though most will avoid enterprises that they don't expect to survive.

Given the weight of their memories, it's not uncommon for elves to become talented mages who can draw on multiple lifetimes for their skills. Such occult meditation is dangerous, however, as those lives that were most capable in sorcery are often those lives most likely to overwhelm the identity of a young or unprepared elf. Most elven sorcerers are the equivalent of third or fourth level High Mages, though the rare arch-memorist who has successfully integrated multiple lives might be the equivalent of eighth, ninth, or even tenth level.

Meeting with unknown elves always has a measure of danger. While some elves maintain a moral code similar to that of the local human nations, others subscribe to beliefs or goals that are either incomprehensible or repugnant to humanity. They might think nothing of sacrificing countless "transients" in pursuit of their grand goals, and consider their immortality to be tangible proof of their superiority over the evanescent humans around them. Charismatic elves of this kind can sometimes sway a considerable number of their peers to their cause, building dark purposes that threaten ruin and misery on humanity, all for the sake of some pleasure or excitement unknowable to ones not so jaded as they.

Elves are usually encountered as solitary adventurers when far from their retreats. When groups of locals are encountered, there will usually be 1d4+1 of them going about their business, while the retreats themselves usually house 10d20 elves of varying degrees of personal power and societal role. The very largest city-refuges may house as many as a thousand elves.

Elves in the Gyre

Much as with dwarves, there are no major elven polities within the Gyre region or kingdoms dominated by these transhumans. Several small elven holdings persist in Emed-Kist among their Darian rulers, and there are persistent stories of surviving elven communities within the jungles of Lost Emed. Other refuges have been established in New Voth, and a few particularly hard-handed ones have found a home in the Llaigisan hills.

Elves are very rare in the common populace, but graced enough to escape any stigma of Blight. Where they are solitary wanderers, they tend to be viewed as just another near-human sport of nature, a handsome man or pretty maid with unusually sharp senses.

The physical grace and beauty of their kind have made problems for elves before when dealing with barbarous lords or acquisitive slavers. It's not unknown for an exceptionally handsome or beautiful elf to be sought for cruel purposes, but such practices are extremely hazardous for an owner. An elf driven to desperate ends and given time to carefully interrogate their memories may be willing to commit the identity-suicide of self-reincarnation and call up a prior life that is fully capable of slaughtering a royal household with their bare hands.

Most lords that claim the territory in which an elven refuge is found are content to receive a tribute in goods and services from the demihumans, profiting by the superb craftsmanship of centuries-old artisans. The elves of the refuge repay this hands-off rule by avoiding entanglements with local powers, with adventurers and leavetakers faring far from their homeland.

Elves usually choose particular ancient sites or remnant Workings for their refuges, taking advantage of their memories to exploit the surviving magics and secrets of the place. Their homes are beautiful and intricately-fashioned, often in a manner reminiscent of long-lost empires and forgotten peoples that were once dear to them.

Legends persist of greater communities than these, however, and of entire elven kingdoms folded away in hidden Iterums and shadowy half-worlds. Strange elven knights of unheard-of lands are sometimes spotted in the Gyre on errands unknowable to others. Some locals maintain that these transhumans are but catspaws and envoys of greater and more awful powers beyond the veil of common space and time, that they are the merest shadow of the terrible inhuman dreams of things that can no longer be called human at all.

Elves	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Elven Villager	1	13a	+1	Wpn	Wpn	30′	9	2	+2	15+
Elven Adventurer	3	15a	+5	Wpn+2	Wpn+2	30′	10	2	+2	14+
Elven Sorcerer	5	10	+3	Wpn	Wpn	30′	9	1	+2	13+
Elven Lord	10	20a	+11 x2	Wpn+5	Wpn+5/-	30′	10	1	+3	10+
Elven Arch-Memorist	10	13	+8	Wpn+3	Wpn+3/-	30′	10	0	+4	10+

Elven Sorcerers cast spells and have arts as per a third or fourth level High Mage, while arch-memorists cast as an eighth to tenth level High Mage. Effort is equal to their skill bonus plus two.

Imperators

Those beings known as "Imperators" are a broad class of demiurges, sorcerer-kings, god-emperors, sentient Legacy fragments, arch-Legates, alien overminds, demi-divine artificial intellects, and other such creatures with power far in excess of any ordinary human being. A being that is more than a human yet less than an inarguable god is generally described as an Imperator in the writings of the sages.

Innumerable Imperators have appeared in the annals of the Latter Earth, often mentioned in brief passing for some tremendous work or empire they wrought, only to vanish out of human memory a short age later. Some scholars suppose that there have been more Imperators in the past of the world than there are harlots currently employed in it, and most would credit the harlots with superior virtue.

For it is a sadly common quality to Imperators that they should eventually lose most of the qualities that modern humans would call "virtue". Something about the ascent to unchallenged supremacy and near-godlike puissance erodes whatever reserves of self-discipline and restraint the Imperator might possess. Without anyone to forbid them their wishes, and with a brilliant mind perfectly capable of conjuring excuses for the worst excess, an Imperator almost invariably sinks into a morass of self-indulgent horrors and brutal atrocities. The *Tsagasthos Incunabulum* purports to be a catalog of the pleasures pursued by the Imperator Tsagasthos the Prevalent; the activities listed in this codex are so horrific in their character and so persuasively justified by the author that possession of the book is usually considered grounds for summary execution of the owner and their household and the burning of the work by a blinded executioner. Thirty-six different Blighted species of cattle-humans, trifoliate odalisques, gladiator-sages, dolorous vivants, and worse are credited directly to Tsagasthos' appetites, and its worst crimes were the inspiration for several black cults that plague the Latter Earth still.

Tsagasthos was not exceptional. While the particularly carnal nature of its horrors was somewhat uncommon, the obsession with satisfying personal goals and a bloodless indifference to the suffering of others was a trait common to most of its brethren. Almost all were convinced of the superiority of their wisdom, the justification for their desires, and the complete depravity of any who would dare oppose their wishes. The struggles between Imperators have shaped whole ages of the Latter Earth, and the relics of their wars and the ruins of their thrones yet burden the land with their awful weight.

Not all Imperators were wholly wicked, however, and some may still nurse some remnant of virtue or higher duty in their analog for a heart. Most of these gentler Imperators still look outside their own desires for a moral code, often remaining in service to some god or higher power they can still respect as a superior. Some are simply of a character to remain compassionate and restrained even with the constant temptation of their own power to seduce them. Such just Imperators often stand as bulwarks against the works of their more ruthless brethren, though it is not unknown for such unending wars to turn even the kindest god-king into an obsessed tyrant.

In the present age, Imperators are few and usually legendary in the regions where they dwell. Immortal emperors, divine avatars, mythic monsters, and other figures of superhuman glory beyond that of a Legate are often credited as Imperators, though the stain that clings to the name often makes such comparisons less than flattering. They leave the imprint of their will on whatever nations, institutions, or regions they may command, often in wholly impossible or magical ways.

Imperators in Your Campaign

While it's possible to stud your campaign setting with a few of these demigods, either as arch-antagonists for the PCs or as vast environmental hazards to be negotiated, it's often more convenient to use them as shorthand for specific ancient empires or lost kingdoms to help supply a pleasant variety of ruins, Deeps, and monuments to explore. Personalizing a nation as a single leader helps shorthand things for players who may not be all that interested in a nuanced history lesson, and tying them into modern ruins helps give a sense of depth to your setting's past.

Still, if you want to use them as active players in your setting, you'll need to keep a few things in mind when designing them.

They can't be beaten head-on. An Imperator is effectively unstoppable in a direct confrontation. The PCs are going to have to somehow disrupt the source of their power, find their hidden weakness, marshal powerful allies, or otherwise tilt the table to have any chance of winning. If they do these things, then the Imperator might just end up with the stat block of a monstrously powerful foe rather than being an automatic victor.

They want impossible things. An Imperator should always want something that's flatly impossible. It's for petty mortals to seek world conquest; it's for an Imperator to seek the retroactive temporal elimination of any potential rival. Their plans, sub-goals, and choice of servants should reflect this impossible goal.

They have minions with their own goals. The servants and underlings of an Imperator cast their lot with it because it can give them something they want. The PCs will likely spend much of their time dealing with subordinates who may or may not be entirely loyal, and overcoming or suborning these minions might be a key step in opening the Imperator up for a mortal blow.

IMPERATORS OF THE GYRE

The only well-known potential Imperator in the Gyre region is the Reaping King himself; while he has not openly exerted any remarkable personal might, he is evidently immortal and completely unconcerned with assassins. All direct attempts at eliminating him have failed in spectacular and brutal fashion.

Aside from the Reaping King, several ancient figures in the region are commonly credited as Imperators, and have left appropriate ruins in their former lands.

Acalis: The Good Emperor, of the Nagadi demihuman race. The Nagadi were engineered for virtue, being far more brave, honest, compassionate, and diligent than baselines, and Acalis was their exemplar. He once ruled the Great Benevolence in the human lands that became Emed-Mar, but left with his people "into elsewhere" when he became convinced that associating with humanity was going to morally deprave him. He left behind monumental public works of noble proportions full of dangerously incorruptible guardians and the Nagadi who would not leave; the latter treat humans like Anakim.

Nakris: The Hive Queen, known only from relics and statues in the Black Spine range. She was some sort of god-queen to the Jikegadi, her parasitical spawn being incredibly vigorous and swift to grow. The Jikegadi ruins of her era are full of biological parasite dangers and toxic Outsider environments.

Qwoll: The Drowned King, lord of an island realm to the north of the Gyre that was overcome by a monstrous Outsider invasion. To kill the intruders he submerged the entire archipelago, the Sisters being its only remnant. His people are said to dwell still below the waves, coral-boned and pearl-eyed and determined to someday bring their rule to every land that is touched by salt water.

Shun: The Lord of Flesh and Bone, an arch-mutator who raised the Rule of Shun in Republic-era Llaigis and perished to his own attempt to become a physical god. He left many laboratories, monstrous breeding-pits, subject-prisons, and healing shrines behind.

Tsagasthos: The Prevalent One, a psychic virus that embodied itself in the brains of thousands of slaves. It ruled present-day Ka-Adun and the Rebel Coast until overcome by Voth in the expansion of her empire. Its ruins are of structures of physical pleasure and sensory experience, both sweet and hideous. Fragments of its psyche remain in creatures there, and they grow stronger with proximity to each other.

Ubarun: The Dwarf King, progenitor of the Great Plan of the Graven World. He set his dwarven followers on a quest to work, carve, engrave, and sculpt every material object, themselves included, into the vast pattern he laid down for them. Pockets of his believers remain in the Deeps, but most know them only by the occasional Deep full of incredibly complex engravings, intricate machinery, and lethal counter-intrusion measures.

Voth: The Mentarch, Imperator-Queen of the Vothite Empire. While immortal, she vanished once her line of heirs was established, telling them only that it was "necessary to the Purpose". The Imperial ruins her nation left behind are filled with memetically resonant objects that can impress ideas, compulsions, or entire alien minds on unwary intruders.

Outsiders

The malevolent or inscrutable remnants of the ancient Outsiders that once ruled the Latter Earth have not been entirely extirpated. Here and there, pockets of surviving alien sentients can be found, most often in the more remote, dangerous, and xenoformed areas of the planet. Many have regressed in both artifice and culture, some little more than savage barbarians burning with a hatred for their former slaves. Others have preserved some remnant of their former arcane might.

The three species described here are relatively well-known in the Gyre, as described on page 110. GMs who wish to use them as antagonists, environmental hazards, or profoundly untrustworthy allies of convenience can use the statistics given here.

Jikegida

These Outsiders are almost never encountered alone, with at least 2d4 members found in even the smallest hunting party. Such parties are invariably out searching for suitable hosts for Jikegida spawn and will be equipped with trusses, carrying poles, and other gear for transporting prisoners. A small mother-hive might contain a hundred of these Outsiders, while their remaining hive-cities deep in the Black Spine could house thousands.

Most Jikegida are relatively frail "beast-born" types, often with visible animalistic traits from their original host and an intellect slightly inferior to that of a normal human. The "man-born" Jikegida are a half-foot taller and considerably smarter, usually acting as leaders. Some of them even have magical abilities not unlike those of human wizards.

Jikegida use mechanical weaponry, as their limbs are weaker than human arms. Their "throwers" function much like soft pellet-hurling crossbows but can be reloaded as a Move action, and their "cracklers" are maces with stunning, electrified heads. While both inflict non-lethal damage, neither weapon functions in non-Jikegida hands, the Legacy forbidding them from human use.

A few Jikegida still have access to organic construction exoskeletons formed out of the tissues of various slave races and fueled by the flesh of unsuitable host candidates. Originally intended to aid their weak limbs in constructing their hexagonal cities, they have been repurposed for war. Many of these exoskeletons have been destroyed and few remaining hive-cities are capable of building them. Those that remain are usually kept back at the hive or hunting camp for defensive purposes.

A Jikegida wearing a construction exoskeleton gains 20 hit points, a +2 bonus to hit, and a +2 bonus on all damage rolls or Shock. Many exoskeletons incorporate the natural defenses or abilities of the creatures used in their construction, with poison sprays, tremendous mobility, sonic shrieks, or other offensive or defensive abilities.

As a matter of policy, the Jikegida will always release at least one captured prisoner from among those who surrender to them in order to encourage future prey to lay down their arms. Those prey species who cooperate against their own kind are often chosen for release, resulting in certain ugly stories of caravan guards turned traitor to save their own skins.

Once captured by a Jikegida hunting party, some hope of rescue remains if a strong force can quickly retrieve them from a mother-hive. Every so often, however, an ancient Jikegida crawler-machine is sent from a hive-city to the mother-hives to collect a tribute of wretched humans. Those who vanish into the great machine's bowels can have no real hope of avoiding their terrible fate.

Polop

While a veteran Polop hunter sometimes finds pleasure in a solo hunt for human prey, most small feasting expeditions consist of at least 1d6+1 of these crab-eel abominations, while an attack meant to reave a coastal village usually numbers at least 20+2d20 of them. Their forward outposts of living coral house twenty to thirty Polop, while the deep-sea cities are reported to contain tens of thousands of the aliens, according to the few who have ever escaped them.

Polop make extensive use of monstrous alien sea life as weapons, transport, and utility. Listed here is the "hellsquid", a claw-tentacled, octopodal attack beast that can operate on land and that is sometimes found with hunting parties. At sea, huge leviathans of hideous aspect are often employed to destroy troublesome human ships, though such vast creatures are reluctant to approach too closely to the shore.

While the Polop who invade the land are usually of the hunter or slaver varieties, legends speak of the living gods of the Polop, those of them who have eaten so much and of so many mighty foes that they become the awe-inspiring patrons of entire Polop cities. These "great devourers" are twice the size of ordinary Polop, but lack nothing of cunning and cruel intellect.

For their own equipment, Polop prefer to use living sea organisms sorceled into suitable weapons and scaly armor. Their "spitters" cough bone darts that function as thrown light spears, and the spears and slave-taking clubs they use are of a living coral. The weapons of their leaders sweat a venom that forces a victim that is struck to make a Physical save or lose their next turn's Main Action. Two failed saving throws in the same scene means the victim is paralyzed for the remainder of the scene.

Parties out to gather food-slaves will prefer to take living prisoners, as the Polop prefer their food conscious while it is being consumed. These prisoners will be smeared with a viscous green gel that allows them to breathe water and ignore the ocean's chill for the next twenty-four hours, before being carried down into the depths. Polop outposts will have air-filled feeding pens for holding these slaves, while the cities have entire herd quarters where whole generations of humans are raised as meat for the Polop lords.

Tuhulot

The Tuhulot are a cowardly but exceedingly cunning species, loving nothing so much as the preservation of their facsimile of life. The jerking puppet-shapes they use to interface with mundane reality are always kept safely behind a screen of dupes, traitors, and hired help, and only in great necessity will a Tuhulot ever put itself in a position where it might face physical destruction.

Tuhulot always have a purpose in being wherever they are. They are trying to destroy one of the keys to their ancient binding, whether that key is at the center of some ancient ruin, incarnated in a particular human bloodline, or manifesting in some organization or religion's particular teachings. The keys are not always physical; some are particular complexes of belief that must be discredited. To this end the Tuhulot will use its abilities to build a power base and enlist catspaws. Some of these minions may be knowing and willing servitors, as the key the Tuhulot is trying to destroy may be related to their own enmities or goals.

Tuhulot have several magical powers specific to their kind, most usable as a Main Action three times per day. Their ***scrying gaze*** allows them to observe a particular point within ten miles for up to a scene as if they were standing there, assuming magical wards don't forfend them. Their ***blandishing voice*** bends the mind of a single target on a failed Mental save, making it friendly toward the Tuhulot until the creature does something obviously hostile. Their ***sidewards step*** lets them teleport to any location within a mile they've occupied before, provided neither their current location nor their destination is directly illuminated by sunlight. Finally, their ***soul consumption*** power allows them to eat the memories and identity of a helpless sentient victim over the course of a torturous hour. The victim becomes a passive meat puppet for the Tuhulot, carrying out its orders with total obedience and human levels of intellect, but with all trace of its former personality erased. The only way to cure the victim is for the Tuhulot to give back the soul, a thing which it will do only for a suitable price.

Tuhulot do not generally use material weapons, fighting when they must with slivers of distorted space and time. These semi-transparent fragments have a range out to one hundred feet.

Outsiders	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Jikegida Beastborn	1	13	+2	Wpn-1	Wpn-1	30′	8	5	+1	15+
Jikegida Manborn	2	13	+3	Wpn	Wpn	30′	9	4	+1	14+
Jikegida Hive Leader	6	18a	+7 x2	Wpn+2	Wpn+2	30′	10	3	+2	13+
Jikegida City Lord	14	20a	+14 x2	Wpn+4	8/-	30′	10	3	+2	8+
Polop Hunter	3	10	+5	Wpn+2	Wpn+2	30′	8	4	+1	14+
Polop Slaver	7	12	+6 x2	Wpn+3	Wpn+3	30′	9	3	+1	12+
Polop Hellsquid	5	13	+5 x4	1d8+2	None	40′	8	5	+1	13+
Polop Great Devourer	20	15	+20 x3	2d8+5	10/-	40′	11	7	+2	5+
Tuhulot Manipulator	10	15	+12 x2	2d8	4/-	50′	7	3	+2	10+

Undead

As the work of generations of necromancers demonstrates, death is not an invariable condition in the Latter Earth. The Legacy that controls and directs all natural processes in the world is not without flaws or deviations, and sometimes a creature that ought properly to be rotting in the grave is denied the finality of a natural end. These wretched "undead" range from mindless animated corpses to phantasmal identity-imprints to entities largely indistinguishable from normal humans. Most of them are inimical to normal life, either out of malice or out of a sheer incompatibility of existence.

While a sufficiently skilled necromancer can force the Legacy glitching that causes undeath, the phenomenon is also known to happen to those who die with great causes unfinished, those who perish because of powerful and disruptive magical effects, or those who die while under the effects of potent curses. Deeps and other places of great magical power are known for a high incidence of accidental undeath, and there are some breeds of Blighted who are intrinsically cursed with the certainty of an unquiet grave. Some necromantic plagues convert their victims into undead, and were it not for the failsafes of the Legacy some of them might have long since converted the entire Latter Earth into a charnel house… and in some Iterums this may have already come to pass.

Aside from accidental undeath, some desperate seekers of immortality intentionally seek out the condition. Elaborate necromantic rituals, the employ of certain ancient relics, and adherence to particular death-god cults are all possible roads to undeath, but the results of these methods are not always entirely satisfactory. There remains a significant chance of complete identity-death, with nothing left of the petitioner but a shambling corpse, and even in the better cases there are often unacceptable aesthetic, intellectual, or sensory losses.

There does remain one fairly well-known way of producing a perfectly lifelike, fully-cognizant, practically immortal undead form. By creating a complete systemic skip in the Legacy, temporarily jamming its proper operation while effacing the petitioner's name from the rolls of life and death, the seeker can vanish from the laws of mortality. Unfortunately, creating this skip requires the equivalent of a civilization-destroying magical disaster. The consequences of failure are horrific for the petitioner, and the energy release required for the ritual invariably inflicts catastrophic damage on the surrounding lands and people. For those who seek the power of an Imperator and an eternal existence, however, such a sacrifice is an acceptable price. Accumulating the necessary sacrifices, constructing or repurposing the necessary occult architecture, and acquiring the correct components are often greater obstacles for them than any consideration of morality.

Types of Undead

Undead are aggressively anomalous; while they are divided into several general classes, individual entities might have very different qualities or show strange traits based on the kind of Legacy glitch that created them.

Husks are mindless corpses, their identities usually lost or hopelessly scrambled by their death. While relatively easy to create, they are capable of only the most bestial, unthinking behavior, and are usually driven by instincts of violence and useless devouring. Something about living creatures seems to trigger an instinctive hostility in them, as if the living were a painful rebuke to their erroneous existence. In some cases a husk may retain some degree of consciousness or be gifted with unusual abilities by their translation into undeath.

Shades are immaterial identity-imprints left behind by death. While intangible, they maintain some semblance of their appearance in life and are usually keyed to particular purposes or repetitious actions related to their death. Their ability to interact with the world is limited, usually restricted to objects or places important to their death, and their intellects range from completely mindless repetition to full awareness of their state. While magical energies or weapons can sometimes destroy them, permanently extinguishing them usually requires completing particular actions or the destruction of certain anchoring objects.

Revenants are similar to husks in being material corpses but are usually much better-preserved both in body and mind. The chief distinction is that revenants have their own sentience and will, and are sometimes capable of masquerading as living humans. There are usually at least some serious flaws to this existence, either in cadaverous appearance, the need for human flesh and blood, a vulnerability to symbols of natural law such as sunlight, running water, or green wood, or some related infirmity. Revenants are not invariably hostile to humanity, but most experience a kind of nausea or instinctive revulsion toward living creatures due to the dissonance between their existence and that of natural life.

The Unending are a special class consisting of those few mortals who have successfully enacted the Legacy-severing ritual of eternal life. Only those with the might of a potential Imperator have any chance of succeeding at such an ambition and those who have passed the gauntlet are invariably demigods of incredible personal prowess. They are also almost always monstrously evil entities, perfectly willing to erase a nation in order to buy their eternal life.

Qualities of the Undead

The example stat blocks below give illustrations of different common types of undead, but you should feel free to add additional abilities to specific creatures or to particular types of undead you create. These special types might have unique vulnerabilities or lack certain of the usual immunities of the undead, while possessing unusual powers in return.

By default, undead cannot be poisoned, diseased, or be made to sleep or fall unconscious. They need not eat, drink, or breathe, and they are indifferent to normal extremes of heat or cold. Common undead are destroyed at zero hit points; PCs or powerful undead automatically stabilize. They do not continue to decay beyond their initial state, but self-repair at normal healing rates. Conventional healing spells or powers are useless on them unless used by themselves, a Necromancer, or by another person skilled in the maintenance of dead flesh. They accrue and lose System Strain as normal.

Below are certain special abilities or traits found in certain undead. Others surely exist.

Averse: Certain religious symbols, lines of salt, emblems of natural law, or like icons repel it. When presented with the symbol it must make a Mental save to approach it. The aversion is broken if the icon's bearer or their allies attack it.

Beguiling: Once per scene it can beguile a creature with its gaze on a failed Mental save. The target becomes its helpless slave until separated from it for a full week. It cannot beguile creatures with more hit dice or levels than it has.

Desynchrony: Foes hit by it must make a Physical save or be paralyzed for 1d4+1 rounds, stunned by its own dislocation from natural law.

Draining: Foes hit by it are enfeebled, taking a cumulative -2 penalty to hit rolls and-1 to damage rolls, Shock, and skill checks for the rest of the scene.

Intangible: It is a shade or specter, unable to be touched by non-magical objects or energies. It can manipulate objects important to it in life or kill with its icy touch.

Ravenous: If it hits with at least one of its attacks, it gets an immediate bonus attack against the target.

Red Hunger: It must eat a pound of human flesh or drink a pint of human blood every week or lose a quarter of its maximum hit points. At zero hit points it dies or goes inert until fresh food comes near.

Sunscorch: Exposure to sunlight, running water, or some specific other emblem of natural law inflicts 1d10 damage on it each round.

Terrifying: Enemies must make a Mental save or lose their first turn's Main Action as they summon their nerve. Morale checks it induces are made at -2.

Impure: Weapons of silver, green wood, or other specific apotropaic material inflict maximum damage to it on a hit and always inflict Shock regardless of AC.

Unending: It cannot die by violence. Only the right act, weapon, object destruction, or ritual can end it.

Origin Focus: Undead

You are a sentient undead creature that is capable of masquerading as a normal human, assuming no one inspects you too closely. Optionally, you can perfectly mimic a living person, but you must then choose one debility or vulnerability from the prior list of qualities.

As with any other origin Focus, it's up to the GM to decide whether to permit this origin in their campaign.

Level 1: You have all the qualities of an undead creature. You can teach your allies how to successfully use healing effects on you. The debilitating effects of death have lessened you; pick an attribute and lower its modifier by -1, to a minimum of -2.

Level 2: Pick one trait to gain: you can mimic the living with no penalty or drawback, you can turn *Intangible* as an On Turn action for one round per scene, you can use *Desynchrony* once per scene as an Instant action, you become immune to Shock, or some similar undead-style power with GM approval. This level of Focus may be taken more than once.

The Undead	HD	AC	Atk.	Dmg.	Shock	Move	ML	Inst.	Skill	Save
Animated Skeleton	1	13	+1	1d6	-	30′	12	5	+0	15+
Shambling Corpse	2	10	+2	1d8	-	20′	12	6	+0	14+
Ravenous Husk	3	13	+4	1d8	-	30′	12	6	+1	14+
Sentient Carcass	5	15	+4 x2	1d8	2/AC 15	30′	10	4	+1	13+
Angry Shade	4	20	+5	1d6	2/-	30′	12	6	+1	13+
Wraith Lord	10	20	+10 x2	1d12+5	10/-	30′	10	4	+2	10+
Hungry Revenant	8	13a	+10 x2	1d8	2/-	30′	10	5	+2	11+
Undead Mage*	8	10	+10	1d8	2/-	30′	9	4	+2	11+
Revenant King	12	18a	+14 x2	1d12+5	10/-	30′	11	3	+2	9+
Unending One*	20	20	+20 x3	2d8	5/-	40′	10	1	+3	5+

* Undead spellcasters have the slots of a Necromancer of half their hit dice, and cast at a level equal to their full HD, up to a maximum effective level of 10.

FACTIONS AND MAJOR PROJECTS

The world is wider than the land beneath the party's boots. Greater powers and other agents within the campaign backdrop are ceaselessly moving to further their own plans, and many adventure possibilities are born from their constant struggles. Even when heroes are wholly uninvolved in a conflict, the consequences of a victory or loss can have grave repercussions on the things and people they hold dear.

Faced with the machinations of existing powers, players often want to enact their own great plans or ambitions on a campaign world. It might be a goal as humble as ensuring the prosperity of their home village, or it might be a burning passion to overthrow a wicked empire or lead their hard-pressed people to a new homeland far away.

These two campaign elements, factional struggles and grand PC projects, often cause trouble for GMs. Without the right tools to handle them in play, a GM can often feel lost in knowing just how to emulate a living campaign backdrop or fairly adjudicate a great PC ambition. This chapter contains rules and guidelines to help such a GM sort out these difficulties.

Factions and Your Campaign

A ***faction*** is an organization, government, cabal, gang, tribe, business, religion or other group that you mean to make a significant player in your campaign. Not every organization in your campaign setting is a faction; only those groups that are most interesting to you and important to the campaign should be given faction statistics. For most campaigns, that means a maximum of six at any time, and quite possibly fewer.

The faction system shows you how to stat these groups, assign them appropriate assets, and adjudicate their conflicts and schemes. It's an abstracted system, where damage to a faction asset might just as easily represent the arrest of a prominent businessman as it could be a bloody ambush on the road. The system tells the GM which parts of an organization were hurt, but it's up to you to translate that into concrete events in-game.

These events then provide a living backdrop of activity to your campaign setting, actions that the PCs can learn about through tavern talk or personal observation. If they're interested enough, they might just choose to get involved in a conflict and become a powerful weapon in the hands of their patrons. And if they're not interested, the existence of the clashes gives you grist for maintaining a sense of motion and activity in your world.

The faction system is meant to be a convenience for GMs and a tool for adding adventure hooks and additional verisimilitude to your campaign setting. It's not really set up to be played "competitively", with all sides balanced for a fair game. As a consequence, the extra muscle a capable party brings to the fight can often end up deciding the ultimate outcome of a struggle.

Factions Created by PCs

While the rules in this section presume that most factions will be GM-created tools for livening up the campaign backdrop, it's quite possible for PC heroes to forge their own factions and reap the benefits of rule. The practicality of this is up to the GM, but the process is relatively simple.

The PC or party must actively seek to build a base of followers and assets using the major project rules that begin on page 336. The scale of the project they must resolve will depend on the scale of the faction they want to establish and their own personal power; a band of famous heroes might find founding a knightly order to be a "plausible" effort, while a penniless group of vagabonds might find it "impossible" in their current situation. In the same fashion, founding a new kingdom in a wilderness is going to be a much more difficult feat than establishing a politically-influential monastery in a market village.

The adventurers can use money, adventures, stockpiled Renown, or other methods to succeed at the project. If they finally bring it to fruition, the GM then creates an appropriately-sized faction using the rules on page 327 and lets the PCs control it. Aside from the campaign-scale faction turn actions described in this section, they get all the usual benefits—and obligations—that come from ruling their own faction. If they have an order of knights under their command, they can probably dispatch several otherwise-unoccupied ones wherever they wish and garrison important places with others.

These peripheral benefits should match the scale of the adventures and effort they put into obtaining them. A faction created through great deeds and dire costs should pay off appropriately in local influence, status, and utility. The faction may suffer if the PCs spend its resources too freely and don't support it out of their own purse and doings, but it should be good for something more than bragging rights.

Major Projects in Play

Aside from the rules for factions, this section also includes guidelines on ***major projects***, grand session-spanning goals that the party might take up. These goals are too vast or nebulous to be accomplished just by paying silver or killing a few troublemakers, so GMs often feel uncertain as to how they're to fairly adjudicate the players' efforts in accomplishing them.

The rules in this section provide a framework for identifying the difficulty of the project, measuring progress toward its completion, and turning those vast ambitions into adventure hooks that cut down on the GM's own need for content creation. Great goals are a blessing to a GM; the players are being kind enough to tell you exactly what kind of adventures they want to have, and these pages will help you take best advantage of it.

Factions and the Faction Turn

Factions have several statistics to define their overall qualities. Weak or small factions tend to have low ratings even in their main focus, while kingdoms and major institutions may have a good rating even in their less important traits, simply because they have so many resources available to them.

Cunning is measured from 1 to 8 and indicates the faction's general guile, skill at subterfuge, and subtlety. Low Cunning means the faction is straightforward or unaccustomed to dealing with trickery, while high Cunning is for Machiavellian schemers and secretive organizations.

Force is measured from 1 to 8 and reflects the overall military prowess and martial competence of the faction. A faction with low Force isn't used to using violence to get its way, or is particularly inept at it, while a high Force reflects a culture of military expertise.

Wealth is measured from 1 to 8 and shows the faction's general prosperity, material resources, and facility with money. Low Wealth means the faction is poor, disinterested in material goods, or spendthrift with what they have, while high Wealth factions are rich and familiar with using money and goods as tools for success.

Magic measures the amount of magical resources available to the faction. "None" is for factions that have no meaningful access to magic. "Low" is for those factions that have at best a few trained mages or small stores of magical goods. "Medium" is for a faction where there is an established source of magical power for the faction, either as a sub-group of cooperative mages, a magical academy, a tradition of sorcery in the faction, or some other institutionalized aid. "High" magic is reserved for those factions that have a strong focus on wielding magical power, most fitting for a faction that represents a magical order.

Treasure is counted in points, and the total reflects how much the faction owns in cash and valuable goods. A single point of Treasure doesn't have an established cash value; a sack of gold is worthless in itself to a faction that needs a dozen oxcarts, and a herd of cattle owned by a faction can't necessarily be turned into a fixed sum of coin.

Hit points work for factions much as they do for characters; when a faction is reduced to zero hit points, it collapses. Its individual members and sub-groups might not all be dead, but they're so hopelessly disorganized, dispirited, or conflict-bound that the faction ceases to exist as a coherent whole.

Assets are important resources possessed by a faction, such as controlling a ring of Smugglers, or having a unit of Infantry. Assets all have their own statistics and hit points, and all of them require certain scores in Force, Wealth, Cunning, and Magic to purchase. Assets don't cover all the resources and institutions the faction may control, but they reflect the ones that are most relevant to the faction at that moment. A kingdom may have more military than the Infantry unit they have, but that Infantry unit is the one that's doing something important.

The Faction Turn

Every month or so, the GM should run a faction turn. This turn may take place more often during times of intense activity, or less often if the campaign world is quiet. In general, a faction turn after every adventure is a good average, assuming the PCs don't have back-to-back adventures.

At the start of every faction turn, each faction rolls 1d8 for initiative, the highest rolls going first. Ties are resolved as the GM wishes, and then each faction takes the following steps in order.

- The faction earns Treasure equal to half their Wealth plus a quarter of their combined Force and Cunning, the total being rounded up.
- The faction must pay any upkeep required by their individual Asset costs, or by the cost of having too many Assets for their attributes. If they can't afford this upkeep, individual Assets may have their own bad consequences, while not being able to afford excess Assets means that the excess are lost.
- The faction triggers any special abilities individual Assets may have, such as abilities that allow an Asset to move or perform some other special benefit.
- The faction takes one Faction Action as listed in the following section, resolving any Attacks or other consequences from their choice. When an action is taken, every Asset owned by the faction may take it; thus, if ***Attack*** is chosen, then every valid Asset owned by the faction can Attack. If ***Repair Asset*** is chosen, every Asset can be repaired if enough Treasure is spent.
- The faction checks to see if it's accomplished its most recent goal. If so, it collects the experience points for doing so and picks a new goal. If not, it can abandon the old goal and pick a new one, but it will sacrifice its next turn's Faction Action to do so and may not trigger any Asset special abilities that round, either.

The next faction in order then acts until all factions have acted for the turn.

Asset Locations and Movement

Every Asset has a location on the campaign map. This location may not be where all the elements of the Asset are located. It might simply be the headquarters of an organization, or the spot where the most active and important members of it are currently working. However it's described, it's the center of gravity for the Asset.

This location is usually in a town or other settlement, but it could be anything that makes sense. A reclusive Prophet might dwell deep within the wilderness, and a ring of Smugglers might currently be based out of a hidden sea cave. A location is simply wherever the GM thinks it should be.

Assets can move locations, either with the ***Move Asset*** faction action or with a special ability possessed by the Asset itself or an allied unit. Generally, whenever an Asset moves, it can move one turn's worth of distance.

As a rule of thumb, for a one-month turn, this is about one hundred miles. This is as far as an organization can shift itself in thirty days while still maintaining some degree of control and cohesion. The GM may adjust this distance based on the situation; if the campaign is taking place in an island archipelago with fast sea travel it's going to be easier to move long distances than if the Asset has to march through mountains to get there.

Some Assets also have special abilities that work on targets within one move of the Asset. Again, the GM decides what this means, but generally it means that the Asset can affect targets within a hundred miles of its location.

Sometimes it doesn't make logical sense for an Asset to be able to move to a particular location. A unit of Infantry, for example, could hardly walk into an enemy nation's capital so as to later ***Attack*** the Court Patronage Asset there. In this case, the best the Infantry could do would be to move to a location near the capital, assuming the GM decides that's plausible. The Infantry couldn't actually ***Attack*** the enemy faction's Assets until they got into the city itself where those Assets were located.

Assets with the Subtle quality are not limited this way. Subtle Assets can move to locations even where they would normally be prohibited by the ruling powers. Dislodging them requires that they be Attacked until destroyed or moved out by their owner.

Assets with the Stealth quality are also not limited by this, and can move freely to any location within reach. Stealthed Assets cannot be Attacked by other Assets until they lose the Stealth quality. This happens when they are discovered by certain special Assets or when the Stealthed Asset Attacks something.

Attribute Checks

Some actions, such as ***Attack***, require an attribute check between factions, such as Force versus Cunning, or Wealth versus Force. Other special Asset abilities sometimes call for attribute checks as well.

To make this check, the attacker and defender both roll 1d10 and add their relevant attribute. Thus, for a Force versus Cunning check, the attacker would roll 1d10+Force against the defender's 1d10+Cunning. The attacker wins if their total is higher, and the defender wins if it's a tie or their roll is higher.

Some special abilities or tags allow the attacker or defender to roll more than one die for a check. In this case, the dice are rolled and the highest of them are used.

Faction Tags

Many Factions have at least one "tag", indicating some special benefit or quality it has due to its nature. These are merely some of the possibilities you might assign.

Antimagical: The faction is dwarven or of some other breed of skilled counter-sorcerers. Assets that require Medium or higher Magic to purchase roll all attribute checks twice against this faction during an Attack and take the worst roll.

Concealed: All Assets the faction purchases enter play with the Stealth quality.

Imperialist: The faction quickly expands its Bases of Influence. Once per turn, it can use the ***Expand Influence*** action as a special ability instead of it taking a full action.

Innovative: The faction can purchase Assets as if their attribute ratings were two points higher than they are. Only two such over-complex Assets may be owned at any one time.

Machiavellian: The faction is diabolically cunning. It rolls an extra die for all Cunning attribute checks. Its Cunning must always be its highest attribute.

Martial: The faction is profoundly devoted to war. It rolls an extra die for all Force attribute checks. Force must always be its highest attribute.

Massive: The faction is an empire, major kingdom, or other huge organizational edifice. It automatically wins attribute checks if its attribute is more than twice as big as the opposing side's attribute, unless the other side is also Massive.

Mobile: The faction is exceptionally fast or mobile. Its faction turn movement range is twice what another faction would have in the same situation.

Populist: The faction has widespread popular support. Assets that cost 5 Treasure or less to buy cost one point less, to a minimum of 1.

Rich: The faction is rich or possessed of mercantile skill. It rolls an extra die for all Wealth attribute checks. Wealth must always be its highest attribute.

Rooted: The faction has very deep roots in its area of influence. They roll an extra die for attribute checks in their headquarters location, and all rivals roll their own checks there twice, taking the worst die.

Scavenger: As looters and raiders, when they destroy an enemy Asset they gain a quarter of its purchase value in Treasure, rounded up.

Supported: The faction has excellent logistical support. All damaged Assets except Bases of Influence regain one lost hit point per faction turn automatically.

Tenacious: The faction is hard to dislodge. When one of its Bases of Influence is reduced to zero hit points, it instead survives with 1 hit point. This trait can't be used again on that base until it's fully fixed.

Zealot: Once per turn, when an Asset fails an ***Attack*** action check, it can reroll the attribute check. It automatically takes counterattack damage from its target, however, or 1d6 if the target has less or none.

Faction Turn Actions

Attack: The faction nominates one or more Assets to attack the enemy in their locations. In each location, the defender chooses which of the Assets present will meet the Attack; thus, if a unit of Infantry attacks in a location where there is an enemy Base of Influence, Informers, and Idealistic Thugs, the defender could decide to use Idealistic Thugs to defend against the attack.

The attacker makes an attribute check based on the attack of the acting Asset; thus, the Infantry would roll Force versus Force. On a success, the defending Asset takes damage equal to the attacking Asset's attack score, or 1d8 in the case of Infantry. On a failure, the attacking Asset takes damage equal to the defending Asset's counterattack score, or 1d6 in the case of Idealistic Thugs.

If the damage done to an Asset reduces it to zero hit points, it is destroyed. The same Asset may be used to defend against multiple attacking Assets, provided it can survive the onslaught.

Damage done to a Base of Influence is also done directly to the faction's hit points. Overflow damage is not transmitted, however; if the Base of Influence only has 5 hit points and 7 hit points are inflicted, the faction loses the Base of Influence and 5 hit points from its total.

Move Asset: One or more Assets are moved up to one turn's worth of movement each. The receiving location must not have the ability and inclination to forbid the Asset from operating there. Subtle and Stealthed Assets ignore this limit.

If an asset loses the Subtle or Stealth qualities while in a hostile location, they must use this action to retreat to safety within one turn or they will take half their maximum hit points in damage at the start of the next turn, rounded up.

Repair Asset: The faction spends 1 Treasure on each Asset they wish to repair, fixing half their relevant attribute value in lost hit points, rounded up. Thus, fixing a Force Asset would heal half the faction's Force attribute, rounded up. Additional healing can be applied to an Asset in this same turn, but the cost increases by 1 Treasure for each subsequent fix; thus, the second costs 2 Treasure, the third costs 3 Treasure, and so forth.

This ability can at the same time also be used to repair damage done to the faction, spending 1 Treasure to heal a total equal to the faction's highest and lowest Force, Wealth, or Cunning attribute divided by two, rounded up. Thus, a faction with a Force of 5, Wealth of 2, and Cunning of 4 would heal 4 points of damage. Only one such application of healing is possible for a faction each turn.

Expand Influence: The faction seeks to establish a new base of operations in a location. The faction must have at least one Asset there already to make this attempt, and must spend 1 Treasure for each hit point the new Base of Influence is to have. Thus, to create a new Base of Influence with a maximum hit point total of 10, 10 Treasure must be spent. Bases with high maximum hit point totals are harder to dislodge, but losing them also inflicts much more damage on the faction's own hit points.

Once the Base of Influence is created, the owner makes a Cunning versus Cunning attribute check against every other faction that has at least one Asset in the same location. If the other faction wins the check, they are allowed to make an immediate ***Attack*** against the new Base of Influence with whatever Assets they have present in the location. The creating faction may attempt to block this action by defending with other Assets present.

If the Base of Influence survives this onslaught, it operates as normal and allows the faction to purchase new Assets there with the ***Create Asset*** action.

Create Asset: The faction buys one Asset at a location where they have a Base of Influence. They must have the minimum attribute and Magic ratings necessary to buy the Asset and must pay the listed cost in Treasure to build it. A faction can create only one Asset per turn.

A faction can have no more Assets of a particular attribute than their attribute score. Thus, a faction with a Force of 3 can have only 3 Force Assets. If this number is exceeded, the faction must pay 1 Treasure per excess Asset at the start of each turn, or else they will lose the excess.

Hide Asset: An action available only to factions with a Cunning score of 3 or better, this action allows the faction to give one owned Asset the Stealth quality for every 2 Treasure they spend. Assets currently in a location with another faction's Base of Influence can't be hidden. If the Asset later loses the Stealth, no refund is given.

Sell Asset: The faction voluntarily decommissions an Asset, salvaging it for what it's worth. The Asset is lost and the faction gains half its purchase cost in Treasure, rounded down. If the Asset is damaged when it is sold, however, no Treasure is gained.

Creating Factions

A given campaign should generally not have more than six active factions at any one time, and three or four are generally more manageable. If there are more extant factions than this in your campaign, then simply run turns for the three or four most active or relevant ones and leave the others fallow for the turn.

To create a faction, first decide whether it is a small, medium, or large faction. A small one might be a petty cult or small free city or minor magical academy. A medium one might be a local baron's government or province-wide faith. A large one would be an entire kingdom or a major province of a vast empire.

It's perfectly acceptable to break a large institution down into a smaller faction. If the provincial government of Ruhark is the important element in the campaign, the empire that Ruhark belongs to can be ignored. If the One Red Dawn faction of the Howling God's clergy are the ones who hate the PCs, then making them into their own small faction is much easier and better than factionizing the entire Howling God hierarchy.

All factions have a Base of Influence at their primary headquarters with a hit point total equal to the faction's maximum. The faction's Magic rating is whatever the GM thinks suitable.

For a small faction, give them a 3 or 4 in their best attribute, a 2 or 3 in their second-best, and a 1 or 2 in their worst quality.

Medium factions should assign 5 or 6 to their best attribute, 4 or 5 to their second-best, and 2 or 3 to their worst. They should have two Assets in their primary attribute and two others among the other two.

Large factions should assign 7 or 8 to their strongest attribute, 6 or 7 to their second-best attribute, and 3 or 4 to their worst quality. They should have four Assets in their primary attribute, and four others spread among the other two. Their Magic rating will depend on whatever you think is appropriate for their scale, but remember that it's harder to concentrate effective magical resources when dealing with a whole province or nation than it is to enchant a single city-state or magical institution.

To determine a faction's maximum hit points, use the adjacent table. Thus, one with a Force of 3, a Wealth of 5, and a Cunning of 2 would have hit points equal to 4 plus 9 plus 2, or 15 total. The Base of Influence at their primary headquarters will always have a maximum hit points equal to the faction's maximum hit points, even if it later rises or falls due to attribute score changes.

Lastly, give a faction a goal, either one from the foregoing list or one chosen by the GM. When this goal is achieved, the faction earns experience points which it can later spend to increase its attributes. The cost for such increases is given on the table adjacent. Earlier levels must be purchased before later, so to raise Force from 5 to 7 will cost 9 XP to raise it to 6, then 12 more to raise it to 7.

Attribute Rating	Faction XP Cost to Purchase	Hit Point Value
1	-	1
2	2	2
3	4	4
4	6	6
5	9	9
6	12	12
7	16	16
8	20	20

Example Faction Goals

The difficulty of a faction goal is the number of experience points earned on a successful completion of it.

Blood the Enemy: Inflict a number of hit points of damage on enemy faction assets or bases equal to your faction's total Force, Cunning, and Wealth ratings. Difficulty 2.

Destroy the Foe: Destroy a rival faction. Difficulty equal to 2 plus the average of the faction's Force, Cunning, and Wealth ratings.

Eliminate Target: Choose an undamaged rival Asset. If you destroy it within three turns, succeed at a Difficulty 1 goal. If you fail, pick a new goal without suffering the usual turn of paralysis.

Expand Influence: Plant a Base of Influence at a new location. Difficulty 1, +1 if a rival contests it.

Inside Enemy Territory: Have a number of Stealthed assets in locations where there is a rival Base of Influence equal to your Cunning score. Units that are already Stealthed in locations when this goal is adopted don't count. Difficulty 2.

Invincible Valor: Destroy a Force asset with a minimum purchase rating higher than your faction's Force rating. Difficulty 2.

Peaceable Kingdom: Don't take an Attack action for four turns. Difficulty 1.

Root Out the Enemy: Destroy a Base of Influence of a rival faction in a specific location. Difficulty equal to half the average of the current ruling faction's Force, Cunning, and Wealth ratings, rounded up.

Sphere Dominance: Choose Wealth, Force, or Cunning. Destroy a number of rival assets of that kind equal to your score in that attribute. Difficulty of 1 per 2 destroyed, rounded up.

Wealth of Kingdoms: Spend Treasure equal to four times your faction's Wealth rating on bribes and influence. This money is effectively lost, but the goal is then considered accomplished. The faction's Wealth rating must increase before this goal can be selected again. Difficulty 2.

Cunning Assets

Bewitching Charmer: When the Bewitching Charmer succeeds in an Attack, the targeted Asset is unable to leave the same location as the Bewitching Charmer until the latter Asset moves or is destroyed. Bewitching Charmers are immune to Counterattack.

Blackmail: When a Blackmail asset is in a location, hostile factions can't roll more than one die during Attacks made by or against them there, even if they have tags or Assets that usually grant bonus dice.

Court Patronage: Powerful nobles or officials are appointing their agents to useful posts of profit. A Court Patronage Asset automatically grants 1 Treasure to its owning faction each turn.

Covert Transport: As a free action once per turn, the faction can pay 1 Treasure and move any Cunning or Wealth Asset at the same location as the Covert Transport. The transported Asset gains the Stealth quality until it performs some action or is otherwise utilized by the faction.

Cryptomancers: In place of an Attack action, they can make a Cunning vs. Cunning attack on a specific hostile Asset within one move. On a success, the targeted Asset is unable to do anything or be used for anything on its owner's next faction turn. On a failure, no Counterattack damage is taken.

Dancing Girls: Dancing Girls or other charming distractions are immune to Attack or Counterattack damage from Force Assets, but they cannot be used to defend against Attacks from Force Assets.

Expert Treachery: On a successful Attack by Expert Treachery, this Asset is lost, 5 Treasure is gained by its owning faction, and the Asset that Expert Treachery targeted switches sides. This conversion happens even if their new owners lack the attributes usually necessary to maintain their new Asset.

Hired Friends: As a free action, once per turn, the faction may spend 1 Treasure and grant a Wealth Asset within one turn's movement range the Subtle quality. This quality will remain, regardless of the Wealth Asset's movement, until the Hired Friends are destroyed or they use this ability again.

Idealistic Thugs: Easily-manipulated hotheads are enlisted under whatever ideological or religious principle best enthuses them for violence.

Informers: As a free action, once per turn, the faction can spend 1 Treasure and have the Informers look for Stealthed Assets. To do so, the Informers pick a faction and make a Cunning vs. Cunning Attack on them. No counterattack damage is taken if they fail, but if they succeed, all Stealthed Assets of that faction within one move of the Informers are revealed.

Interrupted Logistics: Non-Stealthed hostile units cannot enter the same location as the Interrupted Logistics Asset without paying 1d4 Treasure and waiting one turn to arrive there.

Just As Planned: Some sublimely cunning mastermind ensures that the schemes of this faction are unimaginably subtle and far-seeing. Whenever the faction's Assets make a roll involving Cunning, they may reroll a failed check at the cost of inflicting 1d6 damage on Just As Planned. This may be done repeatedly, though it may destroy the Asset. There is no range limit on this benefit.

Mindbenders: Once per turn as a free action, the Mindbenders can force a rival faction to reroll a check, Attack, or other die roll they just made and take whichever result the Mindbenders prefer. A faction can only be affected this way once until the start of the Mindbender's faction's next turn.

Occult Infiltrators: Magically-gifted spies and assassins are enlisted to serve the faction. Occult Infiltrator Assets always begin play with the Stealth quality.

Omniscient Seers: At the start of their turn, each hostile Stealthed asset within one turn's movement of the Omniscient Seers must succeed in a Cunning vs. Cunning check against the owning faction or lose their Stealth. In addition, all Cunning rolls made by the faction for units or events within one turn's movement of the seers gain an extra die.

Organization Moles: Sleeper agents and deep-cover spies burrow into hostile organizations, waiting to disrupt them from within when ordered to do so.

Petty Seers: A cadre of skilled fortune-tellers and minor oracles have been enlisted by the faction to foresee perils and allow swift counterattacks.

Popular Movement: Any friendly Asset is allowed movement into the same location as the Popular Movement, even if it would normally be forbidden by its owners and lacks the Subtle quality. If the Popular Movement later moves or is destroyed, such Assets must also leave or suffer the usual consequences of a non-Subtle Asset in a hostile area.

Prophet: Whether a religious prophet, charismatic philosopher, rebel leader, or other figure of popular appeal, the Asset is firmly under the faction's control.

Saboteurs: An Asset that is Attacked by the Saboteurs can't use any free action abilities it may have during the next turn, whether or not the Attack was successful.

Seditionists: In place of an Attack action, the Seditionists' owners may spend 1d4 Treasure and attach the Asset to a hostile Asset in the same location. Until the Seditionists are destroyed, infest another Asset, or leave the same location, the rebelling Asset cannot be used for anything and grants no benefits.

Shapeshifters: As a free action once per turn, the faction can spend 1 Treasure and grant the Shapeshifters the Stealth quality.

Smugglers: As a free action, once per faction turn, the Smugglers can move any allied Wealth or Cunning

Cunning Asset	Cost	HP	Magic	Attack	Counter	Qualities
			Cunning 1			
Informers	2	3	None	C v. C/Special	None	Subtle, Special
Petty Seers	2	2	Medium	None	1d6 damage	Subtle
Smugglers	2	4	None	C v. W/1d4 damage	None	Subtle, Action
Useful Idiots	1	2	None	None	None	Subtle, Special
			Cunning 2			
Blackmail	4	4	None	C v. C/1d4 damage	None	Subtle, Special
Dancing Girls	4	3	None	C v. W/2d4 damage	None	Subtle, Special
Hired Friends	4	4	None	C v. C/1d6 damage	None	Subtle, Special
Saboteurs	5	6	None	C v. W/2d4 damage	None	Subtle, Special
			Cunning 3			
Bewitching Charmer	6	4	Low	C v. C/Special	None	Subtle, Special
Covert Transport	8	4	None	None	None	Subtle, Special
Occult Infiltrators	6	4	Medium	C v. C/2d6 damage	None	Subtle, Special
Spymaster	8	4	None	C v. C/1d6 damage	2d6 damage	Subtle
			Cunning 4			
Court Patronage	8	8	None	C v. C/1d6 damage	1d6 damage	Subtle, Special
Idealistic Thugs	8	12	None	C v. F/1d6 damage	1d6 damage	Subtle
Seditionists	12	8	None	Special	None	Subtle
Vigilant Agents	12	8	None	None	1d4 damage	Subtle, Special
			Cunning 5			
Cryptomancers	14	6	Low	C v. C/Special	None	Subtle
Organization Moles	8	10	None	C v. C/2d6 damage	None	Subtle
Shapeshifters	14	8	Medium	C v. C/2d6 damage	None	Subtle, Special
			Cunning 6			
Interrupted Logistics	20	10	None	None	None	Subtle, Special
Prophet	20	10	None	C v. C/2d8 damage	1d8 damage	Subtle
Underground Roads	18	15	None	None	None	Subtle, Special
			Cunning 7			
Expert Treachery	10	5	None	C v. C/Special	None	Subtle
Mindbenders	20	10	Medium	None	2d8 damage	Subtle
Popular Movement	25	16	None	C v. C/2d6 damage	1d6 damage	Subtle, Special
			Cunning 8			
Just As Planned	40	15	None	None	1d10 damage	Subtle, Special
Omniscient Seers	30	10	High	None	1d8 damage	Subtle, Special

Asset in their same location to a destination within movement range, even if the destination wouldn't normally allow an un-Subtle Asset to locate there.

Spymaster: A veteran operative runs a counterintelligence bureau in the area and formulates offensive schemes for the faction.

Underground Roads: A well-established network of secret transit extends far around this Asset. As a free action, the faction may pay 1 Treasure and move any friendly Asset from a location within one round's move of the Underground Roads to a destination also within one round's move of the Roads.

Useful Idiots: Hirelings, catspaws, foolish idealists, and other disposable minions are gathered together in this Asset. If another Asset within one turn's move of the Useful Idiots is struck by an Attack, the faction can instead sacrifice the Useful Idiots to negate the attack. Only one band of Useful Idiots can be sacrificed on any one turn.

Vigilant Agents: A constant flow of observations runs back to the faction from these watchful counterintelligence agents. Whenever another faction moves a Stealthed asset into a location within one move's distance from the Vigilant Agents, they may make a Cunning vs. Cunning attack against the owning faction. On a success, the intruding Asset loses its Stealth after it completes the move.

Force Assets

Apocalypse Engine: One of a number of hideously powerful ancient super-weapons unearthed from some lost armory, an Apocalypse Engine rains some eldritch horror down on a targeted enemy Asset.

Brilliant General: A leader for the ages is in service with the faction. Whenever the Brilliant General or any allied Force Asset in the same location Attacks or is made to defend, it can roll an extra die to do so.

Cavalry: Mounted troops, chariots, or other mobile soldiers are in service to the faction. While weak on defense, they can harry logistics and mount powerful charges.

Demonic Slayer: Powerful sorcerers have summoned or constructed an inhuman assassin-beast to hunt down and slaughter the faction's enemies. A Demonic Slayer enters play Stealthed.

Enchanted Elites: A carefully-selected group of skilled warriors are given magical armaments and arcane blessings to boost their effectiveness.

Fearful Intimidation: Judicious exercises of force have intimidated the locals, making them reluctant to cooperate with any group that stands opposed to the faction.

Fortification Program: A program of organized fortification and supply caching has been undertaken around the Asset's location, hardening allied communities and friendly Assets. Once per turn, when an enemy makes an Attack that targets the faction's Force rating, the faction can use the Fortification Program to defend if the Asset is within a turn's move from the attack.

Guerrilla Populace: The locals have the assistance of trained guerrilla warfare leaders who can aid them in sabotaging and attacking unwary hostiles.

Infantry: Common foot soldiers have been organized and armed by the faction. While rarely particularly heroic in their capabilities, they have the advantage of numbers.

Invincible Legion: The faction has developed a truly irresistible military organization that can smash its way through opposition without the aid of any support units. During a ***Relocate Asset*** action, the Invincible Legion can relocate to locations that would otherwise not permit a formal military force to relocate there, as if it had the Subtle quality. It is not, however, in any way subtle.

Knights: Elite warriors of considerable personal prowess have been trained or enlisted by the faction, either from noble sympathizers, veteran members, or amenable mercenaries.

Local Guard: Ordinary citizens are enlisted into night watch patrols and local guard units. They're most effective when defending from behind a fortified position, but they have some idea of how to use their weapons.

Magical Logistics: An advanced web of magical Workings, skilled sorcerers, and trained logistical experts are enlisted to streamline the faction's maintenance and sustain damaged units. Once per faction turn, as a free action, the Asset can repair 2 hit points of damage to an allied Force Asset.

Military Roads: The faction has established a network of roads with a logistical stockpile at this Asset's location. As a consequence, once per faction turn, the faction can move any one Asset from any location within its reach to any other location within its reach at a cost of 1 Treasure.

Military Transport: A branch of skilled teamsters, transport ships, road-building crews, or other logistical facilitators is in service to the faction. As a free action once per faction turn, it can bring an allied Asset to its location, provided they're within one turn's movement range, or move an allied Asset from its own location to a target also within a turn's move. Multiple Military Transport assets can chain this movement over long distances.

Purity Rites: A rigorous program of regular mental inspection and counterintelligence measures has been undertaken by the faction. This Asset can only defend against attacks that target the faction's Cunning, but it allows the faction to roll an extra die to defend.

Reserve Corps: Retired military personnel and rear-line troops are spread through the area as workers or colonists, available to resist hostilities as needed.

Scouts: Long-range scouts and reconnaissance experts work for the faction, able to venture deep into hostile territory.

Siege Experts: These soldiers are trained in trenching, sapping, and razing targeted structures. When they successfully Attack an enemy Asset, the owner loses 1d4 points of Treasure from their reserves and this faction gains it.

Summoned Hunter: A skilled sorcerer has summoned a magical beast or mentally bound a usefully disposable assassin into the faction's service.

Temple Fanatics: Fanatical servants of a cult, ideology, or larger religion, these enthusiasts wreak havoc on enemies without a thought for their own lives. After every time the Temple Fanatics defend or successfully attack, they take 1d4 damage.

Thugs: These gutter ruffians and common kneebreakers have been organized in service to the faction's causes.

Vanguard Unit: This unit is specially trained to build bridges, reduce fortifications, and facilitate a lightning strike into enemy territory. When its faction takes a Relocate Asset turn, it can move the Vanguard Unit and any allied units at the same location to any other location within range, even if the unit type would normally be prohibitive from moving

Force Asset	Cost	HP	Magic	Attack	Counter	Qualities
				Force 1		
Fearful Intimidation	2	4	None	None	1d4 damage	
Local Guard	3	4	None	F v. F/1d3+1 damage	1d4+1 damage	
Summoned Hunter	4	4	Medium	C v. F/1d6 damage	None	Subtle
Thugs	2	1	None	F v. C/1d6 damage	None	Subtle
				Force 2		
Guerrilla Populace	6	4	None	F v. F/1d4+1 damage	None	
Military Transport	4	6	None	None	None	Action
Reserve Corps	4	4	None	F v. F/1d6 damage	1d6 damage	
Scouts	5	5	None	F v. F/2d4 damage	1d4+1 damage	Subtle
				Force 3		
Enchanted Elites	8	6	Medium	F v. F/1d10 damage	1d6 damage	Subtle
Infantry	6	6	None	F v. F/1d8 damage	1d6 damage	
Temple Fanatics	4	6	None	F v. F/2d6 damage	2d6 damage	Special
Witch Hunters	6	4	Low	C v. C/1d4+1 damage	1d6 damage	
				Force 4		
Cavalry	8	12	None	F v. F/2d6 damage	1d4 damage	
Military Roads	10	10	None	None	None	Action
Vanguard Unit	10	10	None	None	1d6 damage	Action
War Fleet	12	8	None	F v. F/2d6 damage	1d8 damage	Action
				Force 5		
Demonic Slayer	12	4	High	C v. C/2d6+2 damage	None	Subtle, Special
Magical Logistics	14	6	Medium	None	None	Special
Siege Experts	10	8	None	F v. W/1d6 damage	1d6 damage	
				Force 6		
Fortification Program	20	18	None	None	2d6 damage	Action
Knights	18	16	None	F v. F/2d8 damage	2d6 damage	
War Machines	25	14	Medium	F v. F/2d10+4 damage	1d10 damage	
				Force 7		
Brilliant General	25	8	None	C v. F/1d8 damage	None	Subtle, Special
Purity Rites	20	10	Low	None	2d8+2 damage	Special
Warshaped	30	16	High	F v. F/2d8+2 damage	2d8 damage	Subtle
				Force 8		
Apocalypse Engine	35	20	Medium	F v. F/3d10+4 damage	None	
Invincible Legion	40	30	None	F v. F/2d10+4 damage	2d10+4 damage	Special

there. Thus, a Force asset could be moved into a foreign nation's territory even against their wishes. The unit may remain at that location afterwards even if the Vanguard Unit leaves.

War Fleet: While a war fleet can only Attack assets and locations within reach of the waterways, once per turn it can freely relocate itself to any coastal area within movement range. The Asset itself must be based out of some landward location to provide for supply and refitting.

War Machines: Mobile war machines driven by trained beasts or magical motive power are under the faction's control.

Warshaped: The faction has the use of magical creatures designed specifically for warfare, or ordinary humans that have been greatly altered to serve the faction's needs. Such forces are few and elusive enough to evade easy detection.

Witch Hunters: Certain personnel are trained in sniffing out traitors and spies in the organization, along with the presence of hostile magic or hidden spellcraft.

Wealth Assets

Ancient Mechanisms: Some useful magical mechanism from ages past has been refitted to be useful in local industry. Whenever an Asset in the same location must roll to make a profit, such as Farmers or Manufactory, the faction may roll the die twice and take the better result.

Ancient Workshop: A workshop has been refitted with ancient magical tools, allowing prodigies of production, albeit not always safely. As a free action, once per turn, the Ancient Workshop takes 1d6 damage and the owning faction gains 1d6 Treasure.

Arcane Laboratory: The faction's overall Magic is counted as one step higher for the purposes of creating Assets in the same location as the laboratory. Multiple Arcane Laboratories in the same location can increase the Magic boost by multiple steps.

Armed Guards: Hired caravan guards, bodyguards, or other armed minions serve the faction.

Caravan: As a free action, once per turn, the Caravan can spend 1 Treasure and move itself and one other Asset in the same place to a new location within one move.

Cooperative Businesses: If any other faction attempts to create an Asset in the same location as a Cooperative Business, the cost of doing so increases by 1 Treasure. This penalty stacks.

Dragomans: Interpreters, cultural specialists, and go-betweens simplify the expansion of a faction's influence in an area. A faction that takes an ***Expand Influence*** action in the same location as this Asset can roll an extra die on all checks there that turn. As a free action once per turn, this Asset can move.

Economic Disruption: As a free action once per turn, this Asset can move itself without cost.

Farmers: Farmers, hunters, and simple rural artisans are in service to the faction here. Once per turn, as a free action, the Asset's owner can roll 1d6; on a 5+, they gain 1 Treasure from the Farmers.

Free Company: Hired mercenaries and professional soldiers, this Asset can, as a free action once per turn, move itself. At the start of each of its owner's turn, it takes 1 Treasure in upkeep costs; if this is not paid, roll 1d6. On a 1-3 the Asset is lost, on a 4-6 it goes rogue and will move to Attack the most profitable-looking target. This roll is repeated each turn until back pay is paid or the Asset is lost.

Front Merchant: Whenever the Front Merchant successfully Attacks an enemy Asset, the target faction loses 1 Treasure, if they have any, and the Front Merchant's owner gains it. Such a loss can occur only once per turn.

Golden Prosperity: Each turn, as a free action, the faction gains 1d6 Treasure that can be used to fix damaged Assets as if by the ***Repair Assets*** action. Any of this Treasure not spent on such purposes is lost.

Healers: Whenever an Asset within one move of the Healers is destroyed by an Attack that used Force against the target, the owner of the Healers may pay half its purchase price in Treasure, rounded up, to instantly restore it with 1 hit point. This cannot be used to repair Bases of Influence.

Hired Legion: As a free action once per turn, the Hired Legion can move. This faction must be paid 2 Treasure at the start of each turn as upkeep, or else they go rogue as the Free Company Asset does. This Asset cannot be voluntarily sold or disbanded.

Lead or Silver: If Lead or Silver's Attack reduces an enemy Asset to zero hit points, this Asset's owner may immediately pay half the target's purchase cost to claim it as their own, reviving it with 1 hit point.

Mad Genius: As a free action, once per turn, the Mad Genius may move. As a free action, once per turn, the Mad Genius may be sacrificed to treat the Magic rating in their location as High for the purpose of buying Assets that require such resources. This boost lasts only until the next Asset is purchased in that location.

Manufactory: Once per turn, as a free action, the Asset's owner may roll 1d6; on a 1, one point of Treasure is lost, on a 2-5, one point is gained, and on a 6, two points are gained. If Treasure is lost and none is available to pay it by the end of the turn, this Asset is lost.

Merchant Prince: A canny master of trade, the Merchant Prince may be triggered as a free action once per turn before buying a new Asset in the same location; the Merchant Prince takes 1d4 damage and the purchased Asset costs 1d8 Treasure less, down to a minimum of half its normal price.

Monopoly: Once per turn, as a free action, the Monopoly Asset can target an Asset in the same location; that Asset's owning faction must either pay the Monopoly's owner 1 Treasure or lose the targeted Asset.

Occult Countermeasures: This asset can only Attack or inflict Counterattack damage on Assets that require at least a Low Magic rating to purchase.

Pleaders: Whether lawyers, skalds, lawspeakers, sage elders, or other legal specialists, Pleaders can turn the local society's laws against the enemies of the faction. However, Pleaders can neither Attack nor inflict Counterattack damage on Force Assets.

Smuggling Fleet: Once per turn, as a free action, they may move themselves and any one Asset at their current location to any other water-accessible location within one move. Any Asset they move with them gains the Subtle quality until they take some action at the destination.

Supply Interruption: As a free action, once per turn, the Asset can make a Cunning vs. Wealth check against an Asset in the same location. On a success, the

Wealth Asset	Cost	HP	Magic	Attack	Counter	Qualities
			Wealth 1			
Armed Guards	1	3	None	W v. F/1d3 damage	1d4 damage	
Cooperative Businesses	1	2	None	W v. W/1d4-1 damage	None	Subtle, Special
Farmers	2	4	None	None	1d4 damage	Action
Front Merchant	2	3	None	W v. W/1d4 damage	1d4-1 damage	Subtle
			Wealth 2			
Caravan	5	4	None	W v. W/1d4 damage	None	Action
Dragomans	4	4	None	None	1d4 damage	Subtle, Special
Pleaders	6	4	None	C v. W/2d4 damage	1d6 damage	Special
Worker Mob	4	6	None	W v. F/1d4+1 damage	1d4 damage	
			Wealth 3			
Ancient Mechanisms	8	4	Medium	None	None	Special
Arcane Laboratory	6	4	None	None	None	Special
Free Company	8	6	None	W v. F/2d4+2 damage	1d6 damage	Action, Special
Manufactory	8	4	None	None	1d4 damage	Action
			Wealth 4			
Healers	12	8	None	None	None	Action
Monopoly	8	12	None	W v. W/1d6 damage	1d6 damage	Action
Occult Countermeasures	10	8	Low	W v. C/2d10 damage	1d10 damage	Special
Usurers	12	8	None	W v. W/1d10 damage	None	Action
			Wealth 5			
Mad Genius	6	2	None	W v. C/1d6 damage	None	Action
Smuggling Fleet	12	6	None	W v. F/2d6 damage	None	Subtle, Action
Supply Interruption	10	8	None	C v. W/1d6 damage	None	Subtle, Action
			Wealth 6			
Economic Disruption	25	10	None	W v. W/2d6 damage	None	Subtle, Action
Merchant Prince	20	10	None	W v. W/2d8 damage	1d8 damage	Action
Trade Company	15	10	None	W v. W/2d6 damage	1d6 damage	Action
			Wealth 7			
Ancient Workshop	25	16	Medium	None	None	
Lead or Silver	20	10	None	W v. W/2d10 damage	2d8 damage	
Transport Network	15	5	None	W v. W/1d12 damage	None	Action
			Wealth 8			
Golden Prosperity	40	30	Medium	None	2d10 damage	
Hired Legion	30	20	None	W v F/2d10+4 damage	2d10 damage	Action

owning faction must sacrifice Treasure equal to half the target Asset's purchase cost, or else it is disabled and useless until this price is paid.

Trade Company: Bold traders undertake potentially lucrative- or catastrophic- new business opportunities. As a free action, once per turn, the owner of the Asset may roll accept 1d4 damage done to the Asset in exchange for earning 1d6-1 Treasure points.

Transport Network: A vast array of carters, ships, smugglers, and official caravans are under the faction's control. As a free action the Transport Network can spend 1 Treasure to move any friendly Asset within two moves to any location within one move of either the target or the Transport Network.

Usurers: Moneylenders and other proto-bankers ply their trade for the faction. For each unit of Usurers owned by a faction, the Treasure cost of buying Assets may be decreased by 2 Treasure, to a minimum of half its cost. Each time the Usurers are used for this benefit, they suffer 1d4 damage from popular displeasure.

Worker Mob: The roughest, most brutal laborers in service with the faction have been quietly organized to sternly discipline the enemies of the group.

Background Actors

There are times when a GM might want to add some extra motion and activity to their campaign setting, but including additional full-fledged factions may be overkill. A few hostile nobles, a rival adventuring party, a zealous new demagogue, an ambitious crime boss, or some other variety of actor can provide some extra liveliness to the campaign backdrop, even if their activities have no immediate bearing on the PCs. Simply hearing about their exploits or encountering the peripheral consequences of them can add extra flavor to a game, and help the players feel that the world exists even when they're not adventuring there.

These background actors need very little development unless you anticipate a direct encounter with the PCs. A petty noble is just a petty noble, and a few sentences of description about their holdings and ambitions are all you need. A rival adventuring party might have statistics assigned to as a group of mid- to high-hit die human foes, but it's rarely worth statting them out with class levels and all the trimmings. A simple conceptual hook for a background actor and a set of motivations are all a GM really needs. If they run into conflict with the PCs, you can build them out more fully, but it's best to start simple.

About three pertinent background actors is usually plenty for a game. Different groups or individuals might rotate in and out of relevance as their plans progress or the PCs involve themselves in nearby events, but more than three tend to create so much background noise that the players can have a hard time identifying specific actors. Combined with the larger-scale activities of factions, three actors should give plenty of both small- and large-scale events for the PCs to notice and potentially react to.

Actors in the Faction Turn

Every time you run a faction turn, decide what each of your relevant actors has been up to in the meanwhile. If you have no active factions, make this decision between each gaming session, assuming a reasonable amount of time has passed.

To determine their actions, you can either simply decide it by GM fiat, or use the adjacent tables for inspiration. A generic table is provided for general rolls, and some actor-specific sub-tables for those occasions when you want results more closely personalized to a type of actor. Once you have the general gist of their activities, add details and specifics that fit the particular campaign region you're using; if an adventuring group is delving into a local Deep, then maybe they're investigating the same dungeon that the PCs have been exploring lately. In the same vein, a noble who betrays a peer might turn traitor on the lord of the town the PCs are currently occupying.

Try to make each result visible to the players, even if it's not strictly pertinent to them. They might hear about military clashes nearby, or learn about an adventuring band that was wiped out, or pass through a village that's busily preparing for the local lord's wedding. The PCs might choose to take an interest in events, but even just hearing about them going on in the background will help add verisimilitude to the world. Some activities might be hidden from them, particularly those involving intrigue or deception, but if the actors' actions never become visible then your prep time is not doing you much good.

Adding and Removing Actors

Background actors come and go. Sometimes they make some mistake that proves unsurvivable, or they journey beyond the scope of the campaign, or they simply attain their goal and have no reason for further activity. Sometimes the PCs pull up stakes and move half a continent away, and there's no way that the old crew would have any bearing on events in their new home.

In such cases, it's fine to simply shuffle the expended actors offscreen and bring on a few new ones more suitable to the campaign. If the PCs ever return to them or they become relevant anew you can pull them out of retirement or use them as NPCs in your adventures. It's often particularly useful to turn consequential NPCs from recent adventures into these new actors, as the lord the PCs helped or the bandit chief they feuded with become a source of ongoing events.

d20	General Actor Activities and Events
1	They came into a large amount of money
2	They became sick or diseased somehow
3	A friend betrayed their trust
4	A stroke of luck aided their pursuit of their goal
5	They defeated a rival or significant enemy
6	They made a grave social mistake
7	A friend or ally was slain or lost to them
8	They overcame an obstacle to their goal
9	A source of power they have was threatened
10	They were defeated by a rival in their ambition
11	They were accused of a serious crime
12	They obtained a useful item of magic
13	They vanished mysteriously for a time
14	They were attacked by monsters
15	They made some unsavory associates
16	They stole something or were robbed in turn
17	They ventured into dangerous terrain
18	They offended a powerful entity
19	A plan of theirs came to its fruition
20	They gained a powerful new ally

Background Actor Events

d12	Adventuring Parties
1	They're delving into a perilous Deep
2	They've been savaged by monsters
3	They slew a powerful foe
4	They're quarreling over some treasure
5	They committed an outrageous social crime
6	They're spending huge amounts of money
7	A member has betrayed the others
8	They murdered someone important
9	A promising new member joined them
10	They've gotten or lost a noble patron
11	They've been cursed or blighted by magic
12	They're heading into dangerous territory

d12	Demagogues and Religious Zealots
1	A noble patron is finding them useful
2	Their followers are getting out of hand
3	They're picking a fight with existing authority
4	They've made ties with local crime figures
5	They've struck against a hated local figure
6	They're spreading an appealing new idea
7	An important local has joined their cause
8	They've gotten a major donation from believers
9	They're being suppressed by local authorities
10	Followers are arguing over ideological points
11	They're trying to create a new power base
12	They've gotten a stroke of divine good fortune

d12	Nobles and Gentry
1	A rival has encroached on their lands or rights
2	They're making a familial tie by marriage
3	A trusted lieutenant has died or betrayed them
4	They've ruthlessly quashed a non-noble rival
5	A family scion has gotten in big trouble
6	Their superior has repaid a favor owed them
7	They're fighting with a rival local power base
8	They've formed an alliance with a neighbor
9	An old enemy of their line has struck them
10	They're fighting over rights to a particular title
11	They've committed some grave social faux pas
12	They've infuriated their superior somehow

d12	Warlords and Warband Chiefs
1	They've attacked a poorly-defended place
2	They've got a promising new lieutenant
3	One of their underlings betrayed them
4	Their men went on an undisciplined rampage
5	They've moved their base of operations
6	They've gotten backing from an outside power
7	They're trying to become legitimate rulers
8	They're infighting over loot, women, or rank
9	They were badly wounded in a fight
10	They pulled off a remarkable victory
11	Their band split due to a quarrel
12	They absorbed a weaker group

d12	Merchants and Oligarchs
1	A local industry fell under their control
2	They made a deal with a local crime boss
3	They bought or built something fabulous
4	Criminals are assaulting their wealth sources
5	They cut a very profitable new deal
6	Their employees or minions are getting restive
7	They opened a new branch of operations
8	They made an alliance with a local noble
9	They've enlisted adventurers for dire work
10	A noble has marked them as a dangerous foe
11	They drove a rival out of business
12	Some enterprise of their has collapsed

d12	Sorcerers and Magic-Users
1	They've acquired "subjects" for their work
2	They suffered a magical mishap of some kind
3	They've acquired an esoteric magic item
4	A rival sorcerer has struck at them
5	They've hired adventurers to acquire something
6	A noble has enlisted their aid in a cause
7	They've been venturing into ancient ruins
8	They've created a Working to pursue an end
9	They're accused of a heinous crime
10	The locals begged their aid in a time of need
11	They've acquired a promising apprentice
12	They've devised a new and potent magic

Major Projects and Party Goals

In any campaign, there will likely arise some occasion when the PCs take it into their heads to accomplish some great change in the world. Perhaps they want to abolish slavery in a country, or institute a new government in a howling wilderness, or crush the economic power of a hateful merchant cartel. The party wants to accomplish something grand or large-scale where there is no obvious direct path to success. No single killing or specific act of heroism will get them their aim, though the goal itself isn't so wild as to be obviously futile.

Such ambitions are ***major projects***, and this section will cover a simple system to help the GM adjudicate their progress and success. This system is meant to handle sprawling, ambiguous ambitions that aren't clearly susceptible to a simple solution. If the party wants a dead town burgomaster, then they can simply kill him. If they want to turn his town into a major new trading nexus, something more complicated may be required.

Renown

The basic currency of major projects is called ***Renown***, and it's measured in points much like experience points. PCs gain Renown for succeeding at adventures, building ties with the world, and generally behaving in a way to attract interest and respect from those around them. PCs then spend Renown to accomplish the changes they want to make in the world, reflecting their own background activities and the work of cooperative allies and associates.

Each individual PC has their own Renown score. They can spend it together with the rest of the party if they agree on the mutual focus of their interests, but a PC might also spend it on other ambitions or intermediate goals that come to mind. It's ultimately up to the player as to what they want to put their effort into; spending Renown reflects the kind of background work and off-screen support that the hero can bring to bear.

A GM doesn't have to track Renown unless they intend to use the this system. If the GM prefers to do things their own way, they can completely ignore Renown awards. If the GM changes their mind later and wants to introduce the system, they can simply give each PC a Renown score equal to their current accumulated experience points and then track things accordingly from there.

Generally, a PC will receive one point of Renown after each adventure. Some other activities or undertakings might win them additional bonus Renown, usually those works that increase the PC's influence and involvement with the campaign world, and some adventures might not give them much Renown at all if they left no impression on the people around the party. Specific guidelines on Renown awards are given in the adventure building section of the book, on page 254.

Determining Project Difficulty

To find out how much Renown is needed to achieve a project, the GM must determine its difficulty. This total difficulty is a product of the intensity of the change, the scope it affects, and the powers that are opposed to it.

First, decide whether the change is plausible, improbable, or impossible. If the change is something that is predictable or unsurprising, it's a ***plausible*** change. A town with good transport links and a couple of wealthy neighbors might quite plausibly become a trade hub. A duke with an abandoned frontier keep and a raider problem might plausibly decide to give it to a famed warrior PC with the agreement that the PC would pledge fealty to him. A plausible change in the campaign is simply one that no one would find particularly surprising or unlikely.

An ***improbable*** change is one that's not physically or socially impossible, but is highly unlikely. Transforming a random patch of steppe grasslands into a trading hub might be an improbable change, as would convincing a duke to simply hand over the frontier fort with no particular claim of allegiance. Some things that are not particularly physically difficult might be improbable due to the social or emotional implications; a society with a relative handful of trophy slaves might find it improbable to give them up even if they serve only as status symbols for their owners.

An ***impossible*** change is just that; something that is physically or socially impossible to contemplate. Turning a desolate glacier on the edge of the world into a trading hub might be such, or convincing the duke to simply give the PCs his duchy. Accomplishing a feat like this might require substantial magical Workings, the involvement of ancient artifacts, or a degree of social upheaval on par with a war of conquest. Some changes might be so drastic that they require their own heroic labors simply to prepare the groundwork for the real effort, and entire separate projects must be undertaken before the real goal even becomes possible.

Determining the Scope

Once the change's probability is decided, the GM must identify how wide the scope of the change may be. The more land and the more people the change affects, the harder it will be to bring it about.

A village-sized change is the smallest scale, affecting only a single hamlet or a village's worth of people. A city-sized change affects the population of a single city or several villages, while a regional one might affect a single barony or small province. A kingdom-sized one affects a whole kingdom or a collection of feudal lordships, and a global change affects the entire Latter Earth, or at least those parts known to the PCs.

When deciding the scope of the change, focus on how many people are going to be immediately affected

Probability of the Goal	Base Difficulty	Scope Affected	Difficulty Multiplier	Greatest Active Opposition	Difficulty Multiplier
Plausible	1	Village	x2	Minor figures	x2
Improbable	2	City	x4	Local leaders	x4
Impossible	4	Region	x8	Major noble or beast	x8
		Kingdom	x16	King or famed monster	x16
		Known World	x32		

Multiply opposition by x2 if the local population is emotionally or socially against it.

by the project. Turning a town into a trading hub might incidentally affect a significant part of a kingdom, but the immediate consequences are felt only by the residents of that town, and perhaps their closest trading partners. The scope in that case would be simply that of a city, rather than a region. Banishing slavery throughout a kingdom would require a kingdom-sized change, while getting it banned within some smaller feudal region would require a proportionately lesser scope.

If the PCs are trying to establish an educational institution, or a religious order, or some other sub-group meant to serve a chosen cause, the scope should be the largest general area the order can have influence in at any one time. A very small order of warrior-monks might only have enough devotees to affect a village-sized community or problem. An order with multiple monasteries and bases of operations throughout a kingdom might have enough muscle to affect events on a nation-wide scale. In the same vein, a small academy might be enough to bring enlightened learning to a city, improving the lives of men and women there, but not have the reach to influence the greater region around it. Individual warrior-monks or specific scholars might play major roles elsewhere in the setting, but the institution itself can't rely on the certainty of being able to step into such roles.

In some cases, a PC might attempt to forge a Working or develop a specific bloodline of magical or cursed beings. Assuming that they have the necessary tools and opportunities to achieve such a great feat, the scope should apply to the total number of people affected by the magic over its entire course of existence. Thus, a village-sized change like this might apply to ten generations of a very small bloodline, the enchantment lasting for a very long time but applying only to a few people at any one time. It might be reproduced by special training, magical consecration, or a natural inherited bloodline. Once the scope limit is reached, the magic can no longer be transmitted, as it has either been exhausted or the subtle shiftings of the Legacy have damaged it beyond repair. Conversely, a very large scope for such a work might mean that many people are so affected, though a very large change like that would only last for a few generations before reaching the maximum affected population. Because of such limits, many such empowered bloodlines or augmented magical traditions are very selective about adding new members.

Optionally, PCs who want to create such a magical working can fix it indefinitely, causing it to be heritable or transmissible for the indefinite future. Such laborious workings are much more difficult than simply tying the effect to the natural flow of the Legacy, however, and so it costs four times more than it would otherwise. Thus, imbuing a village of people with some magical quality that they will forever after transmit down to a similar number of heirs would count as a x8 multiplier instead of a x2 multiplier.

Determining the Opposition

Once you have decided on the difficulty and the scope, you now need to identify the most significant people or power bases that would be opposed to this change. In some cases, there may be no one opposed to the alteration; turning a steppe oasis into a trading post might not have anyone to object if there are no nomads who control the land, nor terrible beasts to threaten settlers. In most cases, however, there's going to be at least one person, creature, or other power in the area who would prefer things not change.

If the opposition comes in the form of ordinary peasants or citizens, minor bandit rabble, normal dangerous animals, or other disorganized and low-level threats, then the difficulty is multiplied by x2.

If the opposition is organized under competent leadership, such as a local baron, rich merchant, or persuasive priest, or if the opposition is some dangerous but not especially remarkable monster, then the difficulty is multiplied by x4.

If the opposition is entrenched and powerful, such as a group of nobles, an influential bandit king, a crime boss, a major city's mayor, or a monster impressive enough to have developed its own legendry, then the difficulty is multiplied by x8.

If the opposition involves facing down a king, a legendary monster, the primate of a major religion, or some similar monarchic power, then the difficulty is multiplied by x16.

When measuring opposition, only the greatest opponent counts. Thus, if the king, the nobility, and the local village chief all hate an idea, the difficulty modifier is x16. If the king is then persuaded to relent, the difficulty modifier becomes x8, until the barons are pacified,

after which the village chieftain is the only opposition left, for a x2 modifier.

On top of this, if the change inspires widespread popular disapproval or unease among the populace affected by the change, multiply the modifier by an additional x2. Such changes usually touch on delicate questions of group identity, cultural traditions, or basic values, and the people in the change's scope are likely to resist such measures on multiple levels.

As an example, assume an idealistic band of adventurers dreamed of extirpating slavery from an entire kingdom. The natives use slaves for work and status, but their labor isn't crucial to the economy's survival, so the GM decides it is merely improbable to give up slavery, for a base difficulty of 2. The scope is kingdom-wide, so 2 is multiplied by 16, for a difficulty of 32. As the situation stands now, the king has no desire to infuriate the wealthy magnates of his kingdom by taking away their free labor, so he would oppose it for an additional x16 multiplier, for a total difficulty of 512. Oh, and the natives find the idea of accepting slaves as equals to be emotionally abhorrent, so that's an additional x2 multiplier, for a final difficulty of 1,024.

It is very unlikely for the heroes to manage to scrape up the 1,024 points of Renown needed to make this change out of hand. They're going to have to alter the situation to quell the opposition and make specific strides toward making the ideal more plausible before they can finally bring about their dream.

Decreasing Difficulty

Adventurers who have a dream bigger than their available Renown have several options for bringing it about more rapidly. The party can use some or all of these techniques for making their ambition more feasible, and the GM might well insist on at least some of them before the PCs can succeed.

They can spend money. Sometimes a problem can be solved by throwing enough money at it, either by paying off troublesome opponents, constructing useful facilities or installations, or hiring enough help to push the cause through. Money is often useful, but it eventually begets diminishing returns; once everything useful has been bought, additional coinage brings little result.

The adjacent table shows how much a point of Renown dedicated to the project costs. The first few points come relatively cheaply, but after that the price increases rapidly. Eventually, there comes a point where only the wealth of empires can shove a massive project through with sheer monetary force. Small projects and modest ambitions are generally easy to accomplish with cash, but society-wide alterations and massive undertakings can defeat the richest vault.

Renown Bought	Cost in Silver per Point
First 1-4 points	500 per point
Next 4 points	2,000 per point
Next 8 points	4,000 per point
Next 16 points	8,000 per point
Next 32 points	16,000 per point
Next 64 points	32,000 per point
Further points	Prohibitively expensive

Thus, purchasing 14 points of Renown would cost 2,000 for the first four, 8,000 for the next four, and 24,000 for the next six, for 34,000 total.

They can build institutions. If the PCs want a fortified monastery loyal to them, they can either throw enough Renown at their goal until allied NPCs and local potentates think it's a good idea to buy them off by building it for them, or they can actually go out and purchase it with their own money. They can hire the masons, recruit the monks, and find a trustworthy abbot to act as regent for the heroes. Such steps may not be enough to completely attain the purpose, as they'll still have to deal with quelling any local opposition to the new monastery and any innate implausibility of establishing a monastery wherever they want to put it, but it'll get them a long way toward success.

The GM decides a reasonable cost for the institution they want to build and the assorted recruits they'll need to operate it, using the guidelines in this section. Prices will vary drastically based on the situation; building a splendid stone castle in a desert with no good source of stone will cost far more than listed, while hiring skilled artisans in a major metropolis won't be nearly as difficult as finding them in an empty tundra.

Once the cost is paid, the GM assigns a suitable amount of Renown toward attaining the goal. For example, if the overall goal is securing the trade route between two distant cities, building a fortified caravansary with patrolling road guards might give enough Renown to solve half the problem. The rest of it might require dealing with the opposition that's making the hazard in the first place, such as the depredations of a bandit chief or the perils of the savage monsters that haunt the road.

They can nullify opposition. Either through gold, persuasion, or sharp steel, the PCs can end the opposition of those powers who stand against their ambition. Opponents who can be bought off might be managed with nothing more than a lengthy discussion and an exchange of valuables, but other opponents might need full-fledged adventures to deal with. Some might demand favors in exchange for withdrawing their opposition, or quests accomplished on their behalf, or enemies snuffed out by the swords of the heroes. Others could be so unalterably opposed to the idea that they must either be killed or endured.

If the opposition is nullified, the difficulty decreases accordingly. If several sources of opposition exist, then only the biggest opponent counts for the multiplier; if they're eliminated, then the next largest counts.

They can adventure in pursuit of their goal. This adventure might be something as simple as finding the den of a troublesome pack of monsters, or it could be something as involved as delving into an ancient Deep to recover the lost regalia that will give them the moral authority to make demands of a troublesome prelate. Such adventures will give the PCs their usual award of Renown, but they can also give a bonus award toward their specific goal if their efforts are particularly relevant.

This bonus is determined by the GM. The easiest way for the GM to pick the proper amount for the award is to privately estimate how many such adventures their goal is worth and then award Renown accordingly. Thus, if the GM thinks that three adventures like this one is as much focus and effort as the group should have to spend toward accomplishing their aim, then each adventure will decrease the goal's difficulty by one-third.

Adventuring is by far the most efficient way to accomplish a group's goals, assuming they can come up with adventures that are relevant. This is intentional; a goal that gives the GM an easy supply of adventuring grist is a genuine contribution to the game. The more adventures that a GM gets out of PC ambitions, the easier it will be to prepare for the game and ensure the players are involved in the campaign.

Achieving the Goal

Once the PCs have piled up enough Renown and lowered the difficulty enough to actually make it feasible to achieve the goal, they need to take the final steps necessary to complete the work. For a minor goal, this might be a simple matter of describing how they take care of the details, while a vast campaign of effort might culminate in several brutal, perilous adventures.

The time this change takes will rest with the GM's judgment. It might take half a year to build a large stone monastery, while a week could be time enough to throw up a palisade and other simple fortifications around a village. Persuading a kingdom to alter its laws about slavery might be done in a theoretical instant if the autocrat decrees but take years to truly percolate into the public consciousness. If the PCs have been working on the project for some time already this effort should be taken into account and lessen the time required.

For mundane changes or changes the GM doesn't really want to focus on, the PCs simply declare that they're spending their Renown and using their own good name, personal prowess, and accumulated friendships and contacts to pull off their ambition. They might give examples of some of the ways they're working to achieve the goal and specify what allies or resources they're deploying. The GM then describes the outcome of their efforts. They may not be completely successful and events may not work out exactly as they planned, but they'll get the substance of what they wanted.

For changes that push through opposition instead of subverting it, those that just pay the price for the opposition multiplier, the GM might make the PCs deal with consequences of that unquelled opposition. The kingdom might outlaw slavery, but if not all the opposition was defeated there may remain small pockets where the law doesn't reach or the populace refuses to accept the freed slaves as fellow citizens. Solving these remnant problems might require their own projects or adventures.

For magical, impossible, or truly epic changes, the GM might oblige the PCs to face some culminating adventure or challenge before their ambition becomes real. They might've marshaled enough force and enough allies to depose the wicked king, but now the day of reckoning has come and they must face the tyrant and his elite guard in a pitched battle within the capital city. Some heroic changes might require several such adventures, with failure meaning that their efforts somehow fall short of complete success. If the tyrant is not slain, he might escape into exile to foment further trouble, or he might flee to a province he still can control.

Once the change is successfully achieved, the GM should take a little while to consider the larger ramifications of the event. Who in the surrounding area is going to take notice of the events, and what are they likely to do about it? What allies of the PCs might be strengthened by the change and able to push their own agendas further? What are the longer-term consequences of their actions, and how might these show up during future adventures?

The ultimate point of changes like these is not simply to make marks on the campaign map, but to create the seeds of future adventures and future events. The actions of the characters create reactions, and the deeper they involve themselves in the campaign setting, the more that setting is going to involve itself with them. This is ultimately a virtuous circle for the GM and the group, as it helps to generate adventures and events that matter to the players and spares the GM from confusion or uncertainty over what kind of adventuring grist to generate.

Major Changes and Factions

Players are likely to end up with goals or ambitions that directly involve them with local factions or potentially touch on Assets or other resources significant to faction powers. This is normal, and it's not difficult to integrate the two systems when they happen to touch.

As a general rule, major projects should be treated just as adventures would be. When a project would plausibly damage a faction's Assets, then the Assets will be damaged or destroyed. When they would create an Asset useful for a faction, whether one belonging to the players or to another group, then the Asset is created. If a faction doesn't care for a project, it might turn into a source of opposition that must be quelled or overcome, while an allied faction might supply some portion of the Renown itself by taking an action to aid the PCs.

The help of a faction should be scaled by the GM; if an empire decides to give the PCs a castle, then it might be such a minor part of the faction's holding that no Treasure expense or other effort is required to do so. A small

religious cult that wants to help build a monastery for the PCs might not be able to give nearly as much help, and might simply be good for a quarter of the Renown needed if they spend an action assisting the PCs. Conversely, when a faction is opposed to some measure, the PCs will probably have to undertake an adventure to change its mind or pull the fangs that it's using to interfere with their efforts.

Magical Projects

Some projects are flatly impossible in nature, such as changing humans into some new humanoid species or creating a magical effect that covers an entire region. These efforts are a step beyond ordinary impossibility, as they often require measures entirely beyond the physical capabilities of normal civilizations.

While exceedingly difficult, such projects are not out of the question for powerful mages who have the help of skilled adventurers. They do require a few more steps than an ordinary project would require, however.

The heroes must create one or more Workings dedicated to enabling the change, using the guidelines given in the Magic chapter. The scope of these Workings must be large enough to affect the scope of the change itself; if the alteration is to be done to an entire region, then a region-sized Working must be built. Workings so large as to affect an entire kingdom are beyond the scope of modern magic, and only some special quest into the fathomless past could discover the keys to grand, world-spanning alterations.

The degree of the Working will depend on the degree of the change. The devising of a race of humanoid creatures similar to humans but cosmetically different might be a Minor Working, while more substantial alterations will require great degrees of power. The summoning of a river from the depths of the earth might be a Major change for a small stream, while something the size of the Amazon might be of Supreme difficulty.

If the magical change is impossible but relatively modest in scope, then one great Working will be necessary to empower it. If the change is significant and will have major repercussions on the future area, it will take two, while a change that seems barely within the limits of possibility will need three Workings to support it, all of the appropriate degree and scope. The construction of these Workings often require adventures in their own right to find the critical components or esoteric substances needed to erect them, to say nothing of the material cost of the work.

If these Workings are later destroyed or corrupted the change itself may be damaged as well. Sometimes the effect is so graven on the world that it continues unsupported, but other times the change fades away into something more mundane. In the worst cases, the magic goes rampant and terrible consequences are born from its uncontrolled fury. As a consequence, most nations are highly averse to the construction of large-scale magical infrastructure, even when they can afford to do so.

Factions and Major Projects

PCs who have the friendship or control of factions can leverage them to assist in their grand plans. A faction can assist on a project only once per faction turn, and this help counts as its action for the turn.

When a faction helps, it spends one point of Treasure and decreases the difficulty of the project by the sum total of its Wealth, Force, and Cunning attributes, down to a minimum difficulty of 1 point. The faction can't usually complete a major project on its own; it needs the PC or some driving personality to envision and implement the plan. A faction needs to spend Treasure and help only once on a project to decrease the difficulty. The difficulty reduction remains until the project is complete or the faction chooses to withdraw its support for some reason. More than one faction can contribute its help, if they can be persuaded.

If the faction is ideally suited to the project, such as a government establishing a new political order, or a religion instituting a new cultural norm, or a thieves' guild forming a cabal of assassins, then their attribute total is doubled for purposes of calculating the new difficulty.

If the faction is willing or forced to go to extremes in helping a project, either out of desperation or the ruthless demands of its leadership, it can commit its Assets and own institutional health to the project. Any Asset or Base of Influence in the same location as the project can accept hit point damage to lower the difficulty; each hit point they spend lowers it by one point. This kind of commitment is difficult to calibrate safely; at the end of the spend, each Asset or Base of Influence that contributed suffers an additional 1d4 damage. This may be enough to destroy an Asset, or even destroy the faction itself if enough damage is done to a Base of Influence. If the Asset is destroyed in the process of helping the project, the fallout of its collapse or exhaustion may have local consequences of its own.

If the faction is of a vastly larger scale than the project, such as a prosperous kingdom helping to construct a new border village, the entire project can be resolved in a single action. In some cases, the GM may not even require the faction to spend any Treasure, as the expense is so small relative to its resources that it's not worth tracking.

Major Projects in Stars Without Number

If you're importing these rules for use in ***Stars Without Number***, they can be brought over largely verbatim. As a crude rule of thumb, 25 credits is worth 1 silver when buying Renown. GMs are within their rights to cap buyable Renown much lower, however, unless the PCs are sufficiently integrated with the local culture. Otherwise, they may not really know *how* to convert cash into great influence without just wasting it on parasites and con men.

Construction Costs

It's often necessary for a GM to have some idea what a particular structure might cost to build or buy. PCs might want to establish a base of operations in the wilderness, or some grand plan they have might require the construction of a sprawling institution. Sometimes wealthy patrons will offer rewards in land and real estate rather than cash, and an idea of what their largesse is worth is useful for a GM.

The prices here reflect ordinary costs for purchase or construction materials in the places normal for each structure. A wealthy peasant's farmhouse would cost far more than 200 silver to build on the costly land within a walls, while a city townhouse could perhaps be had for a quarter of the price if it were built in some rural village.

These prices also assume that materials can be had relatively close to hand. A PC who wants to build a wooden manor house in the midst of a savanna may be disappointed, while one who wants a stone watchtower in a place that lacks any nearby quarries may have to undertake great labors or greater expenses to have his way.

These prices are for simply buying an existing property. If the PCs want to build one from scratch, they'll also need to pay for the labor they need to build it, hiring masons and common laborers at the wages given on the following page.

Cost	Common Buildings and Lands
500	Good, safe farmland for a family
25,000	Landholdings for a minor lord
200,000	Landholdings for a major noble
50	Humble peasant cottage
200	Prosperous peasant farmhouse
500	Village temple
250	Urban slum dwelling
1,000	Modest city shop
2,500	City townhouse
5,000	Military watchtower or outpost
5,000	Minor city temple
25,000	Rural gentry estate
50,000	Keep on the borderlands
50,000	Important urban temple
100,000	Merchant-prince's city house
250,000	Large royal palace
500,000	Major fortress

General Construction

Most of the time, PCs who want to build a structure not on the list can just pick something close. The GM can then adjust the price to what seems reasonable to them. Other times, however, the PCs want to build something unusual, and no existing structure seems a good match.

The general construction costs adjacent cover the abstract cost of building wooden or stone structures of a particular volume or complexity. Ordinary living spaces, walls, simple bridges, and other basic and common structures qualify as "simple" construction, while exceptionally artful, beautifully adorned, or difficult-to-engineer structures as counted as "elaborate".

To find the total price of a structure or delving, just add up all the ten-foot cubes or other spaces it involves and price it accordingly. The costs include ordinary furnishings or functional equipment within a structure appropriate to its nature and function.

	General Construction Costs
50	Simple wooden / 10' cube
200	Elaborate wooden / 10' cube
200	Simple stone / 10' cube
500	Elaborate stone / 10' cube
100	Stone wall per 10'x10'x1'
10	Wooden palisade per 10'x10'x1'
250	Tunnel through stone, 10'x10'x5'
100	Shored tunnel through earth, "
10	Trench or earth mound, 10x10x10

Building Structures

One skilled artisan-mason can build 25 silver pieces worth of the structure for each day of labor. Thus, a building worth 10,000 silver could be constructed in 40 days by a team of ten skilled laborers. Unskilled laborers or those with no experience in construction are worth only 5 silver pieces of completed work per day. Large or complex structures built with less than 10% skilled labor may be less than perfect in execution.

PCs with the Administer skill, or Work skill related to the labor, or some other background suitable for oversight can personally oversee the labor to save 10% of the total labor and material costs, assuming they're willing to remain on site for the duration of the work.

Property Taxes

If the PCs own property on land that's meaningfully controlled by some other power, they can usually expect to pay 5% of its total worth to the local ruler each year. Exceptionally powerful PCs may be exempt from this if the ruler doubts his ability to make them pay, or if their presence is somehow useful to the ruler. Nobles and other titled folk are often exempt from these taxes as well, an often-sore point to the common gentry and merchants.

Hirelings and Servitors

Heroes with large households to maintain, fortifications to construct, or other major projects to undertake might need to hire a wide range of employees. The servants listed here will work on a monthly basis, carrying out all ordinary duties of their role.

Hirelings will not generally venture into unusually dangerous places such as Deeps, *arratus*, untamed wilderness, or hostile territories, nor will they take risks beyond the customary scope of their duties. Smooth talking and the immediate application of silver might persuade some of the braver among them to take a few excess risks, but heroes who want companions in a dungeon will have to negotiate terms involving full shares of loot… and will likely find few takers even then.

The monthly hire prices listed assume that the hireling lives elsewhere. If the PC's estate can provide a home and lifestyle of a quality appropriate to the hireling's expectations, their hire price can be halved.

Where it matters, a hireling is assumed to have a skill bonus of +1 in relevant skill checks. Finding better servants than this usually requires an adventure.

Monthly Pay in SP	Hirelings
50	Artisan of a common skill
200	Artisan of a rare skill
250	Assassin
100	Bodyguard
20	Farmhand or common laborer
30	House servant
250	Majordomo
250	Minor Mage
50	Musician or performer
200	Physician
200	Priest
200	Reeve
75	Scholar
500	Spymaster

Artisan: Whether a common blacksmith, harlot, mason, carpenter, or tailor, or a more exalted armorsmith, jeweler, or architect, an artisan will provide their services to the PC. While they can create items as noted on page 58, their help may be necessary for maintaining a large household, supporting its staff, or justifying progress in some major project.

Assassin: This criminal could be a killer for hire, or they might be an expert cat burglar, skilled fence, or some other criminal elite. An assassin can probably kill any ordinary man or woman, and might manage to bag tougher targets with a good skill check. Each time they act, roll 1d6, subtracting 1 or more if the target was important or well-guarded. On a 1 or less, something went badly wrong or they were traced back to their employer.

Bodyguard: These servants have the statistics of Veteran Soldiers and come equipped with light armor and hand weapons. They're skilled at guarding their employer from ordinary assassination attempts and polite enough to be taken into genteel society.

Farmhand or common laborer: An ordinary farmer, sailor, porter, hod-carrier, or other practitioner of an extremely common trade.

House servant: Maids, cooks, footmen, and other employees that require some modicum of social training but no esoteric skills.

Majordomo: A large household requires an experienced butler, chamberlain, or other majordomo to maintain discipline and efficiency in the staff. Houses of more than ten servants without such a leader might find themselves prey to pilferage or poor service.

Minor Mage: While this servitor has the talents of a first level mage, they lack the ambition for a greater place in life. Such mages will cast spells for their patron or provide arcane consulting services, but they will not generally adventure with them.

Musician or Performer: Bards, dancers, singers, musicians, storytellers, or other purveyors of skilled amusement can be hired.

Physician: Not a magical Healer, but skilled in the mundane care of the sick or frail.

Priest: A cleric of whatever faith is best favored by their employer. While they cannot use magic, they can perform the rites of their faith, give educated advice, and give spiritual assistance to their employer and fellow servants.

Reeve: Whether a bailiff, reeve, agent, or overseer, this hireling can monitor farms and other landholdings and ensure order is maintained, rents are paid, and due services are rendered. Without a reeve, employers with landholdings too large to personally monitor may suffer losses of income from them.

Scholar: This employee is versed in some academic topic of interest to their employer. While they can answer many questions in their specialty, the broad character of learning in this age leaves them equipped with most scholarly languages and a nodding grasp of all major academic fields.

Spymaster: The spymaster comes with a small ring of informants and agents that can infiltrate one community or organization at a time, assuming the GM thinks it plausible. They'll usually dig up at least one interesting or profitable fact about their target each month.

Soldiers and Guards

PCs with fortresses to garrison or raids to conduct may need to hire help. The prices given here are for quickly-hired mercenaries; if the PC can offer appropriate long-term housing for them, their monthly price is halved.

Soldiers will generally endure mundane risks, like dangerous overland travel or attacks on hostile forces, but they won't normally go Deep-crawling, exploring, or confronting supernatural or overwhelming perils.

While the core rules of ***Worlds Without Number*** don't include mass combat rules, GMs can estimate combat results with a quick approximation. For monsters and PCs, estimate their combat strength as compared to a human light infantry. You can add percentage bonuses to either side's total to reflect situational advantages.

Total each side's combat strength. Add them together and divide the weaker side's score by the total. That's the percentage chance that the weaker side wins a fight.

Monthly Pay in SP	Soldiers and Guards	Combat Strength
40	Light Infantry	1
60	Heavy Infantry	2
100	Light Cavalry	4
200	Heavy Cavalry	8
75	Archer	3
150	Horse Archer	5
50	Crossbowman	2
x2	Sergeant	x2
x5	Captain	x5

Archer: Wears a buff coat and uses a large bow, with a short sword for backup

Crossbowman: Wears a buff coat and uses a crossbow, with a short sword for self-defense

Heavy Cavalry: Fights as an Elite on a warhorse, uses mail hauberk, large shield, and one or more melee weapons

Heavy Infantry: Uses cuirass and greaves, large shield, and a melee weapon

Light Cavalry: Fights as a Skilled Veteran on a warhorse, uses a buff coat, small shield, and light spears for throwing and melee

Light Infantry: Usually uses linothorax, large shield, and a melee weapon

Horse Archer: A Skilled Veteran on a riding horse; uses a buff coat, small bow, and a hand weapon

Sergeant: Every ten troops need one sergeant to keep them sharp and in line. The sergeant costs half again as much as a usual trooper of his type, and has +1 hit die and +1 to hit compared to others of his type.

Captain: Every hundred troops needs one captain if they're to respond efficiently to their employer's commands. These cost five times as much as a usual trooper of their kind, and have +2 hit dice over their base type and +2 to hit. Captains won't usually serve unless they actually have troops to command, so PCs can't just hire a squad of such proven fighters.

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