

Welcome to the *Asunder* Playtest!

What you hold in your hands is the playtest document for *Asunder*, a game of people seeking truth, power, and belonging in a savage world without metal. It uses the same rules that Rob Schwalb's *Shadow of the Demon Lord* uses so, if you're familiar with that game, you'll be able to get up to speed on *Asunder* fairly quickly. Here's a quick breakdown of what you'll find in this document.

Chapter 1: A World Out of Balance

This chapter will tell you what you need to know, in brief, about the world of *Asunder* and its people. It's designed to give you the very basics, but there's more setting material later in the document.

Chapter 2: Seeker Creation

Asunder has character creations similar to those of *Shadow*, though *Asunder's* Origins are a bit different from *Shadow's* ancestries. Also of note is that the Interesting Things table and the Roleplaying section are missing from this chapter; you can use the ones from *Shadow* if you wish.

Chapter 3: Playing the Game

Asunder's rules are very similar to *Shadow's*, so you won't find much new content here. There are a few terminology changes here and there, and you'll want to familiarize yourself with Strain and Discord, as well as the rules for fatal flaws.

Chapter 4: Combat

Combat in *Asunder* works as it does in *Shadow*. If you're familiar with *Shadow* combat, you're familiar with *Asunder* combat.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7: Novice Paths, Expert Paths, and Master Paths

These are all new! Enjoy them. Also look for the rules on ties and teamwork dice; they're an important part of *Asunder*!

Chapter 8: Equipment

Equipment in *Asunder* is somewhat different from what you're used to in *Shadow*, particularly when it comes to weapons and armor.

Chapter 9: Living Gear and Other Oddities

Living gear is something new to *Asunder*, as are the rules for glass items and other strange things. Have fun with this stuff; it's part of what makes *Asunder* cool!

Chapter 10: Essence Trees

Magic, as a concept, doesn't exist in *Asunder*, but the people of *Asunder* do have access to Essence powers, innate abilities that they can choose to develop if they wish. Essence trees use the same basic framework as magical traditions do in *Shadow*, but there are some key differences in how they work, what they grant access to, and how they're acquired.

Chapter 11: Chaos and Pure Light

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

Chapter 12: The World of Asunder

This is our setting chapter. Most of the setting material you'll need to run the game is here.

Chapter 13: Other Peoples of the World

This chapter, when it's complete, will contain information on the Naga, the demons, and the devourers. Right now there's nothing here, but you shouldn't need it for the playtest. If you decide you really need stats for these creatures, look for stats that make sense in *Shadow* and use them instead.

Chapter 14: The Keeper

This is where our GM (called the Keeper) advice will go. There's nothing here yet, so refer to *Shadow* for advice. Much of it still holds true for *Asunder*.

Chapter 15: Bestiary

You'll find some stats for monsters and NPCs here, though it's not as complete as it will be. The stats here, combined with stats from *Shadow*, should be enough to run the adventures provided in this document.

Chapter 16: The Journey Begins

Much of the adventure-running and adventure-writing advice is missing right now. However, what is in this chapter are three complete adventures that will take your group from level 0 to level 3. Feel free to run these as part of the playtest.

Chapter One: A World out of Balance

Seeking Answers

"Someone's been through here," Ralla says, voice barely a whisper. She studies the footprints in the soft earth, faint and delicate but no more than a few hours old. She turns her head slightly and raises her voice so that Kamira can hear her. "Recently. Three or four of them, probably weavers."

"Are they going our way?" Kamira asks, voice cool and dark like a subterranean pool.

"Maybe. It might mean we're getting close to the Wellspring."

"Remind me why we're here again," comes Vestrus's voice, sardonic and bored.

Ralla stands and faces the man, a flat look in her eyes. "Because of what I saw on the battlefield. Remember?"

"Oh right," he says, running a hand through his long hair. "Something something spirit, something something 'seek the Wellspring', something something save the world. Something. Right?"

"There's a bit more to it than that," Ralla retorts, rolling her eyes. "But yes. The spirit on the battlefield told me that the fate of the world hung in the balance, and that the Wellspring contains answers."

"And this is our responsibility because..."

"Vestrus, you could have stayed at Heartwood and drunk yourself into a stupor. Nobody forced you to come out here, into the jungle." Ralla points east. "It's that way, if this expedition is boring you."

Vestrus quirks a smile. "Touchy today, aren't you?"

Ralla turns her back to the sky-dweller and rolls her eyes again. "Astrid?" she says to the woman next to her, a note of pleading in her voice.

Astrid chuckles and turns to Vestrus. "The Wellspring contains knowledge, and knowledge is valuable. Good enough reason?"

Vestrus tilts his head. "Knowledge can be dangerous, too."

Astrid smiles, quirks one eyebrow. "You scared of a little danger?"

"Just pointing it out," Vestrus replies. "Personally, I *live* for danger. But I don't want to speak for the rest of you."

Ralla sighs and tries to tune the two of them out. Vestrus is insufferable, but useful. She doesn't trust Astrid, but she *is* grateful for the glass-dealer's ability to handle Vestrus. She walks up to Ereborn and says, quietly, "You're uncharacteristically quiet today."

Ereborn nods.

"There a reason for that?"

"The jungle's watching us. Waiting for something. I'm trying to figure out what."

Ralla studies the Chaos-wielder for a moment. "Does someone know we're seeking the Wellspring?"

An errant crackle of electricity plays across Ereborn's face. "I'm not sure. Possibly. You did find those footprints, and we'd be fools to discount them."

"Do you think we're still going the right way?"

Ereborn takes a deep breath and lets it out. "I believe so. I can feel the tug of power from this direction. It may be the Wellspring, it may be something else, but I believe it to be the former."

"How can you be sure?"

The Chaos-wielder doesn't answer immediately. "Describe the spirit you saw on the battlefield again."

"Um," Ralla says, confused at the change of topic. "She was tall, maybe sixteen feet. She radiated with power. Bald, eyes made of light, skin that looked like stone and earth with vines all around her. Her voice sounded like the voices of hundreds of people at once."

Ereborn nods. "Others have described similar visions on the sites of battlefields, as well as other places of great calamity and death. Many theorize that these are manifestations of Gaia. They believe that Gaia appears to provide aid and guidance to the survivors of such calamities."

"You don't sound so sure."

"These manifestations may very well be aspects of Gaia. As to whether they're benevolent in nature... I've heard conflicting things, and I have my doubts."

Ralla considers for a moment. "You think we might be walking into a trap?"

"Not necessarily, but it's a possibility we shouldn't discount."

“Do you think it’s worth the risk?”

Ereborn raises his hand, flames playing around his palm as he gazes at it. “Power is seldom without risk, and never without cost.”

Ralla stares at the flames. “Do you regret seeking Chaos?”

“Do you regret deserting the Bone Army?”

Ralla’s jaw clenches. “No. It was the right decision for me at the time.”

“Well then,” he replies, saying nothing more.

“Hey,” comes Kamira’s voice, hushed. “Quiet down. I hear someone ahead.” The woman is crouched low, the claws on her disfigured right arm flexing and unflexing.

Ralla nods, signals to Vestrus to flank right. He smiles, winks, and disappears into the underbrush. The man may be insufferable, but he follows orders when it’s important. She signals Astrid and sends her to the left. The slight woman draws her sword, a blade of red glass with an edge sharper than nearly anything else in the world. She nods silently and moves off. To Kamira and Ereborn, she signals the center, with her, and the three of them move forward quietly, low and careful.

Ahead, Ralla sees three figures standing in a clearing, waiting. She signals for Kamira to stay and Ereborn to come with her, then she stands up straight and walks into the clearing.

The three weavers turn to face her. “Greetings, outlanders,” says one of them, a tall woman covered in a patchwork outfit of vines, leaves, and bark. “What do you seek here?”

Ralla stops ten paces from the leader, near enough to close the distance quickly if she needs to, far enough to ready her defenses if the other attacks. “Just passing through,” she says, keeping her body language loose, non-threatening, but ready.

“Doubtful,” says the woman, tilting her head. “You’ve come very close to the Wellspring, and such things do not happen coincidentally.”

Ralla’s eyes narrow. “What do you know about the Wellspring?”

“We serve the Wellspring and, through it, Gaia. I believe the five of you seek it for reasons you don’t understand.”

The five of us. Should've known better than to try to sneak up on weavers in the jungle. No point in subterfuge, I guess. "Fine, yes. We're looking for the Wellspring. Can you take us to it?"

The lead weaver nods. Then, without warning, vines lash out and wrap themselves around Ralla's arms and legs, restraining her.

"To arms!" she shouts, struggling against the snares.

Ereborn is the first to act, his hand lashing out and a bolt of multi-colored energy shooting from his palm, engulfing one of the weavers. The weaver screams as his flesh starts to turn to obsidian, but he points at Ereborn and a trio of tiny bolts shoot from an organism attached to his arm. The bolts hit Ereborn square in the chest and he falls to one knee, shaking his head, trying to clear it as the poison works its way into his system.

Vestrus lands in the center of the group of weavers, falling from the sky like some kind of meteor. In a blur, he snaps his arm at the lead weaver and a vine whip extends, wrapping around one of her arms and crushing it into uselessness. The woman screams, but she closes the distance quickly, ignoring the pain, and shoves a wooden blade into Vestrus's midsection with her other hand.

Kamira darts forward from behind Ralla, claw ready to make quick work of the third weaver, but roots rise up to tangle her feet and she goes down in a heap. She starts to stand, but Ralla can see the roots wind themselves around her legs and, like Vestrus's whip, start to crush her, turning her bones to powder. Kamira grunts but refuses to cry out. She turns her claw to the roots, starts slashing through them, but the third weaver advances on her, an axe made of living wood in her hands.

Ralla struggles against the vines binding her, tries to free herself. *A blade*, she thinks. *I need a blade*. One of the vines — the one on her right arm — goes limp, and Ralla looks to see Astrid there, glass sword in hand. Another stroke and Ralla's right leg is free too. Ralla takes the opportunity to grab her horok-bone axe and go to work on the other two vines as Astrid runs toward the weaver advancing on Kamira. The weaver raises her axe to block Astrid's sword-swipe, but the glass blade slices right through the wooden axe and bites deep into the weaver's neck, nearly severing her head. Astrid deftly pulls her blade free and turns on the other two.

Now freed from the vines binding her, Ralla, too, advances upon the weavers, axe raised, shield up. The leader turns toward her, Vestrus crumpled in a bloody pool at her feet, his whip still wrapped around her arm. She stands placidly and says, "When you kill us, we'll feed the Wellspring. You'll do the same in time."

Ralla surges forward and grabs the woman with one hand, raising her axe with the other. "What is the Wellspring?" she snarls. "Why did Gaia lead me here?"

The weaver smiles and says nothing, simply closing her eyes. With a grunt of frustration, Ralla throws the woman to the ground and prepares for a killing blow. That's when the world explodes around her.

Ralla struggles to open her eyes. She feels weak, weaker than she's ever felt, so weak she can barely raise her head. The scene in front of her is one of carnage, her friends and traveling companions lying prone on the ground, scattered around her, among the lifeless bodies of the three weavers. She lifts her eyes and sees a figure, a woman, striding toward her: the spirit from the battleground, Gaia. "Why?" she croaks. It's all she has the strength to ask.

The spirit tilts her head. She gestures at the bodies of the weavers and of Ralla's companions. "These are a suitable offering. Would you like to drink from the Wellspring? Would you like to serve me?"

This is all wrong. Ralla tries to think, tries to piece together some plan, but it's so hard to form thoughts, to even stay awake. "I... what?" she asks, weakly.

The spirit regards her for a moment. "You will serve me, or you will become part of the offering. Choose."

Ralla looks at her friends, their still, lifeless bodies. She remembers Ereborn's words: power is seldom without risk, and never without cost.

She makes her decision.

Ralla wanders the battlefield, looking for survivors. There, a young man, struggling to sit up, long thorns piercing his chest and midsection. She walks to him, kneels next to him.

"Help... help me," he gasps, eyes unfocused.

"Shhh," she says. "Don't worry. You'll serve a greater purpose soon."

"I... my sister... I need to..."

"Shhh," Ralla repeats, laying her hand on his forehead. There's a brief warmth and a sudden intake of breath from the boy, and then his body slumps, still, cold. His Essence was weak, but it was something at least. One more strand of power for her mistress. Ralla stands and surveys the carnage around her, the battle she instigated. She can feel the Wellspring within her, thirsting for more. Ralla walks on.

The World of Asunder

The world is broken.

It was broken a long time ago, broken by the gods who made us, broken when they fled this world to fight their eons-long war, and when they left they took something from the world, and changed it forever thusly. Our most ancient texts say that there was once a thing called metal, hard and unyielding, pulled from the very earth and forged into tools and weapons. Now, gone. Fuel for the gods' war. And us, their children, they left behind in a world that cares not about us at all, a world savage and beautiful and wondrous all at once.

But we are not alone.

Though we are the gods' creation, we are not the only ones left behind. Before us they created the Naga, majestic and cruel, a form fused of serpent and woman. We are forever at odds with them; they, too, believe that they were the gods' final and best creation, but we know this to be untrue because we possess what the Naga do not: Essence. When the gods made us, they infused us with Essence like theirs, though a million million times lesser. It is from this spark of being that we draw our creativity, our ingenuity, our drive to make and improve and invent. The Naga possess none of this. Though they are fiercely intelligent and possessed of great powers of their own, they do not create. Creation is a cycle that started with the gods and continued to us, but in them it was broken, and so they instead seek to take that which we create, and so we are at odds.

Few things can cause us to unite with the Naga, but the gods' first creation, the demons, is one such thing. We know not why the gods created the demons, but we know that they are vicious, strong, taller than a man with skin as hard as black wood, and they thirst only to destroy. To the north, from the pits of the Black Isle, they spew forth, consuming and destroying that which they touch for reasons we do not comprehend, but we fight them.

On that same Black Isle dwell the barbarian-monks, men and women whose Essence is turned inward, granting them exceptional strength, durability, and control over their bodies. They live in the harshest of climes, for the Black Isle is nothing but black stone, and nothing grows there save the few spores they use for food. They have learned to endure the hardship, to draw strength from it, and to lend that strength to each other so that a single champion can be made powerful enough to fight demons.

To the east is Picari, the savage land, a place of beasts and those who master them. The men and women there are hard, strong, bonded to the beasts that roam that land, beasts huge and fierce and deadly. They take on aspects of those beasts, and they work in tandem with them, hunting, tilling the fields, moving great burdens, and defending their land and lives from the predations of other beasts — and other humans.

To the west is the Sky City, islands that, against all logic, float high above the seas. The Skydwellers there have learned to control gravity itself, and are able to make great leaps and to even fly, assisted by spore packs that control their flight. The young Skydwellers who come of age must make a thousand-foot leap in order to prove that they are adults. Those who make the leap become full members of society. Those that don't are never seen again. On their sky islands, the wealthy and elite dwell on the top, the sky above them, the sun shining down, while the others build homes and places of business into the sides of the islands.

In the Inner Ring, in the seas, live the Seafaring Folk, and they are a people few understand. Out in the seas Gaia is weak, and where Gaia is weak, chaos reigns. They bond with the creatures of the sea, in particular the crustaceans and sea urchins. They use urchins as masks that help them breathe within the toxic fumes that rise from the waters, and their great ships are made of many urchins and crustaceans, living things that help them hunt and survive against the great sea serpents and other monsters of that realm. No tribe has been marked by chaos so much as the Seafarers; each is unique, with mutations all their own. Some have four arms, some have gills, while others have skin as hard as stone or eyes that can see in total darkness. They are fierce and secretive, and they own the waterways.

Ah yes, chaos. When the gods made the world, they used chaos, the god-machine, to do so. They controlled it and harnessed it, and when they left the world, they left behind particles of the god-machine, motes of chaos that dwell in the secret places of the world and warp reality around them. Some are able to harness that chaos. Some go mad trying. Those who are able to harness chaos are able to manipulate it, creating devastating and wondrous effects with that chaos, performing miracles that others cannot even dream of attempting. Chaos, though, is a drug, compelling a chaos-wielder to use it, and burning that wielder out from the inside. For, while the gods had stable Essence, we humans have only a fraction of that substance, and it is scarcely enough to wield chaos's terrible power. Still, chaos-wielders are highly sought-after by the governors of cities and settlements. He who controls the chaos-wielder has great power and, while the chaos-wielders are unpredictable and dangerous, that cost outweighs the potential gain. And so many chaos-wielders spend their short lives in idle luxury, bringing their power to bear at the beck and call of those who pay their wage.

It is into this world that you have come. This world is a harsh one; dangerous, unpredictable, full of terrible beauty and wondrous danger. It is broken, and may never be healed.

But it is our home.

10 Things to Know about Asunder

There Are No Gods

The gods left long ago. They created the world and the creatures that populate it for reasons nobody fully understands, but they abandoned their creations to go fight a war elsewhere, and they have not returned.

There Is No Metal

When the gods left the world, they took all the metal from it, leaving it broken and incomplete. Many believe that they needed the metal for their war.

People Have Adapted

When the gods created humans, they invested them with a fragment of their own Essence, their own divine spark. When they left the world, the humans' Essence bonded with parts of the world around them, allowing them to gain the power they needed to survive. In addition, to compensate for the sudden lack of metal, humans learned to craft other substances and to create symbiotic lifeforms to act as weapons, armor, and tools.

Much Of The World Is Water

The gods broke the world when they left, and much of Asunder's land masses sank below the waves. What remains is a single continent and a number of smaller islands around it. There are people who live upon the seas, people who live on each of the islands, and a great many people who live on the mainland.

The World Is Fantastical

Strange and wondrous things exist in the world of Asunder. There's an entire city made up of flying islands populated by people who can defy gravity. There's a land of people who bond with and communicate with beasts, and another where people control and engineer plants, making advanced technology.

The World Is Harsh

Despite the fantastical elements, Asunder is not a kind world. Life can be brutal and short; the world and its people do not tolerate weakness, and those who cannot survive on their own do not live long.

People Are Strange And Varied

The people of the world are a varied lot. Some have random mutations like extra arms or gills. Others bond with beasts and take on their aspects, like horns or thick hides. Still others can fly or control plants or harness the elemental powers of the universe. There is no such thing as a typical human on Asunder.

There Is No Magic, Only Chaos

Chaos is an elemental force, and one that is at odds with the natural order of the world. It leaked into the world when Asunder was broken, and it infects parts of it still. Some seek these shards of Chaos out in order to harness their power. Many of these people

die trying, but those who succeed are potent individuals, capable of reshaping reality to their whim. Chaos is not without risk, though, and many are consumed by their own power within a few years.

Humans Are Not Alone

Humans are not the only sentient beings on Asunder. The Naga — huge, snakelike beings — live in the swamps of the world. They prey upon human settlements, taking what they need through pillage. In some parts of the world, demons spew forth from the depths, destroying anything in their path. And there are rumors of beings known as devourers, creatures so dangerous and destructive that most who encounter them are destroyed utterly.

Seekers Look For Answers

There are many mysteries on Asunder. Where do the demons come from? What do the Naga want? Is the world truly coming to an end? What is Gaia, and what is her purpose? Some people form bands of Seekers: powerful, adventurous individuals, outcasts in search of answers.

Their story is your story.

Chapter 2: Seeker Creation

Before you can play *Asunder*, you'll need a character. This chapter walks you through the steps you need to think about in order to make an avatar for yourself in the game world. The Keeper can provide you with a character if you wish, but this chapter allows you to make one that is yours in every way.

When you create a character, you can make all the decisions about what the character looks like, acts like, and where they come from, or you can leave many of those choices to chance. While having full control over your character can be satisfying, rolling random traits for your character can often generate ideas you'd never have come up with otherwise!

What is a Seeker?

Most people in *Asunder* are content to live their lives: merchants, hunters, sailors, craftspeople, artists, and myriad other professions. Some, though, know that something is wrong with the world. Some go beyond muttering about end times and want to know more, to find out what the truth of the matter is, and maybe to stop it. These are the Seekers, and their story is your story.

Before you create your Seeker, as yourself: what do you seek?

Answers

One thing many Seekers have in common is their need for answers. They wonder why the world is dying, why the dead sometimes rise from battlefields, why there's a perpetual storm that haunts the seas, why the demons spill forth from the earth, why the gods left. They recognize that the world is full of mystery, and they make it their mission to investigate that mystery, to learn why things are the way they are, why they work the way they do.

Redemption

Some become Seekers in order to atone for some past misdeed. They believe that, if they can unravel the mysteries of the world, if they can protect people from its dangers, if they can find its hidden places and its wonders, they can make up for the things they've done.

Belonging

Many Seekers start off as outcasts. They're people who don't belong in the communities to which they were born for some reason or another, and they're looking for a place to call home. Seekers often organize into bands, and these bands can become incredibly tight-knit. When you're out in the world, facing its dangers on a regular basis, you try to do so with people you trust. You come to rely on those people, and those people become your family, even if only for a time.

Adventure

Some are Seekers purely out of a sense of wanderlust. They want to see the wide world, to make their mark on it, and to have a good time doing it. It's a simple motivation, but a common one.

Fame and Fortune

There are a lot of valuable artifacts in the forgotten places of the world, and there's a lot of money and notoriety to be made by finding those things and bringing them back to civilization. There are those who become Seekers because a trade just isn't for them, and they have to make money *somehow*.

Origins

Once you've thought about why your character might become a Seeker, it's time for you to choose your Origin. Your Origin describes where in the world you come from, but it goes a bit beyond that. While every Seeker in *Asunder* is human, humans are a widely divergent lot in this world. When the gods created humanity, they imbued humans with a spark of divine Essence. When the gods left, the humans' Essence bonded with things in their environment, with their own souls, or with their physical bodies, giving humans from different parts of Asunder myriad strange and amazing powers.

The following Origins are available in the world of Asunder. Other Origins, or even Ancestries from Schwalb Entertainment's *Shadow of the Demon Lord*, might be available, at the Keeper's option.

- People from **the Mainland** have no special powers unless they seek them out. Those from the mainland delve deep into their professions, bond with symbiotic gear, or they seek out Chaos so that they can wield that powerful and unpredictable force.
- On **Pacari**, people bonded with beasts. This bond gives the Pacari bestial traits and abilities, as well as the power to communicate with and even control their bonded beasts.
- **The Black Isle** is a place of desolation and hardship, where people have learned to turn their Essence inward. Through intense training and powerful meditative techniques, the Black Islers have made themselves capable of superhuman feats.
- The people of **Sky City** live among the clouds, and their bond allows them to defy gravity. Most can leap great distances, and some can even fly!
- On **New Gaia**, people bond with plants, learning to create, mold, and control them in unique and powerful ways. In addition, some people on New Gaia bond with insects instead of plants, though these cases are rare.
- The people of **the Sea** are a changeable and tumultuous people, and this is represented by the mutations on their bodies. Some even learn to catalyze additional mutations, adapting to their environment further.

Origin Benefits

Each origin will provide you with a number of benefits, starting traits, and access to special Essence powers.

Origin Story

In each Origin, you'll see suggestions for what your character might be like, as well as a number of tables that include even more twists and turns in your personal story. You're free to roll on these tables, choose options, or make up your own (with help from your Keeper), as you see fit. While random chance can act as a catalyst for story ideas you may never have thought of before, ultimately your Seeker is *your* character in this game, and you should make sure you're happy with who you're playing before play begins.

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Languages of Asunder

The following languages are used throughout the lands of Asunder.

- **Trade Speech:** devised by the city-states of the mainland in order to facilitate trade and communication between cultures, Trade Speech (or, simply, Trade) has spread beyond the borders of the mainland and become a commonly used language amongst all people of the world. Though it doesn't replace a nation's native language or languages, many Seekers know enough Trade to be able to communicate anywhere.
- **Pacari:** The language of the Pacari tribesfolk is complex and rich, with a system of hieroglyphs for written communication. Each tribe has their own dialect of Pacari and, while most tribes are able to communicate with each other, outsiders often find the myriad variations confusing.
- **Mother's Tongue:** A language known almost exclusively by the weavers of New Gaia, Mother's Tongue is not often taught to outsiders. It can be used to communicate incredibly complex ideas in a very short span of time.
- **Blue:** While most seafarers speak fluent Trade, they have their own language, Blue, that they use amongst each other. They often use Blue to speak openly with each other around land-dwellers.
- **Nagese:** The Naga have their own language, a tongue of sibilant, rolling sounds.
- **Deep:** Though they may not have invented it, the demons often speak Deep. As a result, many Black Islers have learned the language.
- **Hyderen:** Hyden, like the other city-states, used to have its own language, before the widespread use of Trade. Though the other city-states' languages have more-or-less died off, Hyderen is still spoken in places and taught in the academies, even if it is considered terribly archaic.

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Origin Traits

This game uses attributes and characteristics to describe your capabilities, as well as talents and powers. Your Origin determines what your starting attributes and characteristics are, as well as your starting talents (if any), what powers you have access to, and so forth.

Attributes

Your Seeker has four attributes: Strength, Agility, Intellect, and Will. Each attribute has a **score** (provided by your Origin) and a **modifier**.

Scores

Your attributes are rated 1 to 20; this is your **score**. 10 is considered average for a human being. Write down the starting scores for your Origin and modify them as your Origin directs you to.

- **Adjusting Scores:** You can increase one score by 1 by decreasing another score by 1. You can make this adjustment only once.
- **Increasing Scores:** As your group's level increases, so too will your scores.

Modifier

You use your score to determine your modifier. To do so, subtract 10 from your score; the result is the modifier for that attribute. For example, if your Strength is 11, your modifier is +1. If your Agility is 9, your modifier is -1. Note the modifier for each attribute on your character sheet.

Characteristics

In addition to your four attributes, your character has several characteristics: Defense, Health, healing rate, Perception, Size, Speed, Essence, Damage, Discord, and Strain. Your Origin tells you what to fill in for each of these numbers.

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Character Sheet

You'll find a character sheet at the end of this book; you can feel free to print or photocopy this sheet as often as you need to in order to record your character's statistics and other important features. You can also download a copy of the character sheet at [URL].

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Essence Tree Access

Your Origin determines what your character's Essence has bonded to, or can bond to. Part of this is represented by any talents your Origin gives you, but each Origin also has access to two Essence trees. Essence trees are collections of Essence powers ranked from 0 to 5. Whenever a talent — whether from your Origin or from a path — directs you to choose Essence powers or discover Essence trees, you choose from the trees your Origin grants you access to.

Languages and Professions

Your Origin also tells you which languages you speak, read, and write, and which professions (if any) you start the game with. You might get more of these throughout the game as your group advances, as well as from the Origin tables connected to each Origin.

Talents

Your Origin might also give you one or more talents. Some Origins don't start with any talents, while others might start with more than one. Record these talents and what they do on your character sheet.

Level 4 Benefit

You gain a special benefit tied to your Origin when your group reaches level 4.

Origin Tables

Each Origin presents several tables that you can use to flesh your character out. You can feel free to choose options from these tables or even make up your own (with your Keeper's help), but it can sometimes be more fun to roll randomly on these tables. After all, constraints often breed creativity!

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Fatal Flaws

Each Origin has a Fatal Flaw table. While you can feel free to choose or make up your own Fatal Flaw, ensure that your Fatal Flaw is something that will complicate your life from time to time. Ideally, it'll get in your way one or two times per session. Don't worry; when your Fatal Flaw complicates your life, you get a mechanical reward and it'll lead to fun situations! Check out Chapter 3 for more information on how Fatal Flaws work.

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The Mainland

People from the mainland don't have the same array of strange and diverse powers that people from other parts of Asunder have. What they do have is determination, versatility, and numbers. Where someone from New Gaia might learn to rely on her ability to control plants or a person from Sky City might grow dependent on his ability to defy gravity, mainlanders learn to live in the world of Asunder without any of those advantages, and so they adapt by deepening their knowledge of their professions, banding together into large city-states, and learning to survive on their own grit and gumption.

- **Soul-Bonded:** People from the mainland have Essence just like any other human on Asunder, but their Essence bonded with their own souls long ago. While this doesn't give them any overt powers, it does make them the only people in the world who can learn to harness Chaos or to receive blessings from Pure Light, and mainlanders can forge bonds with living gear deeper than those of other people. Most mainlanders pursue none of these paths, though, leaving such dangerous activities to Seekers and other foolish risk-takers.
- **Numerous:** The mainland is larger than any of the islands of Asunder, and its population is correspondingly huge. Where a settlement on one of the islands might consist of thousands, even tens of thousands of people, each city-state on the mainland contains millions of people. While the city-states don't often agree, there's strength in numbers and there's power to be found in cooperation; mainlanders learned this a long time ago; they know the value of having reliable comrades at your side.
- **Deep Knowledge:** Mainlanders, for the most part, don't have to spend time learning how to use strange powers because they have none. As a result, they spend that time learning trades, crafts, professions, and pursuing various areas of knowledge. The mainland is renowned for its expert craftsfolk and sages, and nearly everyone on the mainland is literate in at least one language.
- **Common Names:** [come up with some names]

Creating a Mainlander

Starting Attribute Scores Strength 10, Agility 10, Intellect 10, Will 10. Choose one attribute and increase it by 1.

Perception equals your Intellect score

Defense equals your Agility score

Health equals your Strength score

Healing Rate equals one-quarter your Health, round down

Size 1/2 or 1, **Speed** 10, **Essence** 0

Damage 0, **Discord** 0, **Strain** 0

Essence Trees Chaos, Symbiosis

Languages and Professions You speak, read, and write Trade Speech, and you speak a second language of your choice. You also get one random profession.

Level 4 Expert Mainlander

Characteristics Health +5

You either learn one Essence power or gain Expertise.

Expertise Make two choices. For each choice, you can choose to read, write, and speak a new language or add any profession. In addition, whenever you make a challenge roll with 1 boon granted by one of your professions, you get 1 extra boon. If any of your boons on this roll generate a result of 1, reroll them, keeping the new result.

Mainlander Background

D20 Background

- 1 You come from a wealthy merchant family. When you roll for your starting Wealth, add 2 to the roll.
- 2 You were exposed to Chaos not too long ago. You start with 1 Discord.
- 3 You earned a living working in your profession.
- 4 You once hired Jenny Blue-Eyes to assassinate someone.
- 5 You attended one of the academies of Hyden. Add a random area of academic knowledge.
- 6 You're a frequent visitor to the Arena of Megalith.
- 7 You come from one of the outlying settlements and have only visited a city-state once.
- 8 You spent seven years learning to sail with the Seafarers. You start with 1d6 Strain and the Sailor profession.
- 9 You spent time apprenticing for a master craftsman. Add the Artisan profession.
- 10 You're recovering from an addiction to symbiotic performance-enhancers. You start with 1d6 Strain.
- 11 You once tried to bond with a Chaos shard and failed, but survived. You start with 1d6 Discord.
- 12 You lost two fingers on one of your hands to your profession. You consider it a fair trade.
- 13 When the Naga attacked your caravan, you drove it off.
- 14 You spent time in Storm Point in a part of town inhabited primarily by weavers.
- 15 You were born in Megalith and spent your early years on the streets.
- 16 You've traveled all over the world. You speak an additional language.
- 17 You spent time in Hyden studying linguistics. Choose a language you speak; you can read and write that language.
- 18 You have a spouse and 1d6-2 children (minimum 0).
- 19 You stole something valuable and buried it to keep it safe.
- 20 You lost someone important to you. Their death haunts you to this day.

Mainlander Fatal Flaw

3d6 Fatal Flaw

- 3 You're cruel, and like causing others pain.
- 4 You're greedy, and want to get as much for yourself as you can.
- 5-6 You anger easily, and fly into a rage at the slightest provocation.
- 7-8 You have a grudge, and you'll do anything to get revenge.
- 9-12 You're reckless, always looking for a thrill.

- 13-14 There's someone you're protecting, and you'll do anything to keep them safe.
- 15-16 You doubt yourself, and often hesitate at the wrong time.
- 17 You dislike violence, and avoid it whenever you can.
- 18 You believe that everyone is fundamentally good.

Mainlander Nationality

- 3d6 Nationality
- 3 Megalith
- 4-7 Far East
- 8-11 Storm Point
- 12-14 Hyden
- 15-16 East Twin
- 17-18 West Twin

Mainlander Age

- 3d6 Age
- 3 You're a child, 11 years old or younger.
- 4-7 You're an adolescent, 12 to 17 years old.
- 8-12 You're a young adult, 18-35 years old.
- 13-15 You're a middle-aged adult, 36-55 years old.
- 16-17 You're an older adult, 56-75 years old.
- 18 You're a venerable adult, 76 years old or older.

Mainlander Build

- 3d6 Build
- 3 You are short and thin.
- 4 You are short and heavy.
- 5-6 You are short.
- 7-8 You are slender.
- 9-12 You are average in height and weight.
- 13-14 You are a bit overweight.
- 15-16 You are tall.
- 17 You are tall and thin.
- 18 You are very tall and heavy.

Mainlander Appearance

- 3d6 Appearance
- 3 You're monstrous. You were probably touched by Chaos in the womb, and it gave you an inhuman appearance: a tail, horns, glowing eyes, or the like.
- 4 You're ugly. People find you unpleasant to be around because of your boils, sores, missing nose, or weird body hair.
- 5-6 Most would call you homely. You're not ugly, but you're certainly not beautiful.
- 7-8 You're quite plain. Often, people can't even remember precisely what you look like.
- 9-12 You're average in pretty much every way.
- 13-14 Most consider you attractive for some quality: your hair, your smile, your eyes.

15-16 You have a number of attractive qualities that, when put together, make people notice you.

17 You're considered one of the great beauties of the land, and you likely have many suitors.

18 Beauty doesn't quite describe you. People like you come along once in a generation, if that.

Pacari

The people of Pacari bonded with beasts of the land long ago, and that fact has influenced their culture and physiology in a number of ways. Many Pacari have beast-like traits, and most Pacari can communicate with one or two beasts at least, if not an entire species of animal. The Pacari tend to be either large and muscled or lean and lithe, and they are a nomadic hunter-gatherer people with a strong warrior tradition.

- **Beast-Bonded:** Nearly every Pacari is bonded to at least one beast, a bond they form when they reach adolescence. This bond gives Pacari the ability to speak telepathically to their bondmates and, sometimes, to other beasts of that type. This bond goes deeper for some, allowing the Pacari to take on traits of their bonded beast, thus increasing their strength, endurance, speed, stealth, and savagery in combat. The most powerful beastmasters are able to muster huge groups of animals to their command, or even to transform physically into a beast.
- **Nomadic Hunter-Gatherers:** There are few permanent settlements on Pacari, and tribes that rely on agriculture are rare. Rather, Pacari tend to move from place to place within a territory, taking what they need from the land and ensuring that it can give them sustenance again later. While the Pacari haven't spent much time on animal domestication in the traditional sense, their beast bonds mean that labor animals are a common sight in Pacari encampments, and hunting parties are often accompanied by wolves, big cats, and other predators.
- **Savage Warriors:** Pacari combat is straightforward and efficient. They leave fancy weapon techniques and codes of battle to others, instead treating combat like any hunt: the strongest survives. When in a fight, a Pacari fights with a beast's savagery, and also in tandem with one or more bonded beasts. This makes the Pacari extraordinarily dangerous in combat; they are ruthlessly pragmatic in a fight, and mercy isn't a concept that's gotten much of a foothold in Pacari culture.
- **Common Names:** [come up with some names]

Creating a Pacari

Starting Attribute Scores Strength 9, Agility 9, Intellect 8, Will 9.

Perception equals your Intellect score +1

Defense equals your Agility score

Health equals your Strength score

Healing Rate equals one-quarter your Health, round down

Size 1/2 or 1, **Speed** 10, **Essence** 0

Damage 0, **Discord** 0, **Strain** 0

Essence Trees Beast Bond, Beast Aspect

Languages and Professions You speak, read, and write Pacari in the dialect of your tribe. You also speak Trade Speech.

Bondmate You are bonded to one beast. Your beast is a tiny, small, medium, or large animal. You can choose traits for your beast from the table below, based on your beast's size.

Beast Size	Traits
Tiny	Choose 2: climber, flier, poisonous, swimmer
Small	Choose 2: climber, poisonous, swimmer

Medium Choose 1: climber, poisonous, swimmer
Large None

You can communicate with your bonded beast telepathically as long as you're within 1 mile of each other. Your beast acts on its own in combat, but you can use an action or a triggered action to issue it a command, allowing you to control it during that turn. If your bonded beast dies, you take 1d6 Strain. You can bond with a new beast (which you choose and create using the rules above) by going out into the wilderness of Pacari and meditating for one day and one night. After this time, your new bondmate finds you.

Level 4 Expert Pacari

Characteristics Health +5

You either learn one Essence power or gain Second Bond

Second Bond You gain an additional bondmate, using the same rules listed above, under Bondmate. You cannot have two bondmates of the same size.

Pacari Background

D20 Background

- 1 Your beast bond came early, when you were a young child.
- 2 You bonded to an unusual beast, one with strange traits or abilities. Your bondmate gets an additional trait, chosen from the Tiny row.
- 3 You sat in meditation at the Great Menhir of Ordru for six days before your bondmate found you.
- 4 You were a huntmaster for your tribe.
- 5 You were once badly injured by the Black Cloud.
- 6 You've studied under a tribal elder. Add a random academic are of knowledge.
- 7 You made good money working as a guide for outlanders. Start the game with 2d6 slivers.
- 8 You once fought a Chaos-wielder, and it left its mark on you. You start with 1d6 Discord.
- 9 You spent time standing vigil over the God's Corpse, guarding it from outsiders.
- 10 You once explored the ruins of Martu Canyon and found something there. You start with an extra Interesting Thing.
- 11 You lost a bondmate several years ago. Start with 1d6 Strain.
- 12 A mainlander spent time with your tribe and taught you to read and write. You can read and write Trade Speech.
- 13 You were born to the Nanok tribe, but left them long ago.
- 14 You once met the Wooden Man and lived to tell the tale.
- 15 You spent several years traveling the world. You speak one additional language.
- 16 You're a craftsperson for your tribe. You start with the Artisan profession.
- 17 You once traveled to the Black Isle and fought a demon there. It left you with a scar.
- 18 You were taken prisoner by another tribe. You spent 1d6 years there before you escaped.
- 19 You are one of the few Pacari who live in a permanent settlement.

20 A good friend of yours died, and you bonded with their bondmate.

Pacari Beast Bond

d20 Beast Bond

1-4 You draw savagery and raw power from your bondmate. Increase your Strength by 2.

5-8 You draw nimbleness and stealth from your bondmate. Increase your Agility by 2.

9-12 Your bondmate has acute senses, and imparts this gift to you. Increase your Perception by 2.

13-16 Your bondmate grants you great speed. Increase your Speed by 3.

17-20 You draw hardiness and durability from your bondmate. Increase your Health by 5.

Pacari Fatal Flaw

3d6 Fatal Flaw

3 Your savagery is unmatched, and you give yourself over to bloodlust readily.

4 You don't trust others, believing that everybody seeks to take what's rightfully yours.

5-6 You're proud, believing yourself to be the superior of those you meet.

7-8 You know little of the world outside of Pacari, and this often trips you up.

9-12 You thrive in the heat of battle, and are always seeking physical combat.

13-14 You feel stupid and inferior among these outsiders.

15-16 You're seeking something, and you hold its importance above anything else.

17 You only kill when you absolutely must, and you judge those who kill readily.

18 You're naive, and believe what others say.

Pacari Age

3d6 Age

3 You're a child, 11 years old or younger.

4-7 You're an adolescent, 12 to 17 years old.

8-12 You're a young adult, 18-35 years old.

13-15 You're a middle-aged adult, 36-55 years old.

16-17 You're an older adult, 56-75 years old.

18 You're a venerable adult, 76 years old or older.

Pacari Build

3d6 Build

3 You are short and thin.

4 You are short and dense.

5-6 You are short.

7-8 You are slender.

9-12 You are average in height and weight.

13-14 You are muscular.

15-16 You are tall and muscular.

17 You are tall and thin.

18 You are enormous.

Pacari Appearance

3d6 Appearance

3 You're touched by the beast. You have animalistic physical traits, like fur, wolf ears, or cat eyes.

4 You're ugly and brutish. Your features are coarse, thick, and scarred, and it makes you frightening.

5-6 You're nothing special. Not particularly attractive, but not ugly either.

7-8 You're plain. There's nothing special or distinctive about your appearance.

9-12 You're average in pretty much every way.

13-14 You have an attractive quality: a powerful build, bronzed skin, or thick, lustrous hair.

15-16 You have many attractive qualities, making you quite popular in your tribe.

17 People from every tribe know of your beauty.

18 Your beauty is so great that many of your fellow Pacari believe it's supernatural in some way.

New Gaia

New Gaia is an island of verdant, primeval jungles. The plants here are enormous in scale; they're huge, prehistoric varieties not found anywhere else on Asunder. When the gods left the world, the women of New Gaia bonded with the plants of the island, gaining the ability to create, alter, bond with, and control them, and even to take on aspects of plant life. Eventually the men of New Gaia also bonded with the plants, though their bonds are rarely as strong as those of women. A rare few people on New Gaia in every generation bond with insects instead of plants, and these insect-bonded are often feared and mistreated by the rest of society.

- **Plant-Bonded:** The people of New Gaia — often called “weavers” — bond with the plants of their island, learning to control and shape them to their will. This has led to a society of innovation and invention, as weavers engineer plants to fill a variety of purposes. Society in New Gaia is one of convenience and constant advancement; there are plants here that perform functions that simply don't have an analog in other parts of the world, and New Gaia is seen by most as a leader in culture and technology.
- **Fighting for Equality:** Not everyone on New Gaia gets to share in all the benefits of the islands society and advancement, though. Because men's plant bonds are rarely as strong as those of women, it's correspondingly rare for men to advance as far as women socially and politically. There are many who say that the basis for this discrimination is no longer true and, indeed, there's quite a bit of evidence to indicate that the genders are no longer any different in terms of bond strength or capability with plants. Still, the struggle for equality continues, and tradition is a difficult obstacle to overcome. Beyond that, though, the weavers who bond with insects instead of plants are often treated very poorly regardless of gender. Many rationalize this by talking about how dangerous the insect-bonded are, while proponents of social justice decry such accusations as pure bigotry.
- **Insect Weavers:** A rare few (maybe ten per cent) of weavers on New Gaia bond with insects instead of plants. These weavers have the ability to control swarms of insects, as well as to create new forms of insects over time, breeding them for different purposes. Many see these insect-bonded as dangerous because of their ability to call great, destructive swarms of creatures at a whim, but most insect weavers simply want to be treated fairly and to live in peace.
- **Common Names:** [come up with some names]

Creating a New Gaian

Starting Attribute Scores Strength 8, Agility 9, Intellect 12, Will 10.

Perception equals your Intellect score

Defense equals your Agility score

Health equals your Strength score

Healing Rate equals one-quarter your Health, round down

Size 1/2 or 1, **Speed** 10, **Essence** 0

Damage 0, **Discord** 0, **Strain** 0

Essence Trees Plant Control, Plant Form

Languages and Professions You speak, read, and write Mother's Tongue and Trade Speech. You know one random common, academic, or wilderness profession.

Verdant Awareness When you're in a place with a significant number of plants — a jungle, a park, a forest, a plain, or anywhere else where plants are common — you're able to tap into the plants' collective unconscious in order to increase your awareness of your surroundings. Consequently, you get 1 boon on any Perception rolls you make in such a place, and you can see areas obscured by shadows as if they were lit.

Shape Plant You can spend a few minutes shaping a plant into a useful form, granting one of the following benefits.

- The plant is a melee weapon. It deals 1d6+2 damage.
- The plant is a ranged weapon. It deals 1d6 damage and can attack anything in short range.
- The plant is armor, or otherwise defends you. If you're not already wearing armor, it grants you +2 to your Defense.
- The plant enhances your physical body in some way when you consume it. Choose Strength or Agility; for the next minute, you get 1 boon on any attack rolls or challenge rolls you make with that attribute.
- The plant has healing properties. When you consume it, you heal half your healing rate.

Once you create the plant, it lasts for 1 hour (or until it's consumed, if consumable; whichever comes first). You suffer no Strain from using a plant you shape, and neither does another plant-bonded New Gaian. Someone else can bond to and use your plant, but doing so requires 1 minute of concentration and inflicts 1 Strain on the wielder. Once you've used this ability, using it again before you complete a rest causes you 1 Strain each time you do so.

Plant Empathy You can feel the pain of plants around you. Under normal circumstances, this is minimal and doesn't distract you. However, if you're near an event of significant plant destruction — such as a forest fire or even a tree being cut down — the screams of the plants fill your ears and you can feel their pain. When this happens, you suffer 1 bane on all challenge rolls and attack rolls until you leave the area or the destruction stops.

Level 4 Expert New Gaian

Characteristics Health +5

You either learn one Essence power or gain Plant-Shaping Mastery

Plant-Shaping Mastery The plants you shape are more potent and durable. They last for 6 hours (or until consumed). Further, plants that deal damage deal an extra 1d6 damage. Plants that increase your Defense increase it by +4 instead of +2. Plants that grant boons grant 1 extra boon. Plants that heal allow you to recover your full healing rate.

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Insect-Bonded

Some weavers bond to insects instead of plants. If your Seeker is one such weaver, alter the the Creating a New Gaian section as follows:

Instead of the Plant Control and Plant Form Essence trees, you have access to:

Insect Control, Insect Meld

Replace Verdant Awareness, Jungle Walker, and Plant Empathy with the following:

Cloud of Flies You're constantly surrounded by a cloud of stinging or biting insects that you can communicate with and even control. You can dismiss or recall the cloud as an action, if you wish. While your cloud is present, you get 1 boon on any Perception rolls you make. In addition, whenever you deal melee damage or damage with an Insect Control power, you deal an extra 1d6 damage from your stinging insects. Your cloud can be killed off, however. If you're subject to an effect that requires an Agility challenge roll to resist, your cloud is destroyed if you fail the roll. When this happens, you receive 1 bane on any attacks or challenge rolls you make for 1 turn, and enemies receive 1 boon to attack you for the same duration. You can summon a new cloud of flies when you take a rest.

Replace Verdant Healing with the following:

Stinging Swarm As an action or a triggered action on your turn, you can send your cloud of flies to harass and annoy someone within medium range. While your cloud is doing so, you lose the benefits of Cloud of Flies, but your target makes all attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane, and anyone who attacks the target does so with 1 boon. You can recall your cloud as an action or triggered action on your turn, ending this effect and regaining the effects of Cloud of Flies. If your target is subject to an effect that requires an Agility challenge roll to resist and fails the roll while being afflicted by your Stinging Swarm, your swarm is destroyed and you suffer the same effects you would if your Cloud of Flies were destroyed.

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New Gaian Social Class

D20 Social Class

1-8 Female

9-16 Male

17-20 Insect-Bonded (any gender, see the Insect-Bonded sidebar)

New Gaian Background

D20 Background

1 You are renowned as an expert in herbalism among your people. You gain the Apothacary profession.

2 You spent time in Storm Point, learning the ways of the mainlanders.

- 3 You studied at a university in Hyden. You speak, read, and write an additional language.
- 4 You've been chosen by the Council of Mothers for an important task.
- 5 You ate a seed from the Great Tree and gained knowledge. You gain a random academic profession.
- 6 You spent extensive time studying bioluminescent fungus in the Starlight Caverns.
- 7 You invented something that made you some good money. Start the game with 2d6 slivers.
- 8 You nearly died in the Poison Lands, but were rescued. Start with 1d6 Strain.
- 9 You served the Council of Mothers with distinction.
- 10 You journeyed to the Barrens to seek knowledge, but found Chaos instead. Start with 1d6 Discord.
- 11 You have ties to the Red Alliance.
- 12 You've been fighting for justice and equality most of your life.
- 13 You grew up near Bugtown, and your best friend is insect-bonded.
- 14 You once sought out Grandfather Ash, asking for wisdom. He told you something you wish he hadn't.
- 15 You spent a year on the Black Isle and it nearly killed you. Start with 1d6 Strain.
- 16 Your village was nearly destroyed by a wandering Chaos-wielder, but you saved it. Start with 1 Strain and 1 Discord.
- 17 You've argued for insect-bonded equality in front of the Council of Mothers. It didn't go well.
- 18 The Red Alliance claimed responsibility for a terrorist act that killed someone you loved.
- 19 You spent a year building ships at Shipwatch. Gain the Artisan profession.
- 20 You nearly killed yourself once experimenting with augmentative plants. Start with 1d6 Strain.

New Gaian Fatal Flaw

- 3d6 Fatal Flaw
- 3 Like nature itself, you are red in tooth and claw. You relish violence.
 - 4 You look down upon those not from New Gaia.
 - 5-6 You've been mistreated, and have a chip on your shoulder.
 - 7-8 You tend to assume people know what you're talking about. They often don't.
 - 9-12 You have a deep mistrust of those who casually harm plants (or insects).
 - 13-14 When you learn that you can do something, you rarely think about whether or not you should.
 - 15-16 You believe Gaia is salvation, and anyone who disagrees with you is wrong.
 - 17 You are fiercely protective of those you travel with. Woe betide those who do them wrong.
 - 18 You're utterly inexperienced with the world outside New Gaia.

New Gaian Age

- 3d6 Age
- 3 You're a child, 11 years old or younger.

- 4-7 You're an adolescent, 12 to 17 years old.
- 8-12 You're a young adult, 18-35 years old.
- 13-15 You're a middle-aged adult, 36-55 years old.
- 16-17 You're an older adult, 56-75 years old.
- 18 You're a venerable adult, 76 years old or older.

New Gaian Build

- 3d6 Build
- 3 You are short and thin.
- 4 You are short and heavy.
- 5-6 You are short.
- 7-8 You are slender.
- 9-12 You are average in height and weight.
- 13-14 You are tall.
- 15-16 You are tall and muscular.
- 17 You are tall and thin.
- 18 You are unusually tall and thin.

New Gaian Appearance

- 3d6 Appearance
- 3 You're so in tune with plant (or insect) life that your appearance is strange, alien, and frightening.
- 4 You're ugly. You have pimples, boils, scars, and other unattractive features that make people shun you.
- 5-6 You're pretty homely. Not ugly, but certainly not attractive.
- 7-8 You're plain. People have trouble describing you when they try.
- 9-12 You're average in pretty much every way.
- 13-14 You're considered attractive: shapely, slender, a dazzling smile, eyes like stars. Take your pick.
- 15-16 The artists of your people use people like you as models. You're quite beautiful.
- 17 You're one of the great beauties of your generation.
- 18 Your bond with nature is such that your appearance seems otherworldly in a way that people find irresistible.

Black Isle

The Black Isle is a hard place full of hard people. It contains almost no vegetation, and the entire landscape is made of flat black rock with hard edges and sharp corners. The few beasts that live here are dangerous predators that prey upon each other and upon the humans living here, but they're not even the worst part. The Black Isle is the part of the world where demons spew from the ground on a regular basis, emerging to hunt and kill, and the Black Islers feel it is their responsibility to keep the tide in check. As such, they are a fierce warrior people, and their lives leave little room for anything soft or unnecessary.

- **Essence Turned Inward:** The Black Islers had little to bond with when the gods left, and so their Essence turned inward and bonded with their own bodies. These people have learned to harness their Essence with intense meditative techniques and complex martial arts. They practice constantly, sparring and going through forms, focusing their energy on relentless self-improvement. Such single-mindedness has paid off for them; those from the Black Isle are capable of amazing superhuman feats. Their skin is tougher, their muscles stronger, and they can move with unmatched speed and deadliness.
- **Demon-Hunters:** The people of the Black Isle see themselves as the last line of defense against the demonic incursion, the only thing preventing these creatures from escaping into the wider world. Long ago, they learned to form hunting parties: groups of ten to twenty led by a single hunter. While the hunter is the most skilled and the most highly-trained of the group, this isn't what makes her deadly; rather, the people of the Black Isle have learned to work in tandem, using potent meditative techniques to achieve a group consciousness that allows them to funnel all their power — the power of a group of ten to twenty hardened warriors — into a single person, the hunter. Such an individual is more than a match for your average demon.
- **Purpose in All Things:** Black Islers don't much like things that don't seem to serve a purpose. "Purpose" in this case means, "this thing helps me survive and excel." Art, song, soft clothing, and other such unnecessary distractions are rare in Black Isle society. Many Black Islers even eschew weapons in combat, relying instead on their bodies alone. More than one person has lost a fight against a Black Isler after realizing with growing dismay that the unarmed, unarmored person bearing down on them was far deadlier than they.
- **Common Names:** [come up with some names]

Creating a Black Isler

Starting Attribute Scores Strength 11, Agility 9, Intellect 9, Will 9.

Perception equals your Intellect

Defense equals your Agility score +2

Health equals your Strength score +4

Healing Rate equals one-quarter your Health, round down

Size 1/2 or 1, **Speed** 10, **Essence** 0

Damage 0, **Discord** 0, **Strain** 0

Essence Trees Body Conditioning, Battle Meditation

Languages and Professions You speak Trade Speech and Deep.

Demon Killer Whenever you attack a demon, you do so with 1 boon.

Level 4 Expert Black Isler

Characteristics Health +6

You either learn one Essence power or gain Stone Fists

Stone Fists Your unarmed strikes deal an extra 1d6 damage.

Black Isler Caste

3d6 Caste

3-4 Gatherer. Increase your Intelligence by 1. Add the Animal Trainer, Farmer, or Gatherer profession.

5-7 Teacher. Increase your Intelligence by 1. Add another language, and you can read and write all languages you speak.

8-13 Warrior. Increase your Agility by 1 and your Strength by 1.

14-16 Builder. Increase your Strength by 1. Add the Artisan, Laborer, or Woodcutter profession.

17-18 Elder. Increase your Intelligence by 1 and your Will by 1. When you roll your age, your result cannot be lower than older adult.

Black Isler Background

D20 Background

1 You used to be a demon hunter, but you were ousted by a younger upstart.

2 You were once accused of demonic corruption.

3 You made enemies by supporting Kared instead of Stolgart.

4 You guided a group of outlanders into the Mines of Korunna. They died, but they paid you first. Start the game with 2d6 slivers.

5 You left the Black Isle and returned, but were branded a coward. Still, you learned a new, random profession.

6 You've studied the outside world. Add an academic area of knowledge.

7 You once drank the pure, hot blood of a demon after you killed it, and it gave you a vision. Start with 1d6 Discord.

8 You fell into a deep chasm once and it took you 1d6 years to find your way back out.

9 As a rite of passage, you swam out to the Face of the Sea and back.

10 You served on the Circle of Six for 1d6 years.

11 A demon once nearly killed you by sapping your life-force. Start with 1d6 Strain.

12 You once did a favor for a mainlander, and he gave you something. Start with an additional random Interesting Thing.

13 You were cast out of your clan as an infant for being weak. Another clan took you in and raised you.

14 You're fascinated by outlander art. Add the Artist profession.

15 You have a large, distinct scar, a reminder of a near-fatal mistake.

16 A friend saved your life once, and you have yet to repay her.

17 Someone you cared about was killed by a demon while you were out on a hunt.

- 18 You had a vision when you meditated at Skyward Temple.
- 19 You once found yourself in the Green Valley, but you've never been able to retrace your steps.
- 20 A demon took you prisoner once, talked to you for seven days, and released you.

Black Isler Fatal Flaw

- 3d6 Fatal Flaw
- 3 You believe killing is the only thing you're truly good at.
- 4 You have nothing but disdain for these outlanders and their softness.
- 5-6 You hold yourself above others, believing yourself their superior.
- 7-8 You know almost nothing about outlander customs.
- 9-12 You slay demons and those you believe to be their servants, without hesitation or remorse.
- 13-14 You long for the thrill of battle, and seek it whenever you're able.
- 15-16 You're seeking something, and you hold its importance above anything else.
- 17 You're a little too fond of outlander creature comforts.
- 18 You've sworn a vow not to kill another human being ever again.

Black Isler Age

- 3d6 Age
- 3 You're a child, 9 years old or younger.
- 4-7 You're an adolescent, 10 to 14 years old.
- 8-12 You're a young adult, 15-25 years old.
- 13-15 You're a middle-aged adult, 26-45 years old.
- 16-17 You're an older adult, 46-55 years old.
- 18 You're a venerable adult, 56 years old or older.

Black Isle Build

- 3d6 Build
- 3 You are short and wiry.
- 4 You are short and hard.
- 5-6 You are short.
- 7-8 You are slender.
- 9-12 You are average in height and weight.
- 13-14 You are muscular.
- 15-16 You are tall and muscular.
- 17 You are tall and wiry.
- 18 You are huge and muscled.

Black Isle Appearance

- 3d6 Appearance
- 3 You're hideous. Many think you touched by the demons for your unnatural features, and few trust or want to be around you.
- 4 You're ugly and battle-scarred. You're probably missing an ear, an eye, or your nose, and even before that you were no prize.

5-6 You're somewhat brutish. Your features are thick and heavy, and you have lots of unsightly hair.

7-8 Your looks are entirely utilitarian.

9-12 You're average in pretty much every way.

13-14 You have an attractive quality: chiseled muscles, piercing eyes, or a square jaw.

15-16 You're quite attractive, with a number of qualities that people find appealing.

17 You're so beautiful that most of your clanmates don't believe you're hard enough for the Isle.

18 You're a vision. Many think you touched by the demons for your unnatural features, and few trust or want to be around you.

Sky City

When the gods left Asunder, taking all the metal with them, great islands wrested themselves from the ocean and drifted upward, to settle in the sky high above. The people who dwell on those islands know that it's because of a peculiar crystal that grows on those islands — blice crystal — that conveys properties of being lighter than air. When metal was present, it was heavy enough to keep the islands in the water; once the metal disappeared, the islands found a new home in the sky. The people who lived — and still live — on those islands learned to bond with blice crystal, which allowed them to adapt to their new, skybound environment with ease. They built a great city there, as well as an elaborate elevator to allow visitors and cargo to enter the city, and there they dwell still, in Sky City.

- **Sky-Bound:** Though not actually bound to the sky itself, people often refer to the citizens of Sky City as being sky-bound. In actuality, their Essence bonded to the blice crystal of the islands of Sky City. This crystal gives them the ability to leap great distances, alter gravity around them, and even fly, though they still rely on specialized gas spores to direct their flight. The people of Sky City harvest blice, working it into clothing and armor to enhance their abilities and grinding it up to make tonics that they use to strengthen their control over gravity.
- **Ruled by Nobles:** The noble houses rule Sky City. Each of the major islands is owned by one of the major noble houses, and there are countless minor houses that fight over what's left. Though the rule of law is strictly upheld in Sky City, behind the scenes the nobles engage in the Great Game, a contest of bribery, blackmail, assassination, and political machination. In the Great Game, nothing is out of bounds as long as you don't get caught. Beneath the nobles are, basically, everyone else. Commoners in Sky City are effectively serfs, working the land, tithing to their noble lords, and operating at their beck and call.
- **Quick Warriors, Giant Swords:** The Sky-Dwellers have learned to use their gravity-manipulation powers to develop and perfect a distinct martial style that nobody else in Asunder can quite replicate. Their fighting style is graceful, flowing, full of impossible leaps, slow floats to the earth, wall-running, and other confounding techniques that make Sky-Dwellers difficult to target and even more difficult to defend against. Mobility is their hallmark, and you never know which direction a Sky-Dweller will strike from. To make things even more dangerous for their opponents, Sky-Dwellers are fond of wielding oversized weapons, such as swords almost as long as a man, wielded in one-hand. Those who learn this technique do so by altering the gravity around the weapon, making it light and easy to wield, then reversing that once they've built momentum to create a devastating swing.
- **Common Names:** [come up with some names]

Creating a Sky-Dweller

Starting Attribute Scores Strength 9, Agility 12, Intellect 10, Will 9.

Perception equals your Intellect

Defense equals your Agility score

Health equals your Strength score

Healing Rate equals one-quarter your Health, round down

Size 1/2 or 1, **Speed** 12, **Essence** 0

Damage 0, **Discord** 0, **Strain** 0

Essence Trees Sky-Dancing, Gravity Manipulation

Languages and Professions You speak, read, and write Trade Speech. In addition, you can choose to speak one additional language or add one random profession.

Lighter than Air You can leap great distances, dozens or even hundreds of feet at a time. Whenever you jump up or across, multiply the distance you can jump by 10. When you drop down from a height, you can fall 30 yards safely, without taking damage. In addition, whenever you make a challenge roll that involves jumping or climbing, you do so with 1 boon.

Level 4 Expert Sky-Dweller

Characteristics Health +5

You either learn one Essence power or gain Prodigious Leap

Prodigious Leap As an action or a triggered action on your turn, you can make an astoundingly long leap. When you do so, multiply the distance you jump by 10 again. This includes the distance you can safely drop. Once you've used this ability, you must complete a rest before you can do so again.

Sky-Dweller Background

D20 Background

- 1 You were born to a minor noble house. When you roll for starting Wealth, add 2 to your roll.
- 2 You were raised as a blice farmer. Add the Gatherer profession.
- 3 You left home to study at an academy in Hyden. Add a random academic area of knowledge.
- 4 You were born as a commoner on the island of one of the major noble families.
- 5 You served one of the major noble families with distinction.
- 6 When you first took your Great Leap, you nearly fell to your death.
- 7 You were involved in a blice-farming accident. The crystals exploded and nearly killed you.
- 8 You rejected the rule of the nobility and went to live on the Rebel Islands.
- 9 You spent time as a guard in one of the great museums of Sky City.
- 10 You grew up on the streets, stealing your food to survive. Add a random criminal profession.
- 11 You're the disowned scion of a major noble house.
- 12 You made a good living trading goods with mainlanders. Start with 2d6 slivers.
- 13 You worked as a translator for one of the noble houses. You can speak another language.
- 14 You're renowned as a great artist in Sky City. Add the Artist profession.
- 15 You spent 1d6 years in prison for crossing a noble.
- 16 You made a living in your profession.
- 17 You spent time spying on a noble house for a different noble house.
- 18 You were a sky bridge operator for several years.

- 19 You attended the Academy. Add a random martial profession.
- 20 In your youth, you spent time doing jobs for Blue William.

Sky-Dweller Fatal Flaw

- 3d6 Fatal Flaw
- 3 You love to show your powers off to anyone who will watch.
- 4 You're a hedonist. Earthly pleasures are your favorite kind of pleasures.
- 5-6 You're prone to fits of irrational rage.
- 7-8 You play the Great Game everywhere: deception, subterfuge, and gaining the advantage are everything.
- 9-12 You hate the wealthy and those who wield power over others.
- 13-14 You believe yourself better than those who are bound to the ground.
- 15-16 You're on a mission of revenge, and nothing will get in your way.
- 17 You have a lover in every port, and most of them are none to fond of you now.
- 18 You're utterly without guile.

Sky-Dweller Age

- 3d6 Age
- 3 You're a child, 11 years old or younger.
- 4-7 You're an adolescent, 12 to 17 years old.
- 8-12 You're a young adult, 18-35 years old.
- 13-15 You're a middle-aged adult, 36-55 years old.
- 16-17 You're an older adult, 56-75 years old.
- 18 You're a venerable adult, 76 years old or older.

Sky-Dweller Build

- 3d6 Build
- 3 You are short and thin.
- 4 You are short and stocky.
- 5-6 You are short.
- 7-8 You are slender.
- 9-12 You are average in height and weight.
- 13-14 You are heavy.
- 15-16 You are tall and muscular.
- 17 You are tall and heavy.
- 18 You are very tall and thin.

Sky-Dweller Appearance

- 3d6 Appearance
- 3 You're incredibly ugly. Life has not been kind to you, whether it's the ravages of a disease or simply hard living.
- 4 You're ugly. You have unsightly hair, unattractive features, pimples, boils, and so forth.
- 5-6 You're homely. While most wouldn't consider you ugly, your appearance is... uninspired.

7-8 Your quite plain. Your appearance doesn't make much of an impression, and people don't tend to notice you for your looks.

9-12 You're average in pretty much every way.

13-14 You're attractive. You might have long, beautiful hair or a sculpted nose that people find appealing.

15-16 You're beautiful. You have numerous suitors, and you never have to sleep alone if you don't want to.

17 You're one of the great beauties of your generation. There are maybe four or five like you in Sky City.

18 Your looks go beyond beauty. Nobody can recall someone like you; your grace is unparalleled.

The Sea

Those who live on the sea are like it: mercurial, tumultuous, dangerous, and without mercy. Most land-dwellers consider the seafarers frightening, not just because of their tendency toward unpredictability and violence, but for their strange mutations. Every seafarer has at least one mutation and, while these mutations help them survive out on the open ocean, they also act as a mark that separates them from those who dwell on land. People spot the seafarers easily, and tend to avoid them unless they need something from them. The seafarers, for their part, don't seem to care. Many enjoy the fear they inspire and, in any case, they spend most of their time out on the sea, hunting great sea serpents, engaging in piracy, and doing what the sea demands for survival.

- **Sea-Bound:** When the gods left Asunder, there were many people out at sea. The Essence of these people bound to the closest thing it could: the ocean itself. When this happened, they mutated. Some grew extra limbs, while others sprouted eyes, mouths, claws, scaly skin, or gills. These mutations set them apart from their brethren back on land, and so they united to become a new tribe. Now, the seafarers rule the seas. They're unparalleled sailors, able to survive in conditions that would utterly destroy lesser sailors or ships, and they have become a vital, necessary part of commerce and travel on Asunder.
- **Symbiotic Bonds:** While every nation of Asunder uses symbiotic organisms in some way or another, nobody relies on them quite as much as the seafarers do. They wear crustaceans and urchins that help them breathe underwater, filter the toxic chlorine gas of the ocean out of their lungs, or enhance their strength, speed, and toughness. But the most notable way in which the seafarers use symbiotic organisms is their ships. A seafarer ship is a composite of numerous living creatures, hatched and grown out in the waters. A skilled seafarer can control this creature, but seafarer ships have a mind of their own, and this makes them both a dangerous liability and a powerful asset.
- **Many Captains:** Though seafarers, for the most part, see each other as kin and abide by a code that binds them together, they are a fractious and independent lot. Each ship captain is a sovereign ruler, and aboard her ship, her word is law. No other ship captain has the right to countermand a captain on her own ship; to do so is an open challenge, and often leads to war between the two captains. Because each ship is effectively its own little nation, rules and behavior vary greatly between ships. Some can be relied upon to provide safe passage to land-dwellers looking to travel or trade, while others will waylay any ship they see, plundering it and leaving the crew for dead. Each captain flies her own flag, and it's usually wise to learn which flags are safe, and to assume any you're unfamiliar with are not.
- **Common Names:** [come up with some names]

Creating a Seafarer

Starting Attribute Scores Strength 10, Agility 10, Intellect 9, Will 9.

Perception equals your Intellect

Defense equals your Agility score

Health equals your Strength score

Healing Rate equals one-quarter your Health, round down

Size 1/2 or 1, **Speed** 12, **Essence** 0

Damage 0, **Discord** 0, **Strain** 0

Essence Trees Sea-Calling, Adaptation

Languages and Professions You speak Trade Speech and one other language. You have the Sailor profession.

At Home At Sea Whenever you'd make a challenge roll with at least 1 boon due to your Sailor profession, you roll with 1 additional boon.

Mutation Every seafarer has a mutation. Roll on the following table to determine yours, or choose one. With your Keeper's help you can, at your option, come up with your own mutation. You get to decide what your mutation looks like.

1d20 Mutation

1-2 Natural Weapon. Your unarmed attacks deal an extra 1d6 damage.

3-4 Natural Armor. Add 2 to your Defense.

5-7 Heightened Senses. Add 4 to your Perception.

8-14 Water Adaptation. You can breathe underwater, and you ignore difficult terrain due to swimming.

15-16 Climber. You ignore difficult terrain due to climbing, and you roll any climbing-based challenge rolls with 1 boon. You don't require handholds to climb, and you can climb horizontal surfaces with 1 bane.

17-18 Extra Arms. You have four arms instead of two. This allows you to wield twice as many weapons or tools, and even to dual-wield two-handed weapons.

19-20 Camouflage. Whenever you make a challenge roll to avoid notice, you do so with 2 boons.

Level 4 Expert Seafarer

Characteristics Health +3

You either learn one Essence power or gain Extra Mutation

Extra Mutation Roll again on the Mutation table, or choose a new mutation. You now have both mutations. If you roll the same mutation a second time, roll again until you get a different one.

Seafarer Background

D20 Background

1 Your ship sank during a violent swarm. You're the only survivor.

2 You used to be the captain of a ship, but lost it due to mutiny.

3 Your ship went feral when you hit a pocket of Chaos. Start with 1d6 Discord.

4 Your last raid was quite successful. Start with 2d6 slivers.

5 You were marooned alone on an island for 1d6 years.

6 You've spent a lot of time in Megalith, and have even fought in the Arena.

7 A scholar sailed with your ship for several years, and you learned from him. Add a random area of academic knowledge.

8 You've sailed on dozens of different ships, with dozens of different captains.

9 You spent some time wandering the mainland. You can speak an additional language.

- 10 You're wanted in at least two city-states for piracy.
- 11 You found something on a raid, and have hung onto it since. Start with an additional, random Interesting Thing.
- 12 You were once chased out of a port for being a little too rowdy.
- 13 Your best friend was killed by a sea serpent during a hunt. The serpent got away.
- 14 You recently spent days adrift in a lifeboat in a chlorine-induced haze. Start with 1d6 Strain.
- 15 You have a distinctive scar from an encounter with a sea serpent.
- 16 You spent time hatching and raising ships. Start with the Shipwright profession.
- 17 Your crew was taken by another ship's crew, and you spent 1d6 years as a galley slave.
- 18 You were once swallowed by a sea serpent, but carved your way out.
- 19 On your ship, you were well-liked for your musical ability. Start with the Entertainer profession.
- 20 Your entire crew was nearly killed in an encounter with the Hungry Fleet.

Seafarer Fatal Flaw

- 3d6 Fatal Flaw
- 3 You're aggressively proud of your mutations.
- 4 You believe that the natural order is for the strong to take things from the weak.
- 5-6 You like to drink, and when you drink, you like to fight.
- 7-8 You often say things that scandalize and offend land-dwellers.
- 9-12 You don't back down from anybody. Ever.
- 13-14 You wear symbiotic organisms in public whenever you can, because you like to scare people.
- 15-16 Being on land sometimes makes you ill-at-ease.
- 17 You're a thrill-seeker. You love danger; the more dangerous, the better.
- 18 You tend to get others into trouble. It's not your fault!

Seafarer Age

- 3d6 Age
- 3 You're a child, 9 years old or younger.
- 4-7 You're an adolescent, 10 to 14 years old.
- 8-12 You're a young adult, 15-25 years old.
- 13-15 You're a middle-aged adult, 26-45 years old.
- 16-17 You're an older adult, 46-55 years old.
- 18 You're a venerable adult, 56 years old or older.

Seafarer Build

- 3d6 Build
- 3 You are short and thin.
- 4 You are short and stocky.
- 5-6 You are short.
- 7-8 You are slender.
- 9-12 You are average in height and weight.
- 13-14 You are heavy.

- 15-16 You are tall and muscular.
- 17 You are tall and heavy.
- 18 You are very tall and thin.

Seafarer Appearance

3d6 Appearance

- 3 You're monstrous. Your mutations are obvious, disturbing, and frightening to some.
- 4 You're ugly. You probably have an extra nose or two, frills instead of hair, or some other unsightly cosmetic mutation.
- 5-6 You're slightly disturbing. Your unsightly mutations are minimal but present. You can hide them if you try.
- 7-8 You're quite plain. You don't have any truly disturbing mutations, but you're also not particularly attractive.
- 9-12 You're average in pretty much every way. You probably have mutations, but they don't bother people.
- 13-14 You're attractive. You have few, if any, visible mutations, and you've got an attractive quality or two.
- 15-16 You're beautiful. Your mutations are nearly invisible, and you have several attractive qualities.
- 17 You're striking. Your mutations serve to accentuate your beauty rather than detract, giving you an exotic appeal.
- 18 Your unearthly beauty turns heads, and makes people wonder if you're really of this world.

Professions

Professions describe what you do. Whether it's a trade, an area of knowledge, some form of military training, or simply an aptitude for a particular kind of work, a profession is a good indicator for what your character did for a living before she became a Seeker. The professions presented here are broad, giving you freedom to define your particular role or expertise within a profession. It's up to you to figure out exactly what a profession or combination of professions means on your character sheet, and how that interacts with the other information on your character sheet.

Starting Professions

You start with two professions, plus any granted to you by your Origin. You can choose any profession you like, or you can roll on the tables provided to generate a random profession.

Languages

If you wish, you can trade out one of your starting professions in order to speak another language, or in order to read and write a language you already speak.

Using Professions

Professions describe, in broad terms, what you know how to do, what you've spent time learning, and what your training is. As such, the GM will often look to your professions in order to determine what's possible for you to accomplish in the game. This might result in an automatic success when you attempt a particular task, or it might result in the GM granting you 1 boon if the outcome is uncertain. For example, if you're a Farmer, it stands to reason that you know how to tend to crops and can generally do so without making a roll. If you try to determine what the weather will be like in the coming day, the GM might grant you 1 boon on a roll to do so, or simply tell you what the weather will be like.

Altering Professions

The professions provided here aren't an exhaustive list. You might have an idea for some pursuit or occupation for your character that doesn't appear on this list. Maybe you spent a long time as a stowaway on a ship, and Sailor just doesn't describe what you did accurately. In that case, it's fine to substitute a profession on these tables for one of your own devising. Consult with your Keeper first, and work with her to come up with a good profession for your Seeker.

Profession Types

D6 Profession

- 1 **Academic.** You've spent time studying a particular field and have become something of an expert. Roll a d20 and consult the "Academic Professions" table. You can recall information related to your area of expertise.
- 2 **Common.** You might be a laborer, a craftsperson, or work in some other commonly-found trade. Roll a d20 and consult the "Common Professions" table. You can recall information related to your trade and, given time and materials, produce goods related to it.

- 3 **Criminal.** You engage in illegal or illicit activities. Roll a d20 and consult the “Criminal Professions” table. You can recall information related to your profession, and you have contacts you can call upon.
- 4 **Martial.** You’ve spent time in the military, law enforcement, or some similar profession. Roll a d20 and consult the “Martial Professions” table. You likely have contacts related to your profession.
- 5 **Religious.** The gods may be gone, but people still believe in something more. Roll a d20 and consult the “Religious Professions” table. You can recall information related to your religion.
- 6 **Wilderness.** You’ve spent time living on nature’s bounty. Roll a d20 and consult the “Wilderness Professions” table. You have access to natural lore.

Academic Professions

D20	Area of Scholarship
1	Architecture
2	Astrology
3	Engineering
4	Etiquette & customs
5	Folklore
6	Geography
7	Tribal culture
8	History
9	Law
10	Literature
11	Chaos
12	Medicine
13	Navigation
14	Essence bonds
15	Philosophy
16	Politics
17	Nature
18	Mythology
19	Science
20	War

Common Professions

D20	Profession
1	Animal trainer
2	Apothecary
3	Artisan. Choose a manufacturing trade.
4	Artist. Choose a medium.
5	Boatman or ferryman
6	Butcher
7	Cook
8	Drover or herder
9	Entertainer. Choose a style.

- 10 Farmer
- 11 Fisher or sea hunter
- 12 Groom
- 13 Laborer. Choose a labor.
- 14 Merchant. Choose a good.
- 15 Miner
- 16 Musician. Choose an instrument.
- 17 Sailor
- 18 Servant of valet
- 19 Shopkeeper
- 20 Teamster

Criminal Professions

- D20 Profession
- 1 Agitator
- 2 Beggar
- 3 Burglar
- 4 Carouser or rake
- 5 Charlatan or confidence artist
- 6 Glass dealer
- 7 Fence
- 8 Forger
- 9 Gambler
- 10 Grave robber
- 11 Informant
- 12 Murderer
- 13 Pickpocket
- 14 Pirate
- 15 Prostitute
- 16 Rebel or terrorist
- 17 Saboteur
- 18 Spy
- 19 Thug
- 20 Urchin

Martial Professions

- D20 Profession
- 1 Constable
- 2 Detective
- 3-4 Guard
- 5 Jailer
- 6 Officer
- 7 Champion
- 8 Mercenary
- 9-10 Militia member
- 11-12 Warrior

- 13-14 Peasant conscript
- 16 Slave
- 17-18 Soldier
- 19 Assassin
- 20 Torturer

Wilderness Professions

- D20 Profession
- 1 Bandit, brigand, or highway robber
- 2 Barbarian
- 3 Exile
- 4 Gatherer
- 5-6 Guide
- 7 Hermit
- 8-9 Hunter
- 10 Nomad or vagabond
- 11 Pioneer
- 12 Poacher or rustler
- 13 Prospector
- 14 Outlaw
- 15-16 Refugee
- 17 Spelunker
- 18 Tracker
- 19 Trapper
- 20 Woodcutter

Religious Professions

- D20 Profession
- 1-5 Disciple of the Old Gods. You believe the Old Gods will one day return and deliver the world from its current tribulations.
- 6-8 Pure Light Adherent. You believe in the divine nature of Pure Light, and you follow it where it goes.
- 9-13 Gaian. You worship Gaia as a source of life and mother of the planet.
- 14-16 Demon-Worshiper. You believe the demons are divine messengers sent to remake the world anew.
- 17-20 Chaos Cultist. You venerate Chaos as a force of both creation and destruction.

Starting Equipment

You start with equipment based on your character's wealth. First, roll 3d6 and consult the **Wealth** table. Come up with a story for why you live at the lifestyle at which you live, bearing in mind your Origin and professions. Your starting Wealth gives you additional equipment as listed below.

Wealth

3d6 Lifestyle

3-4 **Destitute** You are penniless and live on the streets.

5-8 **Poor** You live in squalid conditions and you're never sure where you're going to get your next meal.

9-13 **Getting By** You earn enough to meet all your expenses.

14-16 **Comfortable** You live well and make enough that you can save a little.

17 **Wealthy** You live very well. You have nice clothes and fine accommodations, and you have probably not gone without for a long time.

18 **Rich** You want for nothing. You likely come from a noble family, and you have servants and an estate, castle, or house in the best part of town. Your fortunes earn you many friends and many enemies.

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Currency in Asunder

Asunder has no precious metals; instead, people use gems as currency. The following gems are used as currency in Asunder.

Emeralds, or "greens," are the most valuable currency in Asunder, and are very rare.

Diamonds ("whites") have the next lowest value; two diamonds are worth one emerald.

Below diamonds are **rubies**, or "reds." Five rubies are worth one diamond.

Next are **sapphires**, called "blues." Five sapphires make up one ruby.

Below sapphires are **pearls**, often called "bobs." Five pearls make up one sapphire.

Finally, pearls are often cut into **slivers**, flat discs. Five slivers make up a pearl.

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Destitute

You have a club or a sling with 20 stones, rags, and a pouch containing 1d6 slivers.

Poor

You have a staff or club or sling with 20 stones, patched basic clothing, a sack, bread, a waterskin, a tinderbox, a candle, and a pouch containing 2d6 slivers.

Getting By

You have a light weapon appropriate to your homeland, a staff or club or sling with 20 stones, basic clothing, a backpack, a week of rations, a waterskin, a tinderbox, 1d3 torches, and a pouch containing 1d3 pearls.

Comfortable

You have a light weapon appropriate to your homeland, a staff or club or sling with 20 stones, fine clothing, a backpack, a cloak, a week of rations, a waterskin, a coil of rope, a tinderbox, 2 torches, a [healing potion equivalent], and a pouch containing 2d6 pearls. You also have a small shield; a piece of minor living gear of the Keeper's choice; or a healer's kit, tool kit, or writing kit.

Wealthy

You have a light weapon appropriate to your homeland, courtier's clothing, a backpack, a cloak, a week of rations, a waterskin, a coil of rope, a tinderbox, a lantern, 2 flasks of oil, a [healing potion equivalent], and a pouch containing 1d6 sapphires. You also have a small shield; a piece of minor living gear of the Keeper's choice; or a healer's kit, tool kit, or writing kit.

Rich

You have a light weapon appropriate to your homeland, noble's clothing, a cloak, a week of rations, a waterskin, a coil of rope, a tinderbox, a lantern, 2 flasks of oil, a [healing potion equivalent], and a pouch containing 2d6 sapphires. You also have a personal servant, a guard, and three riding beasts appropriate to your homeland, with saddles.

[INTERESTING THINGS TABLE GOES HERE]

[ROLEPLAYING ADVICE GOES HERE]

Playing the Game

This chapter tells everything you need to know to play *Asunder*. The rules cover the basics of how your character and other creatures do things in the game. Both the characters you play and the creatures you encounter might possess special abilities that alter how the normal rules work. Such exceptions always trump the general rules described here.

As you play, you should always use common sense about the real world as your guide for what's possible and what isn't. Strange creatures, Essence powers, and other such phenomena can defy what we deem laws of reality, bending or even breaking them. Aside from such miraculous events, characters can do just about anything people do in the real world: climb, start a campfire, walk, balance on a narrow surface, talk, use their senses, and so on. Most times, you don't need rules for these things. You tell the Keeper what your Seeker does and the game moves forward.

For simplicity's sake, these rules use "you" to describe your character's actions in the game.

Making Decisions

Simple, ordinary actions are assumed to happen. For example, you tell the Keeper you buy a bone knife from a street merchant. Unless something interesting interferes with that activity, it happens as you stated and the story continues.

If you try to do something that is impossible, the Keeper tells you that the activity doesn't happen and what (if anything) results from the effort. For example, trying to breathe underwater simply fails unless you have a mutation or other advantage that grants you the ability to do so; the Keeper tells you that you start drowning and play moves on.

Sometimes, an action you describe prompts the Keeper to make a judgment about whether or not the action is possible. The rules help to make the decision, often requiring the roll of dice to decide the outcome.

Time

Precise timekeeping is rarely necessary during play. If you're not in a hurry, it doesn't matter how long it takes you to make purchases in a marketplace or reach the nearest city-state. The Keeper decides how much time passes. A month-long ocean voyage might be summarized with a few minutes of description, or you might play through a tense negotiation in real time.

There are occasions where time is important. When a naga slithers out of the jungle and attacks, when you spring a trap and have to run away from the wall of water it releases, or when you're chasing a psychopathic killer through tangled city streets, you need to know when it's your turn to act. In such cases, the Keeper can switch to rounds,

segments of time that are 10 seconds long. See **Chapter 4** for a more detailed look at how rounds work.

Rolling Dice

As noted in the introduction, the game uses two kinds of dice: a twenty-sided die and a six-sided die (the ordinary cube die found in many games).

You roll a twenty-sided die (a d20) whenever you attempt an activity whose outcome is uncertain. The die roll determines whether the attempt is a success or a failure.

You roll one or more six-sided dice (d6) for a number of effects. The most common situation is determining the damage dealt by an attack. For example, an Essence power's effect requires you to roll three six-sided dice (expressed as "3d6") for damage. Sometimes you add or subtract modifiers to such rolls; for example, "1d6 + 2" means you roll 1 six-sided die and then add 2 to the roll to get the total. Boons and banes might require you to adjust a d20 roll by adding or subtracting a d6 roll, and teamwork dice are also d6's added to a d20 roll.

As well, sometimes the rules indicate you should roll a d3, a die with 3 sides. To roll a d3, just roll a d6 and count 1 and 2 as if you had rolled a 1, 3 and 4 as if you had rolled a 2, and 5 and 6 as if you had rolled a 3.

Rolling a d20

You roll a d20 to determine an activity's outcome, by making an attack roll or a challenge roll. Whenever you roll a d20, follow these steps.

Roll the Die: Note the number you rolled.

Apply Modifiers: Add or subtract any modifiers from character attributes or characteristics to the number you rolled. The rules or the Keeper determine what modifier you use, depending on the task you attempt.

Apply Other Adjustments: Add or subtract any other adjustments to the die roll, such as a bonus or penalty, or a boon or bane.

Determine the Result: Compare the final total to the target number for the roll. If the total equals or is greater than the target number, the result is a success. If the total is less than the target number, the result is a failure.

Attack Rolls

You make an attack roll when you attempt to influence or harm another creature or an object. Examples of attack rolls include swinging a weapon to strike an enemy combatant, using an Essence power to overwhelm a creature's mind, or using a club to smash a statue. See **Chapter 4** for more information.

Modifier: Attack rolls with a melee weapon, such as a wooden club or a bone sword, normally add your Strength modifier. When you make an attack with a ranged weapon, such as a throwing shard or thorn spitter, you normally add your Agility modifier to the attack roll. Special kinds of attack rolls might use a different attribute modifier. Some kinds of powers or talents require you to make an attack roll; the power's or talent's description tells you what modifier to use when making it.

Target Number: The target number for an attack roll is usually a creature's Defense score for weapon attacks, or an attribute score for other kinds of attacks.

Success: In general, a success deals damage to the target, imposes an affliction, or forces the target to move or behave in some way. For example, if you use a weapon to attack a creature and get a success, you roll the weapon's damage dice. The creature takes damage equal to the total of the damage roll.

Failure: The target avoids the attack: You miss with your weapon, your shot goes wide of its mark, or the power fails to harm or take hold on the target.

Attack Roll Example: Anna's character, Vetara, takes aim at a wild horok with her thorn-spitter. She's attacking with a ranged weapon, so she adds her Agility modifier to the attack roll. Anna rolls a d20 and gets a 4. She adds her Agility modifier (+3) to the number on the die for a total of 7. The horok's Defense is 16, so the result of the attack roll is a failure and the thorn misses.

Challenge Rolls

You make a challenge roll when you attempt an activity that is not directly opposed by another creature and the outcome is not certain. Sometimes an action that would ordinarily be simple becomes more challenging when under stress or when time is limited. Examples of challenge rolls include climbing, swimming, picking locks, listening for faint sounds, reducing the damage you would take from being caught in an explosion, leaping back from a sprung pit trap, or resisting the effects of strain on your Essence.

Modifier: The type of modifier depends on the action you attempt. For example, you make a Strength challenge roll to smash down a door, applying your Strength modifier. If you listen at a door, you make a Perception challenge roll and use your Perception modifier. If you want to leap out of the path of a gout of fire, you make an Agility challenge roll and use your Agility modifier.

Target Number: The target number for challenge rolls is always 10.

Success: The activity happens as described.

Failure: The activity does not happen, or you don't get the desired outcome. If you attempt the same activity again under identical circumstances, it automatically results in a failure. For example, if you attempt to scale a sheer cliff wall unassisted and get a

failure, you cannot, under the same circumstances, climb that wall. To get up to the top, you have to change the circumstance in some way. You might toss up a grappling hook and rope, find a ladder, hammer spikes into the surface, or put on climbing claws.

As another example, say you attempt to use lock picks to open a locked door. If you have plenty of time and you aren't under any stress, you can eventually open the lock without having to make a roll. However, if you are under pressure, you might have to make the challenge roll. If you get a failure, you can't try again to open the lock under those circumstances, though you can do so once time is no longer an issue.

Challenge Roll Example 1: Adam's character, Kirit, tries to kick down a barred door. The Keeper decides Joe must make a Strength challenge roll. Joe rolls a d20 and gets a 9. He adds his Strength modifier (+2) to the number on the die, for a total of 11, which is a success since Joe needed a 10. Kirit kicks down the door.

Challenge Roll Example 2: An insect-weaver sends forth a swarm of stinging flies, catching Kathy's character, Feldra, in the area. Everything in the power's area takes damage from the flies, but creatures can attempt Agility challenge rolls to take only half the damage. Kathy rolls a d20 and gets a 9. She adds her Agility modifier (+1) to the number on the die for a total of 10. Since the total is 10 or higher, she gets a success and takes only half the damage.

Bonuses and Penalties

Many situations in play can confer a bonus or a penalty on a d20 roll, representing an advantage or a disadvantage.

A bonus is always a positive number (+), which you add to the roll; a penalty is always a negative number (-), which you subtract. A single die roll might have bonuses and penalties from different sources. These are cumulative, so you need to total them up and add them to the total of your roll.

Boons and Banes

Circumstances can make d20 rolls easier or harder. Positive circumstances grant one or more boons, while negative circumstances impose one or more banes.

Boons

Boons improve your d20 die rolls. One or more boons might apply to a given roll. For each boon, you roll a d6 and then add the highest number rolled on all the boon dice to d20 roll. For example, if you make a d20 roll with 3 boons, you would roll 3d6. Say you get 1, 4, and 6 on those dice. The 6 is the highest number, so you add 6 to your d20 roll.

Banes

Banes hinder your d20 die rolls. One or more banes might apply to a given roll. For each bane, you roll a d6 and then subtract the highest number on all the bane dice from your d20 roll. For example, if you make a d20 roll with 4 banes, you would roll 4d6. Say

you get 1, 3, 5, and 5 on those dice. Since 5 is the highest number, you would subtract 5 from your d20 roll.

Combining Boons and Banes

Boons and banes cancel each other out, one for one. If 2 boons and 1 bane apply to a particular d20 roll, you make the roll with 1 boon (1 bane cancels 1 boon). Similarly, if 2 boons and 4 banes apply to the roll, you would end up making the roll with 2 banes (2 boons cancel 2 banes).

Teamwork Dice

You roll a teamwork die only when someone hands you one as you make an attack or challenge roll. You can use a triggered action to hand a fellow Seeker a teamwork die when they make an attack or challenge roll, provided you have a tie to that Seeker (see **Chapter 5**).

If someone hands you a teamwork die when you're making a challenge roll, you automatically succeed on your challenge roll. You don't need to roll the die.

If someone hands you a teamwork die when you're making an attack roll, that teamwork die is a d6. If you have one or more banes on your roll and a teamwork die, your teamwork die cancels out up to two banes. So, for example, if you're making a roll with 3 banes and a teamwork die, you instead make the roll with 1 bane. If you have one or more boons on your roll, you add both the highest boon *and* your teamwork die to the total. For example, if you're making a roll with 3 boons and a teamwork die, and you roll 1, 4, and 5 on your boons and a 3 on your teamwork die, you add both the highest boon (5) and your teamwork die (3), for a total of +8 to your roll.

Attributes

Attributes describe a creature's basic capabilities in the game. Most creatures have four attributes: Strength, Agility, Intellect, and Will. Each attribute has two numbers: a score and a modifier. Together, these numbers reflect a creature's natural talent and formal training when attempting to do things in the game.

Score: An attribute's score ranges from 1 to 20. Player characters usually have starting scores from 8 to 13.

Modifier: An attribute's modifier equals its score – 10. You apply this number to d20 rolls when you use the attribute. So, for example, if your Agility was 13, your Agility modifier would be +3. If you had a Strength of 8, your Strength modifier would be -2.

Using Attributes

Here are some guidelines about how you commonly use your character's attributes in the game. Each attribute is associated with one or more characteristics, described later.

Attribute	Characteristic
Strength	Health

Agility	Defense
Intellect	Perception
Will	Strain

Strength

Strength describes brawn, constitution, physical power, and durability.

Score: Your Strength score is the target number for any attack that would directly harm your body.

Health: This measures your ability to withstand damage. Your starting Health equals your Strength score and might be adjusted by Origin (see **Chapter 2**). If your Strength score increases, your Health increases by the same amount.

Attack Rolls: You make a Strength attack roll when you attack with a melee weapon or use brute force to shove, grab, or knock down another creature.

Challenge Rolls: You make a Strength challenge roll when you attempt an athletic activity, such as climbing, running long distances, or swimming. You also make Strength challenge rolls to resist the effects of poison, disease, and similar harmful substances or situations.

Lifting Weights: Your Strength score determines how much weight you can normally lift, as shown on the “Lifting Weights by Strength” table. The “Normal” column lists how much you can reliably lift over your head without having to make a challenge roll. The “Success” column lists the maximum weight you can lift by getting a success on a Strength challenge roll.

Size: Larger creatures can lift greater weights, while smaller creatures can’t lift as much. Multiply a creature’s lifting weight for its Strength by its Size (see “Characteristics”) to determine how much it can lift. For example, a Size 2 creature with Strength 10 can reliably lift 200 pounds, or 400 pounds with a success on a Strength challenge roll.

Dragging and Shoving: A creature can drag up to about 5 times the weight it can normally lift. Using an action (see “Combat”), a creature can drag or shove such an object up to 2 yards across a reasonably flat surface, 1 yard up a sloped surface, or 3 yards down a sloped surface.

Lifting Weights by Strength

Strength	Normal	Success
1	1 lb.	2 lb.
2	2 lb.	4 lb.
3	5 lb.	10 lb.
4	10 lb.	20 lb.
5	20 lb.	40 lb.
6	30 lb.	60 lb.

7	40 lb.	80 lb.
8	50 lb.	100 lb.
9	75 lb.	150 lb.
10	100 lb.	200 lb.
11	150 lb.	300 lb.
12	200 lb.	400 lb.
13	250 lb.	500 lb.
14	350 lb.	700 lb.
15	500 lb.	1,000 lb.
16	1,000 lb.	2,000 lb.
17	2,000 lb.	4,000 lb.
18	4,000 lb.	8,000 lb.
19	8,000 lb.	16,000 lb.
20	16,000 lb.	32,000 lb.

Agility

Agility describes quickness, poise, and reflexes.

Score: Your Agility score is the target number for any kind of attack that needs only to touch you or that would trap you.

Defense: Your Defense score is the target number for enemy attack rolls using weapons. It equals your Agility score when you are not wearing armor or using a shield, unless you have a bonus from a talent, path, or Origin that increases your Defense.

Attack Rolls: You make Agility attack rolls when you attack with ranged weapons or with melee weapons that have the finesse property (see **Chapter 4**).

Challenge Rolls: You make Agility challenge rolls when you attempt physical activities that involve quickness and dexterity, such as jumping, leaping, escaping bonds, or squeezing through a tight space. You also make Agility challenge rolls to reduce damage from being caught in an explosion or to avoid sudden danger, such as a sprung trap.

Intellect

Intellect describes cunning, wit, memory, and education.

Score: Your Intellect score is the target number for any kind of attack that would deceive or confuse your mind, thoughts, and senses.

Perception: You use Perception to notice and interact with your surroundings. Your base Perception score normally equals your Intellect score, but your Origin can adjust this score.

Attack Rolls: You make Intellect attack rolls when you use certain powers or talents or when you try to deceive another creature.

Challenge Rolls: You make Intellect challenge rolls when you try to recall obscure information, use logic to solve a problem, or attempt any other activity that requires knowledge or education. You also make Intellect challenge rolls to resist effects that would weaken or harm your mind, deceive your senses, or confound or confuse you.

Will

Will describes courage, discipline, and sense of self.

Score: Your Will score is the target number for any attack that would force you to act against your will, such as being charmed, compelled, or frightened.

Strain: Certain actions or events can tax your Essence to dangerous levels. Your Will score is the maximum amount of Strain you can gain before you suffer an Essence break.

Attack Rolls: You make Will attack rolls when you use certain powers or talents or try to persuade or intimidate another creature.

Challenge Rolls: You make Will challenge rolls when you use determination to overcome a challenge. You also make Will challenge rolls to resist effects that would determine or restrict actions or to avoid gaining Strain.

Characteristics

Creatures have characteristics that describe other traits. Some characteristics (Health, Defense, Perception, and Insanity) are associated with attributes.

Health

Health describes the maximum damage a creature or object can take. It represents a combination of durability, stamina, luck, and the ability to turn a lethal injury into a minor one.

Your starting Health is equal to your Strength score, though your Origin might adjust it; if your Strength score changes, your Health changes by the same amount. Powerful creatures can have very high Health.

Increasing and Decreasing Health: For most creatures and objects, Health is a constant. Powers, talents, and other special situations can grant bonuses or penalties to Health, representing improved or weakened vitality and durability. Usually, such bonuses or penalties are temporary.

Advancing in level permanently increases your Health.

If a creature's Health decreases to 0 for any reason, it dies.

Injured

You are injured while your damage equals or exceeds one-half your Health. Being injured doesn't normally change your capabilities, though some effects, talents, and traits can interact with this state.

Healing Rate

All creatures can recover from damage, given enough time. A creature's healing rate is how much damage it heals after it completes a rest or when targeted by an effect that heals damage. A creature's healing rate equals one-quarter its Health (minimum 1). If the creature's Health increases, its healing rate also increases.

Defense

Defense represents the protection a creature or object has against attacks made with weapons.

Defense Score: Unless your Origin states otherwise, while unarmored, your Defense equals your Agility score. Wearing armor and wielding a shield increase or replace this number.

Objects typically have Defense 5.

Maximum Defense: A creature's Defense cannot exceed 25, even if weapons, armor, and other effects would increase it beyond that number.

Perception

Perception works just like an attribute. It has both a score and a modifier. A high Perception indicates sharp senses, while a lower number indicates a creature has poor vision or hearing, or its senses are otherwise limited.

Score: Your base Perception score equals your Intellect score. Your ancestry can increase this number. Other creatures might also have increased Perception scores based on their nature.

Challenge Rolls: You make Perception challenge rolls when you try to listen for sounds, notice a detail in your environment, or recognize an illusion for what it is.

Maximum Perception: A creature's Perception score cannot exceed 25.

Strain

A character's reserve of Essence isn't infinite, and using Essence abilities too often can tax it, causing permanent damage. In addition, living gear can cause Strain. While living gear is useful and necessary to life in Asunder, bonding with a piece of living gear (or, in some cases, consuming one) is introducing a foreign body to one's system, and the body seeks to reject it. The people of Asunder have learned to fight this rejection, but doing so causes Strain, and doing so long-term can cause serious problems.

Strain Total

Most characters begin with Strain 0. You cannot gain more Strain than your Will score.

Gaining Strain

Certain situations cause you to gain Strain, as directed by the rules or at the GM's discretion. The most common sources of Strain are over-use of Essence abilities or living gear, but there are any number of situations that can tax one's Essence. Whenever you gain Strain, you become **fatigued** for a number of rounds equal to your new Strain total. If you are already fatigued, you instead become **stunned** for the duration.

When your Strain total reaches your Will score, you suffer an **Essence break**.

Essence Breaks

When you suffer an Essence break, remove the fatigued affliction gained from Strain and roll a d20, then consult the **Essence Break** table to determine what happens to you. Many forms of Essence break are temporary, but some are permanent. Once your Essence break ends, reduce your Strain total by 1d6 + your Will modifier (minimum 1).

Essence Break

D20 Essence Break

- 1 **Death.** The shock to your Essence proves too much, and your Essence is destroyed, killing you.
- 2 **Coma.** You become unconscious. At the end of each hour, roll a d6. A roll of 4 or higher ends your Essence break.
- 3 **Amnesia.** You lose your memory. You cannot recall who you are, where you are, or who anyone else is. While you still have access to your talents and powers, you lose access to your professions during this time. At the end of each hour, roll a d6. A roll of 4 or higher ends your Essence break.
- 4-5 **Wracked with Pain.** You fall prone and are stunned, writhing in pain. At the end of each minute, roll a d6. A roll of 5 or higher ends your Essence break.
- 6-7 **Sickened.** You become violently sick. While sickened, you are dazed. At the end of each round, roll a d6. A roll of 5 or higher ends your Essence break.
- 8-9 **Weakened Essence.** Your Essence is weak, and you have trouble using it. Whenever you make an attack or challenge roll as the result of using an Essence power or talent, you do so with 2 banes. At the end of each hour, roll a d6. A roll of 4 or higher ends your Essence break.
- 10-11 **Fight Response.** You lash out at everything around you. Until your Essence break ends, you must take a fast turn each round and use an action to attack the creature nearest you, regardless of whether it is a friend or foe. At the end of each round, roll a d6. A roll of 5 or higher ends your Essence break.
- 12-13 **Flight Response.** You're overwhelmed with panic, becoming frightened until your Essence break ends. While frightened in this way, you must use an action to rush away from any creature you see. At the end of each round, roll a d6. A roll of 5 or higher ends your Essence break.

14-15 **Backlash.** Your Essence explodes outward. You and any creature with Essence within medium range take 3d6 damage. Your Essence break immediately ends.

16-17 **Mutation.** You gain a cosmetic mutation chosen by the Keeper. It has no game effect, but you are impaired until you take a rest, after which point you grow accustomed to it. Your Essence break immediately ends.

18-19 **Symbiont Shrivel.** Any living gear bonded to you is immediately destroyed. The number of pieces of living gear you can safely bond with is reduced by 1 while your Essence break lasts. At the end of each day, roll a d6. A roll of 3 or higher ends your Essence break.

20 **Fractured Essence.** Permanently reduce your Essence score by 1 (minimum 0). If you know any Essence powers with ranks higher than your new Essence score, you cannot use them until you raise your Essence score to sufficient level. Essence talents you already have are unaffected, but you can't take new ones if your number of Essence talents is in excess of twice your Essence score. Your Essence break ends immediately.

Strain Recovery

Your Strain total does diminish over time. Each time you take a rest and have at least 1 Strain, roll a d6. On a roll of 3 or higher, reduce your Strain total by 1.

Discord

Chaos is the primal force of pure creation and destruction, the power with which the gods shaped the world. Though humans from the mainland can bond with it, Chaos is fundamentally beyond human capability and ken, and so it warps those who spend too much time in contact with or proximity to it. This is represented by your Discord total.

The most common ways to get Discord is by making contact with a Chaos shard, spending time at a Chaos site, or using Chaos powers or Chaos gear. For more on Chaos shards and Chaos sites, see **Chapter 11**. For more on Chaos gear, see **Chapter 9**.

Starting Discord

Most characters begin with Discord 0.

Gaining Discord

Your Discord score might increase during the game, usually as a result of coming into contact with Chaotic forces. Examples include:

- Using a Chaos power.
- Using a Chaos talent.
- Pushing a Chaos power beyond its normal limits.
- Spending time at a Chaos site.
- Making contact with a Chaos shard.
- Keeping a piece of Chaos gear on your person for an unsafe length of time.

As your Discord score increases, you suffer increasingly strange and unpleasant effects.

In addition, when you gain Discord, roll a d20. If the number rolled is less than your new Discord score, roll a d20 again and consult the **Chaos Mutations** table. If you would gain a Chaos mutation you already have, you instead gain 2d6 Strain.

Discord Effects

Discord Score	Effect
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0-3	No effect.
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4-6	People feel ill at ease around you, and you make attack rolls to interact with creatures in social settings with 1 bane. Reality is warped in minor ways around you, such as small objects disappearing or changing color, or strange smells drifting by without explanation.
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7-8	The matter of your body is disrupted and inconsistent, imposing a -4 penalty to your Health. In addition, you manifest some outward sign of Chaos, such as hair that looks like fire, lightning crackling in your eyes, or skin that constantly changes color and texture.
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9-16	You die if you become incapacitated, your body exploding in a riot of destruction. Everyone within medium range of you must succeed on an Agility challenge roll or take 6d6 damage. On a success, they still take half damage. If your death would cause you to explode for other reasons, instead add 4d6 damage to the normal damage for your explosion.
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17 or more	Each time you take Discord, make a Will challenge roll. If you fail, you die and explode, as above.
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Chaos Mutations

D20 Roll	Chaos Mutation
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1	Your shadow moves of its own accord.
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2	When you speak, multicolored smoke drifts from your mouth.
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3	Mirrors break when you look at them.
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4	You can only consume food tainted by Chaos. Luckily, carrying food on your person does this normally. If you consume non-tainted food, you vomit it back up immediately.
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5	Sunlight causes you discomfort. Whenever you enter sunlight after being away from it for more than an hour, you're impaired for 1 minute.
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6	Strange runes dance underneath your skin. Nobody can quite read them.
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7	You grow great ram's horns.
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8	Your hair turns into fire that produces dim light, though it doesn't produce heat.
---	--

9	Your eyes become black pits of darkness.
---	--

10	Your skin appears to be made of crystal.
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11	When you bleed, your blood is a riot of glowing colors.
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12	The air constantly stirs around you, moving papers and causing flames to flicker.
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13	Animals are always hostile to you and attack you when you come within 6 yards of them.
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- 14 Your facial features melt away, leaving smooth skin behind. This doesn't affect your ability to perceive, breathe, speak, or eat.
- 15 You lose the ability to speak, instead communicating telepathically to everyone in your immediate area.
- 16 Your skin glows green.
- 17 Your teeth become sharp and pointed, and you grow a second row of teeth behind the first.
- 18 If you spend more than a day in the same place, crops in that location wither and die.
- 19 When you lose your temper, it starts to rain.
- 20 You grow an extra finger on each hand.

Essence

Essence describes a creature's ability to harness and direct their Essence bond. A creature's Essence score determines the highest rank power it can learn and how often it can cast the powers it knows. It also determines the total number of Essence talents a creature can have at one time. Essence powers and talents are described in more detail in **Chapter 10**.

Most creatures have Essence 0. Player characters can increase their Essence based on the paths they choose.

Size

Size is a number that describes roughly how big a creature is relative to an average-sized human. A human is typically Size 1. A Size 1/2 creature is half as big as an average human, while a Size 2 creature is twice as big as an average human.

Space

The space a creature occupies is important in combat and special situations (such as squeezing through a narrow opening). A creature is considered to occupy a horizontal, square space roughly equal to its Size on each side. Thus, a Size 1 creature occupies a 1-yard square, while a Size 3 creature occupies a 3-yard square. (It isn't literally filling the whole space, but it is moving around in and otherwise controlling that area.)

A creature's Size does not account for its height, which varies from creature to creature.

Reach

Larger creatures can reach farther than smaller ones, letting them attack or interact with things at a distance. A creature's reach equals its Size rounded up to the nearest whole number. For example, a Size 1 or smaller creature can make an attack with a stone axe against a target, or open a closed door, within 1 yard of it, while a Size 2 creature can do so within 2 yards of it.

Speed

Speed is a number that tells you how quickly a creature moves. On its turn in combat, a creature can move up to its Speed in yards. Outside of combat, creatures can travel longer distances over time.

Movement Effects

When an effect, such as from a trait or a spell, talks about moving, the default movement pace, unless otherwise indicated in the effect's text, is walking on the ground.

Distance Traveled

Sometimes you might need to know how far a creature can move during a period of time. The "Movement by Pace" table tells you how far a creature travels depending on its pace (cautious, walk, jog, or run). The table assumes a Speed of 10, which is typical for humans and similar creatures.

Faster and Slower Creatures: For every point of Speed beyond 10, increase the distance moved by 10 percent. For example, a person from Sky City's base Speed is 12, so that character can walk 72 yards in 1 minute.

For every point of Speed below 10, decrease the distance moved by 10 percent. For example, a creature might have a base Speed of 8, so a that creature can jog 96 yards in 1 minute.

Movement by Pace

	—Pace—				
Time	Cautious	Walk	Jog	Run	
Minute	30 yards		60 yards	120 yards	240 yards
Hour	1 mile	3 miles	4 miles	8 miles	
Day	8 miles	16 miles	32 miles	—	

Cautious: At this pace, you move quietly and watchfully. While moving at a cautious pace, you make all Perception rolls with 1 boon.

Walk: You move at a steady pace. You can typically walk for 8 hours without difficulty. Walking for longer is considered a force march.

Jog: You move at a quick pace. Each hour spent jogging counts as 2 hours of walking. You make all Perception rolls with 1 bane while moving at this pace.

Run: You sprint, moving as fast as you can. Each hour of running counts as 4 hours of walking. You make all Perception rolls with 2 banes while moving at this pace. It's typically not possible to run for 8 consecutive hours without taking periods of rest.

Force March: If you travel more than the equivalent of 8 hours without taking a break for 1 hour or longer, you risk exhaustion. At the end of each additional hour of travel

(regardless of pace), make a Strength challenge roll. This roll is made with 1 bane if you are jogging or with 2 banes if you are running. On a failure, you take 1d6 damage and become fatigued until you complete a rest. See “Healing Damage” for more about resting.

Difficult Terrain

Some forms of terrain are hard to traverse. Rubble, debris, steep slopes, stairs, underbrush, and the like can all slow down movement and are considered difficult terrain. A creature moves across an area of difficult terrain at half the normal rate. Moving across 4 yards of difficult terrain is the same as moving across 8 yards of normal terrain.

If an area contains several kinds of difficult terrain, their effects are cumulative. For example, moving through thick underbrush on a steep hillside would halve your rate of travel twice: traveling 2 yards through it would be equivalent to moving over 8 yards of normal terrain.

You can always move at least 1 yard, regardless of difficult terrain, provided your Speed is at least 1.

Narrow Spaces

A creature can freely move through any opening wide enough to accommodate its Size or larger.

A creature can move at half the normal rate through an opening as narrow as half as wide as its space, but no smaller. For example, a Size 1 creature can squeeze through a tunnel that’s half a yard wide, but not through a foot-wide opening. If the narrow space includes difficult terrain, the effects are cumulative as described under “Difficult Terrain.”

The Keeper might rule that a space is too low to move through regardless of its width, depending on the creature’s height.

Being Moved

Creatures can be moved, willingly or not, by other creatures’ actions or by effects. The source of the movement specifies the distance and direction moved, and the creature immediately moves as directed. Difficult terrain still affects this movement; if a creature pushes you 2 yards across rubble, you would move only 1 yard.

Moving into Peril: If being moved would put a creature into peril, such as over the edge of a cliff or into a wall of flames, the creature makes an Agility challenge roll. On a success, the creature falls prone just before it enters peril—at the cliff’s edge, for example—and then stops moving from the effect that moved it.

Movement through Creatures

A creature cannot move through a space occupied by another creature (friend or foe) without squeezing, unless the other creature is very small or very large. Any creature

can move freely through the space of a Size 1/4 creature or of a creature whose Size is 2 or more larger than its own. For example, a Size 1 creature could move through a space occupied by a Size 1/4 creature or by a Size 3 or larger creature.

Creatures can also move freely through the spaces of prone creatures.

Special Forms of Movement

Usually a creature moves by walking, running, or slithering across the ground.

Creatures can also use some or all of the following special forms of movement, which is described under “Move” in the **Chapter 4**.

Common sense should always prevail when deciding what forms of movement a creature might attempt. Elephants and horses don’t climb well at all, and worms tend to be poor jumpers. The Keeper can rule that certain kinds of movement aren’t possible for creatures based on their nature and anatomy.

Falling

When you fall a distance of more than 5 yards, you take damage from landing. Use the “Falling Damage” table to determine the amount of damage, based on the surface on which you land.

Falling Damage

—Damage by Surface—		
Distance in Yards	Solid	Liquid
4 or less	—	—
5–9 2d6	1d6	
10–14 4d6	2d6	
15–19 6d6	3d6	
20–24 8d6	4d6	
25–29 10d6	5d6	
30–34 12d6	6d6	
35–39 14d6	7d6	
40–44 16d6	8d6	
45–49 18d6	9d6	
50 or more	20d6	10d6

Land Prone: If you take damage from landing after a fall, you fall prone.

Falling onto Other Creatures and Objects: If you land on another creature or an object other than the ground, both you and the creature or object on which you fell take the half the damage from landing after the fall.

Damage

All kinds of harmful effects can deal damage to creatures and objects. A weapon slices into unprotected flesh, a fearsome trap springs, or a nasty power sprays poison.

Harmful environmental effects, falls, and other unexpected situations can also deal damage.

Damage is a number that describes injuries and exhaustion. The amount of damage dealt can be a flat number, the sum of one or more d6s, or a roll of one or more d6s plus a number.

Damage Source: Damage can come from many different sources. Weapons, flames created by a Chaos power, or poison from a snake's venomous bite all deal damage. Some creatures have immunities, resistances, or vulnerabilities to certain sources of damage, taking no damage, half damage, or double the damage. Typically, the damage source is made clear by the name of the effect or power name—damage from a lightning bolt is lightning. If the damage is not clear in the spell name, the Keeper decides the source based on the damaging effect.

Taking Damage

When a creature or object takes damage, add the amount of damage dealt to the creature's or object's damage total.

When a creature or object takes half damage, divide the total damage by 2 and round down to the nearest whole number. You halve damage only once, regardless of how many times you are instructed to halve it.

Rolling Damage: You roll damage once per attack. If a single attack or effect deals damage to more than one target, you apply the amount of damage to each one.

Extra Damage: Many situations might cause an attack to deal extra damage. Any extra damage applies only if the attack normally deals damage. Extra damage granted by different sources is cumulative.

Effects of Damage

A creature or object suffers no ill effects from taking damage until its damage total equals its Health. If a creature's damage total equals its Health, the creature becomes incapacitated (see below). If an object's damage total equals its Health, it is destroyed.

The damage total can never exceed the Health of the creature or object; any excess damage is ignored.

Instant Death: A creature dies if it takes an amount of damage equal to its Health from a single source such as an attack or landing after a fall.

Incapacitated

A creature becomes incapacitated when its damage total equals its Health score. Upon becoming incapacitated, the creature falls prone. A creature remains incapacitated until its damage total no longer equals its Health. If the creature takes any damage while incapacitated, it dies.

Creatures other than player characters that become incapacitated either die or fall unconscious for 1d3 hours, as the Keeper decides.

Player characters, however, become disabled and make fate rolls to determine what happens to them.

Disabled

Disabled characters are defenseless.

Fate Roll: At the end of each round you are disabled, roll a d6. On a 1, you start dying. On a 6, you heal 1 damage and become impaired for 1 minute. A roll of any other number has no effect.

If after 3 consecutive rounds you are still disabled, you become unconscious for 1d3 hours and stop making the fate roll. At the end of this time, you heal 1 damage and become impaired for 1 minute.

Dying

Dying characters are unconscious.

Fate Roll: At the end of each round you are dying, roll a d6. On a 1, you die. On a 6, you become disabled. A roll of any other number has no effect.

Healing Damage

Creatures heal damage by resting or from equipment, certain talents, and healing powers. When a creature heals damage, it reduces its damage total by the amount healed.

Resting

You can benefit from a rest once per 24 hours. A rest is a period of inactivity that lasts about 8 hours. During this time, you can sleep, meditate, read, eat and drink, or perform other non-strenuous tasks. When you complete the rest, you heal damage equal to your healing rate. You can extend the period of rest to a full 24 hours. At the end of this time, you heal damage equal to twice your healing rate instead.

If something interrupts the rest for more than 1 minute, the time spent resting is wasted and you must start the rest over from the beginning to gain any benefit from it.

Death

When a creature dies, it becomes an object. Dead creatures cannot be restored to life by healing damage.

When humans die, their Essence is absorbed by Gaia, to be used for her inscrutable purposes or to be invested into a newly born human again. The subject of the soul, its existence, and what happens to it after death is one of much debate.

Creatures other than humans don't have Essence. They have consciousness, free will, and motive force, but they lack the divine spark that humans have. If they're restored to life somehow, their consciousness returns but is forever changed.

Returning from Death

Certain Essence powers allow dead creatures to live again. When a dead creature returns to life in its original body, it has all the attribute and characteristic scores it had at the time of death. It also gains 1d6 Strain, due to the intense shock of one's Essence being ripped from its body and then restored. If this would cause an Essence break, it instead lingers in a permanent vegetative state, trapped in its body until it dies. While in this state, the creature is unconscious.

Starting a New Character: If you die and you're not restored to life, your next character begins with a [HEALING POTION EQUIVALENT] as compensation for the cruel twist of fate that abbreviated your last character's career.

Afflictions

Afflictions describe a variety of harmful effects that alter or limit what creatures can normally do. The effect that imposes the affliction tells you how long it lasts and what can be done to remove it. If it doesn't specify, the affliction is permanent.

Asleep: A sleeping creature is prone and unconscious. Another creature that can reach it can use an action to wake it up. Unless otherwise noted, taking damage removes this affliction.

Blinded: A blinded creature cannot see. It treats everything else as totally obscured (see "Obscurement"). Other creatures make attack rolls with 1 boon against a blinded creature's Defense or Agility. Perception challenge rolls that rely on sight automatically result in a failure. Finally, the blinded creature's Speed becomes 2 unless its normal Speed is lower.

Charmed: A charmed creature sees the source of the affliction as a trusted friend and ally. The charmed creature cannot choose the creature that bestowed the affliction as the target of its attacks.

Compelled: A compelled creature cannot use actions or move. Instead, during each fast turn (see "Combat"), the creature that bestowed the affliction can force the compelled creature to move up to its Speed or to use an action. The creature that bestowed the affliction makes all decisions on the compelled creature's behalf.

Dazed: A dazed creature cannot use actions.

Deafened: A deafened creature cannot hear. Perception challenge rolls made to listen automatically result in failure.

Defenseless: A defenseless creature cannot defend itself. Its Defense is 5, it cannot use actions, and its challenge rolls using attributes result in failure. The creature can still perceive its surroundings, however, and can make Perception challenge rolls as normal.

Diseased: A diseased creature makes all attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane.

Fatigued: A fatigued creature makes all attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane.

Frightened: A frightened creature makes all attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane. As well, frightened creatures cannot take fast turns (see “Combat”).

Grabbed: The effects of the affliction depend on the creature’s Size. If the grabbed creature’s Size is equal to or less than that of the creature grabbing it, the grabbed creature cannot move away from the creature that grabbed it until it removes the affliction.

If the grabbed creature’s Size is larger than that of the creature grabbing it, whenever the grabbed creature moves, the creature grabbing it can choose to move with it (by clinging to the grabbed creature’s body) or end the grab. (See “Grab” for more information on how to grab, and “Escape” for how to escape a grab.)

Immobilized: An immobilized creature has Speed 0 and cannot benefit from bonuses to Speed. Other creatures make all attack rolls against the immobilized creature with 1 boon.

Impaired: An impaired creature makes all attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane.

Poisoned: A poisoned creature makes all attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane.

Prone: A prone creature lies on the ground. Other creatures can move through its space. While prone, the creature can move only by crawling or use its move to stand up. The prone creature makes Strength and Agility rolls with 1 bane. Creatures that can reach the prone creature make all attack rolls against it with 1 boon, while creatures that cannot reach it make attack rolls against its Defense with 1 bane.

Slowed: A slowed creature can take only a slow turn (see “Combat”), its Speed is halved, and it cannot benefit from increases to Speed.

Stunned: A stunned creature cannot move or use actions. The creature automatically gets failures on all challenge rolls it would make. Other creatures make all attack rolls against the stunned creature with 1 boon.

Surprised: A surprised creature cannot use actions, cannot move, and automatically gets a failure on all challenge rolls it would make.

Unconscious: An unconscious creature is unable to act, move, or perceive its surroundings. The creature's Defense is 5. It cannot use actions or move, and all its challenge rolls result in failure.

Multiple Afflictions

If you gain an affliction you already have, there is usually no additional effect, but you must remove each instance of the affliction to end its effect on you. For example, if you are poisoned from a snake's venomous bite and then become poisoned from a spider's venomous bite, you remain poisoned until you remove both instances of the poisoned affliction.

The Environment

Game play occurs in an imaginary environment, filled with creatures, obstacles, and dangers both seen and unseen.

Objects

Objects are inanimate things such as doors, curtains, statues, staircases, and even dead characters. Objects can be damaged and destroyed.

Attributes: Objects have Strength 0 and Agility 0. They do not have Intellect or Will scores and are thus immune to attack rolls against those attributes and to effects that allow challenge rolls using those attributes. Objects are immune to afflictions.

Perception: Objects do not usually have Perception.

Defense: Objects typically have Defense 5.

Size: Objects have Size just as creatures do.

Speed: Objects incapable of moving under their own power have Speed 0.

Health and Damage: An object's Health depends on its Size and composition, and its base Health equals 10 times its Size. Objects made from fragile materials have half the base Health, while objects made from stone or metal multiply their base Health by 2 or more.

An object takes damage just as a creature does. Damage shows in the object as cracks, scorch marks, and the like. When its damage total equals its Health, the object is destroyed or rendered useless. Some objects are resistant or immune to some sources of damage based on their Size or composition. For example, a galleon is immune to damage from a dagger, and a sword is not likely to be harmed by cold or ice.

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Sentient Objects

Sentient objects, such as animated beings, are effectively creatures and are subject to the rules governing creatures. Such objects might have Intellect and Will scores, the Perception characteristic, and other capabilities.

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Carried and Worn Objects

Carried and worn objects are usually not at risk of taking damage from attacks unless those objects are specifically targeted.

Breaking Objects

Rather than dealing damage to chop up or smash an object, you might just use brute force to break it. Examples include kicking down a door, putting your fist through a paper wall, or bursting rope bonds.

When you attempt to break an object, make a Strength challenge roll. For each point of Size the object is larger than you, you make the roll with 1 bane. Depending on the object's composition, additional banes or boons might apply to the roll, at the Keeper's discretion.

Range and Distance

A few broad categories describe the range of weapons and spells for the purpose of choosing targets and centering area effects.

You: You are the target or the effect originates from you or a point within your space.

Reach: The target or the point from which the effect originates must be within your reach, and you must be able to touch it. If you attempt to touch an unwilling creature, you must make a Strength or Agility attack roll against the target's Agility. On a success, you touch the target.

Short: The target or the point from which the effect originates must be within 5 yards of you.

Medium: The target or the point from which the effect originates must be within 20 yards of you.

Long: The target or the point from which the effect originates must be within 100 yards of you.

Extreme: The target or the point from which the effect originates must be within 500 yards of you.

Sight: You must be able to see the target or the point from which the effect originates.

Obscurement

Poor lighting, precipitation, and fog reduce visibility. An area, and creatures and objects within it, can be partially, heavily, or totally obscured.

Partially Obscured

Rain, light snow, fog, and shadows all partially obscure an area. Everything in a partially obscured area is visible, but observers cannot make out fine detail.

Any roll involving sight by a creature looking into a partially obscured area is made with 1 bane.

Heavily Obscured

Heavy rain, snow, and thick fog all heavily obscure an area. Everything in such areas is faintly visible.

Any roll involving sight by a creature looking into a heavily obscured area is made with 2 banes.

Totally Obscured

Creatures and objects in totally obscured areas cannot be seen, because they are in darkness or blinding conditions, such as a white-out in a blizzard.

A creature in an area that is totally obscured is blinded.

Illumination

The game uses three levels of illumination.

Lit: The sun, moon, torches, candles, and other forms of illumination cause areas to become lit. A sighted creature can see everything in a lit area that's within its field of view and is not hidden. Darkness becomes shadows within a distance of a light source equal to twice the light's radius.

Shadows: Shadows form the border between light and darkness. Indirect illumination, faint glows, and moonlight create areas of shadow. An area of shadows is partially obscured.

Darkness: This is the total absence of light. An area of darkness is totally obscured.

Invisibility

An invisible creature or object cannot be seen by other creatures using normal senses. It is considered to be totally obscured and can thus hide anywhere. An invisible creature makes attack rolls with 1 boon against the Defense or Agility of a target creature that cannot see it.

An invisible creature still makes noise, leaves footprints, and displaces liquids. Clouds of dust and smoke can also reveal such creatures. In such conditions, the invisible creature is treated as heavily obscured.

Roleplaying

Roleplaying covers all the decisions that the Keeper and Seekers make about the creatures and characters they control. These decisions might be as simple as stating what a character says or does, or choosing a target for an attack. In other cases, a player might let background details, personality, and other past events in the game dictate what his or her character does.

People have different comfort levels when it comes to roleplaying. Some like to immerse themselves in the game, speaking as their characters or representing them with painted miniatures. Others are less invested and describe what their characters do and say. There's no "proper" way to roleplay; if everyone is having a good time, you're doing it right.

Making Decisions

Although you can do (or at least attempt to do) whatever you like in the game, you can more easily imagine what's happening and make better decisions based on your character's details and the story in which you play. You can draw inspiration for decision-making from many different sources, a few of which are described here.

Background

You determine your character's background when you create your character. A background describes the kinds of experiences your character had before his or her story begins, which can guide your portrayal. For example, a character who grew up with the rebels of Sky City might be brash, opinionated, and distrustful of authority figures.

Personality

Your character should have a distinctive personality. Keeping that personality in mind can help you decide how he or she would behave in a given situation, though it's okay to act against personality from time to time. For example, a character described as "often serious" might not find the pranks of their vagabond companion all that funny.

Connections

You interact with the other players, as well as their characters, while you play the game. You might be friends or strangers in real life, but in the game you should try to adopt the relationship between the characters instead. Even if you're best friends with another player, your characters could despise each other. You might have just met another player, but your characters are lifelong friends.

When roleplaying character connections, respect the other players' comfort levels. If your character has an amorous relationship with another player's character, express it only as far as that player wants to go along. Likewise, if your character hates another character, you risk ruining the play experience by actively working against that character unless the other player is willing to play out this relationship. Before play, everyone should discuss their characters' connections with each other to find the best ways to portray the relationships.

Story Development

The imaginary world of the game is wide open for you to explore, but you and the other players are working together to tell a particular story and fulfill its objective. Your roleplaying decisions should generally serve to move the story along. It's perfectly fine to abandon the larger story temporarily when you need to, but not when doing so frustrates the efforts of other players who are working toward the goal. Even if your character has negative connections to some or most members of your group, you are still united by a common purpose. When all else fails, remember that Seekers are often misfits. Your fellow Seekers are likely the only family you have.

Fortune

The Keeper awards Fortune for exceptional roleplaying, if you have a good idea and share it with the group, if your character pulls off a remarkable stunt, or if you do something else that makes the game more fun to play. Once you gain Fortune, expending it represents a dash of good luck when you need it.

While you have Fortune, you can expend it in one of the following ways:

- When the result of a d20 roll is a failure, you can expend Fortune to turn the failure into a success.
- When another player rolls a d20, you can expend Fortune to grant 2 boons to the roll.
- When any player (including you) rolls a d6, you can expend Fortune to replace the number on the die with a 6.

Once you expend it, you do not have Fortune until the Keeper awards it to you again.

Fatal Flaws

During Seeker creation, you chose a fatal flaw for your character, and you might get more based on the paths you choose. Your fatal flaw is a roleplaying indicator, a concise phrase that expresses something that often gets your Seeker into trouble. In any given situation in the game, you can choose to use your fatal flaw to **escalate the situation** according to the table below. This table is a guideline, to show you how escalations work; if you and the Keeper come up with a better way to escalate the situation, go with that.

Escalations

Situation	Escalation
Conversation	Tense argument breaks out
Argument	Weapons are bared, threats made
Altercation	Violence breaks out
Violence	Someone important dies, or something important is destroyed

When you decide to escalate, tell the Keeper what you're doing and that you intend to escalate based on your fatal flaw. Once the keeper accepts your escalation, you immediately get Fortune.

You never *have* to escalate the situation; you can instead use your fatal flaw as a guide for how to roleplay your character and leave it at that. Escalations can lead to fun and interesting situations, though, provided everyone's comfortable with them.

Social Interaction

Social interaction is usually handled through roleplaying. When you want to talk to another character, you speak as your character or describe what your character says. The Keeper and other players do the same.

Social Conflict

The Keeper can call for an attack roll when you attempt to alter another creature's behavior or belief through conversation in social settings. These rolls do not usually occur in combat unless the Keeper says otherwise. Intellect and Will are the attributes you use most in social situations. You make the attack roll against the attribute that best describes how the creature would resist your influence.

Usually, when interacting with a creature, it needs to be able to understand you. If you don't have a common language, the Keeper can let you make a roll if you try to communicate a basic idea, possibly with 1 or more banes.

Botched Social Rolls: When you make an attack roll in a social situation and the total of your roll is 0 or lower, your attempt has the opposite of the desired outcome. A creature you hope to befriend becomes hostile to you, a creature you try to persuade becomes intractable, and a creature you would intimidate laughs off your threats. Further attempts to interact with the creature in this way might result in failure, or the botched roll could impose 1 or more banes as the Keeper decides.

Befriend

You try to improve how another regards you, foster goodwill, or give comfort to someone experiencing emotional distress. To befriend a creature, make a Will attack roll against its Will. On a success, the creature becomes friendly toward you. You might make further social rolls against that creature with 1 boon, at the Keeper's discretion.

Deceive

You attempt to pass a falsehood off as the truth, make the implausible seem plausible, or bluff. To deceive a creature, make an Intellect attack roll against its Intellect. On a success, the creature believes your deception until it's shown to be false.

Intimidate

You use threats, physical pain, or body language to menace another creature and force its cooperation. Make a Will (or Strength if you are inflicting pain) attack roll against the creature's Will. On a success, the creature behaves in the desired manner.

Persuade

You try to convince a creature to take a risk, reveal a secret, or do something against its nature, such as accept a bribe. Make a Will attack roll against the creature's Will. On a success, you persuade the creature to do as you wish.

Taunt

You try to infuriate a creature and incite it to violence. Make an Intellect attack roll against the creature's Will. On a success, the creature becomes angry with you and at anyone or anything you chose when you made the attempt. The creature acts in a manner the Keeper deems appropriate based on the taunt. An affected creature might attack, yell, or just become hostile.

Combat

Combat occurs when one or more creatures attack another creature or group of creatures. Since the stakes are at their highest in combat, time in the game slows down to make sure everyone participating has a chance to contribute to the outcome.

The Battlefield

Before combat begins, the Keeper sets up the scene and tells you the important details about the battlefield: the area where the combat will take place. The Keeper might sketch out the battlefield on paper or a wet-erase surface, use a map, or just describe it.

Exact positions are more important for some groups than others, but everyone should at least have an idea about where their characters are when the combat starts. The Keeper might decide where everyone is, based on what was happening when hostilities broke out, or ask the Seekers. Some groups use miniatures, tokens, or coins to keep track of positions, while others let the whole thing unfold in their imagination.

Awareness and Surprise

Most times, the creatures being attacked are aware of their attackers. If creatures on one side were hidden from the other, appear out of nowhere, or catch the other side sleeping or otherwise engaged, there's a chance for surprise.

When the Keeper decides surprise is possible, everyone on the side that could be surprised makes a Perception challenge roll. On a failure, the creature becomes surprised until the end of the first round.

Anatomy of a Round

Combat is resolved in 10-second units of time, called **rounds**. A round has three parts: fast turns, slow turns, and the end of the round.

During each round, Seekers who want to take a turn (fast or slow) do so in that part of the round, in any order they choose. Once a Seeker finishes his or her turn, he or she cannot take another turn until after the end of that round. If players cannot decide who goes first, the Keeper might decide or have each conflicting player roll a d6, with priority going to the player that rolled the highest number.

Once all the Seekers have finished taking their turns during a part of the round, creatures under the Keeper's control can take turns in that part, in any order. Once a creature finishes its turn, it cannot take another turn until after the end of that round.

Fast Turns

A creature that takes a fast turn can either use an action or move up to its Speed. It cannot do both.

Slow Turns

A creature that takes a slow turn can use both an action and move up to its Speed. It can use an action at any point during the move.

End of the Round

The end of the round marks the transition from one round to the next. Certain effects are resolved at the end of the round. As with other parts of the round, the Seekers resolve any effects they created or that affect them first. Then the Keeper resolves end-of-round effects for creatures and effects he or she controls.

When an effect specifies that it lasts for 1 round, it lasts for 1 full round, which means it lasts until the end of the next round.

Combat ends when all creatures on one side surrender, flee, or lie dead. Otherwise, a new round begins and combat continues.

First Round: Before the first round begins, resolve any effects that were already ongoing and that you would normally check for at the end of a round. Then combat proceeds as normal.

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A Round, at a Glance

A single combat round looks like this:

1. Seekers take fast turns.
2. Keeper takes fast turns for Keeper-controlled characters.
3. Seekers take slow turns.
4. Keeper takes slow turns for Keeper-controlled characters.
5. End of round.

Once the round is over, if combat needs to continue, start from the top.

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Turn Token

You can use a two-sided turn token such as a coin, poker chip, or card to keep track which phase of the round you are in. One side represents fast turns and is face up at the start of the round; the other represents slow turns. Once everyone who wishes to has taken a fast turn, the Keeper takes any fast turns and flips over the token. Any remaining players and Keeper-controlled creatures do the same during slow turns. After resolving any effects at the end of the round, the Keeper flips the token back to the fast turn side.

You may find it works better if every player also has a token. When they take their turn, they lay down their token in front of them on the side indicating fast or slow based on when they took their turn.

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Example of a Round

Adam (playing a Pacari survivor), Anna (a Sky-Dweller marauder), Kathy (a weaver bonded), and Rob (a mainlander vanguard) form a group. Their Seekers are exploring an old ruin on the edge of the Naga Swamp. Four carnivorous swamp-lizards emerge from a pool of water and attack. No one is surprised, and combat begins.

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Fast Turns

The Seekers choose whether to act first. Kathy decides to take a fast turn and uses an action to attack a lizard with a Plant Control power, killing it.

Anna takes a fast turn, using an action to attack by charging one of the lizards. As noted in the “Charge” description later in this chapter, Anna can move and attack, albeit with 1 bane on the attack roll. Luckily one of her marauder talents gives her a boon to cancel that bane out.

Adam and Rob wait for slow turns.

Now that all the seekers who chose to act have done so, the Keeper can take fast turns with one or more of the lizards. The lizard that Anna charged uses an action to attack Anna’s character. The rest of the lizards wait for slow turns.

Slow Turns

Again, the Seekers act first. Since Adam and Rob have not yet taken their turns, they do so now. Adam moves up to the lizard Anna is fighting and then attacks it with his bone club, hoping to draw its ire. Rob moves up to the same lizard and attacks it with his obsidian spear. The lizard dies.

Now the last two lizards take their turns to move up and attack Adam and Rob. Unfortunately, Rob’s character takes enough damage to become incapacitated and disabled.

End of the Round

Rob has to roll a d6 to see what happens to his character. He rolls a 3. His character remains disabled.

No other effects check for the end of the round, so a new round begins.

Move

When you take your turn, you can move up to your Speed in yards. On a fast turn, you can move or use an action, but not both. On a slow turn, you can move in addition to using an action, which you can do at any point during your movement.

During your move, you can use any special forms of movement normally available to you such as balancing, climbing, swimming, riding, and so on. Rules for these special forms of movement are described below.

Balance

You balance when you move across treacherous terrain, such as ice or a narrow surface. Such surfaces also count as difficult terrain. When you move onto a treacherous surface, you must make an Agility challenge roll (the nature of the surface might impose 1 or more banes). On a failure, you stop moving on that turn. If the total of your roll is 0 or less, you land prone or could fall from a precarious perch.

Climb

You climb when you ascend, descend, or move across a vertical surface using a rope, ladder, or handholds. The surface also counts as difficult terrain.

The Keeper might call for a Strength challenge roll to see if you can climb a surface that has few handholds or that's coated in grease or otherwise slick, or if you try to climb while distracted or rushed. Challenging climbs can impose 1 or more banes on the roll. If the result of the roll is a failure, you stop moving on that turn. If the total of your roll is 0 or less, you fall.

Crawl

Prone creatures can move only by crawling. You crawl at half your cautious pace, which is further reduced by difficult terrain or narrow spaces to a minimum of Speed 1.

Drop Prone: You can voluntarily drop to the ground. You can drop prone in combat without using your movement.

Stand Up: You can stand up from prone using an action or as your move in combat.

Fly

If you can fly, you can move as far as your Speed allows in any direction, remaining in the air for as long as you wish. You fall to the ground if you would be knocked prone, your Speed drops to 0, or you are prevented from using actions.

The Keeper might call for a Strength challenge roll to see if you can stay airborne in turbulent conditions. On a failure, you fall.

Jump

You jump to move to a surface below you or to reach something above you. You also jump whenever you attempt to move over an obstacle without climbing or walking.

Jump Up or Down: When jumping down, you land safely if the surface is less than 5 yards below you. If you try to jump down beyond this distance, you instead fall.

You can jump up a number of feet equal to half your Agility modifier (minimum 1 foot), or your full Agility modifier if you moved at least 2 yards before making the jump. If you try to jump higher, the Keeper can call for an Agility challenge roll.

You can jump as part of your move in combat. Deduct the number of vertical yards you jump from the total distance you can move on your turn. You land prone or fall if you reach your movement limit before you complete the jump.

Jump Across: You can jump horizontally a number of yards equal to 2 + your Agility modifier (minimum 1 yard). If you moved at least 2 yards before making the jump, increase the distance by 2 yards. If you try to jump farther, the Keeper can call for an Agility challenge roll.

You can jump as part of your move in combat. Deduct the number of horizontal yards you jump from the total distance you can move on your turn. You land prone if you reach your movement limit before you complete the jump. You might fall if you were attempting to cross an open space such as a pit.

Ride

You are riding while you are seated on a mount.

Mounts: A mount is any creature larger than you and willing to bear you as a rider.

Mounting and Dismounting: You use your move to mount or dismount a creature within your reach.

Shared Space: You and your mount share the same space. Any effect that originates from you originates in your space rather than your mount's space, however.

Separate Creatures: Although you share a space, you and the mount are separate creatures.

Actions: You and your mount take turns together and share a single action. If you use an action to attack, you or your mount makes the attack. You can choose to have you and your mount attack in the same action, but you each make the attack roll with 2 banes. You and your mount can attack at the same time only once during each round, regardless of how many attacks you can make.

If you cannot use actions, the mount uses an action in a manner appropriate to its nature. If the mount cannot use actions, you act independently from the mount.

Speed: You use your mount's Speed in place of your own.

Free Attacks: If your mount's movement would trigger a free attack (see "Combat"), the attacking creature chooses whether to attack you or the mount.

Falling Prone: If an attack or an effect knocks you prone while you are riding, you fall from the mount and land prone in a space within 1 yard of it. The space you land in is opposite from the direction of the source of the attack or effect.

If your mount falls prone, you are both prone in the same space. You must also make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, you take damage equal to 1d6 + the mount's Size, and you become immobilized and cannot stand up until the mount stands up or is moved off you. You can use an action while you are immobilized to make a Strength or an Agility challenge roll, with 1 bane for each Size the mount is larger than you. On a success, you are no longer immobilized in this way and can stand up normally.

Sneak

You attempt to move without making a sound when you sneak. To do so, you must get a success on an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, nearby creatures can hear you. If the total of your roll is 0 or less, you make a great deal of noise.

Boons or banes can apply to the Agility roll based on the surface you move across. It's harder to sneak across gravel or broken glass, which would impose 1 or more banes on your roll. If there's a lot of ambient noise in the area—such as in a factory humming with activity—1 or more boons could apply to the roll.

Swim

While moving, you can swim through liquids. Swimming counts as moving across difficult terrain.

The Keeper can call for a Strength challenge roll to see if you can swim through treacherous waters. On a failure, you make no progress. If the total of your roll is 0 or less, you sink. (See "Armor and Clothing" in chapter 6 for more information about swimming while in armor, and see the clockwork entry in chapter 1.)

Teleport

Certain powers or talents can let you move instantly from one spot to another. When you teleport, you disappear from the space you occupy and immediately reappear in the space of your destination. This movement ignores any obstacles and difficult terrain between you and your destination.

Action

You may use one action during a round to perform an activity. Common activities include the following:

- Attack
- Use a utility power
- Concentrate
- Defend
- End an effect
- Find
- Help

- Hide
- Prepare
- Reload
- Retreat
- Rush
- Stabilize
- Use an Item

Attack

You use a weapon, an attack power, or something else to harm or hinder another creature or an object. See “Making Attacks” for how to resolve this action.

Use a Utility Power

You use a utility power (one that doesn’t count as an attack) and resolve its effects. See **Chapter 10** for details about using powers.

Concentrate

Some power effects and talents require you to concentrate to keep them going. If you concentrate on an effect, the effect continues until the end of the next round, up to the maximum amount of time allowed by the power or effect.

Breaking Concentration: If you take damage or gain Strain while you concentrate, you must make a Will challenge roll. On a failure, you stop concentrating and the effect ends immediately.

Defend

When you take this action, until the end of the round, all attack rolls are made against you with 1 bane and you make all challenge rolls to resist attacks with 1 boon. These benefits end if you are prevented from using actions, such as when you become dazed, stunned, or unconscious.

End an Effect

Choose one effect you created with a power or a talent you used. The effect ends.

Find

You attempt to locate a hidden creature or object. Make a Perception challenge roll to search for a hidden object or make a Perception attack roll against the Agility of a hidden creature. On a success, the creature or object is no longer hidden from you and any other creature with whom you share your knowledge.

Help

Choose one creature within 5 yards of you that can see you and understand what you say. Make an Intellect challenge roll. On a success, the target makes its next attack roll or challenge roll before the end of the round with 1 boon.

Hide

You can attempt to hide when you are not being observed and when you are at least heavily obscured or have three-quarters cover or better from an object (see “Cover”).

Make an Agility challenge roll. On a success, you become hidden. You remain hidden until the conditions that let you hide no longer apply or you do something that would reveal your position (such as shouting, making an attack, or casting a spell). For example, if you are in darkness, you would no longer be hidden if the area becomes lit. Similarly, if you are hidden behind a wall, you would no longer be hidden if someone moves to a position where the wall no longer covers you.

While hidden, other creatures cannot perceive you. Generally, this means a creature cannot choose you as a target for its attack, though you are still subject to area affects. A creature can guess at your location, making the attack roll with 3 banes. Even with a success, the attack hits you only if the guess was correct.

Also, while hidden, you make all attack rolls with 1 boon against the Defense or Agility of targets from which you are hidden.

Prepare

You prepare to undertake an activity when a specified event occurs. Choose one activity you would normally use an action to perform, such as attack or retreat. Then, describe what event has to occur for you to undertake it. This is the trigger.

If the triggering event occurs before the end of the round, you can use a triggered action to perform the activity. You make any attack roll or challenge roll required by the activity with 1 boon. Otherwise, nothing happens.

For example, Clark takes a fast turn and uses an action to prepare an attack against the first enemy that moves into his reach. When a hostile Naga moves up to attack his character, Clark uses his triggered action to attack it with his bone dagger, making the attack roll with 1 boon.

Reload

Choose a weapon you can reach that has the reload property (such as a crossbow). If you have a piece of ammunition the weapon uses, you reload the weapon.

Retreat

You move up to half your Speed. This movement does not trigger free attacks.

Rush

You move up to twice your Speed.

Stabilize

Choose one incapacitated creature within your reach. Make an Intellect challenge roll, with 1 bane if the creature is dying. On a success, the target heals 1 damage.

Use an Item

You interact with an item you are holding or wearing, or with an object you can reach. Examples include picking a lock, retrieving an object from a pouch or backpack, or lighting a torch.

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Other Activities

You can try to do something that's not described here. You are limited only by your imagination. When you attempt something that lies outside the rules, the Keeper decides if the activity is possible and how long it takes.

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Triggered Actions

In addition to using actions, most creatures can use one triggered action each round. Creatures use triggered actions to react to the specific events that trigger their use, hence the name.

Almost all creatures may use triggered actions to make a free attack, which is described in the following section. Creatures can also use triggered actions to perform other activities from talents and spells.

The Trigger: Any activity that involves the use of a triggered action also specifies the condition under which the character can use it. The condition, called the trigger, could be broad, such as "on your turn," or narrow, such as "when a creature willingly moves out of your reach." Provided you meet the conditions for using the triggered action, you may do so, provided you have not already used a triggered action during the round.

When you use a triggered action, you perform the indicated activity immediately, even if doing so would interrupt another creature's turn.

Example: Amanda has an opportunity to use a free attack during the fast turn, but because she knows she wants to use Hunt (a demon hunter talent) as her triggered action during the slow turn, she chooses not to make the free attack.

Free Attack

When a creature in your reach willingly moves out of your reach, you can use a triggered action to make an attack against that creature using a melee weapon you are wielding.

Minor Activities

Some activities are so minor that you can just do them on your turn without using an action, triggered action, or move. Examples include dropping an item or picking one up, drawing or stowing a weapon, and opening or closing a door.

As a general rule, you can perform one minor activity during a fast turn, or two during a slow turn. You might do more if you don't move or use an action on your turn, or if your Keeper says you can do more.

Making Attacks

You make an attack whenever you would harm or hinder a creature or damage an object. Typically, you determine the outcome of an attack by making an attack roll. There are several kinds of attacks.

Attack with a Melee Weapon

You attack with a melee weapon you are wielding by swinging or throwing it at your target.

Choose a Target: Choose one target creature or object. The target must be within your reach or, if you're using a weapon with the thrown property (such as a throwing shard), within range of the weapon.

Make the Attack Roll: Make an attack roll against the target's Defense. Typically, you use Strength for attack rolls with melee weapons. Weapons with the finesse property (such as light melee weapons) let you use Agility instead of Strength for the attack roll. See "Melee Attack Options" for more choices.

Resolve the Attack: On a success, the attack hits and you roll the weapon's damage die, which you can find in **Chapter 8**. The target takes damage equal to the total of the damage roll.

On a failure, the attack misses.

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Melee Attack Options

When you make an attack with a melee weapon, you can choose one of the following options. You must make the choice before you make the attack roll.

Driving Attack: You make the attack roll with 1 bane. On a success, you and the target move a number of yards equal to your Strength modifier in the same direction.

Guarded Attack: You make the attack roll with 1 bane, but the next creature to make an attack roll against your Defense before the end of the round does so with 1 bane.

Lunging Attack: You can increase your reach by 1 yard, but you make the attack roll with 1 bane.

Shifting Attack: You make the attack roll with 1 bane. On a success, your movement does not trigger free attacks from the target until the end of the round.

Unbalancing Attack: You make the attack roll with 1 bane. On a success, if the target is your Size or smaller, it must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, the target falls prone.

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Attack with a Ranged Weapon

You make an attack with a ranged weapon you are wielding by firing its ammunition at your target.

Choose a Target: Choose one target creature or object no farther away than twice your weapon's range. (See "Distant Shot" for attacking outside your weapon's standard range.)

Make the Attack Roll: You make the attack roll against the target's Defense. Typically, you use Agility for attack rolls using ranged weapons. See "Ranged Attack Options" for more choices.

Resolve the Attack: On a success, the attack hits and you roll the weapon's damage die, which you can find in chapter 6. The target takes damage equal to the total of the roll.

On a failure, the attack misses.

Cover

Terrain and objects on the battlefield can provide protection against attacks with ranged weapons or spells that target things at a distance.

Half Covered: If an object between you and the attacker covers at least half your body, ranged attack rolls against you are made with 1 bane.

Three-Quarters Covered: If an object between you and the attacker covers at least three-quarters of your body, ranged attack rolls against you are made with 2 banes.

Totally Covered: You cannot be chosen as a target for any attack or effect.

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Ranged Attack Options

When you make an attack with a ranged weapon, you can choose one of the following options.

Called Shot: You attack a specific location on the target's body. You can use this option only if the target has a physical body. Make the attack roll with 2 banes. On a success, the attack has an additional effect as determined by the Keeper. Attacking a creature's eyes might impose 1 bane on all rolls the target makes that rely on sight, for example.

Distant Shot: You can attack a target that is beyond your weapon's range, but no more than twice the weapon's range. You make the attack roll with 1 bane.

Staggering Shot: You make the attack roll with 2 banes. On a success, a target that is your Size or smaller must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, the target falls prone.

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Attack with Two Weapons

If you are wielding a weapon in each hand, and neither of them is cumbersome (see **Chapter 8**), you can use an action to attack with them at the same time. You can use them either to attack one target or to attack two different targets.

If you attack one target, you attack with the weapon in your main hand, making the attack roll with 2 banes. On a success, you deal normal damage from that weapon plus extra damage from the weapon in your off hand.

If you attack two targets, you attack with the weapon in your main hand against one target and then attack the other with the weapon in your off hand. You make both attack rolls with 3 banes.

In either case, if you attack with a shield or a weapon with the defensive property, it loses the defensive property (see **Chapter 8**) until the end of the round.

Attack with an Item

You can make an attack with a harmful item that is not a weapon, such as a bomb or a flask of acid or oil. The rules for using such items describe how to resolve those attacks. For rules covering attacks with improvised weapons, see **Chapter 8**.

Attack with a Power

You use an attack power. **Chapter 10** has further details about using powers.

Attack an Attribute

You can make attacks with your attributes against other creatures' attributes or characteristics to perform stunts and maneuvers.

Disarm

Choose one target creature within your reach that's holding an object. Make a Strength or Agility attack roll against the higher of the target's Strength or Agility. If you are unarmed, you make this roll with 2 banes. On a success, the target drops one object it is holding of your choice.

Distract

Choose one target creature within short range of you that can see you. Make an Intellect attack roll against the target's Intellect. On a success, the target makes its next attack roll or challenge roll before the end of the round with 2 banes.

Escape

You can use this action if you are grabbed. Make a Strength or Agility attack roll against the Strength of the creature that has grabbed you. A success removes the grabbed affliction and lets you move up to half your Speed. This movement does not trigger free attacks from the creature that had grabbed you. (See “Grabbed” for information on the effects of being grabbed, and “Grab” for how to grab.)

Feint

Choose one target creature within short range of you that can see you. Make an Agility attack roll against the target’s Perception. On a success, you make the next attack roll against the target’s Defense or Agility before the end of the next round with 2 boons. Alternatively, your movement does not trigger free attacks from the target for 1 round.

Grab

You must have at least one hand free to grab, and you cannot be grabbing another creature. Choose one target creature within your reach that has a physical body (not a spirit, for example) and make a Strength or Agility attack roll against the target’s Agility. If you choose a creature you are already grabbing, you automatically get a success.

On a success, the target becomes grabbed until the end of the next round. If you are prevented from using actions (such as because you are dazed, stunned, or unconscious), the grabbed affliction ends. The grabbed affliction also ends if you move or are moved to a position where you can no longer reach the grabbed target. (See “Grabbed” in **Chapter 3** for more information on the effects of being grabbed, and “Escape” for how to escape a grab.)

Knock Down

Choose one target creature within your reach. Make a Strength attack roll against the target’s Agility. If the target is larger than you, you make this roll with 1 bane for each 1 Size it is larger. You make this roll with 1 boon if the target is smaller than you. On a success, the target falls prone.

Pull

Choose one target creature of your Size or smaller that you are grabbing. Make a Strength attack roll against the target’s Strength. On a success, you move up to half your Speed and the grabbed creature moves with you so that it remains within your reach.

Shove

Choose one target creature within your reach. Make a Strength attack roll against the target’s Strength. If the target is larger than you, you make this roll with 1 bane for each 1 Size it is larger. You make this roll with 1 boon if the target is smaller than you. On a success, you move the target 1 yard away from you, plus a number of yards equal to your Strength modifier (minimum total distance 1 yard).

Charge

When you use an action to charge, you make attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane until the end of the round. Move up to your Speed. At any point during your movement, make one attack with a melee weapon or with an attribute to knock down or shove a creature.

Attacking Worn or Carried Objects

You can attack an object that another creature wears or carries. You make the attack roll with 2 banes. The Keeper might decide that certain objects are immune or resistant to some forms of attack. An arrow isn't going to break a sword, for example.

Situational Banes to Attack Rolls

One or more banes might apply to your attack rolls, based on the circumstances under which you make the attack. These are in addition to any banes or boons included in the attack. The following table summarizes the most common situations.

Situational Banes

Target is . . .	Effect
Half covered	1 bane
Three-quarters covered	2 banes
Totally covered	Automatic failure
Partially obscured	1 bane
Heavily obscured	2 banes
Totally obscured	3 banes*
Weather, terrain	1 or more banes

*You must guess the target's location (see "Hide").

Novice Paths

Once your characters have completed their starting adventure, they are ready to become Seekers. The first thing you do upon achieving level 1 is choose your novice path. You can choose any path you want to, but keep in mind the things that happened during your starting adventure, and think about the things you found fun. Did you enjoy stabbing people and dealing out lots of violence or did you like using your Essence powers more? Use your actions in the adventure and your reactions to events in it to guide your choice of path.

Think About...

Each novice path includes a series of questions; answering these questions can help you figure out why your character chose to pursue their path, what that path means to them, and what it might mean for future development for your Seeker. Take some time to answer at least a few of them.

Novice Benefits

Your group's level determines the benefits you get from your novice path. As your group's level increases, so to do your novice path benefits. Use the Advancement table to guide you here.

- **Attributes:** Whenever you increase one of your attributes, you increase the score. When this happens, the modifier also increases. When you increase an attribute, make sure you also increase characteristics based on that attribute.
- **Characteristics:** Novice paths will often increase your characteristics directly. Increase them as directed.
- **Languages and Professions:** Your path might grant you additional languages or professions. See Chapter 2 for languages and professions.
- **Talents** Your path will grant you several talents over the course of your career. Some of these talents let you do things you wouldn't otherwise be capable of, some of them improve your existing capabilities, and some of them grant you access to Essence powers or talents appropriate to your Origin. If a talent grants you access to Essence powers, you must first discover an Essence tree in order to obtain powers or talents from that tree. If you obtain a power, that power's rank must be equal to or less than your Essence characteristic. If you obtain a talent, you cannot have Essence talents in excess of twice your Essence characteristic.

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Discovering Essence Trees

Essence trees give you access to all sorts of powers and new talents for your character. Here's a quick reference on how Essence trees work.

- In order to learn powers or talents from an Essence tree, you must first **discover** that Essence tree.
- You discover an Essence tree when the rules direct you to do so, usually from talents you get from paths, such as the bonded path.
- You can only discover Essence trees that your Origin gives you access to.

- Discovering an Essence tree usually gives you an additional benefit, as directed by the talent that grants you discovery. Sometimes this is a bonus power, sometimes it's that Essence tree's unique **discovery benefit**.
- When you **learn** an Essence power or talent, put it on your character sheet.
- An **Essence talent** works just like other talents do.
- When you learn an **Essence power**, you'll be able to use it a limited number of times. You replenish your uses of a power by resting.

For more information on Essence trees, talents, and powers, see **Chapter 8**.

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The **bonded** seek to strengthen their ties to their heritage, and to their Essence. Where she hails from has a dramatic effect on how she develops as a bonded, for what she focuses on is learning new ways to harness and use her Essence and the bond associated with it. Choose this path if you like the idea of having strange, powerful abilities, or if you tend to gravitate toward magic-using characters in other games.

The **marauder** hits hard and fast. While not capable of withstanding prolonged punishment, marauders don't much care because their foes are often dead before things can get that far. A marauder is a quick, agile warrior who exploits his enemies weaknesses and capitalizes on every advantage. Choose this path if the idea of dealing large amounts of damage appeals to you.

The **survivor** outlasts. She's durable, rugged, able to survive in inhospitable areas and soak up huge amounts of damage. More than that, she wears her opponents down over time, exhausting them as they struggle against her seemingly inexhaustible reserve of stamina. Choose this path if you like being the toughest character around.

The **vanguard** is a leader, a guide. She ensures that her allies stay alive and continue to fight at peak efficiency. She points out flaws in the enemy plan and ways that her allies can do things more effectively, and her group is stronger for it. Choose this path if you like to heal, provide aid to allies, and make your enemies' lives harder.

Ties that Bind

Seekers come together for a reason; they are united by bonds stronger than family. Brainstorm with your group and your Keeper about why each of you chose to join this Seeker band, what goals you have in common, how you might have met in your previous lives, and so forth. During this brainstorming session, you must establish a **tie** to one other Seeker in your band. To do so, choose one of the statements below or make up your own, and add one of your fellow Seekers' names to it.

- I've known _____ for years. We were raised together, fought together, and fled our old lives together.
- I owe _____ a debt I cannot hope to pay any time soon, but I'll certainly try.
- I must earn _____'s respect. I'll do anything to get it.
- _____ and I both seek the same thing. I hope we can both have it.
- I saved _____'s life some time ago, and I'll likely have to do it again. Somebody has to look after them.

- _____ and I are working for the same patron.
- I'm connected to _____ in a way that neither of us fully understands yet.
- [need more of these]

As your group gains expert and master paths, you'll gain additional ties.

Teamwork Dice

Every Seeker at the table has a **teamwork** die: a d6 of a distinct color. Not every teamwork die should be a different color, but the teamwork dice do need to be visually distinct from boons and banes. Each Seeker starts each session with 1 teamwork die.

Whenever an ally you have a tie to makes a challenge or attack roll, you can hand them your teamwork die as a triggered action, provided they can see and hear you. They can then roll that teamwork die along with their attack roll and challenge roll. A person rolling a teamwork die always gets to keep that teamwork die and add it to their roll's total, even if they're also adding a boon or subtracting a bane.

Once you hand your teamwork die away, you can't hand your ally another teamwork die until someone hands you a teamwork die and you roll it.

Changing Your Ties

Every time your group gains a level, look at your ties and make sure they all still make sense. If a tie seems irrelevant, resolved, or otherwise inappropriate, talk to the person you're tied to and work with them to change it.

In addition, you'll get to choose a second tie when you select an expert path, and a third when you select a master path.

Deepening Your Essence Bond

At your option, you can choose to deepen your Essence bond at level 2 and again at level 5. If you do so, instead of gaining the normal benefits of your novice path at those levels, you gain the the appropriate benefit below. You make this choice each time you gain one of these levels.

Level 2 Deepening Bond

Characteristics Health +2

Bond Choose one of the following benefits.

- Discover a new Essence tree associated with your Origin and one rank 0 power from that tree.
- Discover a new Essence tree associated with your Origin and one talent from that tree.
- Learn a new power from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

Level 5 Deepening Bond

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1

Bond Choose one of the following benefits.

- Discover a new Essence tree associated with your Origin and one rank 0 power from that tree.
- Discover a new Essence tree associated with your Origin and one talent from that tree.
- Learn a new power from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

The Bonded

There are those who focus on learning about and deepening their Essence bond above all else. A Pacari might spend much of her time with beasts, learning their ways and growing attuned to them. Someone from the Black Isle might rigorously practice martial arts and meditate for hours, turning his energy inward. In Sky City, there are those who undergo regimes of blice-potion treatment, learning all they can about how to stay aloft and manipulate the gravity around them. Whatever the form, these individuals spend their time learning to harness their Essence and use it to incredible effect. Bonded of different Origins look very different from each other, but they all share this singular focus.

When creating a bonded, answer these questions:

- What did it feel like the first time you realized the power of your Essence bond?
- At what point did you realize you needed to learn to control your power?
- Who taught you control?
- How has your Essence bond saved your life?
- What do you wish you could do, but can't?

Level 1 Bonded

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +3, Essence +1

Languages and Professions Add one random profession.

Focused Bond Choose one Essence tree that your Origin gives you access to. You discover that Essence tree and learn one rank 0 power from that tree and its discovery benefit. Then, make two choices. For each choice, you can either discover a new Essence tree and get a rank 0 power form that tree along with its discovery benefit; learn a new power from an Essence tree you've already discovered; or learn a talent from an Essence tree you've discovered.

Strengthen Essence You can use an action on your turn to heal damage equal to your healing rate. In addition, if you use an Essence power within 1 turn, you do not expend a use of that power. Once you use this talent, you cannot use it again until after you complete a rest.

Level 2 Bonded

Characteristics Health +3

Strengthen Essence Make two choices, as described under Focused Bond.

Level 5 Expert Bonded

Characteristics Health +3, Essence +1

Strengthen Essence Make two choices, as described under Focused Bond.

Level 8 Master Bonded

Characteristics Health +3

Strengthen Essence Make two choices, as described under Focused Bond.

Improved Strengthen Essence You can use Strengthen Essence twice.

The Vanguard

There are those who fight, and those who lead the fight; the vanguard is the latter. She spends her time learning to support her allies, to fight as a unit, to call the shots and form the plans. Some are military commanders or guard-captains, while others are the leaders of gangs of thieves or assassin coteries. Whatever a vanguard's vocation, the simple fact is that no group of Seekers is more effective without a vanguard than with one. The vanguard leads from the front. The vanguard shows you how it's done.

When creating a vanguard, answer these questions:

- When did you first discover your aptitude for leadership?
- What was your first victory?
- Who was the first person you failed?
- What do you tell your allies when things look bleak?
- What's the greatest burden you have to live with?

Level 1 Vanguard

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +4

Languages and Professions You add one profession of your choice and learn to speak a language of your choice.

On Your Feet You can use an action on your turn to heal damage equal to your healing rate. When you do so, you choose an ally within medium range; they also get to heal damage equal to their healing rate. Once you use this talent, you cannot use it again until after you complete a rest.

Vital Advice You can use a triggered action when a creature within short range of you makes an attack or challenge roll to either grant 1 boon or impose 1 bane on the triggering roll.

Level 2 Vanguard

Characteristics Health +4

Lead from the Front Once per turn, you can designate a creature that you attack. Any allies who attack that creature within 1 turn get 1 boon on the attack.

Call the Shot When you grant an ally 1 boon on an attack roll with Vital Advice, that ally deals an extra 1d6 damage.

Level 5 Expert Vanguard

Characteristics Health +4

Rally As an action or a triggered action on your turn, you can shout a rallying cry to all allies within medium range who can hear you. If any of those allies are charmed, compelled, dazed, fatigued, frightened, impaired, stunned, or surprised, those afflictions immediately end. Once you use this talent, you cannot use it again until after you complete a rest.

Harry When you designate a creature as the target of Lead from the Front, you impose 1 bane on any challenge rolls or attack rolls that creature makes for 1 turn.

Level 8 Master Vanguard

Characteristics Health +4

Expert Advice While within short range of you, your allies make challenge rolls with 1 boon whenever those challenge rolls would benefit from professions you possess.

Improved On Your Feet You can use On Your Feet twice.

The Survivor

Outlast. Endure. Survive. This is the survivor's mantra. While staying a live is important to everyone, the survivor excels at doing so, and has turned survival into a calling. But the survivor's skill set is more than simply staying alive. With his endless reserves of stamina, he exhausts his enemies, beating them down over time, forcing them to die from a thousand cuts. His ability to simply take the hit and battle on is demoralizing to the enemy and encouraging to his allies, and his ability to return from seemingly fatal wounds is the stuff of legend.

When creating a survivor, answer these questions:

- What nearly killed you when you were young?
- What pushed you to become self-reliant?
- Who have you lost along the way?
- What crucial survival skill have you perfected?
- What do you miss most about your life before?

Level 1 Survivor

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +6

Languages and Professions You add one common, martial, or wilderness profession.

Shake It Off You can use an action or a triggered action on your turn to heal damage equal to your healing rate. Once you use this talent, you cannot use it again until after you complete a rest.

Exhaust Enemy When an enemy damages you with a melee attack, you can use a triggered action to make a Strength attack against its Strength. If you succeed, the enemy becomes fatigued for 1 minute. If it's already fatigued, it becomes impaired for 1 minute. If it's already fatigued *and* impaired, it takes 1d6 damage.

Level 2 Survivor

Characteristics Health +6,

Endure You get 1 boon on any challenge rolls you make to resist afflictions.

Demoralize When you deal damage to an enemy with Exhaust Enemy, that enemy also becomes frightened for 1 round.

Level 5 Expert Survivor

Characteristics Health +6

Never Surrender As an action or a triggered action on your turn, you can draw on bottomless reserves of endurance. This state lasts for 1 minute and, while you're in this state, you heal 1 damage at the end of each turn. This occurs even if you're incapacitated, but your damage cannot be reduced below half your health (rounded down). Once you use this talent, you cannot use it again until after you complete a rest.

Outlast When you use Exhaust Enemy, you get 1 boon on your Strength attack. In addition, Exhaust Enemy deals 2d6 damage instead of 1d6.

Level 8 Master Survivor

Characteristics Health +6, Defense +1

Stone Guts You're immune to the poisoned and diseased afflictions, and you take half damage from poison and disease.

Improved Shake it Off You can use Shake it Off twice.

The Marauder

The marauder lives by a simple credo: fight smart, not fair. Experts at hit-and-run tactics, ambushes, and dirty fighting, marauders capitalize on every advantage and exploit every weakness their enemies show. While not as capable in a toe-to-toe fight as a vanguard or a survivor, marauders are exceedingly deadly to those who underestimate them or ignore them, and they're capable of dealing huge amounts of trauma in a very short span of time.

When creating a marauder, answer these questions:

- Who taught you to fight?
- What forced you to continue to hone your skills?
- Who was your first kill?
- What do you love most about combat?
- What haunts you about the lives you've taken?

Level 1 Marauder

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Speed +2, Health +3

Languages and Professions You add one common, martial, wilderness, or criminal profession.

Turn the Tide You can use an action on your turn to heal damage equal to your healing rate. When you use this talent, the next time you make an attack before the end of the next round, you make the attack roll with 1 boon. Once you use this talent, you cannot use it again until after you complete a rest.

Seize the Advantage Once per round, you can make an attack roll or challenge roll with 1 boon.

Exploit Weakness When you attack with a weapon, you can choose to make the attack roll with 1 bane. On a success, you deal 1d6 extra damage.

Level 2 Marauder

Characteristics Health +3

Fight Dirty When you deal damage to a creature suffering from an affliction, you deal 1d6 extra damage.

Dust in the Eyes Once per round, you can make an attack with 1 bane. If you hit, your target is blinded for 1 round.

Level 5 Expert Marauder

Characteristics Defense +1, Health +3

Momentum When you use an action to attack with a weapon, you either deal 1d6 extra damage with that attack or make another attack against a different target at any point before the end of your turn. If you choose to make a second attack, you can move up to half your Speed before making the attack.

Level 8 Master Marauder

Characteristics Health +3

Fatal Blow When you use Exploit Weakness, you deal 2d6 extra damage instead of 1d6.

Improved Turn the Tide You can use Turn the Tide twice.

Expert Paths

When your group reaches level 3, it's time for you to choose an expert path. The paths in this chapter help bring your character further into focus, specializing them and honing in on what your unique shtick is. Some expert paths imply affiliation with a particular organization, while others represent a deepening connection with your Essence bond. Still others are simply a narrowing down of what your character excels at.

Expert paths are grouped into Paths of Essence and Paths of Skill. A Path of Essence requires a specific Essence bond in order to take the path; this is noted in that specific path's description. A Path of Skill has no requirements.

Expert Story Development

Each expert path includes three questions. Answering these questions can help you flesh out your character's motivations and how they relate to the world. In the case of expert paths that imply group membership, they can help define your relationship to that group.

Expert Path Requirements

Some expert paths have requirements that you must meet in order to take that expert path. In most cases, these requirements are a particular Origin, because those paths represent a deepening connection to the Essence trees available to that Origin. If you don't meet the requirements for an expert path, you cannot take that expert path.

Expert Benefits

Just like your Origin and your novice path, your expert path confers certain benefits in the form of attribute boosts, characteristic boosts, and talents. Follow the instructions in the path you choose and record your new features on your character sheet, just like with a novice path.

What Do You Seek?

Choosing an expert path is more than just advancing in power; it represents a broadened understanding of the world and your place in it. Once your group has advanced to level 3, you've been a Seeker band long enough to know *what* you're seeking. Figure out what your goal is: what do you seek? Write it down on your character sheet along with your professions. If, for example, you've decided that you're seeking answers about the Green Army and what it is, you might write, "Goal: Knowledge of the Green Army" on your sheet. From now on, your goal behaves just like another profession: when you're doing something that directly relates to your goal (such as searching a library for information about the Green Army), you might make challenge rolls with a boon, or even get an automatic success, according to your Keeper.

Achieving Your Goal

Every time you gain a level, look at your goal and determine whether or not it's still relevant. If you feel like you've achieved your goal, scratch it out and come up with a new one.

Deepening Ties

Choose another member of the group to develop a tie to. This can't be the same person you already have a tie to; it must be someone new. This tie works just like the ties described in **Chapter 5**. If there's nobody else to tie yourself to, ignore this section.

Paths of Essence

Bug-Shaper	Those who shape insects can develop deep bonds with them.
Chaos Adept	Delving into the secrets of Chaos is dangerous, but grants power.
Demon Hunter	Hunting demons is dangerous business. Only the strongest try.
Inventor	The inventors of New Gaia are renowned across all of Asunder.
Light-Touched	Some who are touched by Pure Light are changed by it.
Beastmaster	Beastmasters lead packs of beasts on the hunt and learn to become more like them.
Serpent-Hunter	Seafarers hunt sea serpents as a way of life, and that way of life informs their approach to obstacles.
Sky-Dancer	The Sky-Dancers of Sky City are graceful and deadly.

Paths of Skill

Arena Fighter	The Arena of Megalith is home to fighters of a particularly brutal type.
Beast-Rider	Some learn to tame and ride the dangerous beasts of Asunder, from wyverns to horoks.
Bone Recruit	Members of the Bone Army, Bone Recruits are heavily-armored mercenaries.
Captain	Those who take control of their own ships can learn to tame the seas or skies.
Child of Gaia	Gaia touches some, giving them terrible power over life and death.
Lasher	Intelligent whips are hard to control, but deadly.
Martial Artist	The martial traditions of the Black Isle are varied and potent.
Ravager	Demon blood is a drug, and it can make you strong, at a cost.
Razor Fiend	A colloquial term, "razor fiend" refers to those who learn to be deadly with short blades.
Shadow	In Asunder, assassins are a necessary evil.
Storm Point Bodyguard	Many seasoned warriors hire themselves out as bodyguards to the wealthy of Storm Point.
Wanderer	Surviving out in the wild takes a special kind of person.

Choosing a Second Expert Path

When your group reaches level 7, you can either choose a master path or choose a second expert path. Doing so allows you to develop a second area of expertise at the expense of further specialization. Perhaps you're a sky-dancer who also wants to learn to use intelligent whips, so you become a lasher as well, for example. If you decide to choose a second expert path, it cannot be one you've already chosen.

Talents

If your second path grants a talent you already have, choose one of the following options.

- Increase one attribute of your choice by 1 and add one profession to your list of professions.
- Discover an Essence tree.
- Learn one Essence power or talent.

Second Path Benefits

You gain the following benefits at the indicated levels.

- **At Level 7:** You gain the level 3 benefits from your second expert path.
- **At Level 9:** You gain the level 9 benefits from *one* of your expert paths.
- **At Level 10:** You gain the level 6 benefits from your second expert path.

Deepening Your Essence Bond

You may, in lieu of taking the level 6 benefits of your expert path, want to further deepen your Essence bond. If you choose to do so, replace your level 6 benefits with the following:

Level 6 Deepening Bond

Characteristics Health +3

Bond Choose one of the following benefits.

- Discover a new Essence tree associated with your Origin and one rank 0 power from that tree.
- Discover a new Essence tree associated with your Origin and one talent from that tree.
- Learn a new power from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

Extend Essence When you use an Essence power, you can choose to take Strain equal to the rank of the Essence power you're using (minimum 1). If you do, you do not expend a use of that Essence power.

If you take a second expert path, you can choose this option instead of the level 6 benefit of *either* path, but not both.

Arena Fighter

There are three kinds of people who fight in the Arena of Megalith: slaves seeking their freedom, upstarts seeking fame and glory, and veterans looking to make a living. Regardless of their background, all those who fight in the Arena learn the tricks and tactics that keep them alive in such an environment. In the Arena, you have to learn to fight groups of people, to fight wild beasts and horrible monsters, and to fight pitched battles where you're the underdog. The Arena is a meatgrinder, and those who don't learn to become part of the machine get ground up in its works.

When creating an arena fighter, answer these questions:

- Why do you fight in the Arena?
- Why did you decide to leave the Arena?
- Who's angry about your departure?

Level 3 Arena Fighter

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +6

Mob-Fighting You've learned to fight better when you're outnumbered. You get 1 boon on your attack rolls with melee weapons for every hostile creature beyond the first that can reach you. For example, if there are three hostile creatures who can reach you, your attack rolls get 2 boons.

Unarmored Agility While you're not wearing medium or heavy armor, you have a +1 bonus to Defense.

Quick on your Feet While you're not wearing medium or heavy armor, you have a +2 bonus to Speed.

Level 6 Arena Fighter

Characteristics Health +6

Underdog Advantage Whenever you attack a creature larger than you with a melee weapon, you get 1 boon on your attack roll for every point of difference between its Size and yours. For example, if you're Size 1 and your target is Size 3, you get 2 boons on your attack roll.

Vital Strike Once per round, when you attack with a melee weapon with at least 1 boon, you deal 2d6 extra damage.

Level 9 Master Arena Fighter

Characteristics Health +6

Flashy Attack When you attack with a melee weapon, you can make the attack roll with 2 banes. If you succeed, you deal 1d6 extra damage and impose one of the following afflictions on the target: blinded for 1 turn, prone, or impaired for 2 turns.

Beastmaster

While the people of Pacari are often referred to collectively as “beastmasters” by outsiders, the truth is that “beastmaster” is a specific title that one must attain. In order to do so, a Pacari must prove themselves both in battle and in the hunt, and must prove their bond to the beasts of the wild. Beastmasters often travel with packs of beasts, and are not only accepted as one of the pack but typically deferred to as the alpha. The most powerful beastmasters start to take on more and more bestial traits, and the dividing line between human and creature of the wild becomes thin indeed.

When creating a beastmaster, answer these questions:

- What was the first beast to talk to you?
- What did you hunt in order to earn your title?
- What aspect of civilized life do you find false or unnecessary?

Requirement: You must have access to the Beast Aspect and Beast Bond trees in order to take this path.

Level 3 Beastmaster

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +5, Essence +1

Languages and Professions You gain one wilderness profession.

Greater Essence Bond You discover the Beast Aspect and Beast Bond Essence trees and gain one power or talent from each. If you’ve already discovered the either of these trees, choose an additional power or talent from that tree.

Level 6 Beastmaster

Characteristics Health +5

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Beast Aspect or Beast Bond trees.

Pack Beta Choose one of your bondmates to be your pack beta, your second in command. It gets the following benefits:

- Health +10
- Its natural weapons deal 1d6 extra damage.
- You can communicate telepathically with your beta from any distance, as long as you’re both on Asunder.

Beta Command When you use an action to command your beta, you can issue a command to one additional bondmate. If you don’t have another bondmate to issue a command to, your beta instead gets 1 boon on any action it takes.

Level 9 Master Beastmaster

Characteristics Health +5, Essence +1

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Beast Aspect or Beast Bond trees.

Bestial Trait You gain a beast-like trait, chosen from the following list:

- Powerful muscles: Strength +1

- Enhanced reflexes: Agility +1
- Tough hide: Defense +2
- Enhanced senses: Perception +1 and darksight

Beast-Rider

Many people learn to ride beasts in Asunder. On Pacari, people often learn to ride their bondmates, while in Sky City, wyvern-riders are a common sight. What separates someone who rides a beast from a true beast-rider is the connection between rider and mount. A beast-rider is one with her mount, acting in tandem, operating as a single unit. The beast-rider treats her mount as a friend, and equal, and the mount bears its rider out of respect and affection rather than training or conditioning. While either mount or rider can operate individually and might be quite fearsome on their own, when acting in tandem, there's little they can't accomplish.

When creating a beast-rider, answer these questions:

- What is your mount's name?
- Where did you find your mount?
- What habit have you and your mount cultivated together?

Level 3 Beast-Rider

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +3

Languages and Professions You add the animal trainer profession. If you already have that profession, you may instead speak one additional language or add one common or wilderness profession.

Faithful Steed You have a **mount**. With the Keeper's guidance, choose a creature from the **Chapter 15** that is at least Size 2 and has a difficulty of up to 100. If you cannot find a creature you'd like as a mount in the bestiary, use appropriate **animal** or **monster** statistics and work with your Keeper to describe your mount and define what it is. If you have a bondmate that would be suitable as a mount, you can choose your bondmate as your mount, in which case you get the below benefits in addition to the benefits of having a bondmate. You can communicate basic ideas to your mount with words and body language, though it's limited by its own Intellect.

While you're not riding your mount, it acts under the Keeper's control but is friendly to you, and tends to act in either its own or your best interests. You can use an action to issue your mount a command; when you do this, you choose its next action and the target for that action.

While you're riding on your mount, it doesn't get its own actions. You use its Speed instead of your own, and you have access to any traits that affect its movement, such as climber, swimmer, or flier. You direct your mount and, when you attack, you can choose to use its attack options instead of your own. Creatures can choose to target either you or your mount. If a creature attacks your mount, you can use a triggered action to redirect the triggering attack to yourself; you can do the reverse if you are the target.

If your mount dies, you can seek and train a new one. Doing so requires 48 hours of total time, though this 48 hours can be divided up over any total amount of time. Once you've spent a total of 48 hours seeking a new mount, choose a new one with the

Keeper, as described above. Any talents from this path that affect your mount also affect new mounts.

Level 6 Beast-Rider

Characteristics Health +3

Beast-Training Through rigorous training and exercise, you improve your mount's statistics, granting it the following benefits:

- Health +10
- Speed +3
- Intellect +2

Mounted Unity While you're riding your mount, you get 1 boon to attack any creature smaller than your mount, and your attacks against such creatures deal 1d6 extra damage.

Level 9 Master Beast-Rider

Characteristics Health +3

Beast Maturity Your mount grows to full maturity, becoming a larger, more powerful version of itself. It gets the following benefits:

- Size +1
- Increase its Health by 50 percent
- Strength +1
- Speed +2
- Its attacks deal 1d6 extra damage

Whenever you get a new mount, you can choose a creature with a difficulty up to 250. If you do so, your mount doesn't get the above benefits, though it does get the benefits from Beast-Training, if you have that talent.

Bone Recruit

The Bone Army is the largest mercenary military force in the world, and they hold their recruits to a high standard. After a period of training, a recruit is sent out into the wilds of the mainland to hunt a horok, kill it single-handedly, skin it, collect its bones, and fashion those bones into weapons and armor. Horok bone is incredibly hard, but also incredibly light, and horok-bone armor makes the soldiers of the Bone Army both mobile and well-protected. Their weapons are deadly too, for horok-bone holds an edge well, and is more durable than most other materials in Asunder.

Once the recruit returns with their horok-bone gear, they're inducted into the Bone Army and begin their *real* training. Training never stops; the Bone Army demands the highest level of discipline and skill from its soldiers, and it does not tolerate weakness.

When creating a Bone recruit, answer these questions:

- Who sponsored your induction into the Bone Army?
- What scar did you suffer when you hunted and killed your horok?
- What unique flair did you work into your weapons and armor?

Level 3 Bone Recruit

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +5

Languages and Professions Add both the mercenary and soldier professions. If you have either of these professions already, you can speak another language.

Personal Armor You have a personalized set of horok-bone armor. You ignore the Strength requirement for wearing this armor and, because it is fitted to you perfectly, you get +1 to your Defense while you wear it.

Personal Weapons You have two personalized weapons, chosen from the following list: light melee weapon, military melee weapon, heavy melee weapon, or shield. You can choose the same weapon type twice if you wish. Both of your weapons get the deadly property, plus two additional properties each.

Contracts Once per game session, before you perform a significant action, you can declare that doing so is part of a contract. If you succeed in performing the action, you get paid for completing your contract as soon as you complete a rest in a civilized area. The Keeper is the final arbiter of what constitutes a significant action, but typically it requires killing a powerful creature, liberating a town, saving an individual, or something similar. If the contract was easy, you get 3 pearls. If it was of moderate difficulty, you get 1 sapphire. If it was very difficult, you get 1 ruby. If you nearly died while completing the contract, you get hazard pay of 1 sapphire. If you fail to complete the contract, you get nothing.

Bone Army Contacts When you make contact with other Bone Army soldiers, you get 1 boon on any challenge or attack rolls you make to deal with them in social situations.

Level 6 Bone Recruit

Characteristics Health +5

Battle Superiority Choose a Bone recruit stance from the ones described below.

Intense Training Whenever you make an attack roll with one of your personal weapons, you do so with 1 boon.

Level 9 Master Bone Recruit

Characteristics Health +5

Deadly Weapons When you deal damage with your personal weapons, you deal 1d6 extra damage.

Battle Mastery Choose a second Bone recruit stance from the ones described below. You must choose a different stance from the one you chose for Battle Superiority, if you have that talent.

Bone Recruit Stances

You can enter a stance as an action or a triggered action on your turn. Once you've entered a stance, it remains active until you end it, you enter a different stance, or you are incapacitated. You can end a stance as an action or a triggered action. You can only be affected by one stance at a time.

Defender Stance You must be wearing your personal armor to enter this stance. While you're in this stance, you make the attack roll with 1 bane but take half damage from weapon attacks.

Exemplar Stance You must be wearing your personal armor or wielding one of your personal weapons to enter this stance. While you're in this stance, creatures get 1 boon when they attack you, but when you attack a creature, your allies get 1 boon to attack the same creature for 1 turn.

Protector Stance You must be wielding one of your personal weapons and at least one of those weapons must be a shield to enter this stance. While you're in this stance and a creature you can reach is attacked, you can use a triggered action to become the target of that attack, and the attacker gets 1 bane on the triggering attack roll. You're also slowed while you're in this stance.

Shock Stance You must be wielding one of your personal weapons to enter this stance. While you're in this stance, creatures get 1 boon when they attack you, but you deal 2d6 extra damage with melee weapon attacks.

Whirlwind Stance You must be wielding one of your personal weapons to enter this stance. While you're in this stance, you make attack rolls with 1 bane but, when you use an action to attack, you can attack an additional time.

Bug-Shaper

Insect-bonded weavers don't have the reputation for invention that their plant-bonded kin do. This is largely unfair, because there's just as much ingenuity and innovation present in their part of society as there is in mainstream New Gaia society, but it takes a slightly different form. Instead of creating plants to perform tasks, bug-shapers cultivate insects that they can weave into different forms depending on the need. Still, most

people don't use their inventions or task-bugs because doing so is seen as distasteful or gauche.

When creating a bug-shaper, answer these questions:

- What's your bug's name?
- Who taught you to develop a special bond to your bug?
- What sorts of ridicule have you been subject to because of what you do?

Requirement: You must have access to the Insect Control and Insect Meld trees in order to take this path.

Level 3 Bug-Shaper

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1

Languages and Professions You can either speak another language or add one academic area of knowledge.

Greater Essence Bond You discover the Insect Control and Insect Meld Essence trees and gain one power or talent from one from each. If you've already discovered the either of these trees, choose an additional power or talent from that tree.

Bug You have a special insect, called your **bug**. Your bug is a **tiny animal** with the climber and flier traits. Your bug is under the Keeper's control, but it's friendly to you. You can with it using pheromone secretions as long as you're within long range of it, and you can take an action or triggered action on your turn to issue it a command; this allows you to choose its next action. If your bug dies, you take 1d6 Strain. You can bond with a new bug upon completing a rest.

Shape Bug You can use an action to weave your bug into a new shape, allowing you to turn it into any of the following:

- You cause your bug to grow, making it a **small animal**. Its traits and intellect are unchanged.
- Your bug becomes a **small shield**.
- Your bug becomes a **light melee weapon** with one property.
- Your bug becomes a **light ranged weapon** with a range of medium.
- Your bug becomes a bioluminescent **lantern**, giving off light out to 5 yards.
- Your bug becomes a piece of **personal gear** with a value of up to 1 pearl, provided its new shape makes sense.

Your bug's new shape lasts for 1 hour, after which it is fatigued for 1 hour. You cannot use this talent while your bug is fatigued or incapacitated.

Level 6 Bug-Shaper

Characteristics Health +2

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Insect Control or Insect Meld trees.

Greater Bug-Shaping When you use Shape Bug, add the following options to the list of forms your bug can take:

- Your bug grows even bigger, becoming a **medium animal**. It loses the flier trait.
- Your bug becomes a suit of **light armor**.

- Your bug becomes a **martial melee weapon**.
- Your bug becomes a **heavy melee weapon** with the cumbersome property.
- Your bug becomes a **heavy ranged weapon** with a range of short.
- Your bug becomes a **tool** with a value up to 1 ruby.

Bug Sight While your bug is within short range of you, you get 1 boon on Perception challenge rolls.

In addition, you can use an action to see through your bug's eyes for 1 minute. While you're doing so, you're blinded and, once the duration elapses, you're impaired for 1 minute.

Level 9 Master Bug-Shaper

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Insect Control or Insect Meld trees.

Bug Steed When you use Shape Bug, add the following options to the list of forms your bug can take:

- Your bug becomes a **wing pack**, becoming a **medium animal** and latching onto your back. While in this form, your bug cannot take its own actions, though it can be targeted separately from you. You gain the ability to fall from any height without taking damage and, when you jump, you quadruple the distance you jump.
- Your bug becomes a **riding beetle**, becoming a **large animal**. It loses the flier trait and it cannot attack, but you can ride it. While you're riding it, you can make use of its Speed and its climber trait.

Captain

Whether on the sea or in the sky, ships are the lifeblood of commerce and travel on Asunder. The seafarers learn to master their great living ships, and the captains of these ships are sovereigns aboard them, commanding authority and respect. The people of Sky City create skyships laced with blice crystal, and their captains rule the skies. On the mainland and the various islands of Asunder, people build ships and captain them in the hope of competing with the seafarers. Some mainlanders even steal seafarer vessels and learn to pilot them, or take skyships for themselves. In any case, captains are the merchants, naval commanders, and pirates of the world, and if you want to get anywhere on Asunder, you'll have to deal with one of them.

When creating a captain, answer these questions:

- What is your ship's name?
- How did you come by her?
- Who is your first mate, and how much do you trust them?

Level 3 Captain

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +4

Languages and Professions Add the sailor profession. If you already have it, add one common or military profession, or you may speak one additional language.

The Captain's Ship You have a **large ship**, **medium living ship**, or **medium skyship**, as described in **Chapter 8**. While aboard your ship, you get 1 boon on attack rolls and 1 boon on challenge rolls made to navigate or operate your ship.

Ship's Crew You have a crew, comprised of the following. Use NPC stats from **Chapter 15** for your crew.

- A **first mate**, with a difficulty up to 50.
- A **second mate** and **third mate**, each with a difficulty up to 10.
- 25 **crewmen**, each with a difficulty of 1.

While on your ship, your word is law. Provided you care for your crew, keep them fed, and treat them well, they'll follow your orders as long as those orders are reasonable. If you command a crew member to do something unreasonable, like dive into serpent-infested waters to fetch out a bolt of linen, any challenge rolls you make get 2 boons. Provided you have a full complement of crew, you can operate your ship without trouble.

You can also command your crew to accompany you on land. When you do, they act under the Keeper's command but are friendly to you. If you command a crew member to do something unreasonable while you're not on your ship, you get 1 boon instead of 2.

If you have to replace crew due to death or desertion, hiring a new first mate costs 1 sapphire, hiring a new second or third mate costs 3 pearls, and hiring a new crewman costs 1 sliver.

A Ship's Business Whenever you make port, you can choose to sell cargo or take on passengers. To determine how much money you make, make an Intelligence challenge roll with 1 bane for every 5 pearls of profit you want to make. If you succeed, you make

that much money. If you fail, you spend all of your takings on ship upkeep and crew pay, and make no profit.

Level 6 Storm Point Bodyguard

Characteristics Health +4

Trained Officers Your first mate becomes difficulty 100, and your second and third mates become difficulty 25.

Swashbuckling You're accustomed to using your environment to your advantage, swinging around on ropes and vaulting over railings during combat. When you move during a fast turn, you ignore difficult terrain. When you attack during a slow turn in which you've moved at least half your Speed, you do so with 1 boon.

Level 9 Master Storm Point Bodyguard

Characteristics Health +4

Unfailing Loyalty Your crew is loyal to you beyond reason. You can command your crew to do unreasonable things without making a challenge roll. In addition, once per turn when you're attacked, you can use a triggered action to redirect the attack to a crew member who can reach you.

Chaos Adept

Bonding with Chaos, trying to tame it and control it, is not for the faint of heart, nor is it for the hobbyist. A Chaos adept knows that Chaos is not a force to be trifled with, that the addiction must be controlled, that only someone who bends their will toward achieving true mastery of Chaos can hope to prevent the primal force from destroying them utterly. Chaos adepts are those who start to walk that path, the path of one who controls Chaos rather than letting Chaos control them.

When creating a Chaos adept, answer these questions:

- Where was the Chaos shard that you consumed to gain your powers?
- What did bonding with Chaos cost you?
- How are you forever marked by Chaos?

Requirement: You must have access to the Chaos Essence tree in order to take this path.

Level 3 Chaos Adept

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +3, Essence +1

Chaos Bond You discover the Chaos Essence tree and gain one power or talent from it. If you've already discovered the Chaos Essence tree, choose an additional power or talent from that tree.

Controlled Chaos Whenever you push a Chaos power, you can choose to take 1 **flux** instead rolling a die after using the power. You can take as much flux from a single Chaos power as you like, but you add your flux and Discord together for the purposes of determining the ongoing effects of Discord, as shown on the "Discord Effects" table in **Chapter 3**, as well as for the purpose of determining the effects of Chaos talents. The flux lasts until you complete a rest.

Dissonant Eruption At the end of each round during which you gained 1 or more flux, you must make a Will challenge roll. You make the roll with a number of banes equal to your flux. On a failure, energy explodes out from a point within your reach out to a number of yards equal to your flux total. Everything in the area other than you takes 1d6 damage per point of your Essence. Creatures in the area that get a success on an Agility challenge roll take half the damage. Your flux then drops to 0.

Level 6 Chaos Adept

Characteristics Health +3

Chaos Bond You learn one power or talent from the Chaos Essence tree.

Shunt Dissonance Whenever you'd make a Will challenge roll as the result of taking flux, you can choose not to make that challenge roll. If you do, you immediately become the epicenter of a Chaos site with a rank equal to half your Essence. The Chaos site moves with you and, while it's active, anyone within its area other than you is subject to the effects of a Chaos site. While this effect is active, you cannot choose to take flux, and your flux decreases at a rate of 1 point per minute. Once your flux reaches 0, your personal Chaos site dissipates.

Level 9 Master Chaos Adept

Characteristics Health +3, Essence +1

Chaos Bond You learn one power or talent from the Chaos Essence tree.

Touch of Chaos While you have 1 or more flux, you can use an action to touch a creature you can reach and release your pent-up Chaos energy into it. Reduce your flux by half (rounded down) and make a Will attack roll against the target's Agility. On a success, the blast hits and the target takes 1d6 damage for every point of flux you lose when you use this talent. If the target is incapacitated by this damage, it mutates into a hideous Chaos-beast under the Keeper's control; use the stats for a **large monster**, with two traits of the Keeper's choice.

Child of Gaia

Gaia appears in physical form wherever widespread death takes place: battlefields, the sites of great disasters, and other such places. Sometimes, when a survivor makes contact with the manifestation, Gaia touches that human, granting them power and purpose. Such a gift awakens latent abilities, strengthens one's Essence bond, and gives the newly awakened Child power over life and death. It also gives them a terrible purpose: to gather Essence, collecting it from the fallen, and to hold it until such time as Gaia comes to collect it. Those who worship Gaia say that the Mother of All collects the Essence of the dead in order to perpetuate the cycle of death and rebirth, ensuring that each newly born human has a divine spark of Essence within them. Though their task can be a grisly one, the Child of Gaia plays an important role in this cycle.

When creating a ravager, answer these questions:

- When did you first see Gaia?
- What terrible calamity precipitated her appearance?
- What have you given up to serve her will?

Level 3 Child of Gaia

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1

Essence Bond You discover an Essence tree you have access to, or you gain one power or talent from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

Harvest Essence You can use an action to harvest the Essence from a human who has died within the last minute. When you do so, you gain 1 **resonance**. Your maximum resonance is equal to your Essence plus 1; whenever you gain resonance in excess of this number, you take 1 Strain. Your resonance resets to 0 when you complete a rest.

Essence of Many You can spend resonance to use Essence powers that belong to Essence trees you don't have access to. In order to do this, you must satisfy the following requirements:

- You must have used Harvest Essence or Rip Essence on a human with access to that Essence tree in the last 24 hours.
- Your Essence must meet or exceed the power's rank.
- You must spend resonance equal to the power's rank (1 resonance for a rank 0 power).

Strengthen Essence You can spend 1 resonance when you use an Essence power. If you do so, you make any attack or challenge related to using that power with 2 boons.

Level 6 Child of Gaia

Characteristics Health +2

Essence Bond You discover an Essence tree you have access to, or you gain one power or talent from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

Rip Essence You can use an action to touch a human you can reach, ripping its Essence from its body. Make a Will attack roll against the target's Will; if you hit, you deal 2d6 damage. If this target incapacitates the target, it is immediately killed and you absorb its Essence exactly as if you'd used Harvest Essence.

Level 9 Child of Gaia

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1

Essence Bond You discover an Essence tree you have access to, or you gain one power or talent from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

Resonant Power When you complete a rest, choose Strength, Agility, Intelligence, or Will. As long as you have at least 1 resonance, you get 1 boon on any attack or challenge rolls you make with the chosen attribute. This choice lasts until you use this talent again.

Demon Hunter

Demons are the ancient enemy of the people of the Black Isle. They spill forth, destroying, consuming, and despoiling everything in sight, and they seem to have no goal beyond the corruption and destruction of the human race. The Black Islers do what they can to keep the demonic threat in check, and they have done so for generations by developing and perfecting techniques for combating demons. Through rigorous physical conditioning, they can make themselves strong and hardy enough to survive a fight with a demon. Through their Battle Meditation, they can imbue a single hunter with immeasurable power, enough to face a demon in single combat.

When creating a demon hunter, answer these questions:

- What happened during your first fight with a demon?
- Who have you lost during your pursuit of the hunt?
- What drives you to hunt an enemy you know will one day destroy you?

Requirement: You must have access to the Battle Meditation and Body Conditioning trees in order to take this path.

Level 3 Demon Hunter

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +8, Essence +1

Greater Essence Bond You discover the Battle Meditation and Body Conditioning Essence trees and gain one power or talent from one from each. If you've already discovered the either of these trees, choose an additional power or talent from that tree.

Hunt You can use an action or a triggered action on your turn to choose one creature you can see. The target becomes your prey until you use this talent again, you become unconscious, or you complete a rest. When you roll to attack, find, or track your prey, you make the attack roll or challenge roll with 1 boon. If your prey is a demon or someone you believe to be controlled by a demon, you deal 1d6 extra damage on any attacks you make against your prey.

Level 6 Demon Hunter

Characteristics Health +8

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Battle Meditation or Body Conditioning trees.

Track Prey Whenever you find tracks, you can make an Intellect challenge roll. On a success, you learn one true thing about the creature or creatures that made the tracks. On a failure, you discover no useful information from the tracks. If you learn that the creature that made the tracks is a demon, you may immediately designate it as your prey.

Level 9 Master Demon Hunter

Characteristics Health +8, Essence +1

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Battle Meditation or Body Conditioning trees.

Kill Prey You deal 2d6 extra damage on attacks you make against your prey.

Inventor

New Gaia is a culture of invention and innovation, and no culture on Asunder produces as many wonders and marvels as do the weavers. Their bonds with plants allow them to create living gear of unparalleled quality, to outfit their cities and dwellings with conveniences undreamed of outside of New Gaia. Life on the island is fast-paced, constantly pushing forward, constantly moving toward progress and new technology. The inventors of New Gaia are at the forefront of this, pushing the boundaries of what's possible, creating things that seem miraculous until they become commonplace, then pushing past the boundaries again. This can lead to trouble from time to time, and more than one inventor has caused widespread destruction through some mishap or miscalculation. The weavers consider this a small price to pay for innovation.

When creating an inventor, answer these questions:

- What was the first thing you invented?
- What does your seed pouch look like?
- Who is your biggest professional rival?

Requirement: You must have access to the Plant Control and Plant Form trees in order to take this path.

Level 3 Inventor

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1

Languages and Professions You can either speak another language or add one academic area of knowledge.

Greater Essence Bond You discover the Plant Control and Plant Form Essence trees and gain one power or talent from one from each. If you've already discovered the either of these trees, choose an additional power or talent from that tree.

Seed Pouch You have a pouch of specially-engineered seeds that you can use to grow any number of useful items. You measure the value of your seeds in sapphires, though the seeds are worthless to anyone other than you. The sapphire value of your seed pouch is equal to your group level.

You can use an action to coax one of your seeds into growing into a suit of armor, a weapon, ammunition, or another useful mundane item by spending sapphires from your seed bag with a value equal to the item's price. If you do not have enough sapphires to cover the cost, you can take Strain to make up the difference, at a rate of 1 Strain per 2 sapphires. It takes 1 minute to create the object, during which time you must concentrate. At the end of this time, you have a finished piece of equipment that remains until you complete a rest, at which point it shrivels and dies.

When you complete a rest, you replenish the seeds in your seed pouch, up to your normal maximum in sapphires.

If you lose your seed pouch, you can create a replacement. It costs a number of sapphires equal to your group's level and causes you to take 1 Strain. You can have only one seed pouch at a time.

Level 6 Inventor

Characteristics Health +2

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Plant Control or Plant Form trees.

Efficient Growth You now measure your seed pouch's value in rubies instead of sapphires. You have a number of rubies equal to your group level, and you can take Strain to make up the difference in cost at a rate of 1 Strain per ruby.

Complex Machinery You can use your seed pouch to create living gear with the plant keyword, using the rules listed under Seed Pouch. Just like mundane gear created with your seed pouch, living gear shrivels and dies when you complete a rest.

Level 9 Master Inventor

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Plant Control or Plant Form trees.

Plant Servants You can use an action to create one or more **small constructs** using materials contained in your seed pouch. For each 1 ruby in materials you spend, a compelled small construct appears in an open space within short range of you. You can grant the flier trait to any number of constructs by spending 1 extra sapphire from the bag for each construct you would make fly. Just as when you create equipment, you can make up the difference in cost by taking Strain. The constructs remain until destroyed or until you complete a rest. At the end of this time, they shrivel and die.

Lasher

Of all the kinds of living gear, intelligent whips are perhaps the most difficult to use effectively. Certainly a whip that can siphon life energy from those it's wrapped around can be a powerful tool, but it takes skill and practice to learn to use one, and it takes dedication to keep one alive long enough to get comfortable using it. For this reason, few bother to use such tools, and they remain more a curiosity than a tool of war. Lashers seek to prove the above wrong.

A lasher learns how to bond with multiple intelligent whips, how to exist in perfect symbiosis with them, and how to use them to their fullest potential. In the hands of a lasher, an intelligent whip is a powerful and deadly tool, a constant companion, and an extension of one's will and body.

When creating a lasher, answer these questions:

- What is the name of your favorite whip?
- Who taught you the ways of the lasher?
- Who was the first person you killed with an intelligent whip?

Level 3 Lasher

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +4, Essence +1

Lash When you attack with an intelligent whip, you deal 1d6 extra damage and you increase its reach to +2.

Synergy When you attack with an intelligent whip, you do so with 1 boon.

Whip-Fighting Techniques When you attack with an intelligent whip, you can attack with 1 bane. If you hit, choose one of the following effects:

- You grab the target. The target makes any challenge rolls to escape with 1 bane. You cannot use the same whip to attack while the target is grabbed.
- The target falls prone.
- You deal 1d6 extra damage.
- The target is impaired for 1 round.
- You pilfer a small object from the target, or you disarm the target.

Level 6 Lasher

Characteristics Health +4

Whip Bond You can bond to an additional piece of living gear, provided it's an intelligent whip.

Efficient Symbiosis The upkeep cost for any intelligent whip you're bonded to is 1 damage; this supersedes any upkeep notation in the whip's entry. In addition, when you use an intelligent whip's power, you can take 1d6 damage per rank of the whip (1d3 for a rank 0 whip) instead of using a use of that power.

Whip Mobility If you're wielding an intelligent whip, you get 2 boons on any challenge rolls you make to climb, and you ignore difficult terrain from climbing. In addition, when you jump, you can add 3 yards to your jump distance, provided there's something for your whip to attach itself to.

Level 9 Master Lasher

Characteristics Health +4, Essence +1

Greater Lash When you attack with an intelligent whip, you deal 1d6 extra damage.

Whip Bond You can bond to an additional piece of living gear, provided it's an intelligent whip.

Whip Dexterity You can perform actions that require manual dexterity (opening a door, picking a lock, disarming a trap, etc.) with your intelligent whip. This effectively increases your reach according to the whip's reach, but if you have to make a challenge roll to complete the action, you do so with 1 bane. Because this requires focus and concentration, you cannot attempt to use your whip in this way during combat or other highly stressful situations.

Light-Touched

On the mainland, there is a shaft of burning light that travels around the land, vaporizing creatures it touches: the Pure Light. Some mainlanders worship the Pure Light as a divine spirit, while others believe it is a purifying force of nature that forges those who can survive it into something greater. Whatever the belief, Pure Light utterly destroys most of those it touches. A select few, though, are changed by it instead, mutated into something more. Only people from the mainland are capable of undergoing this mutation, and many theorize that these rare few are able to bond their Essence with the Pure Light, gaining the ability to control and manifest its power.

When creating a Light-Touched, answer these questions:

- Why did you seek out the Pure Light?
- How did it first change you?
- Who died when you were changed?

Requirement: You must have access to the Chaos tree in order to take this path.

Level 3 Light-Touched

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +5, Essence +1

Languages and Professions Gain one religious profession.

Pure Light Mutation Select a mutation from the ones described below.

Cleansing Light You learn the *cleansing light* power, which is described below.

Cleansing Light Light-Touched Attack 1

Target One creature you can reach

Make a Will attack against the target's Strength. It can choose not to defend if it wishes. Roll a d6.

On an even roll, the target heals damage equal to its healing rate and is blinded for 1 minute.

On an odd roll, the target takes 2d6+2 damage. If the target becomes incapacitated by this damage, it dies instantly and is vaporized.

Attack Roll 20+ If the target took damage, it takes 1d6 extra damage. If it was blinded, it is blinded for 1 hour.

Level 6 Light-Touched

Characteristics Health +5

Illuminating Light You learn the *illuminating light* power, which is described below.

Illuminating Light Light-Touched Attack 3

Area A sphere with a 3-yard radius centered on a point you can reach.

Duration 1 minute

You begin to glow hotly, shedding light in a 10-yard radius. Everything but you in the area takes 1d6 damage when you use this power and at the end of each round thereafter for the duration. In addition, creatures in the area including you make all attack and challenge rolls with 2 boons.

Level 9 Master Light-Touched

Characteristics Health +5, Essence +1

Pure Light Mutation Select a second mutation from the ones described below. It must be different from the first mutation you selected.

Call Down Light You learn the *call down light* power, which is described below.

Call Down Light Light-Touched Attack 5

Area A cylinder 10 yards tall with an 8-yard radius centered on a point within medium range

You call down a shaft of Pure Light, which burns everything in the area, but also cleanses creatures burned by it. Each creature in the area must make an Agility challenge roll or take 5d6 damage. Creatures that take this damage are cured of all afflictions, and their Strain and Discord are reduced by half (rounded down).

Pure Light Mutations

Bend Light Your skin takes on a sparkling rainbow hue, ever-shifting. As an action, you can become invisible. You remain invisible as long as you neither move nor take an action or triggered action.

Illuminated from Within Your skin glows slightly, constantly giving off a small amount of light. As an action, you can shed light out to 5 yards. You make challenge rolls to hide with 1 bane while under this effect, which you can end as an action or triggered action on your turn.

Crystal Skin Your skin becomes translucent and crystalline. It's far from brittle; you increase your Defense by 2.

Touch of Darkness One of your arms grows monstrous and clawed and, when you touch someone with it, you can sap their life force. You have a natural weapon that deals 2d6 damage.

True Sight Your eyes burn away, leaving behind sockets filled with burning light. You have darksight, and you can perceive invisible creatures within short range.

Martial Artist

Martial arts traditions exist all over Asunder, from the battle techniques of the Black Isle to the graceful swordplay of Sky City to the various forms of combat practiced in New Gaia and the city-states of the mainland. Nearly every Seeker incorporates some martial arts practices into their fighting styles, but those who pursue martial arts as an art form are a different breed altogether. These people seek perfection: perfect form, perfect flow in battle, perfect harmony with their allies, and the perfect strike to end a conflict before it starts. Martial artists identify themselves by the school at which they studied. Some of these are literal schools where people are taught combat, while others are more loosely-defined collections of best practices that people pursue on their own. Others still are techniques handed down within families or clans, instilled into every generation so that the art form lives on.

When creating a martial artist, answer these questions:

- To which school do you belong?
- Who was your teacher?
- What do you call your signature attack?

Level 3 Martial Artist

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +5

School Technique There are hundreds of martial arts schools and styles in the world, but they all boil down to focusing on a particular technique and going about it in their own unique way. Choose a technique benefit from the following:

- **Redirected Force:** When you are attacked, you can choose to grant your attacker 1 boon on the attack roll. If you do, you can then use a triggered action after the attack is resolved to make a melee attack against your attacker. On a success, you deal 1d6 extra damage.
- **Irresistible Force:** When you make a melee attack, you can choose to make the attack roll with 1 bane. If your attack still hits, you deal your normal damage and push the target back 1d6 yards. The target then falls prone.
- **Lightning Strikes:** When you use an action during a fast turn to make an unarmed melee attack, you can attack twice.
- **Impenetrable Defense:** You can use an action to ready your defenses. You impose 2 banes on all attack rolls made against you for 1 round.
- **Thundering Fists:** Your unarmed attacks deal 1d6 extra damage.

Signature Form: Choose one of the following attack forms. When you use your signature attack form, you get the listed benefit.

- **Unarmed:** When you make an unarmed attack, you can choose to either make your attack roll with 2 boons or deal 1d6 extra damage.
- **Light Melee Weapon:** Light melee weapons you wield always have the deadly and finesse properties. If you throw a light melee weapon with the thrown property, increase its range by one step (short to medium, medium to long, long to extreme).
- **Martial Melee Weapon:** When a melee attack misses you while you're wielding a martial melee weapon, you can use a triggered action to attack your attacker.

- **Heavy Melee Weapon:** Heavy melee weapons you wield never have the cumbersome property. You can make a sweeping attack with a heavy melee weapon, which allows you to attack each creature you can reach. After you make such an attack, you're dazed for 1 turn.

Level 6 Martial Artist

Characteristics Health +5

Reveal Flaw When you attack someone with your signature form, you can use a triggered action to reveal the flaws in your target's fighting style. For 1 round, each member of your group that attacks the target makes the attack roll with 1 boon.

Level 9 Master Martial Artist

Characteristics Health +5

School Mastery You gain an additional benefit, based on the school you choose for School Technique:

- **Redirected Force:** When you hit your target with the attack granted by Redirected Force, the target is also impaired for 1 round.
- **Irresistible Force:** When you attack with your signature form, you can choose to attack your target's Defense or Agility.
- **Lightning Strikes:** When you use Lightning Strikes, you can attack one additional time, but one of your attacks must suffer 1 bane.
- **Impenetrable Defense:** Increase your Defense by 2.
- **Thundering Fists:** Your unarmed attacks deal 1d6 extra damage.

Ravager

Most don't know this, but there's a thriving black market trade on demon blood — colloquially referred to as "juice" — coming out of the Black Isle. Though the people of the Black Isle, for the most part, try to stamp it out, it nevertheless continues, making demon blood available in most civilized lands, provided you know who to talk to. To most, demon blood is toxic, causing a slow, agonizing death. Those who know how to do so build up a tolerance to it, though, conditioning their bodies to accept it and draw on its power. Under the effects of demon blood, a human being is capable of amazing and terrifying physical feats, becoming an engine of destruction. However, demon blood takes a toll on a body over time, and even those who learn to accept it and use it rarely live very long.

When creating a ravager, answer these questions:

- Why did you first start using demon blood?
- Who's your most reliable supplier?
- What side effects of demon blood abuse have you started to notice.

Level 3 Ravager

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +5

Languages and Professions You add one criminal profession.

Connections When you take this path, you get 2d6 doses of demon blood. Whenever you complete a rest, you can undergo a special ritual wherein you use your own blood as a sacrifice in order to gain demon blood. Make a Will challenge roll with 1 boon for every 5 damage you decide to take before rolling. On a success, you get 2d6 more doses of demon blood. On a failure, you get 1d3 more doses.

Toxicity Your blood is toxic. Whenever you take damage from a creature's natural weapons, that creature takes 1d6 damage and must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or become poisoned for 1 minute. If the creature was already poisoned, it instead takes 1d6 extra damage. In addition, to anyone not accustomed to the effects of demon blood, a dose of demon blood acts as a dose of poison (see **Chapter 8**).

Juice As an action or a triggered action on your turn, you can spend 1 dose of demon blood in order to become **juiced**. You remain juiced for 1 minute or until you become unconscious. When the effect ends, you can either take another dose to extend the effect, or become fatigued for 1 hour and you must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, you gain 1 Strain.

While you are juiced, you have the following benefits and drawbacks:

- You gain a +10 bonus to Health.
- You cannot become charmed, compelled, or frightened.
- You make Intelligence and Will attack and challenge rolls with 1 bane.
- You make Strength and Agility attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon.
- Your attacks with weapons deal 1d6 extra damage.

Level 6 Ravager

Characteristics Health +5

Cure-All Juice You can use an action, a dose of demon blood, and an alchemist's kit to create a dose of **cure-all juice**. You must spend at least 1 minute concentrating, during which time you use the kit and special ingredients worth 3 pearls. At the end of this time, you create a dose of cure-all juice, which you can drink as an action. When you drink cure-all juice, you heal damage equal to your healing rate and take 1 Strain. For anyone not accustomed to the effects of demon blood, a dose of cure-all juice acts as a dose of poison (see **Chapter 8**).

Inured to Poison You are immune to the poisoned affliction, and you take no damage from poison.

Level 9 Master Ravager

Characteristics Health +5

Demonic Attunement You're so saturated with demon blood that you've started to take on demonic traits that become accentuated whenever you're juiced. Whenever you're juiced, you gain the following additional benefits:

- You gain +2 bonus to Defense.
- You cannot become impaired.
- You take half damage from fire.
- Your attacks with weapons deal 1d6 extra damage.

Razor Fiend

Popularized by the rebels of Sky City, razor fiends learn a deadly fighting style that makes use of daggers, shards, thorns, and other light blades. The style become popular among the rebels because of its swift deadliness and because small blades are easy to conceal and easy to surprise people with. After a while, the style spread to the rest of the world, even finding an audience in the Arena of Megalith. Razor fiends attack swiftly and without warning, hurling blades and getting in close, slashing and cutting and darting away. They use speed and mobility to their advantage, and they always strike with surprise if they can.

When creating a razor fiend, answer these questions:

- Where did you learn the techniques of the razor fiend?
- How have your skills gotten you out of trouble in the past?
- Who was your first kill?

Level 3 Razor Fiend

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +3, Speed +2

Languages and Professions You add one criminal profession.

Blade Training Any light melee weapon with the finesse property you use is considered a **razor**, provided it's a small bladed weapon. A razor you wield has the deadly and thrown properties automatically.

Many Razors You have so many razors hidden on your person that they're effectively unlimited. You also get 1 boon on any challenge rolls made to conceal razors.

Strike from Surprise When a surprised creature or a creature from which you are hidden takes damage from your attack, and that attack is made with a razor, it must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes damage equal to its Health.

Level 6 Razor Fiend

Characteristics Health +3

Dart Away You can use a triggered action on your turn to hide or retreat.

Shank Once per round, when you attack with a razor, the attack deals 2d6 extra damage.

Level 9 Master Razor Fiend

Characteristics Health +3

Deadly You get 1 boon on any attack rolls you make with razors, and your attacks with razors deal 1d6 extra damage.

Fan of Razors You can use an action to throw three razors at up to three different targets. You make each attack roll with 1 bane.

Serpent Hunter

Hunting sea serpents is a way of life for the seafarers; they provide the most sustenance, the best materials for making weapons and tools, and they provide the seafarers the precious heartstones that fuel their ships and keep them warm in the winter. But, for a seafarer, hunting a serpent goes beyond simply tracking and killing a dangerous beast. Serpent hunters learn to forge mental bonds with sea serpents, bonds that allow them to track the creatures across the seas, to find them and kill them more efficiently. They learn techniques to get close to sea serpents, to climb them and deal devastating strikes, and they learn to endure the great heat that sea serpents give off constantly. Perhaps more importantly for a seafarer walking the path of a Seeker, many of these abilities translate to other types of creatures, making them efficient and deadly hunters on land, too.

When creating a serpent-hunter, answer these questions:

- What was the name of the first serpent you killed?
- Who did you lose during a serpent hunt?
- What preparations do you always make before you face a sea serpent?

Requirement: You must have access to the Adaptation and Sea-Calling trees in order to take this path.

Level 3 Serpent Hunter

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +5, Essence +1

Greater Essence Bond You discover the Adaptation and Sea-Calling Essence trees and gain one power or talent from each. If you've already discovered the either of these trees, choose an additional power or talent from that tree.

Harpooner When you attack with a harpoon — a martial melee weapon with the thrown property — and hit, you can use a triggered action to immediately draw the creature 1d6 yards toward you, if its Size is the same as yours or smaller. If its Size is larger than you, you can use a triggered action to move yourself toward your target 1d6 yards.

Know the Seas When you use your Sailor profession to navigate or find sea creatures in your area, you do so with 1 additional boon.

Level 6 Serpent Hunter

Characteristics Health +5

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Adaptation and Sea-Calling trees.

Serpent Link You can forge a mental link to a creature that allows you to hunt it more effectively. Though serpent-hunters primarily use this link to hunt sea serpents, the only requirement is that the creature not be human. You can forge a **link** to a creature you can see as an action; if you consume a piece of the creature — a bit of flesh, some powdered bone, an eye, etc. — you can forge this link without having to see the creature. Once the link is forged, you can take an action to know the direction — as the crow flies — that the target lies, though not the distance to the target. You can do this regardless of distance, as long as the creature is still on Asunder. Once the target is

within one mile, you immediately know. When the target is within long range, you can use an action to pinpoint its exact location. This knowledge pierces barriers and obstacles and sees through attempts to hide, disguise, or become invisible.

The link is two-way; the target of your link gains all the same benefits you do, though most animals and monsters don't have the intelligence to use an action to activate the link. The target does know when you're within one mile, though, and can also pinpoint you while you're within long range, if it has the wit to do so.

While the link is active, if either of you deal damage to the other, that damage is increased by 1d6.

The link remains in place until you use this talent again to forge a link with a different creature, or until you or the target die. If you use this talent again before you or the target die, you take 1 Strain.

Climb Prey When you enter the space of a creature with a Size larger than yours, you can attempt to climb it as an action; if you move into the target's space with the triggered action granted by Harpooner, you can automatically attempt to climb the target as part of that triggered action. To do so, make an Agility attack against the target's Strength or Agility (Keeper's choice). If you fail, you fall prone in a space the target can reach. If you succeed, you climb onto the target, placing yourself in an advantageous situation. While you're on the target, you must use a triggered action each turn to remain on the target; if you don't, you fall. You also get 2 boons to any melee attacks you make against the target while you're climbing it, and you deal 1d6 extra damage. The target can use an action on its turn to try to throw you off. If it does so, it makes a Strength or Agility roll (Keeper's choice) against your Strength or Agility (your choice). If it succeeds, it throws you 1d6 yards in a direction of its choice, which counts as falling. If you used Harpooner to initiate your climb onto the creature, you get 1 boon on any attack or challenge rolls you make to climb the target, and it gets 1 bane on any attack or challenge rolls it makes to dislodge you.

Level 9 Master Serpent Hunter

Characteristics Health +5, Essence +1

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Adaptation and Sea-Calling trees.

Slay Serpent When you attack a creature with a Size larger than yours, you deal 1d6 extra damage.

Inured to Heat Because of your frequent proximity to sea serpents, you are resistant to the heat they produce. You take half damage from fire or heat.

Shadow

Sky City politics can be a dangerous business. The Great Game is always in effect and, according to the rules of the Game, anything's legal as long as you're not caught doing it. Eventually, after enough agents were caught and enough blame was cast around, it became clear that there was a need for neutral agents who excelled at escaping notice, and at escaping blame when they were caught. An industry grew up around this need, the Society of Shadows, and its members became indispensable to those who play the Great Game. Eventually the Society branched out beyond Sky City, and now shadows can be found anywhere in the world, plying their trade in secret.

When creating a shadow, answer these questions:

- What was the first crime you got away with?
- What happened the last time you were caught?
- What's your favorite identity to assume?

Level 3 Shadow

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +3

Languages and Professions You can speak one additional language or add one criminal profession.

Many Faces You have a number of alternate identities equal to your Intellect bonus (minimum 1), and you can alter your appearance to assume one of these identities as an action. How you achieve this act is largely up to you; it may be a slight use of your Essence, a change in demeanor or countenance, or a quick application of a disguise. Detail each identity, including gender, nationality, general appearance, and wealth level. The identity must be the same Size as you. Your facial features, mannerisms, and general body type change to match the identity you've created, though your clothing and possessions remain unchanged. The effect lasts until you use this talent again, or until you revert to your normal appearance.

Disguise Expertise If you have a disguise kit, you can use an action to expend a use from the kit to don a disguise.

Shadow Talent Choose a shadow talent from the ones described below.

Level 6 Shadow

Characteristics Health +3, Perception +1

Shadow Talent Choose a shadow talent from the ones described below.

Melt Away When you become slowed, immobilized, or grabbed, you can use a triggered action to shed the affliction or end the grab and move up to half your Speed without provoking free attacks.

Level 9 Master Shadow

Characteristics Health +3

Shadow Talent Choose a shadow talent from the ones described below.

Forgetfulness You can use an action to make an Intellect attack against the Will of a creature within short range. If you succeed, the target loses track of you for 1 round, making you invisible to that target. If you remain hidden from the target for at least 1 minute more, the target forgets it ever encountered you.

Shadow Talents

Essence Bond Increase your Essence by 1. Then, make two choices: discover one Essence tree you have access to or learn one power for each.

Light Steps You make challenge rolls to sneak with 2 boons.

Lock-Picking If you have lock picks, you can use an action to open one lock you can reach. If the Keeper calls for a challenge roll, you make it with 1 boon.

Pilfer You can use a triggered action to steal an item you can hold in one hand, provided it's within your reach. You do so without anyone's knowledge, even if it's on a person's body.

Poison-Making You can use an action and an alchemist's kit to create a dose of poison. You must spend at least 1 minute concentrating, during which time you use the kit and special ingredients worth 5 pearls. At the end of this time, you create one dose of poison (see **Chapter 8**). The poison retains potency until you complete a rest.

Shadow Meld While you are in a lit area, you are treated as if you were in an area of shadows.

Wall-Crawling You ignore the effects of difficult terrain when climbing, and you make challenge rolls to climb with 1 boon.

Sky-Dancer

The Sky-Dancers of Sky City are among the most graceful and deadly martial artists in the world. While every culture on Asunder practices some form of martial art, no martial art is quite like the one practiced by the Sky-Dancers. These individuals make use of their ability to control and shift gravity, allowing for impossible leaps, quick reversals of momentum, graceful aerobatics, and deadly strikes. The most feared Sky-Dancers make use not just of Sky-Dancing techniques, but also of their ability to control gravity around others and around objects. The ability to stop someone in their tracks or wield a massive sword with deft agility is an oft-admired quality of these graceful fighters.

When creating a Sky-Dancer, answer these questions:

- Who taught you to dance the skies?
- Who is your greatest rival?
- What scar from a duel do you carry to this day?

Requirement: You must have access to the Gravity Manipulation and Sky-Dancing trees in order to take this path.

Level 3 Sky-Dancer

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +4, Essence +1, Speed +1

Languages and Professions You gain one martial profession.

Greater Essence Bond You discover the Gravity Manipulation and Sky-Dancing Essence trees and gain one power or talent from each. If you've already discovered the either of these trees, choose an additional power or talent from that tree.

Dance the Skies You learn the *sky dance* Essence power. If you already know this power, you can use it one additional time.

Level 6 Sky-Dancer

Characteristics Health +4

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Gravity Manipulation and Sky-Dancing trees.

Reactive Step When you're attacked, you can use a triggered action to use the *sky dance* power. If your increased Defense would cause the triggering attack to miss, you can move up to half your Speed without triggering free attacks. If this movement places you within reach of your attacker, you can immediately make a melee weapon attack against your attacker.

Level 9 Master Sky-Dancer

Characteristics Health +4, Essence +1

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from the Gravity Manipulation and Sky-Dancing trees.

Leaf on the Wind While you're under the effect of the *sky dance* power, you get 1 boon on all melee weapon attack rolls, and enemies suffer 1 bane to attack you with weapons.

Storm Point Bodyguard

The wealthy and prosperous need people to protect them, and everyone knows the world over that the best bodyguards are found in Storm Point. The Protector's Academy trains people physically, toughening their bodies and sharpening their reflexes, making them deadly combatants and powerful obstacles. They train people mentally, teaching them to recognize threats, analyze terrain, identify choke points and escape routes. They train people emotionally for the responsibility of protecting another's life with your own, preparing you for the possibility that you might need to give up your life to ensure someone else's survival. Storm Point bodyguards command a high premium from their clients, but they live up to their code and they protect their wards better than anyone else in the world.

When creating a Storm Point bodyguard, answer these questions:

- What made you decide to become a bodyguard?
- Who was your best teacher at the Protector's Academy?
- Who was the first person you ever protected, and why don't you protect them anymore?

Level 3 Storm Point Bodyguard

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +8

Languages and Professions Add one military profession.

Ward Each time you complete a rest, choose one creature you can see; that creature is your **ward**. Whenever your ward is within your reach, attacks against them get 1 bane. This effect lasts until you use this talent again.

Interpose When your ward is attacked, you can use a triggered action to move up to your Speed. If you end your movement within reach of your ward, you can make yourself the target of the attack.

Find Client When you enter a civilized area, you can find a client willing to pay you for your services. Doing so requires a few hours of work. Your client is an NPC under the Keeper's control, has 10 in all attributes, 10 Health, 10 Defense, and is a non-combatant. The Keeper specifies the terms of your contract, which will typically involve getting your client somewhere safely or guarding them during a specific event. If you agree, your client pays you either a lump sum of 1 sapphire (for a short contract) or 1 pearl per day (for a long contract), provided they're happy with you throughout the contract. If you anger you client, or if your client dies, you get no further pay.

Level 6 Storm Point Bodyguard

Characteristics Health +6, Speed +2

Constant Vigilance You cannot be surprised. In addition, you get 2 boons on any challenge rolls you make to detect ambushes, traps, or poisons.

Rugged Your healing rate equals your Health divided by 3.

Better Rates When you have a client, you may charge double.

Level 9 Master Storm Point Bodyguard

Characteristics Health +8

Payback If your ward takes damage from an attack, you get 1 boon on any attack rolls you make against the attacker for 1 round, and you deal 1d6 extra damage if you hit.

Never Stop If you are incapacitated as a result of using Interpose, you instead remain conscious and heal damage equal to your healing rate. Once you've used this talent, you can't use it again until after you've completed a rest.

Wanderer

Wanderers drift from place to place, never belonging in anywhere but always fitting in for a time. Those who wander the lands of Asunder pick up a variety of skills and languages, becoming jacks of many trades. They also learn to survive in the inhospitable wilderness of the world, to live off the land, and to find safe passage from place to place. Some say that wanderers become so attuned to the world of Asunder that they're able to adopt any persona they want, to fit in anywhere for a brief time, and even to tap into the collective memory of the world in order to draw on the knowledge they need. The wanderers of the world, for their part, are silent on these matters.

When creating a wanderer, answer these questions:

- Where was the last place you felt you belonged?
- Why don't you belong there anymore?
- What keeps you from settling in any one place for long?

Level 3 Wanderer

Attributes Increase two by 1

Characteristics Health +6

Languages and Professions You can speak another language *and* add a profession.

Adaptable When you complete a rest, increase one of your attributes by 1. This increase lasts until you use this talent again.

Self-Sufficient When you complete a rest, you can always find enough food and water to sustain you for the next 24 hours, regardless of where you are. In addition, you get 1 boon on any challenge rolls you make to find or create shelter.

Level 6 Wanderer

Characteristics Health +4

Languages and Professions You can speak another language or add a profession.

Blend You can easily assume the mannerisms and mien of the local populace, making you nearly indistinguishable from those around you. Provided you're among a crowd of people (at least 20), you can attempt to hide, even if you're being observed. You don't need to be heavily obscured or to have three-quarters cover. You remain hidden until you use an action or a triggered action, after which you must wait at least 1 minute before you use this talent again.

While you're hidden, people you talk to cannot remember details about you 1 minute after the conversation ends and totally forget having spoken to you 1 hour after the conversation ends.

Finally, during the first round of any combat in which you are hidden, you make attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon. If you take a fast action during this round, you can use an action and move.

Level 9 Master Wanderer

Characteristics Health +5

Languages and Professions You can speak another language or add a profession.

Collective Memory You can, for brief periods of time, bend your Essence to tap into the collective memory of the world. You have a number of **memory points** equal to your group's level. When you make an attack roll or challenge roll, you can spend 1 memory point to make the roll with 2 boons. Whenever you roll two 6s on one roll of boon dice, you gain 1 memory point, up to your maximum. You replenish your memory points when you complete a rest.

Master Paths

When your group reaches level 7, you choose a master path from this chapter, or you may choose a second expert path. See **Chapter 6** for more information on what happens when you choose a second expert path.

Master paths represent a narrowing of focus, a specialization that brings with it incredible power. The paths presented here are divided into two broad categories: paths of power and paths of experience. Paths of power represent a focus on improving one's Essence bond, pushing it beyond the bounds of what's normally possible. Paths of experience represent the results of training and discipline, and in some cases a study of Asunder's more esoteric secrets. You gain benefits from your master path upon acquiring it at level 7, and again at level 10.

Master Path Requirements

Some master paths have requirements that you must meet in order to take that expert path. In most cases, these requirements are having discovered a particular Essence tree, because those paths represent a deepening connection to that specific Essence tree. If you don't meet the requirements for a master path, you cannot take that master path.

Master Benefits

Just like your Origin, novice path, and expert path, your master path grants you attribute boosts, characteristic boosts, and talents. Follow the instructions in the path you choose and record your new features on your character sheet, just like with a novice or expert path.

Master Story Development

When you choose a master path, answer these three questions:

- How did you learn the secrets of your master path, or gain its power?
- What did you have to sacrifice to get here?
- What do you know now, that you wish you'd known earlier in your career?

Paths of Power

Avatar of Chaos

Chittering One

Evolved One

Gestalt Master

Green Man

Light-Chosen

Matriarch

Packmaster

Sea King

Skinwalker

Swarm Lord

Symbiont

Unkillable

Paths of Experience

Ascendant Master
Bone Agent
Bone Dreadnaught
Demon-Blooded
Dread Pirate
Faceless One
Green Commander
Guerrilla
House Agent
Merchant Prince
Mnemonicist
Outrider
Soultaker
Veteran
War Marshal
Wyvern Knight

Choose a Quest

When a Seeker becomes a master, his purpose in life becomes crystal clear. No longer seeking to learn what his purpose is, a master Seeker embarks on a quest to do some specific thing, come hell or high water. Write your quest down with your professions; when you're taking actions directly related to your quest, it can grant you boons just like a profession can, and it can even allow you to succeed automatically in some cases. Here are some sample quests; roll randomly, choose one, or make up your own.

Sample Quests

- D6 Sample Quests
- 1 Defeat a major enemy
 - 2 Find or destroy a powerful item
 - 3 Reach a legendary place
 - 4 Found or take over an organization
 - 5 Gain a title of nobility
 - 6 Raise an army

Deepening Ties

Choose another member of the group to develop a tie to. This can't be either of the same people you already have a tie to; it must be someone new. This tie works just like the ties described in **Chapter 5**. If there's nobody else to tie yourself to, ignore this section.

Ascendant Master

Some come to their ascension through martial arts or meditation, while others practice asceticism or deep communion with their Essence bond. There are many ways to become an ascended master, but everyone who seeks this path does so because they seek enlightenment, because they seek greater knowledge of the workings of the universe. It just so happens that understanding how the universe works allows you to have a profound effect on your environment.

Level 7 Ascendant Master

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +1, Perception +1, Essence +1

Languages and Professions You can speak another language or add another profession.

Essence Bond Make two choices: for each, either discover one Essence tree you have access to or learn one power from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

First, Understand You can use an action to focus on a task or creature for 1 minute, during which you spend time contemplating the task or creature. You need not be able to see a creature in order to focus on it, nor do you have to be able to see a particular obstacle or part of a task. You do, however, need to have a basic understanding of the task or creature you're contemplating. Once you're done contemplating the task, make an Intellect challenge roll with 1 bane for each of the following questions you want to ask:

- What is this creature's Strength/Agility/Intellect/Will/Perception/Defense/Health?
- How can I get this creature to _____?
- What consequences will I suffer for failure?
- What rewards will I reap for success?
- What am I overlooking?

If your Intellect challenge roll succeeds, the Keeper will answer each question truthfully. If you fail, you learn nothing. If you act directly on the information you receive within the next 1 hour, any attack or challenge rolls you make to do so get 1 boon.

Level 10 Ascendant Master

Characteristics Health +3

Essence Bond Make two choices: for each, either discover one Essence tree you have access to or learn one power from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

Then, Do Once you've successfully contemplated a task or creature with First, Understand, you can easily overcome it in one of the following ways.

- Automatically succeed on a single attack roll against the creature.
- Automatically succeed on a single challenge roll to complete the task.
- Make a weapon attack against the creature. On a success, if the creature has Health 50 or lower, it takes damage equal to its Health. If it doesn't, it instead takes 4d6 extra damage.

You can use this talent one time per point of Intellect bonus you have. When you complete a rest, you replenish your uses of this talent.

Avatar of Chaos

Few who harness the power of Chaos live longer than a year or two. Of those who do, fewer still manage to control the Chaos long enough to gain true power. Those who manage to do so, however, are beings to be feared. Barely human anymore, these beings are living manifestations of Chaos, pieces of the God-Machine with a semblance of a body and a driving spirit and sentience.

Requirement You must have discovered the Chaos Essence tree, and you must have at least one power from it.

Level 7 Avatar of Chaos

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1

Chaos Bond Gain one Chaos power or talent.

Skittering Form When you use a Chaos power, you can choose to allow your body to become partially out of phase with reality. If you do, you take half damage from all weapon attacks, you don't take damage from falling, and you can move through any opening that would allow the passage of air. However, you deal half damage with all weapon attacks, and you have a -10 penalty to Health. This effect lasts until you use another Chaos power, at which point you can make the choice again.

Level 10 Avatar of Chaos

Characteristics Health +2

Chaos Bond Gain one Chaos power or talent.

Living Chaos Your body is so saturated with Chaos that, when you're incapacitated, you die and explode exactly as if your Discord was 9 or higher. However, if your Discord is 15 or lower, your body reforms in 4 hours in a random location within 1 mile of where you died. You have damage equal to half your Health, and you're fatigued for 1 hour after you reform. If your Discord is 16 or higher, you stay dead as normal. You ignore the entry in the "Discord Effects" table in **Chapter 3** for having Discord 17 or higher.

Bone Agent

The Agents are the elite scouts, archers, ambushers, and assassins of the Bone Army. They're lightly-armored, efficient killers who excel at sneaking behind enemy lines or operating in hostile territory for long periods of time. Squads of Agents are often sent ahead of the Bone Army's main force to learn more about the enemy, sabotage specific strategic locations, assassinate key figures, and otherwise soften the enemy up for a frontal attack.

Requirement You must have the Bone recruit expert path.

Level 7 Bone Agent

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +3, Speed +1, Perception +1

Languages and Professions You add a martial, criminal, or wilderness profession.

Concealed Armor You've made modifications to your personal armor that make it light and concealable, easy to wear underneath clothes. Reduce the Defense value of your personal armor to 15, but it counts as light armor and, if someone searches you to see if you're wearing armor, they do so with 1 bane.

Disguise Expertise If you have a disguise kit, you can use an action to expend a use from the kit to don a disguise.

Saboteur You get 2 boons on any attack rolls or challenge rolls you make to sabotage equipment or structures.

Level 10 Bone Agent

Characteristics Health +5

Assassin You can use an action on your turn to choose a creature within long range from which you are hidden. Make a Perception challenge roll. On a success, you know where best to attack the target for 1 minute. Until the effect ends, when you attack the target, you make your attack roll with 1 boon and the attack deals 2d6 damage.

Bone Dreadnaught

Every army has shock troops, and the Dreadnaughts are the shock troops of the Bone Army. Hugely powerful, heavily armored, and enormously frightening, Bone Dreadnaughts excel at punching through the front lines, laying waste to lesser troops, and spreading fear. A well-placed unit of Dreadnaughts can break an enemy unit's morale and end the fight before it begins.

Requirement You must have the Bone recruit expert path.

Level 7 Bone Dreadnaught

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +5, Speed +2

Dread Armor You've modified your armor to be more durable and deadly. You have +1 to Defense while you wear your personal armor. Further, you have spikes all over your armor that allow you to deal 2d6 extra damage whenever you charge.

Sow Terror When you incapacitate a creature, creatures you choose within short range must each succeed on a Will challenge roll or be frightened for 1 minute.

Level 10 Bone Dreadnaught

Characteristics Health +6

Carnage You can use an action to sweep your personal heavy weapon around you in a lethal arc. Choose any number of target creatures within 1 yard of you. A target with Health 20 or less takes damage equal to its Health.

Chittering One

There are insect-weavers who become so closely attuned to insects that they start to look like them, to take on insectoid aspects. These chittering ones are often ostracized from polite society in New Gaia, and many people in other parts of the world also look at them askance, but they gain abilities that make them consummate survivors, spies, and combatants.

Requirement You must have discovered the Insect Meld Essence tree.

Level 7 Chittering One

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +1, Essence +1, Perception +1, Defense +1

Essence Bond Gain one Insect Meld power or talent.

Insectile Form You graft insectile body parts onto yourself, granting yourself various abilities. Choose two abilities from the following list:

- Carapace: Health+4, Defense +1
- Legs: You can move through spaces occupied by other creatures, and you can move across all forms of difficult terrain at full speed, even when climbing or swimming.
- Mandibles: You gain a natural weapon that deals 2d6 damage.
- Wings: You can leap three times your normal jumping distance. When you take damage from landing after a fall, you can use a triggered action to make an Agility challenge roll. On a success, you reduce the damage from the fall by the total of your roll. If you reduce the damage to 0, you land on your feet.
- Eyes and Antennae: Perception +1. You gain shadowsight, and you cannot be surprised as long as you're conscious.

Your insectile body parts carry with them a disadvantage, however: people are often uncomfortable around you. Any social attack rolls you make to charm, seduce, or otherwise interact with people suffer 1 bane. This does not apply to attempts to intimidate, or to interactions with other insect-weavers.

You have the ability to grow these body parts very quickly, and you can attach and detach them, given enough time. When you complete a rest, you can reconfigure your body, replacing old insect body parts with new ones. If you choose to do so, take 1 Strain. You can replace any of your insect body parts with different ones; you take 1d6 damage for each body part you replace.

Level 10 Chittering One

Characteristics Health +1

Essence Bond Gain one Insect Meld power or talent.

Insect Graft You can graft insectile body parts onto creatures other than yourself, provided they're willing to undergo the process. When you complete a rest, choose a willing creature you can touch that also just completed a rest. That creature gains one of the benefits listed under Insectile Form. However, this process is painful and stressful to the human body, and causes the target to take 1 Strain and 1d6 damage. The target also suffers the same bane on social rolls that you do from Insectile Form. The target's

insectile body part lasts until they complete a rest, at which point they can choose to let it wither and fall off, or take 1 Strain to keep it.

Improved Form Each time you complete a rest, choose one of your benefits from insectile form; it improves as follows:

- **Carapace:** You take half damage from weapon attacks, but you suffer a -2 penalty to Speed.
- **Legs:** You never have to make challenge rolls to climb, and you can climb on horizontal surfaces.
- **Mandibles:** When you successfully attack a creature with your mandibles, you can use a triggered action to deal 2d6 extra damage from poison. A target that takes the extra damage must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or become poisoned for 1 minute. While poisoned this way, it is also dazed and slowed. If the target is already poisoned this way, it takes 3d6 extra damage. At the end of each round, a target poisoned this way must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1d6 extra damage. You can also use an action to secrete your poison into food or drink. Any target that consumes the poisoned substance is affected as above, though they do not take damage from your bite. Once you deal damage with or secrete your poison into food or drink, you cannot use the talent again until after you complete a rest, or until you take 1 Strain to replenish your poison.
- **Wings:** You can fly at your Speed, but you must end your movement on solid ground.
- **Eyes and Antennae:** Creatures cannot hide from you while they're within short range, even if they're invisible. Creatures that attack you with melee attacks do so with 1 bane.

Demon-Blooded

There are many paths to becoming demon-blooded. Some become corrupted by demons, making deals with them in exchange for power. Others drink demon blood, eventually taking on demonic aspects through prolonged exposure. Still others survive battles with powerful demons only to find that they've been irrevocably changed by the experience. There are even stories of people who are born demon-blooded, though it often takes time for the effects to manifest themselves. Whatever the origin, demon-blooded is a powerful individual who is terrifying when angry, and gets angry easily.

Level 7 Demon-Blooded

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +6, Defense +2

Demonic Countenance Your demonic blood gives off an aura of unwholesomeness that makes people uncomfortable. While this grants you 1 boon on any attack rolls you make to intimidate, it also causes people not to trust you. You make all other social attack and challenge rolls with 2 banes.

Savage Attacker You add your Strength modifier to the damage rolls of attacks you make using melee weapons.

Demonic Rage When a creature you can see deals damage to you, you automatically fly into a rage against that creature. The target becomes marked for 1 minute, until it becomes incapacitated, or until you become unconscious. Until the effect ends, you cannot use this talent again, but you have all of the following benefits and drawbacks:

- You make attack rolls against targets you've marked with 1 boon, and your attacks deal 1d6 extra damage against them.
- Targets you have marked are frightened while within your reach.
- If a target you marked moves away from you, you can use a triggered action to move up to your Speed toward the target.
- You make attack rolls against creatures other than targets you've marked with 2 banes.
- If you go an entire turn without attacking a target you've marked, you take 1d6 damage as your demon blood boils inside your veins.

Demonic Hate You gain the following additional fatal flaw: "I sometimes fly into a demonic rage when provoked or insulted." If you choose to escalate the situation with this fatal flaw, you automatically use Demonic Rage against the creature who provoked or insulted you.

Level 10 Demon-Blooded

Characteristics Health +6

Seethe When your Demonic Rage would normally be activated, you can choose to delay it for 1 round. Each time you do, you take 1d6 damage as your demonic blood boils inside of you, and you make Intellect and Will attack and challenge rolls with 1 bane for 1 round. However, eventually you must release your rage and, when you finally do, it is terrible to behold. You gain the following additional benefits when your Demonic Rage activates:

- You get a +3 bonus to Health for each round you delayed your Demonic Rage.

- You make attack rolls against targets you've marked with 1 additional boon for every round you delayed your Demonic Rage.
- For every round you delayed your Demonic Rage, you deal 1d6 extra damage on the first successful attack roll you make against a target you've marked.

Dread Pirate

Pirates are common on the high seas of Asunder, but only the most feared pirates are given the title of Dread Pirate. These individuals are living legends, people whose reputation for piracy and violence is so great that they rarely have to fight the crews of ships they plunder; the ships simply surrender when they see the Dread Pirate's flag bearing down on them.

Requirement You must have the captain expert path.

Level 7 Dread Pirate

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +4

Languages and Professions You can speak an additional language or add a martial or criminal profession.

Black Flag Your reputation is such that you're a living legend. When you encounter an NPC, you can use an action to declare that they've heard of you, and are afraid of you. If you do so, you get the following benefits and drawbacks for 1 minute, until the target is incapacitated, or until you become unconscious:

- The target is frightened.
- You get 1 boon on any social attack rolls you make to intimidate or coerce the target.
- You get 1 boon on any weapon attack rolls you make against the target.
- You cannot be charmed, compelled, or frightened by the target.
- The target is hostile to you. The Keeper is the arbiter of what, precisely, this means.

Wanted When you enter a settlement, roll 1d6. If your roll is odd, you are wanted in that settlement and there's a reward on your head. Authority figures, such as guards and soldiers, will recognize you and try to arrest you on sight. If you resist, they'll try to kill you.

Dread Crew Your first mate becomes difficulty 250 and your second and third mates become difficulty 50.

Level 10 Dread Pirate

Characteristics Health +4

Legendary Ship Your ship becomes a **huge ship**, **large living ship**, or **large skyship**, as described in **Chapter 8**.

One with the Ship You and your crew get 1 boon on all attack and challenge rolls while on your ship.

Evolved One

Among the seafarers, there are those few who spur their mutations to such a degree that they become something more than human. They catalyze mutations within themselves, and they even gain the ability to spur powerful, short-term mutations that make them terrifying creatures indeed. Seafarers hold these beings in reverence, seeing their mastery over their own bodies as a sign of the divine.

Requirement You must have discovered the Adaptation Essence tree.

Level 7 Evolved One

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +5, Essence +1

Essence Bond Gain one Adaptation power or talent.

Deadly Weapons You gain the Natural Weapon mutation in the Sea entry in **Chapter 2**. If you already have that mutation, your natural weapon does 1d6 extra damage.

Aggressive Mutation You can use an action to catalyze an aggressive mutation in your body, making you larger, more powerful, and far more deadly. Your mutation lasts for 1 minute, but you can extend the duration by taking 1 Strain per minute you add to the duration. You gain the following benefits while aggressively mutated:

- You gain a +10 bonus to Health.
- You cannot be charmed, compelled, or frightened.
- Your natural weapons deal 1d6 extra damage.
- You can breathe water as easily as air, you can swim at your Speed, and you never have to make challenge rolls to swim.
- You are immune to the poisoned affliction, and you take half damage from poison.

When this effect ends, you must get a success on a Strength roll or take 1 Strain.

Level 10 Evolved One

Characteristics Health +5

Essence Bond Gain one Adaptation power or talent.

Catalyze Adaptation When you enter your state of aggressive mutation, you can use a triggered action to use an Adaptation power that you know. Using a power in this way doesn't expend a use of that power, and it only lasts for as long as your aggressive mutation does. You cannot use the "Mutate" entry in the power you use as part of this talent.

Faceless One

There are people in the world who simply escape notice. Your eyes roll off them, you don't remember what they look like, and you can't quite recall ever having met them. These faceless ones make superlative infiltrators and impostors; they're able to blend in with any crowd, look like anyone, and even mimic specific people for a time. Most don't even believe they exist, though legends continue to persist. That's just the way the faceless ones like it.

Level 7 Faceless One

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +3

Languages and Professions You can speak another language or add a criminal profession.

Escape Notice You can use a triggered action on your turn to become utterly forgettable. Make an Intellect challenge roll; if you succeed, you're effectively hidden until you use an action or a triggered action, after which you must wait 1 minute until you use this talent again. You can use this ability while you're being observed, or even while you're in conversation with someone.

While you're hidden in this way, people can't remember details about you even if they speak to you; you're just another piece of background scenery. If you're in a restricted area of some sort, any time someone interacts with you, you must make an Intellect attack roll against their Intellect, as a triggered action. If you succeed, the effect remains in place, the target assumes you're where you're supposed to be, doing what you're supposed to be doing, and the target moves along to leave you to your devices. If you fail, the effect immediately ends.

Level 10 Faceless One

Characteristics Health +3

Steal Face You can use an action to alter your appearance to match that of a target living or dead creature you can see within short range. The target must be the same Size as you and must have a humanoid shape of flesh and blood. Your body changes so you look like the target, though your clothing and possessions remain unchanged. The effect lasts until you use this talent again, or until you use Escape Notice. If you become incapacitated, you immediately revert to your normal appearance.

Gestalt Master

Battle meditation is an important component of Black Isle life. It is the technique that allows demon hunters to face demons one-on-one, and its power comes from one person assuming the abilities of many. Those who perfect this technique are rare, but they become powerful individuals indeed, able to become one with nearly any group, to enter the minds of others, and to work in tandem with their group like nobody else.

Requirement You must have discovered the Battle Meditation Essence tree.

Level 7 Gestalt Master

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +4

Essence Bond Gain one Battle Meditation power or talent.

Group Consciousness You gain the *group mind* power. If you already have this power, you can use it 1 additional time. You can use *group mind* as a triggered action on your turn.

Strength of Many While under the effects of *group mind*, you make all attack rolls with 1 boon, and all Perception challenge rolls with 1 boon.

Level 10 Gestalt Master

Characteristics Health +4

Essence Bond Gain one Battle Meditation power or talent.

Open Mind You can focus on one creature within short range as a triggered action on your turn. When you do, spend 1 use of *group mind*. You gain one of the following benefits:

- You predict its movements and intent. You gain 1 boon on the next attack roll you make against it, or it gains 1 bane on the next attack roll it makes against you. This effect lasts for 1 turn.
- You read its surface thoughts. Ask the Keeper one question that the target would know the answer to; the Keeper will answer honestly, within the bounds of the target's knowledge.
- You detect lies. For the next 1 minute, whenever the creature lies, you know.

Transfer Power While under the effects of *group mind*, you can use an action to make someone else within your group mind the recipient of all group mind-based effects you're currently under. You lose those benefits. This effect lasts until you use this talent again, or until *group mind*'s duration elapses.

Green Commander

Nobody quite knows what the Green Army is or what its purpose is. To simple observation, it's clearly a mobile force of the walking dead, corpses animated by a strange fungus. The Army attacks settlements sometimes, but other times it leaves them alone. Sometimes the dead will take a side in a battle, other times they simply attack everyone. But what people can agree with is that there *is* a purpose to their actions. The reason people assume this is because the Green Army is often directed by living people, people who somehow have the power to control the dead, to command them. These Green Commanders are rare, and many believe they are chosen by Gaia herself, to enact her inscrutable will upon Asunder.

Level 7 Green Commander

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +1, Essence +1

Army of Green You learn the *army of green* power, which is described below.

Army of Green Green Commander Utility 1

Area A circle on the ground with a 10 yard radius within short range, which must have one or more corpses in it

You release fungal spores from your body, infecting and animating the corpses in the area. Make a Will challenge roll; if you're in an area of significant vegetation, you make this roll with 2 boons. If you succeed, you animate each corpse in the area, summoning a **green conscript** for each, up to a maximum total equal to the result of your Will challenge roll. These conscripts remain until you complete a rest, or until they are destroyed.

The conscripts are under your control. You can issue a command to a single green conscript at a time as a triggered action, choosing that conscripts next action. You can also issue a command to all of your conscripts at once as an action, though the command must be simple: attack, retreat, stay, etc.

If you use this power while you still have green conscripts under your control, make another Will roll. If you succeed, you can summon more green conscripts, up to your new result minus the number of conscripts you currently have under your control

Level 10 Green Commander

Characteristics Health +1

Green Champion You learn the *green champion* power, which is described below.

Green Champion Green Commander Utility 1

Area A cube of space, 2 yards on a side, originating from a point within medium range and resting on a solid surface that contains at least one corpse

You summon a single compelled **green brute** or **green stalker**. It remains until you complete a rest, or until it is destroyed.

Green Man

The Green Men are a secretive, reclusive organization of male weavers in New Gaia. Though not in direct opposition to the Council of Mothers, the Green Men choose to live apart from weaver society, out in the jungles, forming their own hidden settlements. There they learn special Essence techniques that allow them to create and live within huge, living suits of bark and leaves. They do this in order to become one with the jungle; each Green Man's ultimate goal is to become a tree, and so to live within the jungle for ever. Some say that Grandfather Ash was once a Green Man, though others believe that the organization simply seeks to emulate him. Green Men are rarely seen about, but they do go on pilgrimages to learn more of the world and experience Gaia more thoroughly.

Requirement You must have discovered the Plant Form Essence tree.

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Green Women

Though the Green Men accept only men into their membership, there's nothing stopping a woman from learning their techniques if she's determined enough. If you decide you want to be a Green Woman, simply come up with a reason for your knowledge of the Green Mens' techniques.

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Level 7 Green Man

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +1, Essence +1

Essence Bond Gain one Plant Form power or talent.

Wooden Skin You create a construct of wood and bark and leaves called a **wooden skin**. Your wooden skin is 12 feet tall and weighs 2,000 pounds, and you can have only one at a time.

If your wooden skin is destroyed, you can grow a new one to replace it. Doing so requires you to focus your Essence and shape plant matter for at least eight hours. At the end of this time, you have a new wooden skin.

Your wooden skin cannot act on its own; without you to pilot it, it is inert. However, you can enter your wooden skin as an action. While you're inside your wooden skin, you use its Defense, Health, Strength, and Agility scores as your own, you move at its Speed, and you can use its attack options in place of your own. You also have access to its immunities.

Your wooden skin must spend at least 4 hours every day rooted to the ground, gathering water and nourishment from it, and it needs at least 4 hours of sunlight every day. For every day that it's deprived of these requirements, it takes a cumulative -10 penalty to Health. The entire penalty disappears if it fulfills this requirement again.

Wooden Skin

Size 2 construct

Perception —

Defense 14 **Health** 50

Strength 16 (+6), **Agility** 8 (-2), **Intellect** —, **Will** —

Speed 4

Immune damage from disease and poison; asleep, fatigued, poisoned

Attack Options

Branch (melee) +6 (2d6)

Replenish You can use an action to root your wooden skin to the ground, immobilizing it for 1 minute. Once 1 minute has elapsed, your wooden skin heals 2d6 damage. Once you've used this talent, you cannot do so again until you've completed a rest.

Root You can root your wooden skin to the ground for 4 hours as an action. After 4 hours have elapsed, your wooden skin heals all damage and loses all afflictions it's suffering from.

Level 10 Green Man

Characteristics Health +1

Essence Bond Gain one Plant Form power or talent.

Mighty Oak Your wooden skin grows strong and hardy. Increase its Health by 25 and its Defense by 2. Its branch attack deals 1d6 extra damage.

Guerrilla

Hit-and-run tactics, ambushes, and other disruptive tactics are key to the success of small groups who want to take on larger groups. In Sky City, the people who live on the Rebel Islands frequently have to defend their homes from the more numerous, better-equipped noble houses. On New Gaia, the Red Alliance often makes use of guerrilla tactics. On the mainland, the Bone Army employs guerrillas, as do virtually every other mercenary company on Asunder. The list goes on and on; wherever there's a small force taking on a larger force, guerrillas even the odds.

Level 7 Guerrilla

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +3, Speed +2

Mobility When you take a fast turn, you can use an action and move. Your movement, on any turn, never triggers free attacks.

Harrier If you move at least half your Speed before you make an attack, your attack deals 1d6 extra damage.

Camouflage When you are obscured or covered in any way, you can use an action to hide. You cannot use this talent to hide from people who are currently observing you.

Level 10 Guerrilla

Characteristics Health +3

Ambush Tactics Your weapon attacks deal 1d6 extra damage to surprised targets and to targets from which you are hidden.

Trapmaker You can use an action and spend time concentrating to create traps that you can place in the environment. You must also spend raw materials, represented by a monetary value. The amount of time and money you spend determines what kinds of traps you can make, as listed below.

Guerrilla Trap-Making

Time	Cost	Trap Level
1 minute	1 pearl	Novice or below
1 hour	1 ruby	Expert
4 hours	1 diamond	Master

Work with the Keeper to determine the exact nature of your trap; use the traps in **Chapter XX** as a guide.

House Agent

The noble houses of Sky City employ agents whose job it is to protect their interests. These agents have official ties to the house, lands and titles, and other privileges, but they get these benefits for the services they provide. These services include rooting out spies and thieves, conducting surveillance, interrogation and, when necessary, assassination. House agents are feared by those who live on the Rebel Islands, as well as by any who try to hide things from the nobility.

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Agents around the World

Though this master path assumes a connection with a noble house of Sky City, any number of large, wealthy organizations around the world could employ agents like this. With a little reframing and reskinning, your house agent could be an agent for a mercantile consortium, a spy-catcher for the Council of Mothers, a counter-espionage agent for the Bone Army, or any number of other, similar types of agents.

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Level 7 House Agent

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +3, Perception +2

Languages and Professions You can speak an additional language or add a martial or criminal profession.

Mark Target You can use an action or triggered action on your turn to **mark** a creature within medium range that you can see. Your mark lasts until you use this talent again, until your target is incapacitated, or until you become unconscious. When you have a target marked, you gain the following benefits:

- While within short range, creatures you have marked cannot hide from you, even if they're invisible.
- While within your reach, creatures you have marked are frightened.
- You get 2 boons on social attack rolls you make against creatures you have marked.
- You get 1 boon on challenge rolls you make to find or track creatures you have marked.
- You know whenever a creature you have marked speaks a deliberate lie while in your presence.
- If a creature you have marked moves away from you, you can use a triggered action to move up to half your Speed toward it.

House Ties You're an official agent of a noble house, which grants you the following benefits:

- You get 1 boon on social attack rolls you make against members of your house, or people whom your house holds authority over.
- Once per session, you can call on your house for a favor. Work with the Keeper to determine the exact nature of the favor, but access to a restricted area, escaping legal consequences, or requisitioning an expensive piece of equipment are all appropriate favors.

These benefits aren't free. You're a representative of your house and, in public, you're expected to comport yourself appropriately and represent the house well. If you bring

disgrace or trouble to your house's door, it may disavow you, stripping you of this talent until you find a way to make amends.

Level 10 House Agent

Characteristics Health +3

Vigilance You can have up to three creatures marked at once with your Mark Target talent. Each target requires you to use an action or triggered action to mark it.

Twist the Knife When you get a success on an attack roll using a weapon against a creature you have marked, you can use a triggered action to either deal the weapon's maximum damage, or cause the creature to be impaired for 1 minute.

Light-Chosen

A very few people who are touched by, and survive, Pure Light become so changed by it that they can hardly be said to be human anymore. Those who believe that Pure Light is divine point to these rare individuals as proof: living prophets of the Pure Light, evidence that, although the gods have left Asunder, divinity still remains and wishes to guide humanity. The Light-Chosen, themselves, are silent on the subject; they're too busy perceiving all of reality to weigh in on matters of religion.

Requirement You must have access to the Chaos Essence tree.

Level 7 Light-Chosen

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +2, Perception +2

Languages and Professions You can speak an additional language or add a profession.

Threads of Light You can perceive the inner workings of the universe and read the threads of light that bind all things. What's more, you can manipulate these threads to alter fate. Each time you complete a rest, you receive three threads. For each, roll a d20 and note the result. The threads last until you expend them or you complete another rest.

When a creature you can see makes an attack roll or challenge roll, you can swap out the number rolled with a number from one of your threads by expending it. Once you expend the thread, cross off the number.

While you have at least one thread, you have darksight, you cannot be surprised while conscious, and creatures within short range of you cannot hide from you, even if they're invisible.

Level 10 Light-Chosen

Characteristics Health +2

Cut Thread Once per round, you can use an action and expend a thread to target a living creature you can see. Make a Will attack against the target's Strength. If you succeed, the target takes damage equal to its Health. Once you use this talent, you are blinded for 1 hour. If you're already blinded, you take 3d6 damage.

Strengthen Thread Once per round, you can use an action and expend a thread to target a living creature you can see. That creature heals all of its damage. Once you use this talent, you are blinded for 1 hour. If you're already blinded, you take 3d6 damage.

Matriarch

Though the Council of Mothers is the ruling body of New Gaian society, there are many matriarchs who act as political leaders, spiritual advisers, thought leaders, and pioneers of technology. These matriarchs are almost universally women, though occasionally a man shows sufficient skill that he is accepted into their ranks (a male matriarch is still called a matriarch). Where the Council of Mothers rule New Gaia, the matriarchs run it. They handle many of the day-to-day tasks that the Council doesn't have time to deal with, and they ensure that the Council is free to focus on truly important things. Even outside of New Gaia, the authority of the matriarchs is recognized and respected.

Requirement You must have discovered the Plant Control Essence tree.

Level 7 Matriarch

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +3, Essence +1

Languages and Professions You can speak another language or add one academic profession.

Essence Bond Gain one Plant Control power or talent.

Authority When a creature gets a success on an attack roll against you, you can use a triggered action to cow the creature. If the creature can hear you and understand what you say, make a Will attack roll against the triggering creature's Will. On a success, you turn the triggering creature's success into a failure, and the triggering creature becomes charmed for 1 minute or until it's attacked. On a failure, the triggering creature becomes immune to this talent until it completes a rest.

Deference You get 2 boons on any social attack rolls you make against weavers and other citizens of New Gaia, provided you outrank them. This applies to the Will attack you make when using Authority, too.

Level 10 Matriarch

Characteristics Health +3

Essence Bond Gain one Plant Control power or talent.

Awaken Plant You learn the *awaken plant* power, which is described below.

Awaken Plant Matriarch Utility 1

Target One Size 2 or smaller plant within short range

Duration 1 minute

The target becomes a compelled **construct** of its size for the duration. Unless the plant is already ambulatory, its Speed is 0. The plant gains sentience and the ability to speak one language of your choice for the duration.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can instead choose to take 1d6 Strain when you extend the duration; if you do, the effect becomes permanent.

Merchant Prince

Piracy is all well and good, but the real money is in legitimate enterprise. At least, for the lucky few who excel in such matters. Merchant princes are those lucky few, the ones who turn their ship and crew into a money-making enterprise, whose reputation and fame guarantee them a seat at the table, an influential ear to listen, or safe passage in a pinch.

Requirement You must have the captain expert path.

Level 7 Merchant Prince

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +2

Languages and Professions You can speak an additional language or add a profession.

Golden Smile Your reputation is such that you're a living legend. When you encounter an NPC, you can use an action to declare that they've heard of you, and want to parlay with you. If you do so, you get the following benefits and drawbacks for 1 minute, until the target is incapacitated, or until you become unconscious:

- The target is charmed.
- You get 1 boon on any social attack rolls you make to bargain with the target.
- You cannot be charmed, compelled, or frightened by the target.
- The target wants something from you, and will try to get it. The Keeper determines what this means, specifically, and what the consequences are of the target not getting what they want.

Filthy Lucre When you use A Ship's Business, you make 5 additional pearls of profit, regardless of your roll.

Bodyguards You have a pair of burly bodyguards who accompany you wherever you go, unless you wish otherwise. These bodyguards have difficulty up to 50 and are compelled by you. If your body guards die, you can replace them for 1 ruby each.

Level 10 Merchant Prince

Characteristics Health +2

Fleet You have a fleet of five ships, in addition to your own ship. Each of these ships is a ship of the same type as your ship, but one size smaller. Each ship also has the following crew:

- A **captain**, with a difficulty up to 50.
- A **first mate**, **second mate**, and **third mate**, each with a difficulty up to 10.
- 20 **crewmen**, each with a difficulty of 1.

These crew members behave in exactly the same way that your own crew does, but they do not benefit from Unfailing Loyalty. You can issue them commands through your captains, and you can order ships in your fleet to escort and protect your own ship. You can also order them to conduct normal business. For each ship you order to conduct normal business, you make 5 additional pearls of profit every time you use A Ship's Business, regardless of your roll.

Mnemonicist

Theories abound in the academic institutions of Hyden about the nature of Essence. Most agree that it is the manifestation of the divine spark, imbued into the first humans by the gods before they left. It's also a universally accepted fact that Essence grants people abilities based on where they were born. But there are many subtleties and vagaries in the study of Essence, many points of contention and disagreement. One such point is Memory Theory: the assertion that the collective memories of all humans are bound together in the Essence of Gaia, and that each human's memories are added to the World Memory when that human dies and their Essence is absorbed by Gaia. Whether or not this theory is true, it *is* a fact that there are individuals who seem capable of tapping into memories that aren't theirs.

Level 7 Mnemonicist

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from an Essence tree you've discovered, or you discover one Essence tree you have access to.

Dream Memories When you complete a rest, make two choices. For each, choose a profession you don't have or a language you don't speak. If you choose a profession, you now have that profession. If you choose a language, you can speak, read, and write it. These choices last until you use this talent again.

Tap Memory As an action, you can tap the collective memory for the knowledge you seek. Make an Intellect challenge roll with a number of banes that you choose. On a success, you can ask the Keeper one question for every bane you added to your Intellect challenge roll; the Keeper will answer your questions truthfully, though she's limited by human knowledge and understanding. On a failure, you are flooded with memories you can't filter or block out, causing you to be dazed for 1 minute. At the end of this duration, whether you succeed or fail, you are impaired for 1 hour.

Level 10 Mnemonicist

Characteristics Health +2

Essence Bond You learn one power or talent from an Essence tree you've discovered, or you discover one Essence tree you have access to.

Tap Essence You learn the *tap Essence* power, which is described below.

Tap Essence Mnemonicist Utility 1

Choose either an Essence power or Essence talent from any Essence tree, regardless of whether or not you've discovered it or have access to it. It must be a rank 0 or rank 1 power, if it's a power. If you choose a power, you immediately use that power; this is considered to be part of the same action as using *tap Essence*. If you choose a talent, you are considered to have that talent for 1 minute, though this power does not give you access to any Origin talents and cannot grant you bondmates or other companions. If you emulate a power, *tap Essence* does not fulfill prerequisites such as being part of a group mind or having a bondmate.

Trade Memory When you use this power, you can choose to expend the use of a different power you know as well. If you do, you can emulate an Essence power with a

rank less than or equal to the rank of the power you expend. For example, if you expend a use of *tap Essence* and a use of a rank 4 power, you can emulate a rank 4 power from a different Essence tree.

Outrider

Many communities, armies, and Seeker groups use outriders: individuals trained to ride quickly, fight from the back of a mount, harry enemies, and report threats back to the group. Outriders are more than individuals who know how to ride and fight, though; an outrider develops a special bond with their mount, one deeper than most. The two fight as one, flying fast and striking quickly, getting back to the group without delay, and becoming a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield.

Requirement You must have a mount or bondmate you can ride.

Level 7 Outrider

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +3, Perception +2

Languages and Professions You speak another language or add a martial or wilderness profession.

Singular Steed If you have a mount or suitable bondmate, it becomes your **steed**. You can communicate complex ideas to your steed with words or body language. If its Intellect is below 10, it becomes 10. It cannot speak to you, but it can communicate complex ideas to you.

While you're not riding your steed, it acts under the Keeper's control but is friendly to you, and tends to act in either its own or your best interests. You can use an action or triggered action to issue your steed a command; when you do this, you choose its next action and the target for that action.

While you're riding on your steed, it doesn't get its own actions. You use its Speed instead of your own, and you have access to any traits that affect its movement, such as climber, swimmer, or flier. You direct your steed and, when you attack, you can choose to use its attack options instead of your own. Creatures can choose to target either you or your steed. If a creature attacks your steed, you can use a triggered action to redirect the triggering attack to yourself; you can do the reverse if you are the target.

If your steed is incapacitated, you can spend 1 hour tending to it, provided you do so within 1 minute. If you do, you nurse it back to health, and it becomes conscious again with damage equal to half its Health. If your steed dies, you can get a new one according to the rules of your mount or bondmate.

Your steed gains the following benefits while you ride it:

- Health +10
- Speed +5
- Defense +2

Like The Wind While you're riding your steed, if you take a fast turn, you can move up to half its speed and also attack.

Mounted Awareness While you're riding your steed, both you and your steed make Perception challenge rolls with 1 boon.

Level 10 Outrider

Characteristics Health +3

Ghost on the Breeze While you're mounted, you can use a triggered action on your turn to hide if you're obscured or covered in any way. If you succeed, your steed is also hidden.

Spur to Violence While you're mounted, you can use a triggered action on your turn to cause your steed to attack.

Packmaster

On Pacari, packmasters are those rare individuals who gain such mastery over their bond with the animals of the world that those animals see packmasters as one of them. They can move freely among animals, speak to them, command them, call on their aid, and lead them into battle. Packmasters often become the leaders of Pacari tribes, allowing those tribes to hunt more effectively, defend their lands, and live in harmony with the animals in their territories.

Requirement You must have discovered the Beast Bond Essence tree.

Level 7 Packmaster

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +4, Essence +1

Essence Bond Gain one Beast Bond power or talent.

Mind of the Beast You can speak with all animals, regardless of species.

Alpha As an action, you can make a Will attack roll against the Will of all animals within medium range. Make a single attack roll and compare it to each animal's Will. Each animal you hit is charmed by you for 1 hour. An animal you fail to charm is immune to your use of this talent until it completes a rest. You can have a total number of animals charmed by this talent equal to your party's level; animals in excess of this number are not charmed.

Level 10 Packmaster

Characteristics Health +4

Essence Bond Gain one Beast Bond power or talent.

Leader of the Pack Add your Will modifier (minimum 1) to the number of animals you can have charmed at once. In addition, any animals charmed by you make attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon.

Sea King

Among the seafarers, Sea Kings (or Sea Queens) are rare individuals of immense power. Their mastery over the depths, the creatures that live there, and the waters themselves are the stuff of legend, and many doubt that these beings even exist. Indeed, if they do, they keep themselves isolated, rarely venturing onto land, preferring instead to live out on their ships, to commune with the creatures of the deep, and to take what they like from the ships they pillage.

Requirement You must have discovered the Sea-Calling Essence tree.

Level 7 Sea King

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +4, Essence +1

Essence Bond Gain one Sea-Calling power or talent.

Ocean's Voice You can speak with all animals, monsters, and other creatures that have the swimmer trait, regardless of species.

Command the Sea As an action, you can make a Will attack against a creature within short range that has the swimmer trait, or against a living ship within short range. If you succeed, the creature is compelled for 1 minute. If you fail, it becomes immune to your use of this ability until it completes a rest, and it gets 1 boon on any attack rolls it makes against you.

Level 10 Sea King

Characteristics Health +4

Essence Bond Gain one Sea-calling power or talent.

Serpent Bond You develop an Essence bond to a **sea serpent** with a Size no larger than 2.

Your bonded serpent is friendly to you and acts on your behalf. Your serpent acts on its own in combat, but you can use an action or a triggered action to issue it a command, allowing you to choose its next action. You can ride your serpent; while you do so, it doesn't get its own actions. You move at its Speed and can make use of its swimmer trait, and you can breathe underwater while you're riding your serpent. You can also use your serpent's attack options instead of your own.

If your bonded serpent dies, you take 1d6 Strain. You can bond with a new serpent by spending 48 hours meditating near or on the sea, after which time a new serpent answers your call.

Skinwalker

The Pacari speak of skinwalkers in hushed tones. These beings shed their bodies as easily as they shed clothes, changing from one form to another, altering their appearance, and preying on whom they like. Most skinwalkers live out in the wilderness, away from civilization, pursuing a deeper understanding of their own physical forms. A few, though, linger around civilized areas, giving themselves over to their predatory instincts, hunting their fellow humans for food and sport. These skinwalkers are feared, but also respected for their power and their deep knowledge.

Requirement You must have discovered the Beast Aspect Essence tree.

Level 7 Skinwalker

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +4, Essence +1

Essence Bond Gain one Beast Aspect power or talent.

Skinwalk As an action, you can assume the form of an animal of your Size. You keep your Health, Intellect, and Will traits, but you use your new form's other attributes, characteristics, and attack options as if they were your own. You cannot use Essence powers while in this form, and you cannot speak, except to other members of your new species. If you wish, you can take 1 Strain when you enter this form in order to gain one of the following traits for the duration: flier, climber, or swimmer. You remain in this form until you use an action to revert to your normal form, use this talent again to assume a different form, or become unconscious.

Predator's Instincts You gain the following additional fatal flaw: "I see other humans as prey." When you escalate the situation with this fatal flaw, you get 1 boon on all attack rolls and challenge rolls you make against humans for 1 minute.

Level 10 Skinwalker

Characteristics Health +4

Essence Bond Gain one Beast Aspect power or talent.

Greater Skinwalking While in a form other than your natural form, you gain the following benefits:

- You get a +10 bonus to Health.
- You get 1 boon on attack and challenge rolls.
- You deal 1d6 extra damage with your natural weapons.
- You gain one of the following traits: flier, climber, swimmer, or poisonous.

In addition, when you use Skinwalk, you can alter your body to be partially bestial rather than changing completely into a beast. To do so, take 1 Strain; you gain all the advantages of Skinwalk and Greater Skinwalk, except that you can speak to humans normally, you can use Essence powers, and you have a humanoid shape that allows you to make use of weapons, tools, clothes, and other things designed for humans.

Soultaker

Soultakers walk the world, harvesting Essence for Gaia and adding to her power. They are servants of the Wellspring, a mystical force that holds Essence for Gaia, and that the soultakers can tap when they need to. Most people don't know these beings exist, or what their purpose is, and the harvesting of a being's Essence is a difficult thing to observe without extremely specialized equipment and preparation. But the soultakers do exist, and they take the Essence from those they kill for purposes only Gaia knows.

Level 7 Soultaker

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +4, Essence +1

Essence Bond You discover an Essence tree you have access to, or you gain one power or talent from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

Drink Soul As an action, you can drain the Essence and memory of a helpless or unconscious human you can reach. Make a Will attack against the target's Will. If you succeed, the target takes damage equal to its Health, and you choose one profession, language, or power that the target possessed. If you choose a profession, you have that profession for 1 hour. If you choose a language, you can speak that language for 1 hour. If you choose a power, you must have a high enough Essence to use learn that power, but you need not have access to the Essence tree it's a part of. You gain a single use of that power, which you must use within 1 hour. This talent doesn't emulate prerequisites for powers you steal in this way, such as being part of a group mind or having a bondmate. If your Will attack fails, the target takes 2d6 damage and you can't use this talent on the target again until you complete a rest.

Fade the Mind As an action, you can touch a human you can reach and disrupt its Essence. Make a Will attack against the target's Will. If you succeed, you deal 1d6 damage and the target must succeed on a Will challenge roll or be fatigued for 1 minute. If the target is already fatigued, it becomes dazed for 1 minute. If it's already dazed, it becomes unconscious for 1 minute.

Level 10 Soultaker

Characteristics Health +4

Essence Bond You discover an Essence tree you have access to, or you gain one power or talent from an Essence tree you've already discovered.

Strengthen Essence When you use Drink Soul on someone, you can choose to forgo the normal benefit in order to gain 1 use of an Essence power you know, up to your maximum number of uses for that power.

Consume Soul When you use Drink Soul on someone, you can choose to forgo the normal benefit in order to heal damage equal to your healing rate.

Efficient Disruption When you use Disrupt Essence on someone, you get 1 boon on your attack roll, and the target makes its Will challenge roll with 1 bane.

Swarm Lord

When weavers express fear about their insect-bonded cousins, it's the Swarm Lords they're talking about. There was a time, long ago, when there was open warfare between plant-weavers and insect-weavers. The war ended when the plant-weavers subjugated their kin, but before that happened the self-styled Swarm Lords laid waste to swaths of New Gaia, directing their insects to fill the air, consume plant life, and strip flesh from bone. Now, the weavers of New Gaia keep a close eye on the insect-bonded, watching for signs that the Swarm Lords are returning.

Requirement You must have discovered the Insect Control Essence tree.

Level 7 Swarm Lord

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +2, Essence +1, Perception +1

Essence Bond Gain one Insect Control power or talent.

Strip Flesh As an action, you can spend 1 use of any Insect Control power to attack a creature or organic object within medium range with your Cloud of Flies. An object is consumed by your Cloud of Flies. Against a creature, make a Will attack roll with 1 boon per rank of the power you expend to make the attack, versus the target's Agility. If you hit, you deal 2d6 damage, plus 1d6 extra damage per rank of the power you expend to make the attack. If you miss, the target takes half damage. If the target is incapacitated by this talent, it dies immediately, its flesh stripped from its bones. Your Cloud of Flies must be active in order to use this talent.

Summon Insects You learn the *summon insects* power, which is described below.

Summon Insects Swarm Lord Utility 0

As a triggered action, you summon your Cloud of Flies back to you. If your Cloud of Flies is already present, it fills all space around you out to short range for 1 minute. For the duration, any creatures you choose get 1 bane on attack and challenge rolls for the duration.

Mastery You can expend a use of any Insect Control power instead of expending a use of *summon insects* when you use this power.

Level 10 Swarm Lord

Characteristics Health +2

Essence Bond Gain one Insect Control power or talent.

Swath of Destruction You learn the *swath of destruction* power, which is described below.

Swath of Destruction Swarm Lord Attack 2

Area A circle with a radius of 10 yards, centered on a point you can reach

Duration 1 minute

You summon a great plague of insects to consume everything in the area, empowering and maddening them. For the duration, each creature you choose in the area takes 2d6 damage each round and is impaired while in the area. Plant life is utterly consumed by

the insects, as is any food or other inanimate organic matter. At the end of the duration, or if you leave the area, all insects in the area die, including your Cloud of Flies.

Mastery You can expend a use of any Insect Control power of rank 2 or higher instead of expending a use of *swath of destruction* when you use this power.

Symbiont

Living gear is an important part of life in Asunder. People use it to accomplish tasks they otherwise couldn't, or to make difficult tasks routine; they use living gear for war, for exploration, for medical treatment; and most modern conveniences come from pieces of living gear. But, despite this dependence on symbiotic organisms, there remains one persistent problem with such items: they drain the user over time. A single person can't bond to more than a few pieces of living gear without risking their health, and even being safe about using living gear carries risks. What's more, living gear withers and dies when not bonded to someone, making it difficult to keep more than a few pieces at a time. Some people seek to transcend these limitations, though, entering into true symbiotic relationships with their gear.

Requirement You must have discovered the Symbiosis Essence tree.

Level 7 Symbiont

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +5, Essence +1

Essence Bond Gain one Symbiosis power or talent.

Symbiotic Attunement You have **symbiont** points equal to your Strength or Will modifier, your choice (minimum 1). You regain all spent symbiont points when you complete a rest, and you can use symbiont points to do the following:

- You can bond with a piece of living gear as an action by spending 1 symbiont point.
- When living gear would cause you to take Strain, you can spend 1 symbiont point instead.
- When living gear would cause you to take damage, you can spend 1 symbiont point to reduce that damage by 3 (minimum 0).
- When a piece of living gear would cause you to make an attack or challenge roll, you can spend any number of symbiont points, gaining 1 boon on the triggering roll per point spent. This does not require an action.

Merge You can spend 1 symbiont point and use an action to spend 1 minute in concentration with a piece of living gear you're bonded to. At the end of that period, your body merges with that piece of living gear. While merged with a piece of living gear, it does not count against the number of pieces of living gear you can be bonded to at once, it does not require you to take any damage upon completing a rest, it cannot be taken from you or removed from your person in any way, and you can choose to take it entirely into your body as an action, hiding it completely (you can reverse this as an action as well). This effect lasts until you use this talent again. You can only merge with one piece of living gear at a time.

Level 10 Symbiont

Characteristics Health +5

Essence Bond Gain one Symbiosis power or talent.

Consume Symbiont You can consume one piece of living gear you've merged with as an action. Consuming a piece of living gear destroys it, and grants you one of the following benefits.

- You regain all of your spent symbiont points.
- Choose Strength or Agility; you gain 2 boons on all attack and challenge rolls with the chosen attribute for 1 minute.
- You heal damage equal to your healing rate.
- You treat the result of a fate roll as if you'd rolled a 6 (this use of Consume doesn't require an action).

Deep Connection You get 1 boon on any attack or challenge rolls you make with living gear you've merged with, and such gear deals 1d6 extra damage when it deals damage.

Store Symbiont You can spend 1 symbiont point and use an action to take one piece of consumable living gear into your body. When you use a power that the target grants you, you do so with a triggered action. You can only store one consumable piece of living gear at a time.

Unkillable

Black Isle legend has it that those who pursue relentless self-improvement, those who tap into their Essence to strengthen their bodies far beyond mortal capabilities, become relentless, unstoppable beings who cannot die. Whether or not this is true is anyone's guess, but there are certainly Black Islers with such mastery over their bodies that they can shrug off blows that would kill anyone else outright, that they no longer feel the effects of poison and disease, that they can walk through fire, and that age no longer seems to effect them.

Requirement You must have discovered the Body Conditioning Essence tree.

Level 7 Unkillable

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +8

Essence Bond Gain one Body Conditioning power or talent.

Implacable Stance As an action or triggered action on your turn, you can enter an implacable stance. While in this stance, you gain the following benefits and drawbacks:

- You take half damage from weapons, fire, and cold.
- You cannot be charmed, compelled, or frightened.
- You cannot fall prone against your will.
- You cannot be moved against your will.
- You make Strength attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon.
- You make Agility attack and challenge rolls with 1 bane.
- You are slowed.

This effect lasts until you end the stance as an action or triggered action on your turn, or until you become unconscious. When the effect ends, you are fatigued for 1 hour.

Level 10 Unkillable

Characteristics Health +8

Essence Bond Gain one Body Conditioning power or talent.

Inviolable Self You gain the following additional benefits while in your Implacable Stance.

- You are immune to the blinded, deafened, diseased, fatigued, and poisoned conditions.
- You take no damage from poison or disease.
- You no longer have to eat or breathe.
- If you take damage equal to your Health from a single source, it doesn't kill you outright (though you're still incapacitated and still must make fate rolls).

Veteran

Asunder is no stranger to war, and soldiers exist everywhere. What separates a soldier from a veteran is one thing: experience. Veterans have the wisdom of having lived a life of war and battle, and having survived it. They know how to survive a battle, how to strike to best effect, and how to exploit an enemy's weaknesses. But their knowledge goes beyond that: a true veteran knows the flow of combat, is familiar with the dance of war, and knows how to turn one moment's victory into the next.

Level 7 Veteran

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +6

Languages and Professions You add a martial profession.

Words of Wisdom You can use an action and spend 1 minute talking to up to 10 creatures, preparing them for a battle to come. Provided the creatures can hear and understand you, at the end of this time each creature gets 1 boon on all weapon attack rolls and deals 1d6 extra damage on weapon attacks for 1 hour. Once a creature has benefited from this talent, it cannot do so again until it completes a rest.

Flow of Battle When you incapacitate a creature, you get 1 **flow** point. You can have a maximum number of flow points equal to your party's level. When you make a weapon attack, you can spend any number of flow points; each flow point either grants you 1 boon on the attack roll or causes the attack to deal 1d6 extra damage on a success. When a creature attacks you, you can use a triggered action to spend any number of flow points; for each flow point you spend, the creature gets 1 bane on the triggering attack. If you become unconscious or go 1 minute without attacking a creature, your flow points reset to 0.

Call Out As an action, you can call out a creature that can see and hear you within medium range. The creature remains called out for 1 minute, until you end this effect as a triggered action, until the target is incapacitated, until you become unconscious, or until you use this talent again. While you have a target called out, you make attack rolls against other creatures with 1 bane. However, each time you attack the target or it attacks you, you get 1 flow.

Level 10 Veteran

Characteristics Health +6

Old Soldiers Never Die When you take damage that would incapacitate you, you can use a triggered action to spend any number of flow points. Reduce the damage by 1d6 for every flow point you spend.

Advice in Practice When a creature you can see benefiting from your Words of Wisdom makes an attack, you can use a triggered action to spend any number of flow points. For each flow point you spend, the triggering attack gets 1 boon or deals 1d6 extra damage. The creature must be able to hear and understand you in order to gain this benefit.

Dance of Swords You have a bonus to your Defense equal to your current flow point total.

War Marshal

When someone is a lifelong student of battle, of war and tactics and leadership, that person becomes a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield. These individuals are capable combatants on their own, but a war marshal is at her peak when she has a team — or an army — to lead. War marshals fight smart, and they do so by understanding their opponents so they can exploit their weaknesses, and by understanding their allies so they can capitalize on their strengths.

Level 7 War Marshal

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +5

Languages and Professions You add a martial profession.

Battlefield Tactics You have a number of **tactics** points equal to your Intellect bonus (minimum 1). When an ally you can see makes an attack against the Strength, Agility, or Defense of a creature you can see, and that ally can hear you, you can use a triggered action to spend 1 or more tactics points by shouting advice to your ally. For each tactics point you spend, you grant the ally one of the following benefits:

- Your ally makes the attack with 2 boons.
- Your ally deals 2d6 extra damage on the attack.
- If the creature attacks your ally within 1 round, it does so with 2 banes.

You can choose the same option more than once for a single attack; doing so increases the number of boons or banes by 1, or increases the damage dealt by 1d6. You can use an action to recover 1 tactics point, provided there are enemies within your line of sight that you can observe, up to your maximum.

Fortify You can fortify an area in preparation for an enemy. To do so, you must spend at least an hour preparing a circle of ground with a 50 yard radius, though you may spend more time doing so. For each hour you spend fortifying the area, add one of the following features to the area:

- **Cover:** Add 10 square yards of obstacles that provide half cover to anyone hiding behind them. If you spend 2 square yards to cover 1 square yard of space, the obstacle provides full cover.
- **Hiding Spots:** Create hiding spots for up to five creatures. A creature hiding in a hiding spot gets 2 boons on challenge rolls made to hide.
- **Difficult Terrain:** Cover 15 square yards with difficult terrain.
- **Create a Starting, Novice, or Expert-level trap** in the area.

You can also enlist the help of your allies. For every two allies you enlist, you can either increase the area's radius by 20 yards, or you can add an additional feature to the area.

Level 10 War Marshal

Characteristics Health +5

Know Thy Enemy If you're able to observe a group of enemies for 1 minute, whenever you enter combat with that group of enemies in the next 24 hours, you do so with twice as many tactics points as usual. At the Keeper's discretion, similar groups of enemies can confer the same benefit. For example, if you observe a hunting group of Naga from a particular tribe, then later fight a different hunting group from the same tribe, the Keeper could award you this benefit for both groups.

Eye for Weakness You can use an action or a triggered action on your turn to get back 1 tactic point. If you wish, you can use both your action and triggered action on the same slow turn; if you do, you regain 3 tactics points.

Wyvern Knight

The Wyvern Knights of Sky City are the elite soldiers of the nobility. Highly trained in martial combat, the Wyvern Knights also have the advantage of air superiority. Only the Wyvern Knights are allowed to ride Sky City's few trained wyverns, and each Knight imprints herself on a wyvern shortly after hatching. This develops a strong emotional attachment, a parental relationship that grants both Knight and wyvern an unparalleled unity. Wyverns are fierce creatures, independent hunters more powerful than most creatures on Asunder, and each Wyvern Knight has her wyvern's unfailing loyalty and respect.

Level 7 Wyvern Knight

Attributes Increase three by 1

Characteristics Health +4

Languages and Professions You add a martial profession.

Wyvern Companion You have a trained **wyvern** that accepts you — and only you — as its rider. The wyvern is highly trained and smarter than most, with an Intellect of 10. You can communicate basic ideas to your wyvern with words and body language, and it's capable of understanding complex commands.

While you're not riding your wyvern, it is compelled by you.

While you're riding on your wyvern, it doesn't get its own actions. You use its Speed instead of your own, and you have access to its flier trait. You direct your wyvern and, when you attack, you can choose to use its attack options instead of your own. Creatures can choose to target either you or your wyvern. If a creature attacks your wyvern, you can use a triggered action to redirect the triggering attack to yourself; you can do the reverse if you are the target.

If your wyvern is incapacitated, you can spend 1 hour tending to it, provided you do so within 1 minute. If you do, you nurse it back to health, and it becomes conscious again with damage equal to half its Health. If your wyvern dies, you must travel back to the Academy in Sky City and imprint upon a new wyvern, a process that takes several months. At the end of this time, you have a new wyvern.

While you're riding it, your wyvern gets the following benefits

- +10 bonus to Health
- +2 bonus to Defense
- +2 bonus to Speed
- 1 boon on all attack rolls

Call Wyvern You have a special whistle you can use to call your wyvern. When you use it as an action, your wyvern will fly directly to you if it is within 1 mile, conscious, and able to hear and fly.

Knight's Code You are a member of the Wyvern Knights of Sky City, a knightly order sworn to serve the nobility and uphold law and justice. You follow the Knight's Code, which acts as an additional fatal flaw. While you are taking actions in pursuit of the Code, you make attack and challenge rolls with 1 boon. The Code follows:

I am a Wyvern Knight, the shield of law.
Sky City is my home, and I shall defend it with my life.
I swear, by my life, to defend those who cannot defend themselves,
To right wrongs as I see them occur,
To overturn injustice and tyranny,
And to represent Sky City with dignity and respect,
Always.

Level 10 Wyevern Knight

Characteristics Health +4

Tend Mount You can use an action and spend 1 minute tending to your mount. At the end of this time, make an Intellect challenge roll with any number of banes. On a success, your mount heals 1d6 damage for each bane you added to the Intellect challenge roll.

Swooping Charge When you take a fast turn while riding your wyvern, you can both move and take an action. If you move at least half your wyvern's Speed before making an attack, your attack deals 1d6 extra damage and the target is grabbed by your wyvern if its Size is smaller than your wyvern's Size.

Equipment

Bone clubs, crystal daggers, suits of armor, and all the other tools a character might need to survive in a world without metal and gods are described in this chapter. The major notable exceptions are **living gear** and **chaos gear**, which are described in **Chapter 9**.

A World Without Metal

There is no metal of any kind in Asunder; the gods took it all when they left to fight their far-away war. This lack of a building material so common on other worlds has left the people of Asunder to find other things to make tools, weapons, armor, farming equipment, currency, and myriad other things out of. What this means for you, as a Seeker, is that you'll describe things a little differently. Your buttons aren't made of copper, they're made of bone. You don't carry silver coins in your purse, you carry small gems that are used for currency. Your sword isn't made of steel, it's fashioned out of a hardened crystal.

For the most part, this is color; you don't have to worry about your equipment being exceptionally brittle because it's *all* exceptionally brittle. Your sword is made of bone, which isn't as hard as steel, but your opponent's armor or shield is only wood or hardened leaves.

It's also an opportunity to be creative. The people of Asunder have had to adapt to a world without metal, and they've done so in a variety of unique ways. Building materials are different in different parts of Asunder, so your tools, weapons, and armor will look different from those of people from other parts of the world. The rules reflect this; instead of a list of specific weapons and armor, there are general rules for armor and rules for creating your own weapons. This is to encourage you to make things up, to describe interesting, weird pieces of gear, even gear that might be alive in some way. The people of Asunder do, after all, develop symbiotic bonds with creatures that they use as weapons and tools on a regular basis.

Bonding with symbiotic organisms, or using living things as gear, is also a way of life on Asunder. While most of the truly powerful living gear is covered in **Chapter 9**, minor pieces of living gear are common. For example, you might use a harvested spore pod as a waterskin, or your weapon might be the still alive branch of a tree, able to grasp at and rake your foes. Thorn-spitters are a common piece of minor living gear: gas-filled pods that attach to your arm and shoot thorns at your foes upon a mental command. The people of Asunder use thorn-spitters much like our ancestors used crossbows. The **bonded** property for weapons represents this minor living gear nicely; for adventuring gear, clothing, or armor, it's largely a matter of color.

When you're coming up with gear for your Seeker, ask yourself: what does my weapon like like? What's it made out of? How is it unique to the culture I came from? What kind of armor do I wear? How is *that* unique? How does my set of lockpicks look different from my Pacari companion's set? And so on and so forth.

Keepers, feel free to describe gear in a wide array of different styles. People from Asunder use whatever materials they can find that will work, and there are a number of kinds of materials available on Asunder that don't exist in our world. Do the weavers the players face wear thick, rubbery mushroom caps for armor? Are their daggers fashioned from the carapaces of large insects? Are their cloths made of leaves? Use vivid descriptions to drive home just how different Asunder is from our own world, and have fun!

Prices

The people of Asunder use gems as the common currency of the world. These aren't minted into coins or carved to reflect any particular nation; rather, they're measured by size. A gem used as currency is roughly the size of a marble: small enough to carry several in a pouch, but large enough to be worth something. Larger gems can be exponentially more valuable, but sometimes people break these up into smaller pieces when they need quick cash.

There are five gems commonly recognized as currency in Asunder; most other precious stones are rare enough that they aren't used directly to buy things, but are exchanged for numerous, less valuable gemstones. Most people refer to these gems by a colloquial nickname usually tied to their color, but either name in the table below is commonly recognized. Of particular note are pearls, which are often cut into slivers to act as pocket change. The poor deal primarily in slivers, while the middle class tend to deal in pearls and sapphires. The wealthy deal almost exclusively in emeralds, diamonds, and rubies.

Gems by Value

Gem	Nickname	Value
Emerald	Green	2 whites
Diamond	White	5 reds
Ruby	Red	5 blues
Sapphire	Blue	5 bobs
Pearl	Bob	5 slivers
Pearl sliver	Sliver	1 sliver

Other Commodities: Crafts, textiles, base materials, food, livestock, and other such things have nearly universal value, and people often trade them directly. In the city-states of the mainland, banks issue promissory notes that people use as currency, and these notes can be used between city-states. Most folk outside of the city-states don't find much value with paper money, though, and won't accept it in trade. In Sky City, art has tremendous value, and can command a high price; it's somewhat less sought-after in the city-states, and nearly worthless elsewhere unless you can find a collector.

Availability

Availability describes how easy it is to find a particular item. Common (C) items include those things that communities depend on for survival. These items can be found almost

anywhere people live. Uncommon (U) items require specialized training to produce and are thus available only in communities with populations of 1,000 or more. Rare (R) items are made from expensive materials and require skilled craftsmanship and are available in communities with populations of 5,000 or more. Finally, illegal (I) items cannot be bought on the open market; you must find someone willing to deal in such objects on the black market, and such people tend not to live outside of Sky City or the city-states of the mainland.

Carrying Limits

You can reasonably carry or wear a number of items equal to your Strength score by holding them in your hands or strapping them to your body. If you exceed your limit, but no more than twice your Strength score, you become encumbered. While encumbered, you're slowed and you make all Strength and Agility rolls with 1 bane.

Clothing and Accessories: Wearable items such as clothing, necklaces, rings, crowns, and the like count as one item. Elaborate apparel, heavy clothing, and costumes count as two items.

Gems: Every ten loose gems you carry count as one item. Larger gems might count as multiple, smaller gems, at the Keeper's discretion.

Containers: A container and everything it contains counts as a single item. You could, for example, stuff your backpack with adventuring gear. While you keep the stuff in your pack, it counts as one item.

You can fit about 500 gems or a 1-foot cube of items in a sack or backpack, 1,000 gems or a 2-foot cube of items in a wooden box, and 5,000 gems or a 4-foot cube of items in a typical chest. A chest or a lock box are quite heavy and become heavier when loaded up. Such containers count as three items instead of one.

Replacing Equipment

The game assumes you keep your gear in good repair, patching holes in your clothing, keeping your weapons oiled and sharpened, replenishing your stores of food and water with materials you forage during your travels, and recovering your ammunition. No matter how fastidious you are about keeping up with your goods, old items wear out and must be replaced. When you choose an expert path or master path, your old gear that is not living gear or chaos gear wears out and must be replaced.

Living Expenses

In addition to keeping up with armor, weapons, and other equipment, characters must also pay for their living expenses to cover things like housing, food, clothing, and entertainment. Rather than account for each sliver spent, the game abstracts expenses by letting you purchase a lifestyle. Starting characters determine their lifestyles randomly by rolling dice (see **Chapter 2** for details). You remain at that lifestyle for the duration of the adventure. When you finish the adventure, you must buy another lifestyle. The benefits or drawbacks of the new lifestyle last until the end of the next

adventure, at which point you must pay for your living expenses to remain at your current lifestyle, or pay the expenses for a different lifestyle.

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Checking for Maintenance

If it helps remind you to check for things like gear wearing out or living expenses, follow this list, in order, whenever you play a session of *Asunder*.

1. Resolve lifestyle effects from previous adventure.
2. Pay living expenses.
3. Play through the adventure.
4. Level up.
5. If you choose an expert or master path, replace your gear.

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Living Expenses

Lifestyle	Price
Destitute	—
Poor	2 slivers
Getting By	1 pearl
Comfortable	1 sapphire
Wealthy	1 ruby
Rich	1 diamond or more

Lifestyle Descriptions

The following entries describe the most typical examples of the basic lifestyles. They might include other drawbacks and benefits at the Keeper's discretion.

Destitute: You live on the streets or in the wilderness. You struggle to get by, go without shelter and food for days, and have a miserable existence. At the start of the adventure, make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane plus 1 bane for each consecutive adventure you started with this lifestyle. On a failure, you lose one object worth 1 pearl or more of your choice. If you have no objects to lose, you become diseased. At the end of each day, make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a success, you remove the affliction.

Poor: You live in squalid conditions, possibly in a tiny rented room shared with others, and survive on meager stores. At the start of the adventure, make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, you lose one object worth 1 pearl or more. If you have no objects to lose, you instead become diseased as described under destitute.

Getting By: You earn enough to make ends meet. You likely have a rented room or a small hovel in a poorer part of the community.

Comfortable: You live well enough and you have enough to cover all of your living expenses. At the start of the adventure, make an Intellect challenge roll with 1 bane. On a success, you save up 1d6 slivers.

Wealthy: You enjoy many of the finer things in life, having enough wealth to live in fine house, have nice clothes, and in a status that opens doors to the rich and powerful. At the start of the adventure, make an Intellect challenge roll. On a success, you save up 1d6 pearls.

Rich: You live in luxury. You probably have a townhouse or an estate in the country with servants in attendance and every comfort provided. At the start of the adventure, make an Intellect challenge roll. On a success, you save up 2d6 pearls.

Armor

Armor is any clothing or worn gear designed to protect you from weapons or other attacks. It comes in three basic varieties: light, medium, and heavy. That said, armor comes in a dizzying array of forms, from chitinous plates from giant insects to hardened leaves to animal hide to the bones of great beasts. When you choose armor, you decide what form it takes.

Each armor description includes that armor's cost in gems, its availability, a number of examples of what such armor might look like, the Defense that it grants you, any requirements you must meet in order to wear it, and any special rules you are subject to while you wear it.

If you do not meet the requirements to wear a particular type of armor, you suffer 1 bane on all Strength and Agility attack and challenge rolls while wearing it.

Light Armor

Cost: 2 slivers

Availability: Common

Look: leathers, hides, gladiator plates, hardened leaves

Defense: Agility +1

Requirements: None

Special Rules: None

Medium Armor

Cost: 1 pearl

Availability: Uncommon

Look: shaped bark, chitin, bone, hardened leather.

Defense: Agility +3

Requirements: Strength 11 or higher

Special Rules: You make challenge rolls to swim or or move silently with 1 bane

Heavy Armor

Cost: 1 ruby

Availability: Rare

Look: heavy bone, heavy chitin

Defense: 16

Requirements: Strength 13 or higher

Special Rules: -1 Speed, you make challenge rolls to swim or or move silently with 1 bane

Horok-Bone Armor

Cost: 50 emeralds or more

Availability: Illegal, unless you're a Bone Army member

Look: The distinctive armor worn by the Bone Army

Defense: 18

Requirements: Strength 15 or higher

Special Rules: -1 Speed, you make challenge rolls to swim or or move silently with 1 bane

Armor for Larger and Smaller Creatures

Listed armor prices are for creatures of Size 1 and Size 1/2. To determine the price of armor for larger or smaller creatures, multiply the price by the creature's Size. A suit of medium armor for a Size 2 creature would cost 2 pearls, for example.

Putting On and Taking Off Armor

You can put on or take off clothing using an action, but it takes time to put on and take off heavier armor. Light armor takes 1 minute, medium armor 5 minutes, and heavy armor or horok-bone armor 10 minutes. With help, you can put on and take off armor in half the time.

Weapons

There are many kinds of weapons in Asunder, from thorn-spitters to bone whips to short chips of crystal used as throwing knives. When you buy a weapon, choose one of the basic types of weapons below. Each type of weapon has its own statistics and rules, as well as its own cost. You can, however, add **properties** to your weapon at the cost of increased price. You can add as many properties as you like to a weapon and, in some cases, you can even add the same property multiple times. Each time you add a property to a weapon, double its cost. Some properties can only be added to specific types of weapons, and some weapons have built-in properties that don't affect their listed price. There are also certain properties that reduce the value of a weapon, making it cheaper. Each negative property you add cancels out a positive property for the purpose of calculating cost. If you have more negative properties than positive properties, you don't get any additional price reduction.

Melee weapons use Strength for attacks by default, while ranged weapons use Agility; a shield is considered a melee weapon for this purpose. Certain properties can change this.

Of special note is the fact that an unarmed strike is considered a light melee weapon, except that it deals 1 damage rather than 1d3.

Light Melee Weapon

Cost: 1 sliver

Damage: 1d3

Look: Crystal shard, bone tonfa, javelin, club, stone knife, staff

Requirements: None

Properties: Finesse, off-hand

Martial Melee Weapon

Cost: 1 pearl

Damage: 1d6

Look: Bone axe, crystal sword, bone-link whip, spear, polearm

Requirements: Strength 11 or higher

Properties: None

Heavy Melee Weapon

Cost: 1 sapphire

Damage: 2d6

Look: Stone maul, bone greatsword, polearm

Requirements: Strength 13 or higher

Properties: Two-handed, cumbersome

Shield

Cost: 1 pearl

Damage: 1

Look: Bone, chitin, wood, hardened leaves, beast hide

Requirements: Strength 9 or higher

Properties: Defensive +1

Ranged Weapon

Cost: 1 sapphire

Damage: 1d6

Look: Bow, blowgun, dart, thorn-spitter, throwing shard

Requirements: None

Properties: Range (medium)

Properties

Bonded: The weapon is alive, though not a true living weapon. It doesn't count as a living weapon for the purposes of calculating how many living weapons you can be bonded to safely, but you do need to spend 1 hour bonding with it, and you must take 1 damage every time you complete a rest in order to keep the weapon alive. You make attacks with the weapon with 1 boon.

Brittle: The weapon is made of a brittle substance, like bone. When you attack with the weapon, if the total of your attack roll is 0 or less, the weapon breaks, becoming useless.

Cumbersome: When you attack with this weapon, you make the attack roll with 1 bane. This is a negative property.

Deadly: Light melee weapons deal 1d6 damage instead of 1d3. Martial melee weapons and shields deal +2 damage. Heavy melee weapons and ranged weapons deal an extra 1d6 damage.

Defensive +1: You add the number to your Defense while you wield this weapon. You can add this property multiple times; each time you do, it increases the number by 1, to a maximum of +3. You can only add this property to shields and melee weapons.

Finesse: You can make a Strength attack roll or an Agility attack roll for attacks made using this weapon. If the weapon has a Strength requirement, you can use Agility to satisfy it. You can only add this property to light and martial melee weapons.

Glass: Glass melee weapons are extraordinarily sharp and durable, but illegal as a result. Only bladed weapons can be made of glass. A glass weapon deals 1d6 extra damage and anyone who takes damage from it is impaired for 1 round. However, this property counts as two properties for the purposes of calculating costs, and the weapon becomes Illegal.

Range (short, medium, or long): The weapon is a ranged weapon, and this property describes the normal range for the weapon. You can take this property again to make the range long, or you can reduce the range to short in order to treat this property as a negative property. For details on the ranges used in the game, see **Range and Distance** in **Chapter 3**.

Reach +1: You add the listed number to your reach when you attack with the weapon. You can add this property multiple times; each time you do, it increases the number by 1, to a maximum of 3. You can only add this property to melee weapons.

Thrown (short): You can throw the weapon, treating it as a ranged weapon with the listed range. You use Strength for the attack roll, unless the weapon has the finesse property, in which case you can use Agility if you wish. If you take this property a second time, increase the range to medium. You can only add this property to light and martial melee weapons.

Two-Handed: You must use two hands to wield this weapon. This is a negative property.

Weapons for Larger Creatures

Multiply the weapon's price by the creature's Size to determine its price if it was created for a creature of Size 2 or larger. As well, a weapon for a larger creature (including unarmed strikes) deals 1d6 extra damage for each point of Size above 1. If the weapon

normally deals less than 1d6 damage, first increase the damage to 1d6 for Size 2 and then increase the damage by 1d6 for each point of Size the creature is larger than 2.

Tracking Ammunition

Some ranged weapons, like bows or throwing shards, use ammunition that must be recovered. Others, like thorn-spitters, generate their own ammunition. In either case, *Asunder* uses an abstract system to track ammunition for ranged weapons.

You are assumed to have enough ammunition to use your ranged weapon up to five times. After, whenever you attack with a weapon that uses ammunition and the total of your roll is 0 or less, you run out of ammunition for that weapon and you cannot make ranged attacks with the weapon until you replenish your stores.

While in combat, you can use an action to replenish one piece of ammunition, allowing you to fire your ranged weapon once. Outside of combat, you can take 10 minutes to recover spent ammunition or allow your weapon to regenerate its own ammunition. Once you do this, you restore your ranged weapon to the default state of five free shots before you have to worry about running out.

Improvised Weapons

You can also attack with objects you find around you. A broom, a door ripped from its hinges, or a dead foe can all serve when other weapons are not available. For an object to be an improvised weapon, it must be made from a hard material such as wood, stone, or bone. When you attack with an improvised weapon, you make the attack roll with 1 bane and the weapon deals damage based on how you wield it. The Keeper will tell you which attribute to use for your attack.

If you wield the weapon in your off-hand, it deals 1 damage.

If you wield the weapon in your main hand, it deals 1d3 damage.

If you wield the weapon in both hands, it deals 1d6 damage.

Adventuring Gear

Wise Seekers spend some time provisioning themselves and gathering gear they think will serve their purposes while visiting a civilized location. The next several sections provide you with personal gear, clothing, and services you might need.

Personal Gear

The following items are useful to any character making their way in a dangerous world.

Personal Gear

Item	Price	Availability
Adventurer's pack	2 pearls	Common
Backpack	1 pearl	Common

Barrel	2 pearls	Common
Bedroll	1 pearl	Common
Blanket	3 slivers	Common
Box, wooden	3 slivers	Common
Box, bone	1 pearl	Uncommon
Box, ivory	1 sapphire	Rare
Candle	1 sliver	Uncommon
Chest, wooden	4 pearls	Uncommon
Climbing Claws	1 pearl	Uncommon
Cutlery set	1 pearl	Uncommon
Dice or deck of cards	2 slivers	Uncommon
Flask	4 slivers	Common
Grapnel	1 pearl	Uncommon
Lantern, bone	1 sapphire	Uncommon
Lantern, bioluminescent	1 ruby	Uncommon
Manacles	1 pearl	Uncommon
Map	1 sapphire	Uncommon
Matches	1 sliver	Rare
Oil, flask	1 pearl	Common
Pipe	2 slivers	Uncommon
Pipe tobacco	1 sliver+	Common
Pole, 10-foot	1 sliver	Common
Pouch	1 sliver	Common
Pot, cooking	1 sliver	Common
Quiver or ammunition case	1 pearl	Common
Rations (1 week)	1 pearl	Common
Rope, coil (20 yards)	1 pearl	Uncommon
Sack	1 pearl	Common
Spike, large stone	1 pearl	Common
Tent, 2-person	1 pearl	Uncommon
Tinderbox	1 pearl	Common
Torch	3 slivers	Common
Waterskin	4 slivers	Common

Personal Gear Descriptions

Items with special rules are described here.

Adventurer's Pack: This item includes a backpack, bedroll, cutlery set, tinderbox, 3 torches, a coil of rope (20 yards), grapnel, a week of rations, and a waterskin.

Candle: You can use an action to light a candle. A lit candle fills an area with light out to a 1-yard radius centered on its space and remains lit for a maximum of 1 hour.

Lantern, bone: You can use an action to light a lantern that is filled with oil. A lit lantern fills an area with light in a 10-yard radius centered on its space. A lantern filled with an entire flask of oil burns for a maximum of 4 hours. Bone lanterns don't last long, though,

and a bone lantern that is used for 4 hours or more during an adventure must be replaced before the next adventure.

Lantern, bioluminescent: This lantern is filled with bioluminescent fungus that fills an area with light in a 7-yard radius centered on its space. A bioluminescent lantern lasts indefinitely, provided the fungus is cared for. Such lanterns come with shutters for blocking out the light.

Matches: You can strike a match against a solid surface as a minor activity on your turn. The match turns darkness in a 1-yard-radius sphere centered on its space to shadows. It remains lit for a maximum of 1 round.

Oil: You can attack with a flask of oil by throwing it at one creature or object within medium range. Make an Agility attack roll against the target's Agility. On a success, the oil covers the target and it remains covered until it spends 1 minute clearing it away. If a creature or object covered in oil takes damage from fire or lightning, the oil catches fire and deals 1d6 damage to the target. The target takes 1d6 damage at the end of each round for 1d6 rounds. A creature can use an action to extinguish the flames.

Torch: You can use an action to light a torch. A lit torch fills a sphere with a 5-yard radius centered on its space with light. A lit torch burns for a maximum of 1 hour.

Apparel and Accessories

The items here assume standard quality and materials. Basic clothes include whatever people wear in the land where it was purchased. You can describe your clothes in whatever way you like.

Clothing: A set of clothing includes a shirt, trousers or skirt, undergarments, woolen socks, leather shoes, and a belt or sash, or whatever is equivalent in the origin country. Cuts and styles vary from region to region. Materials and quality vary based on price and function. Additional accessories might be included in the price where appropriate. "Armor and Clothing" describes the rules for wearing clothing.

Clothing and Accessories

Item	Price	Availability
Belt	1 pearl	Common
Cap	3 slivers	Common
Cap, fine	1 sapphire	Rare
Cloak	1 pearl	Common
Clothing, basic	1 pearl	Common
Clothing, cold weather	8 slivers	Uncommon
Clothing, courtier's	1 ruby	Rare
Clothing, entertainer's	7 slivers	Uncommon
Clothing, noble's	1 diamond	Rare
Clothing, royal	5 emeralds	Rare
Coat, winter	1 sapphire	Common
Costume, elaborate	1 ruby+	Rare

Costume, simple	1 pearl	Uncommon
Dress, basic	1 pearl	Common
Dress, fancy	1 ruby+	Rare
Gloves, fine	1 pearl	Rare
Gloves, work	1 sliver	Common
Handbag	1 sapphire	Uncommon
Hat, lady's	1 sapphire	Uncommon
Hose, silk	8 slivers	Uncommon
Jacket, light	1 pearl	Common
Jewelry	1 sapphire+	Rare to exotic
Shirt	1 pearl	Common
Shirt, fine	1 sapphire+	Rare
Shoes, fine	2 sapphires	Rare
Shoes, leather	2 pearls	Common
Suit, secondhand	1 sapphire	Uncommon
Suit, tailored	4 sapphires	Uncommon
Trousers, basic	2 pearls	Common
Trousers, fine	2 sapphires+	Rare
Uniform	1 pearl	Uncommon
Work coveralls	3 slivers	Common

Tools

Characters need tools to make use of some professions and talents.

Tools

Item	Price	Availability
Alchemist's kit (6 uses)	1 ruby	Rare
Block and tackle	1 sapphire	Uncommon
Book, printed or tome	1 diamond	Rare
Disguise kit (6 uses)	1 ruby	Rare
Garrote	1 sliver	Common
Healer's kit (6 uses)	1 ruby	Uncommon
Knuckledusters	1 pearl	Common
Lock picks	1 sapphire	Rare
Musical instrument	1 sapphire+	Rare
Navigator's instruments	2 sapphires	Rare
Net	1 pearl	Common
Poison	1 ruby	Illegal
Prybar (3 uses)	2 pearls	Common
Tool kit	1 sapphire	Common
Torturer's tools	2 sapphires	Illegal
Writing kit	1 sapphire	Rare

Tools Descriptions

Here are descriptions for tools that have special notes or rules.

Alchemist's Kit: You use an alchemist's kit to make medicines, manufacture poisons, and create other special items.

Disguise Kit: You use a disguise kit to create a disguise for yourself or a willing creature you can reach. You can use an action to expend a use from the kit to start disguising the target creature. It takes 1 minute of work to complete the disguise.

The disguise can increase or decrease the target's height by a few inches; adjust weight by up to 25 percent of normal; change hair color and skin color; add or hide distinguishing features; and cause the target to appear to be a different gender or a member of a different ancestry. The disguise is not good enough, however, to let a creature impersonate a specific person.

Once created, the disguise remains effective for as long as it is worn or until the creature is exposed to something that would ruin it—water, fire, a strong wind. A suspicious creature can recognize the disguise is false by using an action to make a Perception challenge roll and getting a success on the roll.

Garrote: You can use the garrote when you grab a creature whose Size is no more than 1 higher than your own. You must wield the garrote with both hands. If you get a success on your attack roll, the target takes 1d6 damage from the cord being drawn tight around its neck and it becomes grabbed. If the target attempts to escape, it makes its attack roll with 1 bane.

Healer's Kit: You can use a healer's kit to tend to injuries of one creature within your reach. Expend a use from the kit and make an Intellect challenge roll. If the target is dying, you make the challenge roll with 1 bane. On a success, the target heals 1 damage.

Knuckledusters: Knuckledusters, usually made of bone with chips of stone embedded in the knuckles, are sold in pairs, and while you wear them, your attacks with unarmed strikes deal 1 extra damage.

Lock Picks: You can use an action to use lock picks to unlock a lock you can reach. Typically, it takes 1 minute of continuous work to make the attempt, during which time you must concentrate. When you finish working, make an Intellect challenge roll with 1 or more banes depending on the lock's quality. On a success, the lock opens.

Musical Instrument: This item includes a variety of percussion, wind, and stringed instruments. The GM sets the price based on the type of instrument sought. More exotic instruments cost 1 gc or more.

Navigator's Instruments: This case includes a sextant and an astrolabe, plus compass, charts, and other tools useful for navigation.

Net: You can attack with a net by throwing it at one Size 2 or smaller creature or object within short range. Make a Strength attack roll against the target's Agility. On a success,

the net hits and the target becomes slowed. While slowed in this way, the target makes attack rolls and Agility challenge rolls with 1 bane. A target creature slowed by the net can use an action to either cut its way free from the net, which ruins it, or to successfully make an Agility challenge roll. Another creature can use an action to remove the net, which also removes the affliction.

Poison: You can use an action to apply poison to an edged or pointed weapon; to coat up to three arrows, bolts, or darts; or to sprinkle the poison into food or drink.

When treated with poison, weapons and ammunition remain poisonous for 1 hour or until they deal damage. A creature that takes damage from the weapon or piece of ammunition must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, the creature becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If the creature is already poisoned, it takes 1d6 extra damage.

A creature that consumes poisonous food or drink must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage and becomes poisoned for 1 minute. If already poisoned by the food or drink, it takes 3d6 extra damage.

A creature poisoned in this way must make a Strength challenge roll at the end of each round. On a failure, the creature takes 1d6 damage. Three successes remove this poisoned affliction.

Prybar: The crowbar grants 1 boon to Strength challenge rolls made to open doors, containers, and other objects that can be opened or closed. They're typically made of bone, though, and break after 3 uses.

Tool Kit: A collection of tools used to work in one's profession.

Torturer's Tools: You can use an action to use the tools on one creature you can reach. You must concentrate for 10 minutes, during which time you use the tools to hurt the target, who must be present the entire time—usually because it is restrained in some way. At the end of the 10 minutes, make a Will attack roll against the target's Will. You can choose to deal damage to the target during the torture. The target takes 1d6 damage from the tools and you make the attack roll with 1 boon. On a success, you can ask the target one question. The target must answer the question truthfully or make up something if it doesn't know the answer.

Food and Accommodations

Food and accommodations for travelers vary considerably from nation to nation. The table below presents common prices in settlements, particularly on the mainland, in New Gaia, or in Sky City. In Pacari, inns and taverns simply don't exist, and a traveler must fend for themselves for the most part. On the Black Isle, you're given food and accommodations if you can be useful, or if you can trade useful things for it. For both nations, use the prices below as a general guideline.

Food and Accommodations

Item	Price	Availability
Accommodations	1 pearl+/night	Common
Ale, pint	2 slivers	Common
Beer, pint	1 sliver	Common
Feed	4 slivers	Common
Wine, common	4 slivers	Common
Wine, good	2d6 pearls	Uncommon
Wine, fine	2d6 sapphires	Rare
Meal, light	3 slivers	Common
Meal, common	1 pearl	Common
Meal, fine	1 sapphire	Rare
Dream grass	1 pearl	Uncommon
Rotgut	2 pearls	Common
Spirits, common	3 pearls	Common
Spirits, fine	1 sapphire	Uncommon

Hirelings

You can hire companions to undertake tasks on your behalf and, sometimes, accompany you on your adventures. The Keeper has mechanics for these characters in **Chapter 15**.

Commoner: Servants, torchbearers, laborers, and grooms perform the tasks they were hired to perform.

Professional: Alchemists, weaponsmiths, jewelers, and scholars perform only those tasks for which they are trained and hired.

Bodyguard: Bodyguards are hired to protect an individual, and are expected to fight on their behalf and defend them when necessary. Contracts are typically very precise.

Mercenary: Mercenaries are professional soldiers and fight for pay. They might quit your employ if abused, forced to take unnecessary risks, or otherwise mistreated.

Hirelings

Item	Price per Week
Commoner	3 pearls
Professional	1 sapphire
Bodyguard	2 rubies
Bodyguard, Storm Point	1 diamond
Mercenary	1 ruby
Mercenary, Bone Army	3 rubies

Animals and Animal Gear

You can purchase animals to carry your gear, fight at your side, or be your companions. Pets and small animals can be had for a few bits. Animals in Asunder come in a wide

variety of shapes and sizes, and the people of Asunder domesticate many varieties not found in our world. The Keeper has rules for these creatures in **Chapter 15**.

Animals and Animal Gear

Item	Price	Availability
Companion (small animal or tiny animal)	1 sapphire	Common
Raptor (tiny animal, flier)	1 sapphire	Rare
Beast of burden (large animal)	2 sapphires	Common
Mount (large animal)	3 sapphires	Common
War mount (large animal, +50% health)	1 diamond	Rare
Bit and bridle	1 pearl	Common
Harness	1 pearl	Common
Saddle	3 pearls	Uncommon
Saddle bag	2 pearls	Uncommon
Saddle blanket	1 pearl	Uncommon

Performance Enhancers

The people of Asunder cultivate a wide variety of plants, compounds, and organisms that can be used to gain short-term benefits. Using these is not without risk; they're drugs, and they can be addictive. But they undoubtedly have benefits.

Using Performance Enhancers: You can use an action to use an enhancer or administer it to a willing, defenseless, or unconscious creature you can reach. The enhancer takes effect at the end of the round in which it is used.

Drawbacks: Whenever you use a performance enhancer, make a Strength challenge roll with a number of banes specified by the enhancer you used. If you fail the roll, you suffer the effects specified by that enhancer.

Performance Enhancers

Enhancer	Price	Availability	Banes
White Drops	1 ruby	Rare	1
Svit Gland	1 ruby	Rare	1
Ember Beetle	5 ruby	Rare	NA
Sawgrass Powder	2 sapphires	Uncommon	0
Red Leech	1 diamond	Rare	3
Black Drops	1 ruby	Rare	2

Enhancer Descriptions

Descriptions of the enhancers' effects follow.

White Drops: You empty the milky white contents of this flask into your eyes, which blinds you until the enhancer takes effect. When it takes effect, you make Perception challenge rolls with 1 boon for 2d6 hours. Until the enhancer wears off, you cannot rest.

Drawback: You become addicted to white drops. When you're not under the effects of

white drops, you suffer 1 bane on Perception challenge rolls. Each time you complete a rest, you can make a Will challenge roll to end this effect, with 1 bane for each dose of white drops you took since your last rest.

Svit Gland: Harvested from the venomous flying lizards of sky city, properly treated svit glands can negate the effects of poison when ingested. When the enhancer takes effect, the you remove one poisoned affliction from yourself and, for 8 hours, you make challenge rolls to resist poisons with 1 boon. *Drawback:* Your body rejects the svit gland, making you violently ill for 1 round. During this time, you are stunned. You gain no benefit from the svit gland.

Ember Beetle: You place this bright yellow beetle on your skin, allowing it to burrow its head into your flesh like a giant tick. This deals 1 damage to you. When the enhancer takes effect, you take half damage from the effects of fire and heat for the next 24 hours. However, for every hour that passes, you take a cumulative -2 penalty to Health due to blood loss. This penalty ends when you complete a rest without an ember beetle attached to you. You can choose to remove the beetle before it dies on its own; doing so deals 1 damage to you. *Drawback:* None.

Sawgrass Powder: You rub this chalky green substance, distilled from ground sawgrass seeds, into an open wound. When the enhancer takes effect, you heal damage equal to your healing rate. *Drawback:* Sawgrass powder has an anesthetizing effect, making you impaired for 1 minute. If you're already impaired, you become fatigued as well for the duration. If you're already fatigued, you become addicted to sawgrass powder. You suffer 1 bane on all Intellect and Will challenge rolls. Using a dose of sawgrass powder suppresses this effect for 1 hour. Each time you complete a rest, you can make a Will challenge roll to end this effect, with 1 bane for each dose of sawgrass powder you took since your last rest.

Red Leech: Red leeches, harvested from the Naga Swamp, are known to cure diseases with their saliva. You activate this enhancer by attaching it to your skin, which deals 1 point of damage. Unlike other enhancers, you must leave a red leech in place for 1 hour for it to take effect, during which you have a -5 penalty to Health. This penalty lasts until you complete a rest. When the enhancer takes effect, you remove all diseased and poisoned afflictions affecting you and heal damage equal to twice your healing rate. *Drawback:* You're impaired until your penalty to Health is recovered.

Black Drops: You empty the thick, black substance in this flask into your eyes, which blinds you until it takes effect. When the enhancer takes effect, you can see into areas obscured by shadows or darkness as if those areas were lit out to the normal range of your vision. The enhancer wears off after 3d6 minutes. *Drawback:* You become blind for 1 minute.

Kalea Venom

The venom of the kalea — a crystalline organism that resembles a spider crossed with a dragonfly — is a very special kind of performance enhancer. For unknown reasons, when treated and distilled using a particular process, ingesting the venom of the kalea can temporarily enhance one's connection to their Essence bond. In game terms, drinking distilled kalea venom can grant you access to an Essence power you don't know yet, even if you haven't discovered the tree it belongs to. Kalea venom *cannot* grant access to Essence powers that belong to trees your Origin doesn't grant you access to. Drinking undistilled kalea venom simply uses the same rules as drinking a dose of poison.

Distilling Kalea Venom: Distilling a dose of kalea venom requires an alchemy kit, access to undistilled kalea venom, and uninterrupted time. It takes a minimum of 1 hour to distill a low-potency dose of venom; such a dose grants access to a rank 0 power. For every additional hour you spend distilling the venom, and each additional use of an alchemy kit you expend, you can increase the potency of the dose by 1 rank.

Using Kalea Venom: You use venom by drinking it, which is an action. Doing so causes you to take 1d6 damage per rank of the venom, and grants access to a power of the Keeper's choice with a rank equal to the rank of the venom. This effect lasts for 1 hour. While under the effects of kalea venom, you can use the granted power normally, and you have a number of uses of that power based on your Essence score. For example, if your Essence is 0 and you drink a rank 0 dose of venom, you take no damage and have a single use of a rank 0 Essence power for 1 hour.

Kalea Venom

Rank	Price	Availability
Rank 0	1 sapphire	Uncommon
Rank 1	1 ruby	Uncommon
Rank 2	1 diamond	Rare
Rank 3	1 emerald	Rare
Rank 4	5 emeralds	Illegal
Rank 5	10 emeralds	Illegal

Living Gear and Other Oddities

People adapt to their surroundings as best they can. In a world like Asunder, a world without metal, where Chaos is a raw physical force and human Essence bonds to plants, animals, and other things around it, adapting means reshaping things in the world to suit your needs. The weavers of New Gaia shape plants into pieces of specialized equipment, powerful weapons of war, and even entire buildings through their Essence bonds. Those bonded to insects do similar things, as do the seafarers with their living ships and crustacean masks. Living gear is an intrinsic and important part of Asunder society and commerce, though it's far from safe or easy to use.

Glass plays an important part in Asunder, too, though not all glass is the same; the composition of the sand, the time of day, weather effects, and other esoteric factors cause the glass to manifest in different colors, which have a variety of effects. Red glass holds a sharp edge, and is often used in weaponry. Black glass is nearly impervious to heat, once it cools. Blue glass shatters easily and with great force, making it extraordinarily dangerous when used as a thrown weapon. And the Chaos wielders of the mainland have learned that clear glass — the rarest form of glass — can hold within it pure motes of Chaos, allowing them to draw on its power later. Almost all forms of glass are illegal on Asunder, and are both rare and expensive.

Only the mainlanders have mastered the art of making glass, and they do so in great furnaces that reach incredibly high heats. Glassmaking requires precision and care, and can cause injury or death if performed improperly. To make matters worse, most glassmaking furnaces are illegal, and so are stored away from populated areas (and, consequently, away from any help or regulatory body).

Beyond these things, there are other oddities that don't fall into either category, specialized items, structures, and so forth that people use throughout the world of Asunder.

Living Gear

Living gear is both common and powerful, somewhat like power tools or automatic weapons are in our world. People use living gear for a variety of purposes and, though it might seem strange or alien to you and I, to the people of Asunder it's just another part of life. It's a key component of warfare, agriculture, construction, commerce, and virtually every other aspect of life on Asunder.

Bonding to Living Gear

That said, living gear is not precisely safe. Every piece of living gear is a symbiotic organism and, while the benefit it provides to its human host is often obvious, it doesn't provide that benefit for free. A piece of living gear requires two things to continue to live and perform its function: blood and Essence.

A piece of living gear's Essence cost is represented by the fact that you must **bond** with a piece of gear in order to use it. Bonding is an invasive process that takes about an

hour and deals 1 damage to you; once the piece of gear has bonded to you, it remains so until you sever the bond as an action. Because living gear feeds off of your Essence, bonding yourself to too many pieces at once can be dangerous. Unless you have a talent that increases this number, **you can only be bonded to one piece of living gear safely** at any given time. You can choose to bond to additional pieces of living gear, but the process is traumatic, causing you 1 Strain when you initiate the bond, and every time you complete a rest, you take 1 Strain for every piece of living gear you have beyond your safe maximum (which, again, is usually 1).

The blood cost comes in the form of damage that you take after each rest you complete. **Every time you complete a rest, you take 1 damage for each spent charge on each piece of living gear you're bonded to.** This is automatic, and there's no way to reduce or mitigate this damage, even if an Essence power or other effect would normally prevent damage. Once you do, all of your living gear regains all spent charges.

A piece of living gear that goes 24 hours without being bonded to a living human spends 1 of its charges. If it's already at 0 charges, it dies.

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Alternatives to Bonding

Sometimes you just have too much living gear to bond to at once. Sometimes you want to let a piece of gear run autonomously for a while. There are a few different alternatives to keeping a piece of gear bonded to you constantly.

You can **feed** a piece of unbonded living gear by using an action, concentrating on a piece of gear you can touch for 1 minute, and taking a -3 penalty to your Health. This keeps the piece of gear alive and healthy, preventing it from losing charges, for 24 hours. The penalty to your Health lasts until you complete a rest, and is cumulative with penalties from other pieces of living gear that you feed. People who keep phosphorescent lanterns lit in cities often use this technique.

You can also attach a piece of living gear to livestock. You have to coax the animal into bonding with the gear (an Intellect challenge roll and an hour or so of concentration) but, once you do, the livestock's blood can sustain the piece of gear for a time. Whenever the livestock completes a rest, it takes the same damage a human would from the gear attached to it. However, because only humans have Essence, animal blood doesn't sustain living gear as effectively as human blood does. Bonding a piece of living gear doesn't prevent the gear from losing charges over time; it simply slows the rate to 1 charge per week instead of 1 every 24 hours.

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Using Living Gear

Using a power granted by a piece of living gear is usually an action, unless otherwise specified. Doing so also expends 1 of the piece of gear's charges. You can still use a piece of living gear that has no charges left, but doing so causes you to take 1 Strain as it siphons your own Essence to fuel its power.

Some pieces of living gear are weapons or pieces of armor as well; if this is the case, using the basic function of the weapon or benefiting from wearing the armor doesn't require spending a charge. You only have to spend charges to use powers granted by your living gear.

Living Gear Powers

Creating a piece of living gear is a process of taking a piece of mundane gear — like a weapon, suit of armor, disguise kit, or ship — and adding living gear powers to it. Each living gear power below has an associated price, based on its rank; this is the price for each charge the piece of gear has. Add the total price of all charges of all powers to the price of the base item, and you'll find the price of your living gear. Each power entry is structured like this:

Name **Keyword Type #**

Gear Any requirements for the type of gear

Target or Area [number and type] target or [shape and size] area within [range]

Duration # rounds/minutes/hours/day/other/permanent

Description of the effect (attack roll/challenge roll)

Attack Roll 20+ Additional effect

Top Line

The top line of any power includes the power's name, any keywords, what type of power it is, the power's rank (represented by a number from 1 to 5). The keywords associated with living gear are: plant, insect, and sea. A power can have multiple possible keywords, but a single piece of living gear can only have one.

In order to bond safely with a piece of living gear, your Essence must be equal to or greater than its rank. If you bond to a piece of living gear with a rank greater than your Essence, you take Strain equal to its rank whenever you complete a rest. Some living gear powers can be added to pieces of gear at multiple ranks; you make this choice when you create the living gear, and only a single rank of a given power can be added to a given piece of gear; that is, you couldn't add the rank 1 and rank 3 versions of a power to the same piece of living gear.

A power can be one of two types: attack or utility. Attack powers have harmful effects, and using such a power counts as making an attack. Utility powers have a variety of useful effects.

Gear

If the power must be attached to a specific kind of gear, that will be listed here.

Target

A power can target creatures, objects, or something else (such as a point in space). This line specifies the power's target or targets.

If a power targets you and only you, its entry has no target line.

Awareness: You must be aware of a creature or object to target it with a power; the target cannot be hidden from you. Some powers require you to be able to see the target.

Targeting Yourself: When a power specifies a target, you can choose yourself provided you meet all stated criteria for the being the power's target.

Unwilling Target: Even though utility powers are generally beneficial, the intended target might not wish to be affected. If you attempt to cast a utility power on an unwilling target, you must make an attack roll using Intellect (for powers originating from New Gaia or Sky City) or Will (for all other powers). On a success, the target is affected.

Obscurement: If an attack power directs you to choose a target you can see and your intended target is obscured, your attack roll is subject to 1 or more banes depending on the degree of obscurement (see "Obscurement" in **Chapter 3**).

Cover: When you use an attack power against a covered creature's Defense or Agility, your attack roll is subject to 1 or more banes depending on the degree of cover (see "Attack with a Ranged Weapon" in **Chapter 3**). You must have an unobstructed path to the target unless the power description says otherwise.

If a power allows an Agility challenge roll to resist its effect, the target might benefit from intervening cover. Half cover grants 1 boon to the roll, and three-quarters cover grants 2 boons. A totally covered target is not affected by the power, unless the effect spreads around cover and can reach the target. Fragile materials such as cloth, glass, and paper might not provide cover, at the Keeper's discretion.

Targeting Objects: Unless the power's text says otherwise, a power specifying a target object can affect only an object you wear or carry, or an object that is neither worn nor carried by another creature.

Area

Some powers have no target but affect the space defined by an area. An area can be a line, cone, cube, cylinder, sphere, or a special area defined in the entry.

Origin Point: All area effects have an origin point that you choose, within the range specified by the power. This point is where the area is centered or where it originates from. If you're using a gridded map for a visual reference, the origin point is always on an intersection.

Size and Shape: The entry describes the size and shape of the power's area. The area always conforms to the open space in which it is cast. For example, if a power creates a

cube of poisonous gas 8 yards on a side, and you cast the power in a smaller space, the power effect would fill the available space and extend no further.

You can always choose to reduce the size of a power's area. For example, if a power would affect a cube 4 yards on a side, you could make the cube 2 yards on a side instead.

When the rules describe an area of space, the area must be open; that is, not fully occupied by other creatures or objects.

Cones extend away from their origin points. For each 1 yard of a cone's length, it gains 1 yard of height and width. Thus, a 3-yard-long cone would be 1 yard wide and tall in the first yard, 2 yards wide and tall in the second, and 3 yards wide and tall at its maximum length.

Lines extend away from their origin points, maintaining a constant width. Lines might also have a height, producing a wall-like effect. Some lines are shapeable, which allows you to bend them at 90-degree angles. For each 1 yard of the line's length, you can change its direction once.

Cylinders and spheres center on origin points and extend in all directions from them. Cubes extend away from their origin points; the point can lie on a corner or a side of the cube.

Cover and Obscurement: Creatures and objects in areas affected by powers do not benefit from being obscured.

A creature or object in a power's area can benefit from cover for Agility challenge rolls to resist the power's effect, if the cover lies between it and the power's origin point. Half cover grants 1 boon to the roll, and three-quarters cover grants 2 boons. A totally covered target is not affected by the power, unless the effect spreads around cover and can reach the target. Fragile cover might offer no protection, at the Keeper's discretion.

Spreads: If a power description states that it spreads through the area, its effects move around obstacles out to the area's maximum distance. Creatures in the area of such powers do not benefit from cover.

Range

The target or area line also specifies the power's range, which is the maximum distance from you where the power can take effect. See "Range and Distance" in **Chapter 3** for details on ranges.

Duration

This line tells you how long the power's effect lasts. If the power takes effect instantaneously, this line is absent.

Some attack powers take effect instantaneously but produce ongoing effects. They do not have a Duration entry.

End of the Round: The effect continues until the end of the round in which the power was cast.

1 Round: The effect continues until the end of the round following the round in which the power was cast.

Concentration: The power normally lasts 1 round, but you can use the concentrate action to extend its duration as described in **Chapter 3**.

Persistence: Summoned or created creatures or items, as well as illusions, remain in existence for the power's duration unless destroyed before then, and can freely leave the area in which they appeared unless stationary.

Voluntarily Ending an Effect: You can use an action to end a power's effect before its duration expires.

Extending Duration: Some power entries describe how you can extend the duration of the power beyond its normal duration. Usually this involves expending another use of the power or taking Strain. Extending the duration of a power in this manner doesn't require an action.

Effect

This entry describes what happens when you use the power. It's essentially a series of instructions.

Attack: Many attack powers instruct you to make an attack using the specified attribute against the target's Defense or an attribute. If so, the power tells you what happens on a success. Typically, nothing happens on a failure—the magical energy fails to strike or affect the target. Attack rolls against Defense and Agility are subject to obscurement and cover.

Damage: If the attack roll results in a success, the target takes damage as described in the power's effect. The target might be subject to other effects as well.

A creature takes damage from the effect of a particular casting of a power only once per round. For example, a creature that moves back and forth across a wall of fire in the same round takes damage from being in the power's area just once that round.

Attack Roll 20+: Some powers have an additional effect if the total of the attack roll was 20 or higher and exceeds the score of the attribute or characteristic by 5 or more.

Other Effects: If the power has any additional effect on a target, it is described here. The effect's description also tells you how long it lasts if it is not instantaneous.

Some effects require challenge rolls to resist the power's effect. If so, the effect's description states what attribute is used to make the roll.

Moving a Target: Some powers move the target as part of their effect. Unless the effect specifies otherwise, this movement is along the ground or floor; it does not use special movement modes.

Combining Power Effects: A target or area can be subject to any number of different powers, but it is affected by a particular power only once, even if the power is used multiple times, and only by the most recent casting of that power.

Some powers provide exceptions to this rule.

Step By Step Living Gear Creation

Now that you know how to read living gear power entries, when you create a piece of living gear, all you have to do is follow these steps:

1. Pick a base piece of gear, like a weapon, tool set, or vehicle. Write its price down.
2. Add powers to the piece of gear. Your gear can have a maximum number of different powers equal to its highest-ranked power's rank. Take note of the price of each power you add.
3. Determine how many charges each power has. For each charge a power has, add that power's price to the total price of the living gear. A power must have at least 1 charge in order to be added to a piece of living gear. Prices are listed in the "Power Price per Rank" table.
4. Determine your living gear's trappings. Describe it, using its function, powers, and keywords as a guide. Is it a mass of fungal tissue that attaches to your arm? A pod of gas that attaches to your back? A staff of chitin?
5. Buy it! Look at the total price of the living gear. That's how much it costs your Seeker to buy it.

Power Price per Rank

Rank	Price	Availability
1	1 sapphire	Common
2	1 ruby	Common
3	1 diamond	Uncommon
4	5 diamonds	Uncommon
5	5 emeralds	Rare

Living Gear Powers

The following powers can be added to living gear you create for your game.

Artillery Thorn Plant/Sea Attack 3

Gear Spitter (ranged weapon) with the two-handed and cumbersome properties

Area A circle with a 2-yard radius, emanating from a point within this spitter's range

You fire a clustered blast of thorns at the area, creating a heavy blast of shrapnel. Unattended objects in the area are destroyed and, at the Keeper's discretion, walls or doors might be destroyed or damaged, as well. Any creatures in the area must succeed on an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes or take 5d6 damage and fall prone. On a success, creatures take half damage and remain standing.

Battle Rage Sea Utility 2

Gear A mask (same price as a cap)

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you gain the following benefits and drawbacks:

- +5 to Health
- 1 boon on all Strength attack rolls
- Your melee attacks deal 1d6 extra damage
- Whenever you end your turn without making a melee attack against a creature, you take 1d6 damage

Breathe Water Sea Utility 1

Gear A mask (same price as a cap)

Duration 1 hour

You can breathe water as if it were air for the duration.

Burrow Plant/Insect Utility 3

Gear Armor

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you can take an action to burrow into the ground or emerge from it, and you can move while underground, though it's difficult terrain. While you're underground, you have total cover, but all creatures have total cover from you, too. You can burrow as far down as you like, but if you run out of charges underground, you're trapped. While the effect is active, you can also breathe underground; if it runs out while you're still underground, you must hold your breath or start to suffocate.

Camouflage Plant Utility 2-4

Gear Armor

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you get 2 boons on any challenge rolls you make to hide. At rank 3, you can reroll any 1s or 2s you roll on challenge rolls you make to hide for the duration. At rank 4, you become invisible for the duration.

Chomper Insect/Sea Attack 2

Gear Spitter (ranged weapon)

Target One creature you can see within this spitter's range

Duration 1 minute

Make an Agility attack roll against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes normal damage from this spitter, and a small sea creature or insect bites into the target with strong jaws, dealing 1d3 extra damage. The creature deals 1d3 damage to the target at the end of each round until the duration expires (at which point it dies and falls

away), or until the target takes an action to remove it. Removing the creature deals 1d6+1 damage to the target, but prevents any further damage the creature would deal.

Attack Roll 20+ The creature gets an exceptionally good grip, forcing the target to make a Strength challenge roll to remove it. On a failure, the target still takes 1d6+1 damage, but the creature isn't removed.

Courier Beetle Insect Utility 3

Gear Raptor (animal)

A courier beetle is a beetle with a hollowed-out cavity in its back, behind its armored shell, where goods can be stored. It can store roughly 1 cubic foot of goods and can carry up to 200 lbs. You *can* By spending a charge, you can do one of the following:

- Command it to open its storage cavity, allow you to add or remove goods, then close again
- Fly to a specified person or location
- Wrap itself around your body like a backpack, or disengage

Someone with one of the courier beetle's antennae can attach the antenna to the beetle as an action in order to command it to open without spending a charge. You can remove a courier beetle's antenna as an action. While the courier beetle is away from you, it loses charges as if it weren't bonded, but at a slowed rate of 1 charge every 3 days. A courier beetle has the statistics of a **small animal** with the flier and climber traits, except that it has twice as much Health and cannot attack. If the beetle is killed, its contents spill out.

Collapse Plant Utility 2

Gear A piece of gear small enough to be carried by a Size 1 creature

The piece of gear can fold in on itself, collapsing until it's small enough to fit in a pocket. This effect lasts until you dismiss it as an action.

Crushing Whip Plant Attack 2

Gear Whip (light melee weapon with reach 2)

Target Once creature you can reach with this whip

Duration 1 minute; see the effect

You wrap your whip around the target, crushing the life out of it. Make an attack roll with your whip against the target's Agility. On a success, the target is immobilized for the duration. While the target is immobilized, it takes 1d3 damage at the end of each round. The target can take an action to try to escape; doing so requires a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane.

Attack Roll 20+ The target makes Strength challenge rolls to escape with 2 banes, not 1, and the target takes 1d6 damage each round it is immobilized, not 1d3.

Dexterous Whip Plant Utility 1

Gear Whip (light melee weapon with reach 2)

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, your effective reach for actions that require fine manipulation — such as picking pockets, opening doors, and so on — increases to that of your whip. In addition, for the duration, you can cause your whip to wrap around rails, handholds, branches, and other such things so that you can climb it or swing on it. This allows you to climb without making challenge rolls in such situations, and effectively doubles your jumping distance as well.

Explode Plant/Insect/Sea Utility 1-5

Area A circle with a radius of 2 yards per rank

You cause the gear to explode, sending a shower of shrapnel, fire, spores, maggots, or other harmful things in all directions. This destroys the piece of living gear, but all creatures in the area must make an Agility challenge roll or take 3d6 damage, or half damage on a success. For each rank past 1, you can add one of the following effects to the explosion. You can choose the same effect more than once.

- The explosion does 2d6 extra damage
- All creatures that take full damage are also impaired, fatigued, poisoned, or diseased (choose when you create the gear) for 1 minute
- Creatures that take full damage also take ongoing damage. Each turn, they can make a Strength challenge roll to negate the ongoing damage; if they fail, they take 1d6 damage. Once a creature succeeds, it no longer takes ongoing damage.
- Creatures take 1 bane on any challenge rolls they make to resist this power's effects.

Glide Plant/Insect Utility 4

Gear Armor

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you take no damage from falling, your rate of falling slows enough that you can stay aloft for the entire duration, and you can effectively fly at your Speed for the duration, though you cannot ascend.

Heartseeker Insect Utility 3

Gear Spitter (ranged weapon)

Duration 1 round

You prime a specially-engineered wasp designed to fly at its target and burrow its way to the target's heart. You make your next attack roll with this spitter before the duration elapses with 3 boons. If the attack hits, it deals 5d6 extra damage. If this damage incapacitates the target, the target dies as the wasp burrows into its heart and tears it to shreds.

Lashing Whip Plant Utility 1

Gear Whip (light melee weapon with reach 2)

Duration 1 minute

Your whip grows thorns and springs to life. For the duration, its damage increases to 1d6, or increases by 1d6 if it was already 1d6 or higher. While its damage is augmented, you get 1 boon on all attack rolls with the whip, and you can use Intelligence to attack with it if you wish.

Needle Blast Plant/Insect/Sea Attack 1-3

Gear Spitter (ranged weapon)

Area A cone with a length in yards equal to twice the power's rank, extending from a point you can reach

You spray a rapid-fire blast of needles, thorns, or other small, sharp objects from the spitter you're wielding, tearing everything in front of you to shreds. Each creature in the area must succeed on an Agility challenge roll (with 1 bane at rank 2 or 2 banes at rank 3) or take 1d6 damage per rank of the power and be impaired for 1 round. On a success, a creature takes half damage and is not impaired.

Paralyze Sea Attack 4

Gear Melee weapon (any)

Target One creature you can reach

Duration 1 minute

This weapon, typically a staff of some sort, has an urchin attached to it that can lash out with its slimy tentacles, paralyzing those it touches. Make an Agility attack roll against the target's Agility. On a success, the target must make a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes. If it fails, it is immobilized for the duration. While it's immobilized in this way, it's also defenseless.

Poison Filter Plant/Sea Utility 2-3

Gear A mask (same price as a cap)

Duration 1 hour

For the duration, you take no damage from poisons you would inhale or ingest, and you are immune to the poisoned condition from the same source. If this power is rank 3, you can bite with the mask, injecting some of the poison it's filtered. This is an Agility attack against the Defense of a creature within your reach, dealing 2d6 damage on a success and causing the target to become poisoned for 1 minute.

Poshporescence Plant/Insect/Sea Utility 1

The piece of gear can emit light in a 5-yard radius, and shadows for another 10 yards beyond that. This effect lasts until you use an action to end it.

Poisoned Plant/Insect/Sea Utility 1-3

Gear Weapon

Duration 1 minute

Your living weapon generates poison, coating its blade, imbuing its needles, or otherwise inflicting it upon those you attack. Anyone who takes damage from an attack you make with this weapon for the duration must succeed on a Strength challenge roll (with 1 bane at rank 2 or 2 banes at rank 3) or be poisoned for 1 minute. A creature that is already poisoned takes 2d6 extra damage.

Poison Touch Plant Attack 3

Gear Armor

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, anyone who touches you or hits you with a melee attack must make a Strength challenge roll or take 1d6 damage and become poisoned for 1 minute. If such a creature is already poisoned, it takes 2d6 extra damage. While this effect is active, you can make an Agility attack roll against a creature's Agility in order to touch that creature, causing it to suffer the same effects.

Return Insect Utility 1

Gear Thrown weapon

You can spend a charge and a triggered action to cause this weapon to fly back to your hand, provided it's within long range of you.

Screamer Insect Attack 1-3

Gear Raptor (animal)

Area A circle with a radius of 10 yards centered on this gear

When activated, a screamer emits a piercing scream-chirp, something like a cricket but amped up considerably. All creatures in the area that can hear must succeed at a Strength challenge roll or be stunned for 1 round and deafened for 1 minute. At rank 1, you can use an action to spend a charge and set a delay, in rounds, before the screamer activates. You can then use an action or a triggered action on your turn to command the screamer to fly to a point you can see. At rank 2, you can use an action to spend a charge and command the screamer to fly to a point you can see and then immediately activate. At rank 3, you can use an action to spend a charge and command the screamer to fly to a point you can see and wait there until creatures enter its area of effect, then activate. You can describe specific creatures to be ignored, or specific types of creatures to be ignored. You can only command the screamer while you're in physical contact with it; while it's not in physical contact with you, it loses charges as if it were not bonded, but at a rate of 1 charge per 3 days.

Sight Enhancement Insect/Sea Utility 2-3

Gear A mask or set of goggles (same price as a cap)

Duration 1 hour

You have a +5 bonus to Perception for the duration. If this power is rank 3, you also have darksight for the duration.

Sleep Dart Plant/Insect/Sea Attack 2

Gear Spitter (ranged weapon)

Target One creature you can see within this spitter's range

Make an Agility attack roll against the target's Defense. On a success, the target takes 1 damage and falls asleep for 1 minute. The creature can be roused if it's shaken vigorously, or if it takes damage.

Attack roll 20+ The target falls asleep for 1 hour.

Spine Growth Plant/Sea Attack 2

Gear Armor

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, sharp spines protrude from your armor. While this is in effect, whenever you take the charge action or grab someone, you deal 1d6 extra damage.

Spit Rope Plant Utility 1

Gear Spitter (ranged weapon)

Target One horizontal or vertical surface within this spitter's range

Duration 1 hour

You fire a length of sticky fluid that hardens as it travels, adhering to the surface you target and creating a rope that can be climbed for the duration. The rope's length is equal to the distance your projectile traveled, and it can hold 300 pounds at one time. When the duration elapses, it crumbles and falls away.

Spit Web Insect Utility 2

Gear Spitter (ranged weapon)

Target One creature within short range, one 3-yard cube emanating from a point within short range, or one horizontal or vertical surface within short range (see description)

Duration 1 minute

Your spitter can fire strong, sticky spider webs. You can spend a charge to take one of the following actions:

Entangle Foe: Make an Agility attack roll against the target's Agility. On a success, the target is immobilized for the duration. The target can escape by succeeding at a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane.

Coat Area: Choose a point you can see within short range; you fill a 3-yard cube emanating from that point with sticky webs for the duration, making it difficult terrain and causing anything behind it to be lightly obscured. A creature with a fire source can use an action to burn the webs away.

Shoot Line: You shoot a sticky line of web at a vertical or horizontal surface within medium range. It stays for the duration, and anyone climbing it doesn't need to make challenge rolls to climb.

Thorn Cannon Plant/Sea Attack 5

Gear Ship, vehicle, or building

Area A circle with a 6-yard radius, emanating from a point within long range

You lob an enormous, explosive cluster of thorns or urchins at an area. Unattended objects in the area are destroyed and, at the Keeper's discretion, walls or doors might be destroyed or damaged, as well. Any creatures in the area must succeed on an Agility challenge roll with 3 banes or take 7d6 damage and fall prone. On a success, creatures take half damage and remain standing. A ship or other vehicle within the area automatically takes full damage from the blast.

Tracking Splinter Plant Utility 1-3

Gear Spitter (ranged weapon)

Target One creature you can see within this spitter's range

Duration 1 day (rank 1), 1 week (rank 2), or 1 month (rank 3)

You fire a splinter of wood or a needle into the target, and can use this spitter to track the whereabouts of the target for the duration. You can spend a charge from this spitter to do one of two things.

Fire Splinter: Make an Agility attack roll against the target's Agility. On a success, you embed a tracking splinter into the target. If your attack roll also beats the target's Perception, the target does not notice the tracking splinter. A target who becomes aware of a tracking splinter can dig it out with an action; doing so causes 1d3 damage. A tracking splinter remains embedded in the target for the duration, after which point the target's body rejects it.

Find Splinter: If at least one creature carrying a splinter fired by this spitter is within 5 miles, you know the direction and distance to the target, as the crow flies. You may make an Intellect challenge roll with any number of banes on it; for each bane you roll, this effect persists for 1 hour. If there are multiple targets within 5 miles, you know the direction and distance to each of them, but you must focus on a single target to make an Intellect challenge roll. You do not gain any information about which target is which.

Transform Plant/Insect/Sea Utility 1-5

Gear Weapon (any)

When you add this power to a weapon, choose a second weapon with a cost equal to or less than that of the base weapon. For a charge and a triggered action, you can transform your weapon from the base weapon to the second weapon, or back again. For each rank beyond 1, you can add an additional weapon; you can spend a triggered action and a charge to transform your weapon between any of its possible forms.

Twin Sight Insect/Sea Utility 3

Gear A mask or set of goggles (same price as a cap)

You can spend a charge to bond this mask to another with the *twin sight* power. Once bonded, either wearer can spend a charge to see through the other wearer's mask for as long as they concentrate, up to 1 minute. Bonding functions regardless of distance, and stays in effect until another charge is used to bond to a different mask, at which point the previous bond is severed.

Vital Transfer Plant Utility/Attack 2-3

Gear Whip (light melee weapon with reach 2)

Target One creature you can reach with the whip

If you use this power against a willing creature, it's a utility power; otherwise, it's an attack and requires an Agility attack roll against the target's Agility in order to initiate. Choose one of the following effects when you use this power:

Transfer Damage: The target heals 1d6 damage and you take 1d6 damage, or vice versa.

Transfer Health (rank 3 only): You take a -5 penalty to Health and the target gets a +5 bonus to Health, or vice versa. This effect lasts for 1 hour.

Transfer Condition (rank 3 only): You transfer one of the following conditions from the target to yourself, or vice versa: impaired, fatigued, poisoned, or diseased. The condition's duration remains unchanged.

Writhing **Plant/Insect/Sea Utility 1-3**

Gear Melee weapon

Duration 1 minute

You can cause your weapon to twist and writhe, helping you get around your foe's defenses. For the duration, you get 1 boon on attack rolls with this weapon for each rank of this power.

[EXAMPLES OF LIVING GEAR GO HERE]

Glass

Dangerous and illegal, glass is still a vital part of Asunder society. Each type of glass is difficult to make and has its own unique properties, as described below.

Rainbow Glass

Usually the result of a botched batch of some other form of glass, rainbow glass doesn't have any special properties and isn't useful for much besides looking pretty. It's still technically illegal, but most law enforcement officials won't cause a fuss unless they can prove you *made* the rainbow glass. For that purpose, there's a thriving gray market for hunks of rainbow glass that those with disposable income display in their houses, seemingly flaunting local laws.

Black Glass

Perhaps the only kind of glass that isn't outright illegal, black glass is nearly impervious to heat. Those who have to work with fire or in extreme heat often want black glass armor but can rarely afford it; although black glass isn't illegal, it *is* prohibitively expensive.

In game terms, you can buy a suit of black glass armor for 10 diamonds. It's statistically identical to a suit of heavy armor, except that its Defense is 14 and, while you're wearing it, you take no damage from fire- or heat-based attacks.

Red Glass

Often called "assassin's glass" or "blood glass," red glass is incredibly hard and holds a sharp edge better than nearly any other material on Asunder. It's illegal in many civilized parts of Asunder, though that doesn't stop the agents, murderers, and cutthroats of the world from getting their hands on it and using it. It's generally assumed in most places that, if you have a blood glass blade, your intent is to kill someone; this makes blood glass more trouble than it's worth for most, save those who *are* very much intent on killing someone.

If you add the "glass" property to a weapon, it's made of red glass.

Blue Glass

"Razorglass," as it's often called, is perhaps the most illegal form of glass in existence. When a fist-sized chunk of blue glass is thrown at a solid surface, it shatters, sending shards of glass in all directions, shredding flesh and cutting through armor, and shattering further and further, creating a maelstrom of shrapnel. Because of its ability to wreak havoc in populated areas and its frequent use by terrorist organizations, simply possessing blue glass is enough to get you thrown in jail in most civilized areas.

A chunk of blue glass typically costs 1 diamond. You can throw it as an action, targeting a circle with a 10-yard radius within short range of you. Any creatures in that area must make an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes. On a failure, a creature takes 6d6 damage and is impaired for 1 minute; on a success, the creature takes half damage and is not impaired.

Clear Glass

Also called “Chaos glass,” clear glass carries the distinction of being tightly regulated rather than outright illegal in the mainland. In most other places, it’s simply illegal. The defining property of clear glass is that it can hold a mote of pure Chaos, drawn from a Chaos shard or a Chaos site, in perpetuity, keeping it safe and locked away until needed. A piece of clear glass takes on a smoky gray hue when imbued with a mote of Chaos. While a mote of Chaos isn’t enough for a potential Chaos-wielder to bond with, it *is* still enough to be dangerous.

A shard of clear glass typically costs 1 sapphire to a licensed Chaos wielder, or 1 diamond on the black market. A character who’s discovered the Chaos Essence tree can use an action while in a Chaos site or within reach of a Chaos shard to draw Chaos into the glass. This requires a Will challenge roll to achieve with up to 5 banes on it. For each bane the Chaos wielder voluntarily rolls, add 1 rank to the mote within the glass. So, for example, a Chaos wielder who rolls with 3 banes would coax a rank 3 mote of Chaos into the piece of glass. If a Chaos wielder fails this challenge roll, she takes Discord equal to the number of banes she added to the challenge roll.

A shard of clear glass containing a mote of Chaos costs 1 ruby per rank of the mote, or 2 diamonds per rank on the black market. A Chaos wielder can draw on the energy of the mote to fuel her own Chaos powers. When you use a Chaos power, you can expend a number of ranks from a Chaos mote equal to the rank of the power in order to use it without expending a use of that power. You can also spend ranks, 1-for-1, to pay the cost of pushing a power after you’ve used it. So, for example, a you could spend 3 ranks from a rank 4 mote of Chaos to use a rank 3 Chaos power without expending a use of that power, or you could use that power normally, push it 5 times, roll 5d6 for pushing it, and spend ranks 1-for-1 from your mote to cancel out odd results on those dice.

If a shard of clear glass containing a mote of Chaos is shattered (such as by throwing it), everyone within medium range of its point of impact is subject to a Chaos power of the Keeper’s choosing, provided that Chaos power’s rank is not higher than the mote’s rank. The Keeper makes all decisions regarding how the power behaves, just as if he had used the power.

Other Oddities

This section provides a few other strange and wondrous items and objects that people in Asunder use.

Other Oddities

Oddity	Price	Availability
Battle Pod	2 diamonds	Illegal
Drone Flower	1 diamond	Illegal
Gravity Egg	1 sapphire	Uncommon
Memory Dagger	2 rubies	Illegal
Regenerative Pod	10 emeralds	Rare

Battle Pod

Big, fleshy plant pods worn on the back, battle pods have fibrous tubes that extend into a creature's arms, legs, chest, and neck, pumping a combat-enhancing fluid into them. Attaching to a battle pod causes 1d6 damage and 1 Strain. Every 24 hours you spend attached to a battle pod, you take 1 Strain; detaching from the pod causes 1d6 damage. While you're attached to a battle pod, you get a +6 bonus to Strength, a +10 bonus to Health, and you can use a triggered action when you're incapacitated to immediately heal damage equal to your healing rate, though doing so causes 1d6 Strain.

The longer you wear a battle pod, the more it starts to take you over, causing your skin to become bark-like and your mind to become more prone to rage. Once you wear a battle pod for 24 consecutive hours, you gain a new fatal flaw: "My rage boils over, impelling me to acts of wanton violence." You retain this fatal flaw until you've been detached from a battle pod for 72 consecutive hours. In addition, if you suffer an Essence break as the result of Strain you take from a battle pod, you become a plant-like creature of pure rage forever. Make a new character.

Drone Flower

When you attach this parasitic plant to a defenseless creature's head it extends roots into the creature's brain, arresting the creature's higher cognitive functions. The creature must succeed a Will challenge roll with 2 banes or become compliant and easy to control. While in this state, a creature will obey whatever commands are given to it, though it can resist obviously self-destructive commands by succeeding on a Will challenge roll. It can't complete any complex tasks, though it will perform whatever menial tasks are set in front of it. Drone flowers are often used to make slaves easier to manage in certain cultures, though they are illegal in most civilized areas. A creature can recover from being controlled by a drone flower; removing the flower requires a procedure that takes 1 hour and a successful Intellect challenge roll. Failing this roll still removes the flower, but causes the creature to take 1d6 Strain.

Gravity Egg

A small cluster of blice crystals, specially treated and packed with explosive powder. You can throw a gravity egg as an action; choose a point within short range. The egg detonates upon contact with a surface. Everyone in a circle emanating from that point

with a radius of 5 yards must succeed at a Strength challenge roll or fall prone for 1 round.

Memory Dagger

Often carried by those who serve Gaia, memory daggers are peculiar weapons. They're usually made of bark and plant material, and each is a light weapon with no additional properties. However, when you stab someone with a memory dagger, you can use a triggered action in order to absorb some of your target's Essence and, along with it, some of their memories. This ability causes the target 1d3 Strain, and the Keeper tells you what memories you glean from them.

Regenerative Pod

You can use an action to climb into a regenerative pod, which looks like a large seed pod. It closes around you, giving you full cover while you're inside it and making you effectively blinded. Once inside, you can bond with the pod (which takes 1 minute) and take 1 Strain to drift off into a dreamless sleep for 4 hours. At the end of this period, you gain all the benefits of having completed a rest, and you can remove 1 affliction of your choice.

Essence

When the gods left the world, they left behind creatures in whom they'd invested portions of their divine Essence: humans. With nothing left to control the Essence within them, the humans' Essence reached out and bonded with things in their environment, granting them strange and unique powers. These powers allow them to control beasts, shape plants into miraculous inventions, call creatures from the sea, and even defy gravity.

In the world of Asunder, where you're born determines what your Essence makes you capable of. The Essence trees that your Origin gives you access to are the only Essence trees you'll ever gain access to, so choose wisely. There is no way to learn the powers of an Essence tree you're not born into.

People from the **Black Isle** have access to the **Battle Meditation** and **Body Conditioning** trees.

The weavers of **New Gaia** fall into two groups. Those bonded with plants have access to the **Plant Control** and **Plant Form** trees, while those bonded with insects have access to the **Insect Control** and **Insect Meld** trees. There is no way to be bonded to both plants and insects.

Those born on **Pacari** have access to the **Beast Aspect** and **Beast Bond** trees.

The **Seafarers** have access to the **Adaptation** and **Sea-Calling** trees.

On **Sky City**, people gain access to the **Gravity Manipulation** and **Sky-Dancing** trees.

The Essence of the people of the **mainland** doesn't naturally bond with anything in their environment. However, through the **Symbiosis** tree they're able to develop deeper bonds to living gear, and they are the only ones capable of harnessing the power of the **Chaos** tree.

Essence Trees

All Essence powers and talents belong to **trees**. Each tree is a loose collection of powers and talents grouped along a similar theme, such as taking on the aspects of beasts or controlling gravity.

Discovering Trees

In order to use powers and talents associated with a particular tree, you must first **discover** that tree. You do so when the rules tell you to discover a tree, usually by investing in a specific novice, expert, or master path. You can only discover a tree that your Origin gives you access to.

Most Essence trees have associated **discovery benefits**. Gaining these benefits is not automatic; there are certain talents that allow you to discover a tree but do not grant you

the discovery benefit. You only gain the discover benefit when a talent directs you to, and you can only gain that benefit when you first discover that tree. That is, if you've already discovered a tree, you can't later get its discovery benefit.

Essence Talents

Each Essence tree has a number of special **talents** associated with it. These work just like talents that you might get from your Origin or from a path, except that you can only choose Essence talents from a tree you've already discovered. You can only have a number of Essence talents equal to twice your Essence score; this total includes talents from all trees you've discovered. The rules will tell you when you choose an Essence talent.

Essence Powers

An Essence **power** is codified effect that you can accomplish with your Essence bond. These are mostly predictable, though some powers offer flexibility and, in some cases, unpredictability.

Learning Essence Powers

As with trees and talents, you learn an Essence power when the rules direct you to. You can only learn powers from trees you've already discovered, and you can only learn powers with a rank equal to or lower than your Essence score. Once you learn a power, you can use that power as often as you like, provided you have uses of that power remaining.

Exchanging Powers

Whenever you learn a new power, you can exchange a power you've previously learned for another power of the same or lower rank. Such adjustments reflect the changing and mutable nature of humans' Essence bonds.

Using a Power

You use a power by using an action and expending a use of that power.

- **Use an Action:** You must use an action to use a power. Some powers can be used with triggered actions, while others require you to concentrate for a period of time.
- **Expend a Use:** You have a limited number of **uses** of each power you know. Your Essence score determines how many uses each of your powers has by rank, as shown on the **Power Uses** table. For example, if you have Essence 2 and know two rank 0 powers, one rank 1 power, and one rank 2 power, you have three uses of each rank 0 power, two uses of the rank 1 power, and one use of the rank 2 power. You must have at least one unexpended use of a power to use it. When you successfully use a power, you expend a use of that power.

Regaining Expended Uses

You regain all expended uses of your powers when you complete a rest.

Power Uses

Essence	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
0	1										
1	2	1									
2	3	2	1								
3	4	2	2	1							
4	5	2	2	1	1						
5	6	3	2	2	1	1					
6	7	3	2	2	2	1	1				
7	8	3	2	2	2	1	1	1			
8	9	3	3	2	2	2	1	1	1		
9	10	3	3	3	2	2	1	1	1	1	
10	11	3	3	3	3	2	1	1	1	1	1

Power Description

All power entries use the following format or a variation on it.

Name Essence Tree Type

Special Any requirements for casting the power

Target or Area [number and type] target or [shape and size] area within [range]

Duration # rounds/minutes/hours/day/other/permanent

Description of the effect (attack roll/challenge roll)

Push/Mutate/Reverse Description of the effect

Attack Roll 20+ Additional effect

Top Line

The top line of any power includes the power's name, the tree to which it belongs, what type of power it is, and the power's rank (represented by a number from 1 to 10).

A power can be one of two types: attack or utility. Attack powers have harmful effects, and using such a power counts as making an attack. Utility powers have a variety of useful effects.

Special

If you must meet specific requirements to use a power, you'll find that information on this line.

Target

A power can target creatures, objects, or something else (such as a point in space). This line specifies the power's target or targets.

If a power targets you and only you, its entry has no target line.

Awareness: You must be aware of a creature or object to target it with a power; the target cannot be hidden from you. Some powers require you to be able to see the target.

Targeting Yourself: When a power specifies a target, you can choose yourself provided you meet all stated criteria for the being the power's target.

Unwilling Target: Even though utility powers are generally beneficial, the intended target might not wish to be affected. If you attempt to cast a utility power on an unwilling target, you must make an attack roll using Intellect (for powers originating from New Gaia or Sky City) or Will (for all other powers). On a success, the target is affected.

Obscurement: If an attack power directs you to choose a target you can see and your intended target is obscured, your attack roll is subject to 1 or more banes depending on the degree of obscurement (see "Obscurement" in **Chapter 3**).

Cover: When you cast an attack power against a covered creature's Defense or Agility, your attack roll is subject to 1 or more banes depending on the degree of cover (see "Attack with a Ranged Weapon" in **Chapter 3**). You must have an unobstructed path to the target unless the power description says otherwise.

If a power allows an Agility challenge roll to resist its effect, the target might benefit from intervening cover. Half cover grants 1 boon to the roll, and three-quarters cover grants 2 boons. A totally covered target is not affected by the power, unless the effect spreads around cover and can reach the target. Fragile materials such as cloth, glass, and paper might not provide cover, at the Keeper's discretion.

Targeting Objects: Unless the power's text says otherwise, a power specifying a target object can affect only an object you wear or carry, or an object that is neither worn nor carried by another creature.

Area

Some powers have no target but affect the space defined by an area. An area can be a line, cone, cube, cylinder, sphere, or a special area defined in the entry.

Origin Point: All area effects have an origin point that you choose, within the range specified by the power. This point is where the area is centered or where it originates from. If you're using a gridded map for a visual reference, the origin point is always on an intersection.

Size and Shape: The entry describes the size and shape of the power's area. The area always conforms to the open space in which it is cast. For example, if a power creates a cube of poisonous gas 8 yards on a side, and you cast the power in a smaller space, the power effect would fill the available space and extend no further.

You can always choose to reduce the size of a power's area. For example, if a power would affect a cube 4 yards on a side, you could make the cube 2 yards on a side instead.

When the rules describe an area of space, the area must be open; that is, not fully occupied by other creatures or objects.

Cones extend away from their origin points. For each 1 yard of a cone's length, it gains 1 yard of height and width. Thus, a 3-yard-long cone would be 1 yard wide and tall in the first yard, 2 yards wide and tall in the second, and 3 yards wide and tall at its maximum length.

Lines extend away from their origin points, maintaining a constant width. Lines might also have a height, producing a wall-like effect. Some lines are shapeable, which allows you to bend them at 90-degree angles. For each 1 yard of the line's length, you can change its direction once.

Cylinders and spheres center on origin points and extend in all directions from them. Cubes extend away from their origin points; the point can lie on a corner or a side of the cube.

Cover and Obscurement: Creatures and objects in areas affected by powers do not benefit from being obscured.

A creature or object in a power's area can benefit from cover for Agility challenge rolls to resist the power's effect, if the cover lies between it and the power's origin point. Half cover grants 1 boon to the roll, and three-quarters cover grants 2 boons. A totally covered target is not affected by the power, unless the effect spreads around cover and can reach the target. Fragile cover might offer no protection, at the Keeper's discretion.

Spreads: If a power description states that it spreads through the area, its effects move around obstacles out to the area's maximum distance. Creatures in the area of such powers do not benefit from cover.

Range

The target or area line also specifies the power's range, which is the maximum distance from you where the power can take effect. See "Range and Distance" in **Chapter 3** for details on ranges.

Duration

This line tells you how long the power's effect lasts. If the power takes effect instantaneously, this line is absent.

Some attack powers take effect instantaneously but produce ongoing effects. They do not have a Duration entry.

End of the Round: The effect continues until the end of the round in which the power was cast.

1 Round: The effect continues until the end of the round following the round in which the power was cast.

Concentration: The power normally lasts 1 round, but you can use the concentrate action to extend its duration as described in **Chapter 3**.

Persistence: Summoned or created creatures or items, as well as illusions, remain in existence for the power's duration unless destroyed before then, and can freely leave the area in which they appeared unless stationary.

Voluntarily Ending an Effect: You can use an action to end a power's effect before its duration expires.

Extending Duration: Some power entries describe how you can extend the duration of the power beyond its normal duration. Usually this involves expending another use of the power or taking Strain. Extending the duration of a power in this manner doesn't require an action.

Effect

This entry describes what happens when you use the power. It's essentially a series of instructions.

Attack: Many attack powers instruct you to make an attack using the specified attribute against the target's Defense or an attribute. If so, the power tells you what happens on a success. Typically, nothing happens on a failure—the magical energy fails to strike or affect the target. Attack rolls against Defense and Agility are subject to obscurement and cover.

Damage: If the attack roll results in a success, the target takes damage as described in the power's effect. The target might be subject to other effects as well.

A creature takes damage from the effect of a particular casting of a power only once per round. For example, a creature that moves back and forth across a wall of fire in the same round takes damage from being in the power's area just once that round.

Attack Roll 20+: Some powers have an additional effect if the total of the attack roll was 20 or higher and exceeds the score of the attribute or characteristic by 5 or more.

Other Effects: If the power has any additional effect on a target, it is described here. The effect's description also tells you how long it lasts if it is not instantaneous.

Some effects require challenge rolls to resist the power's effect. If so, the effect's description states what attribute is used to make the roll.

Moving a Target: Some powers move the target as part of their effect. Unless the effect specifies otherwise, this movement is along the ground or floor; it does not use special movement modes.

Combining Power Effects: A target or area can be subject to any number of different powers, but it is affected by a particular power only once, even if the power is cast multiple times, and only by the most recent casting of that power. For example, successfully casting the compel power on a target already under the effect of another compel power would replace the effect of the older casting. Similarly, if a creature is in the overlapping areas of two acid rain powers, it suffers only the effects of the one most recently cast.

Some powers provide exceptions to this rule.

Pushing

Pushing is a special effect of Chaos powers that allows you to amplify a power's effect beyond its normal limitations, but at great risk.

Mutate

Adaptation powers can be mutated, which makes them permanent at a cost.

Reverse

Gravity Manipulation powers can be reversed, causing an effect that is counter to the power's normal effect. Reversing a power, in most cases, counts as using that power normally, but produces the reversed effect instead.

Black Isle

The people of the Black Isle focus on relentless self-improvement, as well as a unique fighting style that allows them to tap into each others' minds and bodies and draw strength from each other.

The **Battle Meditation** Essence tree grants you the ability to establish a group mind with your allies and to draw strength from that group mind. Invest in this Essence tree if you want to shore up your weaknesses and enhance your strengths with your allies' help.

The **Body Conditioning** Essence tree focuses on improving your physical self beyond normal human limitations. Invest in this Essence tree if you want to ignore pain, heal yourself, and make devastating unarmed attacks.

Battle Meditation

The Black Isler art of battle meditation is a combination of martial arts and meditative techniques that allows the practitioner to enter into a group consciousness with her allies, drawing strength from them. Demon-hunting parties use this Essence tree to imbue a single hunter with the power to kill a demon bare-handed.

Discovery Benefit: You learn the *group mind* power

Essence Talents

Battle Awareness Whenever you and an ally are within reach of the same creature, you get 1 boon on any attack or challenge rolls you make against that creature.

Forge Link After spending 1 minute in meditation with a willing ally, you can forge a mental link with that ally. While this link is intact, you can communicate telepathically with each other, you're each aware of anything the other sees, and you can pass each other teamwork dice even if you don't have ties with each other. If you and your ally are ever separated by more than long distance, the link breaks. You can only have one such link at a time. You can take this talent up to three times; each time you take it, you can have an additional simultaneous link.

Battle Trance As long as you're within short range of at least one ally, your attacks deal 1d6 extra damage.

Essence Powers

Group Mind Battle Meditation Utility 0

Target Up to 10 willing creatures, which you must touch

Duration 1 hour

You establish a group mind, a mental connection between yourself and the targets. While this connection lasts, you use the highest Perception, Intellect, and Will bonuses from all targets as your own; because your scores don't change, no other attributes or

characteristics change. If a target moves further away from you than 1 mile, your connection to that target is severed and, if you were using any of its attributes or characteristics, you must choose new ones from those still in the group.

If anyone in the group is incapacitated while the group mind is in place, that person's connection is severed and everyone remaining in the group mind takes 1 Strain. You can end the group mind as an action or a triggered action on your turn, and any of the targets can sever their connection to the group mind as an action or triggered action on their turn.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect if it ends prematurely.

Group Body Battle Meditation Utility 0

Special You must have a group mind established

Choose Strength or Agility. For as long as your group mind is in place, you use the highest bonus for the chosen attribute that exists within the group mind as if it were your own. This doesn't change your characteristics.

Distributed Pain Battle Meditation Utility 1

Special You must have a group mind established

When you take damage, you can use a triggered action to use this power. When you do, you distribute that damage as equally as possible among all participants in the group mind, though a participant must be willing to take the damage in order for you to distribute any of it to that participant. If the damage can't be divided equally, you take any remainder.

Gestalt Strike Battle Meditation Attack 1

Special You must have a group mind established

As part of using this power, make an attack with a weapon. Each member of your group mind can use a triggered action to cause your attack to deal 1d6 extra damage.

Lend Speed Battle Meditation Utility 1

Special You must have a group mind established

When you use this power as a triggered action on your turn, each participant in your group mind can choose to become immobilized for 1 turn. For each participant who chooses to become immobilized, you may immediately move up to half your speed.

Lend Endurance Battle Meditation Utility 2

Duration 1 minute

Special You must have a group mind established

When you use this power, each participant in your group can choose to take 1d6 damage. For each participant who chooses to take the damage, you get a +3 bonus to Health for the duration.

Afflicting Strike Body Conditioning Attack 2

Special You must have a group mind established

As part of using this power, you make an unarmed attack. If you hit, you any afflictions from a single member of your group mind to the target of your attack. Any transferred afflictions immediately end on members of your group mind, and the target of your attack gains all of those afflictions for 1 round each. As the conduit of these afflictions, you take 1 Strain.

Share Essence Battle Meditation Utility 3

Target One member of your group mind

Special You must have a group mind established

As part of using this power, your target expends a use of one of his own Essence powers. The Essence power has its normal effect, but you are the originator of that effect and get to make all choices associated with the use of that power. For all intents and purposes, it's as if you used that power.

\$\$The target can expend a use an Essence power he or she knows. You then gain that use of the power and expend it immediately, resolving its effects as if you had used the power.

Resonant Feedback Battle Meditation Attack 3

Target Each member of your group mind

Special You must have a group mind established

You strike with the fists of the participants of your group mind. As part of using this power, make an unarmed attack against a creature within reach of each member of your group mind, excluding yourself. For each attack after the first, you make the attack roll with 1 bane and each attack deals 1d6 extra damage. You can use Will instead of the attack's normal attribute, if you wish.

\$\$\$Suggested Revision: For each member of your group mind, excluding yourself, choose one creature within that member's reach. Make an unarmed strike attack against each target. You can use Will in place of the attribute you would normally use. For each attack you make after the fist you make the attack roll with 1 bane. On a success, the attack deals 1d6 extra damage.

Ten Fists As One Battle Meditation Utility 4

Duration 1 minute

Special You must have a group mind established

When you use this power, each member of your group mind can choose to take 1 bane on either Strength or Agility attack rolls for the duration. For each one who choses to take a bane, your unarmed attacks deal 1d6 extra damage for the duration.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Demon-Killing Strike Battle Meditation Attack 5

Target One creature you can reach

Special You must have a group mind established

Your group mind ends immediately and you take 1 Strain. Make a Strength or Agility attack roll with 2 boons against the target's Agility. On a success, the target takes 9d6 damage. A creature incapacitated by this damage is immediately slain.

Attack Roll 20+ The target takes 3d6 extra damage.

Body Conditioning

Those from the Black Isle spend countless hours training, conditioning their bodies to operate at peak performance levels. They push beyond this, though, turning their Essence inward until they're able to push past the limits of human capability and achieve superhuman feats.

Discovery Benefit: Health +5

Essence Talents

Strength Training You make Strength attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon.

Agility Training You make Agility attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon.

Martial Arts Your unarmed attacks deal 1d6 extra damage.

Thick Skin Increase your Defense by 1.

Speed Training Increase your Speed by 2.

Sensory Training Increase your Perception by 3.

Essence Powers

Defensive Stance Body Conditioning Utility 0

Duration 4 hours

You enter a state of enhanced awareness and endurance, granting a +2 bonus to your Defense for the duration.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 4 hours. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Move with the Wind Body Conditioning Utility 0

You move up to twice your Speed. This movement does not trigger free attacks.

Triggered You can use a triggered action on your turn to use this power. If you do so, you instead move up to your Speed without triggering free attacks.

Accelerate Healing Body Conditioning Utility 1

You heal damage equal to your healing rate.

Triggered You can use a triggered action on your turn to use this power. If you do so, you instead heal damage equal to half your healing rate.

Endure Environment Body Conditioning Utility 1

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you do not have to breathe, you are immune to damage from poison, you ignore the poisoned affliction, and you do not take damage from environments of extreme heat or cold. An attack that uses heat or cold still damages you, but you take half damage from such an attack.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Fists Like Hammers Body Conditioning Utility 1

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, your unarmed attacks deal 1d6 extra damage.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Ignore Pain Body Conditioning Utility 2

When you take damage from an attack, you can use a triggered action to use this power and ignore that damage. You still suffer any secondary effects or afflictions associated with the triggering attack. If the attack would have caused you to take damage in excess of your Health, take 1 Strain.

Healing Hands Body Conditioning Utility 2

Target One creature you can reach

You touch the target, extending your own life energy and Essence into it for a brief period. It heals damage equal to twice its healing rate.

Unstoppable Body Conditioning Utility 3

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you are immune to the following afflictions: asleep, blinded, charmed, compelled, dazed, deafened, diseased, fatigued, frightened, impaired, poisoned, and stunned.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Thunder Strike Body Conditioning Attack 3

As part of using this power, make an unarmed attack. On a success, ~~if you hit~~, the target takes an additional 4d6 damage and must make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane or be stunned for 1 round.

Attack Roll 20+ The target takes 2d6 extra damage.

Regenerate Body Conditioning Utility 4

Duration 1 minute

At the end of each round for the duration, you heal damage equal to your healing rate.

Surge of Prowess Body Conditioning Attack 5

Duration 1 hour

Choose Strength, Agility, Intellect, or Will and roll 1d6. You gain a bonus to the chosen attribute score equal to the number rolled, up to a maximum score of 20, for the duration. The increase also affects any characteristic associated with the attribute.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

New Gaia

The majority of the population of New Gaia are bonded to plants, and are known as weavers. They have the ability to engineer, control, create, and even become like the plants they live with, and their harmony with nature is unmatched.

The **Plant Control** Essence tree allows you to harness, create, and manipulate plants in your environment. Invest in this Essence tree if you like the idea of bending nature to your whim.

The **Plant Form** Essence tree focuses on unity with plant life, and causes you to become more like the plants you spend your time with. Invest in this Essence tree if you want to take on plant-like aspects, or if you want to make better use of plant-based living gear.

A smaller portion of the population instead bonds with insects. While these insect-weavers are treated poorly on New Gaia, their powers are extraordinary.

The **Insect Control** Essence tree allows you to call and command insects, to use them as tools or weapons, and to shape them to your purpose. Invest in this Essence tree if calling up swarms of insects to do your bidding sounds like fun.

The **Insect Meld** Essence tree focuses on becoming more like an insect, gaining the ability to crawl on walls, enhance your reflexes, and even fly or become a giant insect. Invest in this Essence tree if you want weird insect-like powers, or if you want to make better use of insect-based living gear.

Plant Control

The weavers of New Gaia have the ability to communicate with and control plants. This allows them to accomplish incredible things, including creating specialized plants to accomplish all manner of tasks and provide all manner of conveniences.

Discovery Benefit: Plants move out of your way, cover your tracks, and otherwise aid you as you pass. You ignore difficult terrain caused by plant growth, and any challenge rolls you make to move through or on plants, or to hide in areas of thick vegetation, are made with 1 boon.

Essence Talents

Verdant Invention You know how to create living gear with the plant keyword. In order to create a piece of living gear, your Essence must be equal to or higher than its rank. For more information on creating living gear, see **Chapter 9**.

Voice of the Forest Your Verdant Awareness talent now grants you 2 boons instead of 1.

The Forest's Quarry While you're in an area of significant plant growth (a forest, a park, a meadow, etc.), you can use an action or triggered action to designate one creature you can see as your quarry. It remains your quarry until you use this talent again, you leave the area, or the target leaves the area. When you roll to hide from, find, or track your quarry, you make the challenge roll with 1 boon. In addition, you can use an action or triggered action to ask the plants, "Is my quarry near?" The plants will answer you truthfully.

No Trace When you move across ground containing vegetation, you leave tracks only if you choose to. You can also, as an action, ask plant life around you to dispose of bodies and other inconvenient things and, if the plants are big enough to do so, they will.

Shelter When you and up to five creatures you designate take a rest in an area of significant plant growth (a forest, a park, a meadow, etc.), you each gain additional healing equal to your respective healing rates.

Essence Powers

Speak with Plants Plant Control Utility 0

Duration 1 minute; see the effect

You may ask plants within short range of you questions until you either ask them 5 questions or the duration elapses. The plants will answer you truthfully, but their awareness is limited to the immediate area, and there are certain concepts they may not understand.

Thorn Whip Plant Control Attack 0

Target One vine you can reach

Duration 1 hour; see the effect

You convince the target to grow strong and sprout thorns, becoming a potent weapon. While you wield it, the target is a finesse weapon with reach +1 that deals 1d3 damage on a hit. The thorn whip counts as a rank 0 piece of living gear for all intents and purposes. A creature that takes damage from the thorn whip is also impaired for 1 round, wracked by the pain of the whip's tearing thorns. If the target ever leaves contact with your body, it shrivels and becomes a normal, dead vine.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect if it ends prematurely.

Blood Thorns Plant Control Utility 1

Target Up to three thorns you can reach

Duration 8 hours; see the effect

You pluck each target from the plant on which it grows, then pierce your flesh with it, allowing it to drink of your blood. Each thorn deals 1d3 damage to you. Once the targets have drunk your blood, any creature other than you can, as an action, pierce their own

flesh with a thorn in order to heal damage equal to its healing rate. Once a thorn is used in this way, it shrivels and becomes a useless husk.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it to 24 hours or add 24 hours to its duration. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect of a given thorn once it's been used.

Reclaimed Ground Plant Control Utility 1

Area A circle on the ground with a 10-yard radius centered on a point within medium range

Duration 1 hour

Vines, creepers, weeds, tall grass, and other plants break out of the ground in the area, taking it over. It becomes difficult terrain and counts as an area of significant plant growth for all intents and purposes. When the effect ends, the plant growth withers and dies.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can instead choose to take 1d6 Strain when you extend the duration; if you do, the plant growth becomes permanent.

Enhance Shaped Plant Plant Control Attack 1

Target One piece of living gear with the plant keyword

Duration 1 hour

You coax more life and vigor out of the target. For the duration, any attack and challenge rolls made with the target get 1 boon, and if the target deals damage, it deals 1d6 extra damage.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Thirsty Vines Plant Control Utility 2

Area A cylinder 5 yards tall with a 5-yard radius centered on a point within medium range

Duration 1 minute

Special You must be in an area of significant plant growth

Lashing vines spring from the trees and earth around you, whipping at the wounded and drinking their blood. When any creature in the area takes damage, it takes 1d6 extra damage and is impaired for 1 round.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Grasping Branches Plant Control Attack 2

Target Up to five creatures within medium range

Special You must be in an area of significant plant growth

The trees around you reach down and grasp the targets, holding them. Each target must get a success on an Agility challenge roll or become immobilized for 1 minute. The target can use an action to pry itself free of the grasping trees.

Hostile Ground Plant Control Utility 3

Area A circle on the ground with a 10-yard radius centered on a point within medium range

Duration 1 minute

Bushes, tall grasses, roots, and brambles grow in the area, all of them springing razor-sharp thorns and spikes. For the duration, the area is difficult terrain and counts as an area of significant plant growth for all intents and purposes. Any creature entering the area or moving across it must make an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane, taking 1d6 damage on a failure. Creatures able to ignore the difficult terrain also ignore the damage.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can instead choose to take 1d6 Strain when you extend the duration; if you do, the plant growth becomes permanent.

Jungle Ghost Plant Control Utility 3

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you can enter a space occupied by a plant of your Size or larger and instantly exit into an open space from another plant of your size or larger that is within medium range of the plant whose space you entered.

The Forest's Eyes Plant Control Utility 4

Duration 1 hour; see the effect

Special You must be in an area of significant plant growth

For the duration, you enjoy the following benefits:

- You can see with your normal vision, but you also have the sightless trait, and can switch between your two perception modes as a triggered action on your turn
- You see through anything that renders things invisible or hidden
- When you track a creature, you make any associated challenge rolls with 3 boons
- Plants around you do not block your line of sight

If you enter an area without significant plant growth, such as a city, before the duration elapses, the effect ends prematurely.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain

Seed of Wisdom Plant Control Utility 5

Target One seed from the Great Tree you can reach

Duration 1 hour; see the effect

You activate the potential of a Seed of Wisdom. Anyone with the Verdant Awareness talent can take an action to eat the target, after which they enter an hour-long state of trance. While in this state, the creature can visualize a single location where plants exist that fits inside a cube roughly 10 yards on each side, anywhere in the world. The creature can observe the location for the entire duration, but can only see; the vision doesn't have an audio component. If the creature takes damage, the trance ends.

Plant Form

In New Gaia, those who are most in tune with their Essence bond to plants start to take on aspects of those plants. They can enhance these aspects, becoming more and more plant-like, and they can also develop deeper bonds with plant-based living gear.

Discovery Benefit: You can safely bond to 1 additional piece of living gear with the plant keyword.

Essence Talents

Additional Bond You can safely bond to 1 additional piece of living gear with the plant keyword. You can take this talent up to four times.

Photosynthesis You're able to subsist primarily on sunlight and water. You no longer sleep; instead, you must root yourself to the ground for 4 hours during every 24-hour period; doing so counts as a rest. During this time, you're fully alert and awake, but you're immobilized. Rooting or unrooting yourself is an action. As long as you get at least 4 hours of sunlight every day, you never suffer the effects of starvation.

Camouflage While in an area of significant plant life, you can alter your pigmentation to blend in with your surroundings. This gives you 2 boons on any challenge rolls you make to hide in such environments.

Oaken Hide You grow tough bark over your skin. Increase your Defense by 2, provided you're not wearing armor.

Wood Bond If you're wielding a weapon made of wood or plant matter, you can physically bond with it. While you're bonded with the weapon, you can't be disarmed, and you get 1 boon on all attack rolls you make with it.

Essence Powers

Plant Seeming Plant Form Utility 0

Duration 1 hour

You cause yourself to look like a plant for the duration. You decide what kind of plant you look like. You can increase or decrease your apparent height by up to 25 percent, and none of your clothing or gear is visible while you're in this form. While you're

indistinguishable from a normal plant in this state, creatures can see you move and are free to draw their own conclusions from such an event.

Least Plant Bond Plant Form Utility 0

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 0 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the plant keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 1 boon.

Raking Branches Plant Form Utility 1

Duration 1 minute

Your arms and fingers elongate, growing bark and thorns and becoming claw-like branches for the duration. Your branches function as a finesse weapon with reach +1 that deals 1d6+2 damage, which you can dual wield. You make any challenge rolls that rely on fine manipulation with 1 bane for the duration.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Lesser Plant Bond Plant Form Utility 1

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 1 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the plant keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 1 boon and, if the living gear deals damage during this time, it deals 1d6 extra damage.

Bark Skin Plant Form Utility 1

Duration 1 hour

Your skin hardens into tough bark, making you incredibly resistant to harm. For the duration, attack rolls against your Defense, Strength, or Agility are made with 1 bane and you take half damage from weapons. You get 1 boon whenever you try to hide in areas of significant plant life.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Tree Shape Plant Form Utility 2

Duration 1 hour

You become an ambulatory, sentient tree. Your statistics are identical to those of a **large monster**, and you remain in that form for the duration. While in this form, you are sightless and, if you hold still, you are indistinguishable from a normal tree. You are, however, vulnerable to fire and take 2d6 extra damage from any fire-based attacks.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Plant Bond Plant Form Utility 2

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 2 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the plant keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 2 boons and, if the living gear deals damage during this time, it deals 2d6 extra damage.

Strength from the Soil Plant Form Utility 3

You must concentrate for 1 minute while in contact with a patch of soil at least 3 yards in diameter. If your concentration is uninterrupted, at the end of that time, you heal damage equal to twice your healing rate and you remove any of the following afflictions from yourself: diseased, fatigued, and poisoned. If, as part of this period of concentration, you are in contact with a corpse, you may consume that corpse as part of the spell, drawing nourishment from it. If you do so, you heal extra damage equal to your healing rate, and you need no further nourishment for the rest of the day. If you're starving or dehydrating, those states end.

Greater Plant Bond Plant Form Utility 3

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 3 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the plant keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 2 boons and, if the living gear deals damage during this time, it deals 3d6 extra damage.

Lashing Tendrils Plant Form Attack 4

Target Up to five creatures within medium range

Thorn-covered vines spring from your body, lashing out in all directions. Each target takes 3d6 damage and must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure, the target is moved 6 yards in a direction you choose and then becomes immobilized for 1 minute. When you move, you move each target with you, and you can use a triggered action on your turn to move each target you still hold 6 yards in a direction you choose. If the target comes into contact with a surface before moving all 6 yards, it takes 1d6 damage. The target can use an action to make a Strength challenge roll with 1 bane, freeing itself (and removing the immobilized affliction) on a success. A vine not attached to a target withers and falls off of you.

Return from the Soil Plant Form Utility 5

You use this power as a triggered action when you are killed, and it only takes effect if something remains of your body (though a small piece will suffice). You must also be on earth or soil when you die. Your remains merge into the soil upon your death. 8 hours later, you return, emerging from the place where you died, once again alive. When you return, you heal all damage, but you're fatigued until you complete a rest. Any equipment that wasn't on your remains when you died remains wherever it was, but equipment that was on your remains returns with you. All of your living gear is consumed as fuel to regenerate your body and mind, as are any corpses in the immediate area. If there were no corpses or living gear to consume, you are also impaired until you complete a rest.

Insect Control

Perhaps the most feared ability of the insect-weavers is their ability to control insects, to call up great swarms and incite them to violence. The insect-weavers don't often use these abilities against their plant-bonded cousins, but the fear still remains.

Discovery Benefit: You get 1 additional boon from your Cloud of Flies, and the extra damage your cloud allows you to deal is increased by 1d6.

Essence Talents

Insectile Invention You know how to create living gear with the insect keyword. In order to create a piece of living gear, your Essence must be equal to or higher than its rank. For more information on creating living gear, see **Chapter 9**.

Swarm Shield While your Cloud of Flies is active, you have +2 to Defense.

A Thousand Tiny Wings While your Cloud of Flies is active, you can fall 30 yards without taking damage. After this distance, you take damage normally, minus 30 yards.

Carrion Beetles As an action, you can direct your Cloud of Flies to consume a corpse. You lose all benefits of your Cloud of Flies while they're doing so, and it takes them 1 round to consume the corpse, leaving no trace. Once your Cloud of Flies has consumed at least one corpse, you can use an action to consume your Cloud of Flies, gaining nourishment from them. You heal damage equal to your healing rate, but you lose your Cloud of Flies; this doesn't count as your Cloud of Flies being killed. You can summon a new one when you take a rest.

Biting Swarm When you use Stinging Swarm on a creature, that creature must succeed at an Agility challenge roll each round or take 1d6 damage from your swarm. This effect ends when you recall your Stinging Swarm, or when it's destroyed.

Essence Powers

Tiny Spies Insect Control Utility 0

Duration 1 minute; see the effect

You summon insects to gather intelligence for you. Issue the insects a one-sentence command, such as "Follow the man in the green jacket." The insects will follow your command to the best of their ability for the duration, but they cannot move more than 1 mile from you while doing so; if the target of the command moves beyond this distance, they immediately return to you. Once they return to you, you consume them and immediately learn everything they saw during the duration, though you don't learn what they heard, tasted, felt, or experienced through any other sense.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect if it ends prematurely.

Eyebiters Insect Control Attack 0

Target One creature within medium range

Make a Will attack against the target's Strength. On a success, the target is blinded and impaired for 1 round as insects swarm its face and eyes.

Tiny Messenger Insect Control Utility 1

Target One insect you can reach

Duration 8 hours; see the effect

You whisper a message to the insect, imbuing it with knowledge. The message can be no longer than 25 words. You must specify a target for the insect, though the target can be vague, such as, "The first person you meet outside this prison," or specific, such as, "My good friend Veret." Once you've done so, the insect flies unerringly to the recipient using the most direct path possible, at which point it attempts to fly down the recipient's throat. The recipient can make an Agility challenge roll to avoid this, though they can also choose to fail this roll if they wish. If the recipient succeeds, the insect will try two more times, each time on a subsequent round. After the third time, the insect departs. If the recipient swallows the insect, it immediately learns your message, knows it's from you, and learns your location. The insect will fly any distance to find your recipient, but if the duration elapses or it is killed before it finds the recipient, the message is not delivered.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 8 hours. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect if it ends prematurely.

Summon Large Insect Insect Control Utility 1

Area A cube of space, 1 yard on a side, originating from a point within medium range and resting on a solid surface

Duration 1 hour

You summon a larger-than-normal insect to do your bidding. The insect is a compelled **small animal** or **tiny animal**, and it appears in the area. Your insect has the climber, flier, and poisonous traits.

The insect is of a kind appropriate to the environment where you use this power. When the effect ends or the insect becomes incapacitated, it returns whence it came.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Hungry Swarm Insect Control Attack 1

Target One creature within short range

Special Your Cloud of Flies must be active

You send your Cloud of Flies to go and strip the target to the bone. Make a Will attack against the target's Strength. On a success, the target takes 3d6 damage. A

living creature that becomes incapacitated by this damage is stripped to the bone and killed instantly.

Attack Roll 20+ The target takes 2d6 extra damage.

Summon Huge Insect Insect Control Utility 2

Area A cube of space, 2 yards on a side, originating from a point within medium range and resting on a solid surface

Duration 1 hour

You summon a larger-than-normal insect to do your bidding, or multiple smaller ones. The insect is a compelled **medium animal**, or two compelled **small animals** or **tiny animals**, and they appear in the area. Your insect has the climber, flier, and poisonous traits. At your option, you can summon a **swarm of animals** instead.

The insects are of a kind appropriate to the environment where you use this power. When the effect ends or an insect becomes incapacitated, it returns whence it came.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Riding Beetles Insect Control Utility 2

Area A cube, 10 yards on a side, originating from a point within medium range and resting on a solid surface

Duration 2 hours

A group of 1d6 riding beetles (as **large animal**) come to the area. The beetles are friendly to you and become compelled by any creature that rides them. They cannot attack, but they have the climber trait and can bear riders while climbing. You can choose to take 1d6 Strain to also give them the flier trait; if they have this trait, they can carry their riders.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Summon Enormous Insect Insect Control Utility 3

Area A cube of space, 2 yards on a side, originating from a point within medium range and resting on a solid surface

Duration 1 hour

You summon a larger-than-normal insect to do your bidding. The insect is a compelled **large animal**, two compelled **medium animals** or **small animal**, or four compelled **tiny animals**, and they appear in the area. Your insect has the climber, flier, and poisonous traits. At your option, you can summon two **swarms of animals** instead.

The insects are of a kind appropriate to the environment where you use this power. When the effect ends or an insect becomes incapacitated, it returns whence it came.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

A Thousand Tiny Eyes Insect Control Utility 3

Duration 1 hour; see the effect

You concentrate for 1 minute, reaching out telepathically to insects in the area and, through them, insects everywhere. During this extended hive mind, you visualize one creature or object. You can visualize a specific thing, such as the spear that killed your father, or a general category, such as a bone axe. When you finish, for the duration you know the location of the creature or object you chose whenever you are within medium range of it. It cannot become hidden from you for the duration. The insects also reveal the path you need to take to reach the creature or object. If multiple subjects match the same description, you know the location of each.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Invoke the Swarm Insect Control Attack 4

Area A sphere with a 10-yard radius centered on a point within medium range

Duration 1 minute

You call up a swirling, stinging swarm of insects that fills the area. For the duration, insects in the area make attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon, and living creatures other than you in the area make attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane. Once per round during the duration, as a triggered action on your turn, you can direct the swarm to attack a particular creature. That creature must make a Strength challenge roll or take 2d6 damage. As well, Size 1 or 1/2 living creatures that die in the area are instantly killed, stripped to the bone by your swarm.

Awaken Insect Insect Control Utility 5

Target One insect you can reach

Duration 1 hour

You awaken an insect, giving it sentience and the ability to speak one language of your choice for the duration. In addition, for the duration, the target makes attack rolls and challenge rolls with 2 boons, gains a +20 bonus to Health, and deals 1d6 extra damage with any attack that deals damage.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can instead choose to take 1d6 Strain when you extend the duration; if you do, the effect becomes permanent.

Insect Meld

Some insect-bonded weavers start to take on aspects of the insects the bond to. These weavers are capable of many of the same things insects are, and are also better able to bond with insect-based living gear.

Discovery Benefit: You can safely bond to 1 additional piece of living gear with the insect keyword.

Essence Talents

Additional Bond You can safely bond to 1 additional piece of living gear with the insect keyword. You can take this talent up to four times.

Carapace Your skin is covered in a thin layer of chitin. Increase your Defense by 2, provided you're not wearing armor.

Living Hive Insects live within your body. This makes you immune to the poisoned condition, and you take half damage from poison. In addition, if your Cloud of Flies is destroyed, you can use an action to disgorge a mass of insects that becomes a new Cloud of Flies. This process is painful and traumatic, and causes you to take 1d6 damage.

Wall-Climber You get 1 boon on challenge rolls you make to climb, and you ignore difficult terrain from climbing.

Essence Powers

Poison Spit Insect Meld Utility 0

Target One melee weapon or piece of ammunition

Duration 1 minute

You lick the target, covering it with your poisonous secretions. For the duration, the weapon deals an extra 1d6 damage; this damage is considered poison.

Least Insect Bond Insect Meld Utility 0

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 0 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the insect keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 1 boon.

Lesser Wings Insect Meld Utility 1

Duration 1 minute

You use a triggered action to use this power when you fall. Wings sprout from your back and slow your fall, though they're not strong enough to allow you true flight. For the duration, you take no damage from landing after a fall. If you continue to fall after the effect ends, you take damage based on where you continue falling from.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Lesser Insect Bond Insect Meld Utility 1

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 1 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the insect keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you

make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 1 boon and, if the living gear deals damage during this time, it deals 1d6 extra damage.

Cling Insect Meld Utility 1

Duration 1 hour

For the duration, you can move at your Speed across walls, ceilings, and overhangs, and you never need to make a challenge roll to climb.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Chitinous Shell Insect Meld Utility 2

Duration 1 minute

Your skin hardens, becoming a thick, rubbery chitin. For the duration, you gain a +5 bonus to Health, and attack rolls against you are made with 1 bane.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Insect Bond Insect Meld Utility 2

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 2 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the insect keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 2 boons and, if the living gear deals damage during this time, it deals 2d6 extra damage.

True Wings Insect Meld Utility 3

Duration 1 hour

For the duration, wings sprout from your back that can bear you aloft, allowing you to fly at your Speed. These wings can only bear you for short distances at a time, so you must always end your movement on a solid surface, or fall.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Greater Insect Bond Insect Meld Utility 3

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 3 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the insect keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 2 boons and, if the living gear deals damage during this time, it deals 3d6 extra damage.

Insectile Reflexes Insect Meld Attack 4

Duration 1 hour

For the duration, your movement does not trigger free attacks, you impose 2 banes on attack rolls made against you, and you make Agility challenge rolls with 2 boons to resist attacks and other harmful effects.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Meld with Insect Insect Meld Utility 5

Area A cube, 3 yards on a side, originating from a point you can reach

Duration Until you complete a rest; see the effect

You cause an insect to grow to enormous size rapidly, then you merge with the insect, entering its body and assuming control. The insect is a **huge monster** with the climber and flier traits, and it appears in the area. The insect remains for the duration or until incapacitated. It cannot use actions or move independently; you must enter it and merge with its form. While inside, you treat the insect's Defense and Health scores as your own, move at its Speed, have access to its traits, and can use its attack options in place of your own.

Pacari

Those from Pacari have the ability to bond with beasts. This bond expresses itself in two primary ways.

The **Beast Aspect** Essence tree allows a Pacari to take on the physical traits of beasts. Invest in this Essence tree if you want to become more like a beast, fighting with savage fury and natural weapons.

The **Beast Bond** Essence tree focuses on working in tandem with your bondmates and enhancing their abilities. Invest in this Essence tree if you want to build up an entire pack of bondmates and unleash them upon your enemies.

Beast Aspect

The Pacari bond with beasts, and this bond often causes Pacari to take on aspects of those beasts. A Pacari bonded with a rhino might get tough skin, for example, while one bonded to a viper might gain the ability to see heat. Those who pursue this Essence tree seek to deepen this bond, taking on more and more bestial aspects.

Discovery Benefit: You have the eyes of a beast. You gain shadowsight.

Essence Talents

Bestial Aspect You take on a physical aspect from one of your bondmates. Choose one of the following benefits, using your bondmates as a guide. You can describe your bestial aspect however you like. You can take this talent up to seven times, each time taking on a different bestial aspect.

- You gain darksight and increase your Perception by 1.
- You gain a natural weapon; your unarmed attacks deal an extra 1d6 damage.
- You gain natural armor; increase your Defense by 2.
- Increase your Speed by 2.
- Your size increases by 1 and you get Health +3.
- You gain one of the following traits, provided one of your bondmates has the same trait: climber, poisonous, or swimmer.

Bestial Countenance You can manifest your beast traits in a frightening way. Whenever you make an attack or challenge roll to frighten or intimidate someone, you do so with 1 boon.

Animal Magnetism Something about you is just irresistible. Whenever you make an attack or challenge roll to attract or seduce someone, you do so with 1 boon.

Essence Powers

Inner Beast Beast Aspect Utility 0
Duration 1 minute

Your bestial traits become more pronounced, your claws longer, your muscles more taut. For the duration, you get +2 to Perception, +2 to Speed, and your attacks with unarmed attacks and natural weapons deal an extra 1d6 damage.

Catch the Scent Beast Aspect Utility 0

Duration 1 hour

You gain the ability to track and detect your prey more easily, whether this is because of an acute sense of smell or hearing, the ability to see heat, or something else entirely. For the duration, any challenge rolls you make to detect or track creatures get 1 boon, and creatures that are invisible or hidden to you get 1 bane on attack or challenge rolls they make against you.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Primal Vigor Beast Aspect Utility 1

As an action or a triggered action on your turn, you can gain one of the following benefits:

- Remove one of the following afflictions: blinded, deafened, fatigued, or impaired.
- Remove 1 Strain.
- Remove any penalty to your Health.
- Heal damage equal to half your healing rate.

Swipe Beast Aspect Attack 1

As part of using this power, you make an unarmed attack. You make the attack roll with 1 boon. On a success, the target takes 2d6 extra damage.

Environmental Adaptation Beast Aspect Utility 1

Duration 1 hour

You gain one of the following benefits for the duration.

- Gain +5 to Perception and darksight.
- You can move across walls, ceilings, and overhangs, and you never make challenge rolls to climb.
- You can breathe water as easily as you breathe air, you move your full speed underwater, and you never make challenge rolls to swim.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Beast's Attribute Beast Aspect Utility 2

Duration 1 minute

Choose Strength, Agility, Intellect, or Will. For the duration, whenever you make an attack roll or challenge roll with that attribute, you do so with 1 boon.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Natural Armor Beast Aspect Utility 2

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you get a +5 bonus to Health, and attack rolls against you are made with 1 bane.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Savage Onslaught Beast Aspect Attack 3

You move up to twice your Speed in a straight line. During this movement, you can make an unarmed or weapon attack against each creature you can reach, but no more than once per creature. For each attack after the first, you make the attack roll with 1 bane and each attack deals 1d6 extra damage.

Beast Form Beast Aspect Utility 3

Duration 1 minute

You take on the form of a beast of your choice. You can grow or shrink when you assume your new form. While in beast form, you cannot speak to those who cannot understand the speech of beasts, but you can speak to beasts of your type. You can still use Essence powers while in your beast form.

If you grow, your Size doubles and you gain a +10 bonus to Health. Your unarmed or natural weapon attacks deal 1d6 extra damage if your new Size is 3 or less, or 2d6 extra damage if your new Size is 4 or more. If you occupy a space not large enough to accommodate your new Size, you take 5d6 damage and the effect ends immediately.

If you shrink, your Size is halved. You deal half damage with your unarmed or natural weapon attacks, you make Strength attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 bane, and you make Agility attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon. You may choose one of the following traits: climber, swimmer, or poisonous.

You can also choose to become a tiny animal, assuming a size of 1/4 or smaller. If you do so, you deal 1 damage with your unarmed or natural weapon attacks, you make Strength attack rolls and challenge rolls with 2 banes, and you make Agility attack rolls and challenge rolls with 2 boons. You may choose up to two of the following traits: climber, swimmer, flier, or poisonous.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Primal Sight Beast Aspect Utility 4

Duration 1 hour

For the duration, you enjoy the following benefits:

- You see into areas obscured by shadows and darkness as if those areas were lit.
- You see through anything that conceals, disguises, or renders things invisible.

- You recognizes those who wield Chaos for what they are.
- You see creatures that have changed their shape or appearance for what they are.
- You can use an action to focus your senses in order to detect the presence of creatures around you, even if there are obstacles in the way. You can perceive them through foliage, through doors and other thing obstructions, and around corners.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Savage Rage Beast Aspect Attack 5

Area A sphere with a radius equal to half your Speed centered on a point you can reach.

You dart about, rending and tearing with wild abandon. Each creature you choose in the area must make an Agility challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, it takes 4d6+3 damage. Then move up to half your speed. This movement does not trigger free attacks.

Beast Bond

Pacari often forge deep bonds with their beast companions. These bonds allow them to communicate with their beasts and other beasts like them, to act in tandem with their beasts more effectively, and to enhance their beasts' capabilities for short periods of time.

Discovery Benefit: You learn to communicate not just with your bonded beast, but with all beasts of that type. For example, if your bonded beast is a wolf, you can communicate with all wolves. You must be within medium range to communicate with a beast other than your bondmate, and being able to communicate with a beast doesn't guarantee that the beast will be friendly or helpful. If you have more than one bondmate, this benefit applies to all types of beasts you're bonded with.

Essence Talents

Additional Bond You gain an additional bondmate, using the same rules listed under Bondmate in the Pacari Origin. You can take this talent up to three times, but you cannot have two bondmates of the same size.

Command When your bondmate makes an attack or challenge roll, you can use a triggered action to grant the triggering roll 1 boon.

Ferocity When your bondmate makes an attack, you can use a triggered action to cause the triggering attack to deal an extra 1d6 damage.

Pack Recovery Whenever you heal damage, all of your bondmates heal the same amount of damage.

Essence Powers

Walk Among Beasts Beast Bond Utility 0

Duration 1 minute; see the effect

For the duration, animals other than your bondmates lose interest in you. They will not attack you, but neither will they aid you. This effect ends immediately if you make an attack.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect if it ends prematurely.

Unleash the Primal Beast Bond Utility 0

Target One of your bondmates, which must be within short range

Duration 1 minute

Your bondmate grows in stature and ferocity, its eyes glowing and its countenance becoming more menacing. For the duration, it gets a +2 bonus to Speed, a +5 bonus to Health, and its natural weapons deal an extra 1d6 damage, but you cannot issue it commands and it cannot benefit from your talents.

Beast Speech Beast Bond Utility 1

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you can communicate with any animal that can hear you.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Among the Sheep Beast Bond Utility 1

Target One animal you can reach

Duration 1 minute; see the effect

You touch the target, causing it to become hidden from all creatures for the duration.

The effect ends immediately when the target attacks.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect if it ends prematurely.

Coordinated Strike Beast Bond Attack 1

Target One of your bondmates

You and the target each make an attack against the same creature. If both you and the target hit, the creature takes an extra 1d6 damage and falls prone.

Primal Pack Beast Bond Utility 2

Target All of your bondmates, which must all be within medium range

Duration 1 minute

Your bondmates each grow in stature and ferocity, their eyes glowing and their countenances becoming more menacing. For the duration, they each get a +2 bonus to Speed, a +5 bonus to Health, and their natural weapons deal an extra 1d6 damage, but you cannot issue them commands and they cannot benefit from your talents.

Pack Attack Beast Bond Attack 2

Target All of your bondmates

You and each of the targets makes an attack against the same creature. If at least two of you hit, the creature takes an extra 1d6 damage and falls prone.

Savage Charge Beast Bond Attack 3

Target One of your bondmates, which must be under the effects of Unleash the Primal or Primal Pack

You direct your beast to move up to twice its Speed. At any point during this movement, you can direct it to make an attack with its natural weapon against a creature it can reach. On a success, the target takes the attack's damage plus 4d6 extra damage and falls prone.

Beast Sight Beast Bond Utility 3

Target One of your bondmates, which you must be able to communicate with telepathically

Duration 1 hour

For the duration, you can perceive through your bondmate's senses. If it has any special senses, such as shadowsight or darksight, you have access to them for the duration. While you are perceiving through your bondmate's senses, you are unaware of your own surroundings and cannot perceive through your own senses. This effect ends prematurely if you take damage, or if you use a triggered action to end it.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect if it ends prematurely.

Ride Beast Beast Bond Utility 4

Target One of your bondmates, which you must touch

Duration 1 hour

Your body dissolves and enters that of your bondmate, making the two of you one being. While you're riding your within your bondmate, you have full control of its actions, though you cannot speak with those who cannot understand your an animal of your bondmate's type. You treat your bondmate's Defense and Health scores as your own, move at its Speed, and can use its attack options in place of your own. You have access to all of its traits, if any. If your bondmate is incapacitated, you are immediately shunted out into a space within reach of your bondmate, and you take 2d6 damage.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect if it ends prematurely.

Enlarge Beast Beast Bond Utility 5

Target One of your bondmates, which you must touch

Duration 1 hour

Your bondmate grows in size, becoming a **huge animal** but retaining all of its traits, if any. If the target is incapacitated, this effect ends.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain. You can't extend the effect if it ends prematurely.

The Sea

The seafarers adapt to their surroundings, altering their bodies in strange ways and altering the creatures around them to help them survive on the inhospitable oceans. Some can even control these creatures and, some say, the ocean itself.

The **Adaptation** Essence tree allows you to take on additional mutations, as well as to alter your body in significant ways. Invest in this Essence tree if you want to be able to gain new abilities frequently, or if you want to make better use of living gear.

The **Sea-Calling** Essence tree focuses on calling and controlling sea creatures, manipulating the ocean and weather, and creating living gear. Invest in this Essence tree if you want to command the creatures of the sea and even call up a great sea serpent.

Adaptation

The most recognizable and quintessential trait of the seafarers is their ability to adapt: their mutations. All seafarers are born with mutations, but some also learn to control their mutations, to catalyze additional mutations, and even to create temporary mutations on the fly.

Discovery Benefit: You get an additional mutation, rolled or chosen from the Mutations table in your Origin. If you roll a mutation you already have, reroll until you roll a new one.

Essence Talents

Greater Mutation Choose a mutation you have; its effects increase as follows:

- If it deals damage, it deals 1d6 extra damage.
- If it grants a bonus to Defense, you get +4 Health.
- If it grants a bonus to Perception, you get shadowsight.
- If it grants you the ability to breathe underwater, you never have to make challenge rolls to swim, and you get 1 boon on attack rolls and challenge rolls you make underwater.
- If it grants you extra limbs, those limbs become stronger; you get Strength +1.
- If it grants a boon, it now grants 2 boons.

Additional Mutation You get an additional mutation, rolled or chosen from the Mutations table in your Origin. If you roll a mutation you already have, reroll until you roll a new one.

Reconfigure Body When you take a rest, you can choose to enter a state of instability for the next 4 hours. If you have to make any attack or challenge rolls during this time, you do so with 1 bane. Once your state of instability is over, take 1 Strain and swap out one of your mutations for a different mutation. This change lasts until you reconfigure yourself again. If you choose to swap a Greater Mutation for something else, the new mutation is also a Greater Mutation, but you take 2 Strain instead of 1.

Poison Tolerance Because of your constant exposure to chlorine gas on the seas, you are immune to the poisoned affliction and take no damage from poison.

Additional Bond You can safely bond to 1 additional piece of living gear with the sea keyword. You can take this talent up to four times.

Essence Powers

Bioluminescence Adaptation Utility 0

Duration 1 hour

Your skin glows, shedding light in a 5-yard radius for the duration. While you shed light in this way, you make any challenge rolls to hide with 1 bane.

Mutate You can take 1 Strain to make this effect permanent. If you use this power again while it's permanent, extend the light's radius by 3 yards for 1 hour.

Cancel You can end the effect as an action or a triggered action on your turn. If the effect is permanent, you must spend a use of this power in order to cancel it. This also cancels its permanence.

Alter Appearance Adaptation Utility 0

Duration 1 hour

You change your appearance, causing yourself to look like someone else. You decide what you look like. You can increase or decrease your height or weight by up to 25 percent as part of the alteration. You can hide your mutations, but doing so also suppresses any benefit they confer for the duration. You can't change your Size with this power, and it has no effect on your clothing or possessions.

Mutate You can take 1 Strain to make this effect permanent. If you use this power again while it's permanent, you can make additional alterations to your appearance, and you can suppress or reactivate your mutations. All such changes are permanent until you use this power again.

Cancel You can end the effect as an action or a triggered action on your turn. If the effect is permanent, you must spend a use of this power in order to cancel it. This also cancels its permanence.

Lesser Symbiotic Mutation Adaptation Utility 1

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 0 or rank 1 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the sea keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 1 boon and, if the living gear deals damage during this time, it deals 1d6 extra damage.

Nocturnal Mutation Adaptation Utility 1

Duration 1 hour

You have darksight for the duration, but you suffer 1 bane on any attack or challenge rolls you make in sunlight.

Mutate You can take 1 Strain to make this effect permanent. If you use this power again while it's permanent, you get +5 to Perception for 1 hour.

Cancel You can end the effect as an action or a triggered action on your turn. If the effect is permanent, you must spend a use of this power in order to cancel it. This also cancels its permanence.

Aquatic Mutation Adaptation Utility 1

Duration 1 hour

For the duration, you can breathe underwater, you can swim at your Speed, you get a +5 bonus to Speed and Perception, and you never have to make challenge rolls to swim. Further, you make all attack and challenge rolls while underwater with 1 boon. However, if you leave the water you must hold your breath or begin to drown, non-aquatic terrain is difficult terrain for you, and you make all attack and challenge rolls with 1 bane while you're not in the water.

Mutate You can take 1 Strain to make this effect permanent. If you use this power again while it's permanent, you get +5 to Speed for 1 hour, and you make attack and challenge rolls underwater with 1 additional boon for 1 hour.

Cancel You can end the effect as an action or a triggered action on your turn. If the effect is permanent, you must spend a use of this power in order to cancel it. This also cancels its permanence.

Spiny Protrusions Adaptation Utility 2

Duration 1 hour

You grow spikes and spines all over your body. For the duration, anyone who makes a melee attack against you takes 1d6 damage, and you deal 1d6 extra damage with your melee attacks. However, you cannot wear armor while this power is active, and anyone you make physical contact with must succeed at an Agility challenge roll or take 1d6 damage.

Mutate You can take 1 Strain to make this effect permanent. If you use this power again while it's permanent, your spines deal 1d6 extra damage for 1 hour.

Cancel You can end the effect as an action or a triggered action on your turn. If the effect is permanent, you must spend a use of this power in order to cancel it. This also cancels its permanence.

Malleable Form Adaptation Utility 2

Duration 1 hour

Your form becomes malleable; your bones are soft and bendable, your tissues flexible. For the duration, you can move through spaces occupied by other creatures regardless

of their Size, you can move through openings as narrow as six inches wide, you take half damage from weapon attacks, and you get 1 boon on challenge rolls you make to contort or hide yourself. However, you make all weapon attack rolls with 1 bane, you deal half damage with weapon attacks, and you cannot wear armor.

Mutate You can take 1 Strain to make this effect permanent. If you use this power again while it's permanent, you get 2 additional boons on challenge rolls you make to contort or hide yourself for 1 hour.

Cancel You can end the effect as an action or a triggered action on your turn. If the effect is permanent, you must spend a use of this power in order to cancel it. This also cancels its permanence.

Greater Symbiotic Mutation Adaptation Utility 3

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 2 or rank 3 piece of living gear, provided the gear has the sea keyword. Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the piece of living gear for the next round get 2 boons and, if the living gear deals damage during this time, it deals 2d6 extra damage.

Growth Adaptation Utility 3

Duration 1 hour

You grow, doubling your size. For the duration, you get a +10 bonus to Health, you make Strength attack and challenge rolls with 2 boons, and your attacks with melee weapons deal 2d6 extra damage. However, you cannot wear armor of Sizes smaller than your new Size, and you make Agility attack and challenge rolls with 2 banes.

Mutate You can take 1 Strain to make this effect permanent. If you use this power again while it's permanent, your Size increases by 1, you deal an extra 1d6 damage with melee attacks, your Strength attack and challenge rolls get 1 extra boon, and your Agility attack and challenge rolls get 1 extra bane. All such changes last for 1 hour.

Cancel You can end the effect as an action or a triggered action on your turn. If the effect is permanent, you must spend a use of this power in order to cancel it. This also cancels its permanence.

Calcify Adaptation Utility 4

Duration 1 hour

Your body becomes hard and stone-like. For the duration, your Defense becomes 20, you gain a +10 bonus to Health, you are immune to the asleep, blinded, deafened, diseased, fatigued, and poisoned afflictions, and you cannot be moved against your will. However, during this time, you are slowed, you cannot drink, eat, or swim, you sink to the bottom of any body of liquid you enter, and you make all Agility attack and challenge rolls with 2 banes.

Mutate You can take 1 Strain to make this effect permanent. If you use this power again while it's permanent, you take half damage from weapon attacks for 1 hour.

Cancel You can end the effect as an action or a triggered action on your turn. If the effect is permanent, you must spend a use of this power in order to cancel it. This also cancels its permanence.

Be the Fittest

Adaptation Utility 5

Duration 1 hour

Choose Strength, Agility, Intelligence, or Will and roll 1d6. You gain a bonus to the chosen attribute score equal to the number rolled, up to a maximum score of 20, for the duration. This increase also affects any characteristic associated with the attribute.

Mutate You can take 1 Strain to make this effect permanent; you also take 1 Strain every time you take a rest for as long as this effect is permanent. If you use this power again while it's permanent, choose a different attribute to apply the bonus to and reroll the d6. You lose your bonus to the previous attribute.

Cancel You can end the effect as an action or a triggered action on your turn. If the effect is permanent, you must spend a use of this power in order to cancel it. This also cancels its permanence.

Sea-Calling

Those who ply the waves have learned to tame sea creatures, causing them to grow into useful forms. They also learn to control the sea itself, exerting their will over the waves and the weather in order to assure that they are the best sailors on the seas.

Discovery Benefit: Whenever you'd roll with any boons from your Sailor profession, you roll with 1 additional boon.

Essence Talents

Craft Sea Creature You know how to create living gear with the sea keyword. In order to create a piece of living gear, your Essence must be equal to or higher than its rank. For more information on creating living gear, see **Chapter 9**.

Shipwright You know how to create living ships. In order to create a living ship, your Essence must be equal to or higher than its rank. For more information on creating living ships, see **Chapter 9**.

Helmsman You can forge a bond with a living ship, allowing you to control and pilot it. To do so, make a Will attack with 1 boon against the ship's Will while you're in contact with its helm. If you succeed, the ship is compelled until you sever your connection to it, and you make any challenge rolls related to piloting or navigating it with 1 boon for the duration.

Sea Hunter Whenever you make an attack roll against a creature with the swimmer trait, you do so with 1 boon and deal 2d6 extra damage.

Essence Powers

Friendly Current Sea-Calling Utility 0

Duration 1 hour

You stir the waters around you such that the current speeds you, or your ship, on your way. Your ship's speed is increased by half for the duration. If you're not in a ship, you get +5 to your speed while you're in the water, and any rolls you make to swim get 2 boons.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 hour. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Sea Tongue Sea-Calling Utility 0

Duration 1 minute

For the duration, you can communicate with any animal within medium range, provided it has the swimmer trait. This doesn't guarantee that the animal will be friendly or cooperative.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Tame Sea Creature Sea-Calling Utility 1

Target One animal or monster with the swimmer trait that you can see within short range

Make a Will attack roll against the target's Will. You make the attack roll with 1 boon if you're under the effect of the *sea tongue* power. If the target's Health is higher than yours, the power fails and its use is wasted.

On a success, the target becomes charmed until you complete a rest. It accompanies you on your adventures and helps you to the best of its ability, though it remains under the Keeper's control.

You can have a number of sea creatures charmed this way equal to your Essence score. If using this power causes you to exceed this number, the effect automatically ends on the creature affected for the longest time.

Attack Roll 20+ The target becomes permanently charmed.

Call Small Sea Creature Sea-Calling Utility 1

Area A cube of space, 1 yard on a side, originating from a point within medium range and resting on a solid surface or an area of water

Duration 1 hour

A compelled **small animal** or **tiny animal** appears in the area. The creature has the swimmer trait, and a tiny animal can have one additional trait from the following list: climber, poisonous, or flier.

The creature is of a kind appropriate to the environment where you used the power. When the effect ends or the creature becomes incapacitated, it returns whence it came.

Shape Sea Creature Sea-Calling Attack 1

Target One tiny or small animal or monster with the swimmer trait you can reach. You touch the target, causing its body to twist and mutate, shaping it into a form that benefits you. Make a Will attack against the target's Will. On a success, the target takes 3d6 damage. If this damage incapacitates the target, you reshape its body into a form that suits you, turning it into a short-lived piece of living gear. It counts as a piece of consumable living gear with the sea keyword, and provides one of the following benefits for the next hour while it's attached to you:

- You are immune to the poisoned and diseased conditions and you take no damage from poison or disease.
- You gain darksight.
- You can breathe underwater.
- When you heal damage, you heal 1d3 extra damage.
- Choose Strength, Agility, Intellect, or Will. You get 1 boon on all attack rolls and challenge rolls with that attribute. However, when the duration expires, you get 1 bane on attack rolls and challenge rolls with the same attribute for 1 hour.

Call Medium Sea Creature Sea-Calling Utility 2

Area A cube of space, 1 yard on a side, originating from a point within medium range and resting on a solid surface or an area of water.

Duration 1 hour

This power works like *call small sea creature*, except that a compelled **medium animal**, **small animal**, **small monster**, or **tiny animal** appears inside the area. The creature has the swimmer trait, and a small or tiny animal can have an additional trait from the following list: climber, poisonous, or flier.

Call Scalding Spout Sea-Calling Attack 2

Area A circle with a 5-yard radius centered on a point on the ground or water within medium range.

You reach deep down and call up a spout of scalding water, which erupts from the area, climbing 2d6 yards before raining onto the surrounding area out to half that many yards beyond the area of this power.

The force of the water moves unsecured objects of Size 1 or smaller 1d6 yards away from the origin point and extinguishes unprotected flames. Each creature in the area takes 2d6+2 damage from the hot water, and must make an Agility challenge roll. The creature falls prone on a failure, or just takes half the damage on a success.

Call Large Sea Creature Sea-Calling Utility 3

Area A cube of space, 2 yard on a side, originating from a point within medium range and resting on a solid surface or an area of water.

Duration 1 hour

This power works like *call small sea creature*, except that a compelled **large animal**, **medium animal**, **medium monster**, **small animal**, **small monster**, or **tiny animal** appears inside the area. The creature has the swimmer trait, and a medium or smaller animal or small monster can have an additional trait from the following list: climber, poisonous, or flier.

Stormcaller Sea-Calling Attack 3

Area A cylinder, 2 yards tall with a 5-yard radius, centered on a point within long range

Duration 1 minute

Dark clouds gather over the area, and a violent storm erupts. The area is partially obscured by mist and rain and, for the duration, creatures within the area and within 5 yards of the area's edge are deafened. The ground in the area becomes difficult terrain due to slippery mud; the deck of a ship or the waters of a body of water are similarly effected.

When you use this power, at the end of each round for the duration, hail deals 3d6 damage to anything in the area that does not have shelter. Each creature that takes damage this way must make an Agility challenge roll. It falls prone on a failure, or just takes half the damage on a success.

You can, at your option, expend a use of this power to calm a natural storm, dispersing it over the course of 1 minute and calming the weather within 1 mile. A storm created by this power does not count as a natural storm, nor does the God's Eye or an effect created by a power or Chaos site.

Calm Sea Creatures Sea-Calling Utility 4

Target Any number of animals or monsters with the swimmer trait within medium range, or a single sea serpent

Each target must make a Will challenge roll with 1 bane. On a failure, it becomes charmed until you attack it or until you complete a rest. While charmed in this way, the creature becomes impaired if it is beyond short range of you.

Call Serpent Sea-Calling Utility 5

Area A cube of space, 4 yards on a side, originating from a point within medium range in an ocean

Duration 1 minute

One compelled **sea serpent** of Size 3 or smaller appears in the area.

Sky City

The people of Sky City use their bond with blice crystals to learn to manipulate gravity, jump great distances, and even fly. The sky-dwellers have also perfected their own unique martial art.

The **Gravity Manipulation** Essence tree grants you powerful gravitational attacks and effects, and also allows you to wield oversized weapons and wear heavier armor more easily. Invest in this Essence tree if you want to move people around, control gravitational effects, and wield two-handed weapons in one hand.

The **Sky-Dancing** Essence tree represents a unique martial art created by the sky-dwellers that capitalizes on their speed, agility, and ability to become lighter than air. Invest in this Essence tree if you want to be able to make great leaps, avoid deadly attacks, and fly.

Gravity Manipulation

The people of Sky City can learn to manipulate gravity not just around themselves, but around others. They also learn techniques for making their gear lighter, or for making large, unwieldy weapons lighter and easier for them to wield.

Discovery Benefit: You've learned to manipulate your personal gravity such that you can carry more. When calculating how many objects you can carry before being encumbered, at 5 to your Strength score.

Essence Talents

Weapon Grace You treat all one-handed melee weapons as if they have the Finesse property, and you ignore the Cumbersome property on such weapons. You can take this talent twice; if you take it a second time, apply its effects to two-handed weapons as well.

Armored Grace When determining whether or not you are strong enough to wear a piece of armor, use Agility instead of Strength.

Safe Fall You can fall twice as far as normal without taking damage. If a creature within short range of you falls, you can use a triggered action to apply this effect to that creature for 1 round; if you do so, it doesn't apply to you for the duration.

Long Shot Increase the range of any ranged weapon you wield by 1 step (short to medium, medium to long, long to extreme).

Essence Powers

Single-Hand Style Gravity Manipulation Utility 0

Target One or two melee weapons on your person that require 2 hands to wield

Duration 1 minute; see the effect

For the duration, treat the targets as if they were one-handed weapons. If a target leaves your person, the effect ends on that target.

Reverse You can reverse this power after you use it as part of an attack action. If you do, any attack rolls you make as part of the attack action get 1 boon and the attacks deal 1d6 extra damage, but the power immediately ends.

Force Blast Gravity Manipulation Attack 0

Target One creature or object within short range

You unleash a light blast of gravitational force against the target. Make an Intelligence attack roll against the target's Strength. On a success, the force moves the target 1d6 yards away from you.

Reverse You can reverse this power, drawing the creature toward you instead of pushing it away.

Gravity Well Gravity Manipulation Attack 1

Area A sphere with a 2-yard radius, originating from a point within medium range. Gravity draws all creatures and objects within the sphere toward its center. Each creature in the area must get a success on a Strength challenge roll or be moved 1d6 yards toward the origin point of this power. Flying creatures make the roll with 1 bane.

Reverse You can reverse this power, pushing creatures away from the origin point instead of pulling them toward it.

Gravity Strike Gravity Manipulation Attack 1

Target One melee weapon you wield

As part of using this power, you make an attack with a weapon, increasing the gravity on that weapon to drive it home even harder. You make the attack roll with 1 boon and can use either Intellect or Agility instead of the attack's normal attribute. On a success, the target takes 2d6 extra damage.

Reverse You can reverse this power as a triggered action in response to a melee weapon attack being made against you. When you do, you target the attacker's weapon, making it suddenly lighter. The triggering attack roll is made with 1 bane and, if it hits, it deals half damage. This use of *gravity strike* is a utility power.

Slowfall Gravity Manipulation Utility 1

Target One creature within long range

You use a triggered action to use this power when you see the target fall. For the duration of the fall, the target takes no damage from landing. This power doesn't affect subsequent falls unless you use it again.

Reverse You can reverse this power to instead accelerate the creature's fall. Unless the target succeeds on an Agility challenge roll, it takes 2d6 extra damage from the fall and lands prone. This use of *slowfall* is an attack power.

Optimize Gravity Gravity Manipulation Utility 2

Target One creature you can reach

Duration 1 minute

You touch the target. For the duration, the target gets a +3 bonus to Speed, its jump distance is doubled, and attack rolls against the target are made with 1 bane.

Reverse When you reverse this power, the target must succeed on a Strength challenge roll. If it fails, for the duration it is slowed and attack rolls against the target are made with 1 boon. This use of *optimize gravity* is an attack power.

Gravity Surge Gravity Manipulation Attack 2

Target Up to three creatures or objects within long range

You manipulate the gravity around the targets such that it pulls them in multiple directions at once. For each target, make an Intellect attack roll against the target's Agility. On a success, the target takes 1d6 damage and is impaired for 1 round.

Reverse You can reverse this power to instead strengthen the gravitational fields around the targets. Each target must succeed on an Agility challenge roll or be immobilized and impaired for 1d3 rounds.

What Goes Up Gravity Manipulation Attack 3

Area A cylinder, 4 yards tall with a radius of 4 yards, centered on a point within long range

You fling each creature in the area straight up. Each creature in the area must make a Strength challenge roll; Size 1 or smaller creatures make the roll with 1 bane. On a failure, the creature is moved 5d6 yards straight up, at which point it falls normally.

Reverse When you reverse this power, you instead push creatures in the area down. Each creature in the area must make a Strength challenge roll; Size 1 or smaller creatures make the roll with 1 bane. On a failure, each creature takes 2d6 damage, falls prone, and is immobilized for 1d3 rounds. Flying creatures that fail their challenge rolls fall, taking the 2d6 damage as extra damage.

Meteoric Leap Gravity Manipulation Attack 3

You fly up to twice your speed, then land. When you land, a shockwave spreads out through the ground in a 4-yard radius from a point within your space. Each creature on the ground must make an Agility challenge roll. On a failure the creature takes 2d6 damage and falls prone.

Reverse You can reverse this power to instead land lightly. When you do so, you fly up to three times your speed and land normally. This use of *meteoric leap* is a utility power.

Singularity Gravity Manipulation Attack 4

Area A sphere with a 6-yard radius, originating from a point within long range

Duration Concentration, up to 1 minute

You create a powerful well of gravity that draws all creatures and objects in the area into itself. Anything in the area take 3d6 damage. Objects that take this damage are drawn directly to the origin point of the singularity. Each creature damaged in this way must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it is moved 1d6 yards toward the origin point and is immobilized. On a success, it takes half the damage and is instead slowed. A creature that starts its turn within the area of the singularity must repeat this challenge roll, but does not take more damage, even on a failure.

Reverse You can reverse this power to instead push creatures away from the origin point. In this case, the duration becomes instantaneous and, instead of being drawn 1d6 yards toward the origin point, creatures who fail their Strength challenge rolls are flung 5d6 yards away from the origin point. A creature that encounters a solid surface before moving the full distance takes 1d6 damage plus 1d6 damage per 5 yards remaining in this movement (round down). Objects that take the initial damage from this power are scattered in random directions.

Gravity Shield Gravity Manipulation Utility 5

Duration 4 hours; see the effect

You gain a +5 bonus to Defense for the duration. The next time a creature within short range of you would get a success on an attack roll against you, this effect ends and the success automatically becomes a failure. The triggering creature must make a Strength challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 10d6 damage, is moved 2d6 yards away from you, and falls prone. It takes half the damage on a success.

Reverse You can reverse this power to bind an unstable gravitational field to a creature. Make an Intellect attack against the Agility of a creature within short range. On a success, you destabilize the creature's gravitational field for 1 minute, granting 2 boons on any attacks made against it for the duration. The first attack that hits the target ends this effect, dealing an extra 7d6 damage, knocks the creature prone, and immobilizes it for 1 round.

Sky-Dancing

Perhaps the most iconic ability of the denizens of Sky City, the art of sky-dancing wraps speed, agility, defense, aerobic leaps and maneuvers, and even flight into a complex and unique martial art that nobody else can quite replicate.

Discovery Benefit: You learn the *sky dance* power

Essence Talents

Aerobic Attack You get 1 boon on any weapon attack rolls you make while in the air or above your target.

Run on Anything You can make yourself light enough that you're able to run on walls, narrow surfaces such as rope, and even across liquids, all at your normal Speed. You

must end your movement on a solid horizontal surface, though, or you fall prone, fall off the surface, sink into the liquid, or suffer some other, appropriate consequence. You can't use this talent if you're wearing armor.

Swift as Wind Increase your Speed by 2, provided you're not wearing armor.

Light Steps When you make a challenge roll to move quietly, you do so with 1 boon.

Armored Agility You can wear light armor and still use powers and talents from this tree.

Missile Deflect When you're attacked with a ranged weapon wielded by a creature you can see, you can use a triggered action to alter your gravitational field, causing missiles to go awry. Choose 1:

- For 1 round, you impose 1 bane on attack rolls against you made using ranged weapons.
- The triggering ranged weapon attack suffers 2 banes and, if it misses, you can make an Intellect attack against the target's Defense. If you hit, you reflect the attack back at the target, dealing damage to the target according to the triggering ranged attack.

Essence Powers

Sky Dance Sky-Dancing Utility 0

Duration 1 minute

You enter a state of lightness and agility that allows you to perform the martial art called sky-dancing. You cannot wear armor while sky-dancing. While in this state, you get +2 to your Defense and +3 to your Speed.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it to 1 hour or add an hour to its duration. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Great Leap Sky-Dancing Utility 0

You jump 200 yards. If you get a running start, you jump 500 yards. If you're sky-dancing, double these values.

Swift Action Sky-Dancing Utility 1

Special You must be sky-dancing

If you use this power as a fast action, you can take a normal action and move half your speed. If you use this power as a slow action, you can take a normal action and move twice your speed.

Cut like Wind Sky-Dancing Attack 1

Target One creature or object within short range

Special You must be sky-dancing, and you must be wielding a melee weapon

You hurl your melee weapon at the target, causing it to whirl and cut. Make an Intelligence attack roll against the target's Strength. On a success, the target takes 2d6+3 damage. After the attack, your weapon returns to your hand.

Attack Roll 20+ The target takes 2d6 extra damage.

Silent Steps Sky-Dancing Utility 1

Special You must be sky-dancing

For as long as you remain sky-dancing, you don't make sound unless you choose to. If you stop sky-dancing, this effect ends.

Light as Air Sky-Dancing Utility 2

Special You must be sky-dancing

For as long as you remain sky-dancing, you don't take damage from falling. In addition, you can stand on any surface that would bear at least 1 pound of weight. If you stop sky-dancing, this effect ends.

Swift Strikes Sky-Dancing Utility 2

Duration 1 minute

Special You must be sky-dancing

For the duration, when you make a melee weapon attack, you do so with 1 boon.

When this power's duration elapses, you can choose to extend it by 1 minute. If you do, either expend another use of this power or take 1 Strain.

Walk the Wind Sky-Dancing Utility 3

Special You must be sky-dancing

For as long as you remain sky-dancing, you can levitate. You do not fall if you do not wish to, and you can move up or down at half your normal speed. You can't move horizontally unless you have handholds — in which case you can move at half your speed — or some form of propulsion. Most sky-dancers use spore packs to allow them to fly more effectively.

Step Aside Sky-Dancing Utility 3

Special You must be sky-dancing

You can use a triggered action to use this power when a creature gets a success on an attack roll against you. The success instead becomes a failure, and you move your Speed without triggering free attacks.

Turn the Blade Sky-Dancing Attack 4

Target One creature within short range

Duration 1 minute; see the effect

Special You must be sky-dancing

For the duration, the target gets 1 bane on any weapon attacks against you. If the target succeeds on an attack roll against you, you can use a triggered action to end this effect.

If you do, the success instead becomes a failure, and you can immediately make a weapon attack against the target. If you hit, you deal 3d6 extra damage.

Sky-Dancing Mastery Sky-Dancing Utility 5

Duration 1 minute

Special You must be sky-dancing

You enter a state of heightened awareness, speed, and agility. For the duration, you cannot use Essence powers but gain all of the following benefits:

- You gain a +3 bonus to Defense and a +15 bonus to Health.
- You make Agility attack rolls and challenge rolls with 1 boon.
- Your melee weapon attacks deal an extra 2d6 damage.
- You can use a triggered action on your turn to expend 1 use of a Sky-Dancing power. If you do, you extend this effect's duration by a number of minutes equal to the power's rank.

You can dismiss this effect as a triggered action on your turn, if you wish.

The Mainland

People from the mainland don't have Essence bonds with anything in their environment when they're born. Because their Essence is, effectively, unbonded, mainlanders can forge bonds with symbiotic living gear, or even with the primal force of Chaos.

The **Chaos** Essence tree is powerful, dangerous, and rife with risk... and reward. Chaos is addictive and potentially deadly to the wielder, and Chaos-wielders often bring destruction and discord where they go, but no force humans can control is more powerful. Invest in this Essence tree if you want enormous power and are willing to accept the risk and the cost.

The **Symbiosis** Essence tree allows mainlanders to forge deep bonds with the living gear of Asunder, allowing them to use that gear more effectively and more often than anyone else in the world. Invest in this Essence tree if your eyes light up when you peruse the living gear section in **Chapter 9**.

Chaos

Chaos is a dangerous and unpredictable force. Those who seek to bond with it do so at their own peril; many destroy themselves in the process, and those who survive often live short lives full of destruction, violence, and hedonism. Despite this, many still seek it out. Chaos allows you to reshape and control the fundamental building blocks of reality, and it is easily the most powerful force that humans can harness. It's exceedingly dangerous, though, and more addictive than any drug.

Discovery Benefit: There is no discovery benefit for Chaos. Instead, there are special rules that affect only Chaos-wielders, listed below.

Benefits and Drawbacks of Chaos

Chaos is an incredibly powerful force. Because of this, every Chaos power has a **push** notation. Any Chaos power can be used with relative safety, but in order to use a Chaos power to its true potential, you must take a risk. Every time you push a Chaos power, apply the push effect listed under that power. You can push as many times as you like on a single casting of a Chaos power. After you've resolved the effect of the power, roll 1d6 for each push you applied to it. For every 1d6 that comes up odd, you must choose to either take 2d6 damage or 1d6 Discord.

There's no way to reduce the damage you receive from using a Chaos power; not even the *deny death* power reduces this damage. Further, if you're incapacitated by damage you receive from using a Chaos power, you explode. This kills you and forces every creature within short range of you to make an Agility challenge roll or take 1d6 damage for every point of Discord you had when you died, as well as 1d6 Discord. The area becomes a Chaos site with a rank equal to the amount of Discord you had when you died.

Further, Chaos is incredibly addictive. Using a Chaos power in the heat of battle causes a euphoric rush that you can only sustain by continuing to use Chaos powers. The first

time you use a Chaos power during a particular battle, your euphoria starts. While under the effects of euphoria, you gain 1 boon on all attack and challenge rolls. However, in order to maintain your euphoria, you must use a Chaos power every turn. As soon as you go a full turn without using a Chaos power, you crash; you lose the boon granted by your euphoria and instead gain 1 bane on all attack and challenge rolls for 1 hour. Using another Chaos power puts you back under the effects of euphoria, and resets the duration of your crash. Using a Chaos power outside of battle doesn't cause a crash, but doesn't cause euphoria, either.

Chaos Talents

Shunt Discord You can spend 1 hour in intense concentration, at which point you take an action to bleed off some of your Discord. Immediately reduce your Discord by half, rounded down. However, that Discord has to go somewhere; any creatures within short range of you take 2d6 damage and 1d6 Discord, and the area becomes a Chaos site with a rank equal to half the amount of Discord you shunted (maximum 4).

Strength from Chaos If your Discord is higher than your Strength score, you can use Discord instead of Strength when calculating your modifier or defending against attacks that target your Strength. Any of your Strength-based characteristics are still based on your Strength score.

Chaotic Agility If your Discord is higher than your Agility score, you can use Discord instead of Agility when calculating your modifier or defending against attacks that target your Agility. Any of your Agility-based characteristics are still based on your Agility score.

Chaos Shield If your Discord is higher than your Defense score, you can use Discord instead of Defense.

Chaos Eater When you encounter a Chaos shard, you can consume it to gain power. Consuming a Chaos shard induces euphoria identical to the euphoria that you gain from using Chaos powers, except that it lasts for 1 hour per rank of the Chaos shard consumed. In addition, for every rank of the Chaos shard you consume, you regain one spent use of a Chaos power and take 1d6 Discord.

Chaos Shaper You know how to create Chaos gear. In order to create a piece of Chaos gear, your Essence must be equal to or higher than its rank. For more information on creating Chaos gear, see **Chapter 9**.

Chaos Spike As an action, you take 1 Discord and then manifest a spike of Chaos, a blade of pure primal energy that springs to life from your fist. The spike deals 1d6+2 damage and has the finesse property. If your Discord is 13 or higher, it deals an extra 1d6 damage. The Chaos spike lasts until you dismiss it as an action or triggered action on your turn, or until you are rendered unconscious or take a rest.

Chaos Powers

Maintain the High Chaos Utility 0

Duration 1 round

Take 1 damage or 1 Discord. You draw just enough Chaos into yourself to intensify your state of euphoria briefly. For the duration, you gain 1 boon on all attack and challenge rolls. You have to bleed the Chaos off somehow, though, and it manifests in strange occurrences in your environment: multicolored lights, tiny bursts of flame in the air, or small animals spontaneously changing texture.

Push When you push this power, you extend its duration to 1 minute, or you add 1 minute to its duration.

Induce Mutation Chaos Attack 0

Target One creature or object within short range

Take 1 damage or 1 Discord. Make a Will attack against the target's Strength. If you hit, the target takes 1d6+2 damage and must make a Will challenge roll if it's a creature. If the target fails the will challenge roll, it becomes impaired for 1 minute. This impairment takes the form of some permanent change to the target: fur, skin like bark, an extra eye, or some other cosmetic change to the target. An object automatically suffers a similar cosmetic change.

Push The first time you push this power, you get 1 boon on your Will attack. The second time, the power deals 1d6 extra damage. The third, the duration of the target's impairment and physical change increases by 1 minute. Further pushes follow the same pattern, but if you push this power 6 times, the physical change to the target becomes permanent and it immediately gains 1d6 Discord, though the impairment still wears off after the duration elapses.

Chaotic Servitor Chaos Utility 1

Area A cube of space, 1 yard on a side, originating from a point within medium range and resting on a solid surface

Duration 1 minute

Take 2 damage or 1 Discord. You create a semi-living manifestation of pure Chaos in the form of a compelled **small monster** in the area. When the monster is incapacitated, it explodes, dealing 1d6 damage to anyone within short range who fails an Agility challenge roll.

Push Each time you push this power, choose 1: increase the duration by 1 minute, grant the monster 1 boon on attacks, or increase the damage of its death explosion by 1d6.

Create Matter Chaos Utility 1

Duration 1 hour

Take 2 damage or 1 Discord. A weapon, bundle of ammunition, tool, or hand-held object appears in your hand or hands, or at your feet if you have no hands free. The

item is clearly unnatural and thus has no value, though it has its normal effects. A person who has discovered the Chaos Essence tree can use this item without any ill effect, but anyone else takes 1 Discord for every full minute they spend in contact with it. You can't create pieces of living gear with this power.

Push Each time you push this power, choose 1: increase the duration by 1 hour, or grant 1 boon to the attack or challenge rolls of anyone using the item for its primary function. Each time you push this power, it also increases the Discord that people take from contact with the item by 1.

Distort Time Chaos Attack 1

Target One creature within short range

Take 2 damage or 1 Discord. Make a Will attack roll with 1 boon against the target's Strength. On a success, the target becomes slowed for 1 minute.

Push The first time you push this power, the target is also impaired for the duration. The second time, the target is also immobilized. The third time, the target is fatigued. The fourth time, the target is frozen in time, effectively becoming unconscious. Each additional push extends the duration by 1 minute, but if you push this power a total of 10 times, the target becomes permanently frozen in time.

Erase Injury Chaos Utility 2

Target One creature you can reach

Take 1d3 damage or 1 Discord. You touch the target, which heals damage equal to twice its healing rate. If the target has not discovered the Chaos Essence tree, it takes 2 Discord.

Push Each time you push this power, you can either affect an additional target or extend the range for a single target to short range.

Bend Space Chaos Utility 2

Take 1d3 damage or 2 Discord. You teleport to an open space you can see within long range.

Push Each time you push this power, you can increase the distance you teleport to 1 mile or add 1 mile to the distance. If you cannot see the place you're teleporting to, you must be familiar with that place, and you must make an Intellect challenge roll. If you fail the challenge roll, you appear in a location of the Keeper's choosing within 1 mile of your intended destination.

Transform Creature Chaos Attack 3

Target One creature you can see within medium range

Duration 1 minute; see effect

Take 1d6 damage or 2 Discord. You can choose to transform the target into a helpless creature or a dangerous creature. If the target is unwilling, it must make a Strength challenge roll to avoid the effect.

If you transform the target into a helpless creature, it becomes a **small animal** for the duration. While transformed in this way, it becomes frightened and must take a fast turn each round, using its action to rush away from you by the safest available route.

If you transform the target into a dangerous creature, it becomes a **large monster** for the duration.

In either case, if the target is unwilling, the effect ends immediately when it takes any damage.

Push When you push this power, you can choose to either affect an additional target or extend the duration for a single target by 1 minute.

Alter Reality Chaos Utility 3

Area A cube, 4 yards on a side, originating from a point you can see within long range

Duration 1 hour; see the effect

Take 1d6 damage or 2 Discord. An illusion of a creature, object, or force that looks, sounds, and otherwise seems real appears inside the area. If you cannot see the illusion at the end of a round, the effect ends immediately.

If you create an illusion of a dangerous force, such as fire or boiling water, a creature moving into its space must make a Perception challenge roll, taking 4d6 damage on a failure.

If you create an illusion of a creature, it moves and behaves in a lifelike manner and uses your Will score for its attributes, Defense, and Health. It ignores all afflictions and disappears when it becomes incapacitated, which ends the effect. For the duration, you can use an action to move the illusion up to 10 yards and attack one creature within 1 yard of it that can see the illusion and that believes it to be real. Make a Will attack roll against the target's Perception. On a success, the target believes that it was injured, burned, or otherwise harmed by the illusion and takes 5d6 damage.

Maintaining this power counts as using a Chaos power on each of your turns for the purpose of maintaining your euphoria.

Push Each time you push this power, you can choose to increase the duration by 1 hour or increase the damage the illusion deals by 1d6.

Deny Death Chaos Utility 4

Target One creature you can reach

Duration 1 minute

Take 2d6 damage or 1d6 Discord. You touch the target, making it immune to all damage for the duration.

Push Each time you push this power, you extend its duration by 1 minute.

Unmake Chaos Attack 5

Target One creature or object you can see within long range

Take 3d6 damage or 1d6 Discord. Make a Will attack roll against the target's Will. On a success, the target takes 10d6 damage. A creature incapacitated by this damage is erased from existence.

Push Each time you push this power, it deals 2d6 extra damage.

Symbiosis

Because mainlanders' Essence isn't bonded to anything in the environment, using living gear is far less taxing for them than it is for people from other parts of the world. Though every nation on Asunder uses living gear, mainlanders are capable of bonding to such symbiotic organisms to a much greater degree.

Discovery Benefit: You can safely bond to 1 additional piece of living gear.

Symbiosis Talents

Additional Bond You can safely bond to 1 additional piece of living gear. You can take this talent up to three times.

Symbiotic Healing As an action, you can spend 1 use of a piece of living gear in order to heal. The amount you heal depends on the rank of the living gear.

Living Gear Rank Healing

0	2
1	Half your healing rate
2	Your healing rate
3	Twice your healing rate
4	Three times your healing rate
5	Fully heal yourself

Symbiont Whisperer As an action, you can touch a piece of living gear in order to discover exactly what it does. You can also bond with a piece of living gear as an action instead of the usual bonding time.

Symbiosis Powers

Least Symbiotic Command Symbiosis Utility 0

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 0 piece of living gear.

Push Symbiont Symbiosis Utility 0

As a triggered action on your turn, you can grant yourself 1 boon on any attack or challenge rolls associated with the next piece of living gear you use, provided you use it within 1 turn.

Lesser Symbiotic Command Symbiosis Utility 1

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 1 or lower piece of living gear.

Resist Symbiont Symbiosis Utility 1

Whenever somebody attacks you or affects you against your will with a piece of living gear, you can use a triggered action to grant yourself 2 boons on any challenge rolls made to resist the effect, and to impose 2 banes on any attack rolls made against you by the wielder.

Symbiotic Restoration Symbiosis Utility 1

Target One piece of living gear of at least rank 1 that you wield and are bonded to
You can draw energy from a piece of living gear, allowing you to restore your Essence. Expend 1 use from the target. You lose 1d6 Strain.

Symbiotic Command Symbiosis Utility 2

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 2 or lower piece of living gear.

Enhance Symbiont Symbiosis Utility 2

Target One piece of living gear that you wield and are bonded to

Duration 1 minute

Any attack or challenge rolls you make with the target receive 1 boon for the duration.

Greater Symbiotic Command Symbiosis Utility 3

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 3 or lower piece of living gear.

Consume Symbiont Symbiosis Utility 3

Target One piece of living gear that you wield and are bonded to

You consume the target, destroying it. Upon doing so, you heal twice your healing rate and regain spent uses of your rank 3 and lower Symbiosis powers equal to the number of uses the target had remaining.

Master's Symbiotic Command Symbiosis Utility 4

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 4 or lower piece of living gear.

True Symbiosis Symbiosis Utility 5

You can expend a use of this power instead of expending a use of a rank 5 or lower piece of living gear.

Chaos and Pure Light

Chaos is the primal force of creation and destruction, the god-machine that was used to forge the world long ago. Pure Light is a manifestation of Chaos, though a very different one from Chaos shards or Chaos sites.

This chapter provides rules for when your Seekers encounter Pure Light, Chaos shards, or Chaos sites. For information on how to wield Chaos, refer to **Chapter 10**. For information on how Discord works, refer to **Chapter 3**.

Chaos Shards

Very rarely, shards of pure Chaos energy manifest in the world, fragments of the god-machine bleeding out into human reality. Some say that Chaos exists in a reality parallel to our own, and these shards are fragments of that reality blending with ours where the barrier between them is thin. Others say that the god-machine is underground, within the planet itself, and that fragments of Chaos dislodge from it and get pushed out of the world's skin, Gaia rejecting a foreign invader. Whatever the truth, the fact remains that Chaos shards are tremendously dangerous, but can be harnessed by those with the will, knowledge, and ability to do so.

Shard Rank

All Chaos shards have a rank, from 1 to 5. Rank 1 shards are rare, numbering in the hundreds in the entire world. Rank 5 shards are theoretical; it's possible that one or two of them exists in the world, but nobody's found one and lived to tell the tale. A shard's rank determines its general power, and also its size. A shard's Size is equal to its rank. Whenever a shard makes an attack or challenge roll, it does so with a bonus equal to its rank, and with an equivalent number of boons. Whenever a shard forces a challenge roll, that challenge roll suffers a number of banes equal to the shard's rank.

Shard Effects

Chaos shards have a form of sentience and awareness — or, at least, they seem to. Whenever Seekers come into contact with a Chaos shard, refer to the “Shard Effects by Rank” table below to determine what the Shard does in their presence. You may wish to run an encounter with a Chaos shard as a conflict.

Shard Effects by Rank

Rank	Effects
1	Chaos site
2	Chaos site
3	Chaos site, Chaos beasts
4	Chaos site, Chaos beasts, attack
5	Chaos site, Chaos beasts, attack

Chaos site: A Chaos shard always exists in the center of a Chaos site with a rank equal to its own.

Chaos beasts: The Chaos shard is accompanied by creatures comprised of pure Chaos. A rank 3 shard is accompanied by 2 **medium Chaos beasts**, a rank 4 shard by 2 **medium Chaos beasts** and 1 **large Chaos beast**, and a rank 5 shard by 2 **large Chaos beasts** and 1 **huge Chaos beast**.

Attack: The Chaos shard can take actions and attack. Its attack is a ranged attack that can affect anything within its Chaos site, and the attack deals 2d6 damage per rank of the shard, plus 1d6 Discord. A creature that takes damage from this attack is also warped and mutated; this mutation is permanent but has no specific game effect, though the creature is impaired for 1 minute due to the disorientation of the sudden mutation. A creature incapacitated by this damage is transformed into a **monster** of its Size.

Harnessing a Shard

A Seeker from the mainland can harness a Chaos shard's energy in order to learn to wield Chaos. If a Seeker wishes to do discover the Chaos Essence tree, allow them to visit a Chaos shard of appropriate rank (see the "Shard Rank by Level" table) and play out an encounter with the shard. Typically, harnessing a shard's power requires a Will challenge roll with a number of banes equal to the shard's rank.

Someone who is already a Chaos wielder can use clear glass to contain a mote of Chaos from a Chaos shard. See "Glass" in **Chapter 9** for information on this.

Finally, a Chaos wielder can draw power from a Chaos shard within short range as a triggered action when they use a Chaos power. Make a Will challenge roll with a number of banes equal to the shard's rank. If you succeed, you take 1 Discord and can either use the power without expending a use of it (as long as the power's rank is not greater than the shard's), or you can use the shard's energy to push the power a number of times equal to twice the shard's rank for free. If you fail the challenge roll, you take 1d6 Discord and gain no benefit.

Destroying a Chaos Shard

You can't simply hit a Chaos shard with a weapon and expect to harm it; destroying a Chaos shard requires a lengthy cleansing ritual in which all who participate bend their Essence toward containing and dissipating the Chaos energy of the shard. In order to engage in the ritual, you must use an action and spend 1 minute in concentration within short range of the Chaos shard. After the minute elapses, if your concentration hasn't been broken, take 1 Strain and reduce the Chaos shard's rank by 1. If you reduce it to 0, the shard dissipates and is destroyed. Multiple people can participate in this ritual at the same time; each takes 1 Strain at the end of the minute, and each point of Strain taken reduces the Chaos site's rank by 1.

Chaos Sites

A Chaos site is a location that's been saturated by Chaos so thoroughly that there's a lingering effect. All Chaos shards are surrounded by Chaos sites, but Chaos sites often arise in places where Chaos energy is used in significant amounts, and some Chaos

wielders know how to shunt their own Discord off into the surrounding environment, corrupting it.

Making a Chaos Site

There are a few ways Chaos sites come into being, other than being tied to a Chaos shard.

The first is with the Shunt Discord talent from the Chaos Essence tree (see **Chapter 10**).

The second way that Chaos sites can arise is when too much Chaos energy is used in a short period of time at the same spot. In game terms, if a Chaos wielder uses 8 or more Chaos powers in a minute within the same general location (only count individual uses of Chaos powers, not sustaining Chaos powers), a Chaos site with a rank 1 lower than the highest-ranked Chaos power used is born.

Finally, if a Chaos wielder dies, her Discord bleeds off into the surrounding area. A Chaos site is born with a rank based on the total amount of Discord the Chaos wielder had when she died. See the “Discord to Chaos Site Rank” table, below.

Discord to Chaos Site Rank

Discord	Chaos Site Rank
1-5	No Chaos site
6-10	Rank 1
11-15	Rank 2
16-18	Rank 3
19-20	Rank 4
21+	Rank 5

Effects of a Chaos Site

Strange things happen at a Chaos site. Mutated animals, trees made of glass, water hovering in the air, and rain falling upward are all possible.

A **rank 1 site** only carries minor Chaos effects. Animals in the area develop minor mutations, small objects occasionally move around, change color, or otherwise transform, and what you see can mislead you. Anyone in a rank 1 Chaos site takes 1 bane on all Perception rolls, and every hour you spend in a rank 1 Chaos site causes you to take 1 Discord.

In a **rank 2 site**, the effect intensifies. Anyone in a rank 2 Chaos site takes 2 banes on Perception rolls, and every half hour you spend in a rank 2 Chaos site causes you to take 1 Discord.

In a **rank 3 site**, space begins to distort. In addition to the effects of a rank 2 site, every time a character moves, the roll 1d6. If the result is odd, treat all terrain as difficult

terrain for this move. If the result is even, the creature's speed is doubled, and the movement is considered to be teleportation.

At **rank 4**, reality is no longer reliable. In addition to the effects of a rank 3 site, anyone who takes an action in a rank 4 site is subject to the effects of a Chaos Essence power, chosen by the Keeper. In addition, characters take 1 Discord for every minute they spend here, not every 30 minutes.

All bets are off in a **rank 5 site**. As these are largely theoretical, you can feel free to incorporate whatever effects seem appropriate in addition to those listed under rank 4. Instead of taking 1 Discord per minute, characters take 1 discord at the end of each round.

Chaos Site Size

The stronger a Chaos site is, the larger it tends to be. Refer to the table below; distances are measured from the center of the Chaos site in every direction.

Chaos Site Size

Rank	Size
1	10 yards
2	30 yards
3	100 yards
4	1 mile
5	5 miles

Destroying a Chaos Site

Unlike a Chaos shard, you can't simply destroy a Chaos site. However, with nothing to sustain it, the Chaos energy in the environment will eventually dissipate on its own. For every year that passes without something to sustain it, a Chaos site's rank decreases by 1. At 0, it dissipates entirely, though many of its more permanent effects may still persist.

Pure Light

Nobody knows precisely why Pure Light exists or what its purpose is. Many theorize that it's a manifestation of Chaos, some remnant of the god-machine run amok, and for that they worship it. These people believe that Pure Light is semi-divine and has a consciousness, and they seek to join it and become part of it when they die. Regardless of the truth, what Pure Light is from an observable perspective is an immense shaft of white-hot light that descends from the sky. It moves from place to place, roving around the mainland, and occasionally disappearing entirely, only to reappear elsewhere. There's only ever one shaft of Pure Light, and it's nearly impossible to predict where it will be, though many try.

People worship Pure Light as a divine entity, and a large part of this is because it seems to *touch* certain people, imbuing them with power and knowledge, warping and changing their Essence to grant them power unattainable in any other way. Pure Light worshipers revere these Light-Touched, treating them as holy figures, prophets, and spiritual leaders (often whether or not the Light-Touched, themselves, want that mantle).

Effects of Pure Light

Pure Light is, broadly speaking, a plot device. It can't be destroyed or harnessed in any way, and it's far too dangerous and powerful for nearly any human to survive. As such, you can use it in the following ways.

As a World Detail

A shaft of Pure Light nearly a mile across, moving across the countryside, burning up any animals or people that it comes across, is a dramatic image. You might use it as a way to bring a Pure Light cult into an adventure, as either allies or antagonists, or as a neutral party. Maybe the cultists have a prophecy they're watching for. Maybe the shaft of Pure Light just burned away everyone in a village, leaving only a single Light-Touched survivor and numerous empty houses. There are a few things to keep in mind about Pure Light when you're using it this way.

First, Pure Light burns up any living creature it touches. NPCs, animals, monsters, and other creatures that come into contact with it are burned away to nothing.

Second, Pure Light leaves everything else untouched. Buildings, grass, trees, rocks, water, and everything else it comes into contact is seemingly unaffected by Pure Light, not even rising in temperature. A shaft of Pure Light can burn away everything in a village, leaving all of the objects in the village intact.

Third, Pure Light does what it will. It moves as it will, or not at all. It disappears if it decides to. What this means is that it can effectively do whatever you want it to do in the story. It can show up unexpectedly, cause some problems, then leave just as unexpectedly, or it can be a constant presence that follows the Seekers around. Its motivations, if it indeed has motivations, are utterly alien and unpredictable.

As a Hazard

A battle near a shaft of Pure Light can be exciting and dramatic, because the chances of imminent and instant death are high. Don't overuse this trick; doing this once in an adventure is plenty, and you probably don't want two adventures back-to-back with such an encounter in it. Pure Light usually manifests as a large shaft, around 100 yards thick... but it doesn't have to. It can shrink if it wishes. In game terms, it's a cylinder with a radius of whatever you need it to be. It moves as you need it to move. Depending on what level your group is when you use Pure Light as a hazard, the damage can be different; refer to the "Pure Light Attack and Damage" table.

A creature pushed into Pure Light can make an Agility challenge roll to try to avoid the worst of its effects. A creature who fails takes full damage, while a creature who succeeds takes half. This doesn't represent being entirely enveloped by Pure Light; if that happens, a creature is utterly destroyed. Rather, this represents being partially consumed by it, such that it burns away some of your flesh, but you're able to escape before it kills you (maybe).

You can also have Pure Light attack creatures on the battlefield, moving to them to try to consume them. Refer to the "Pure Light Attack and Damage" table for Pure Light's attack bonus and its damage on a success.

A creature incapacitated by Pure Light's damage is burned away to nothing.

Pure Light Attack and Damage

Level	Damage	Attack Bonus
Starting	4d6	+1
Novice	6d6	+2
Expert	10d6	+3
Master	14d6	+4

As an Advancement Trigger

Sometimes Pure Light doesn't destroy someone it envelops. Sometimes it instead touches them, mutating them and giving them power. This only happens to people from the mainland, never to anyone else. Talk to your players. If one of them wants to take on the Light-Touched expert path or the Light-Chosen master path, you can justify either path by having them be enveloped by Pure Light at a climactic moment in an adventure, and surviving untouched. Shortly afterward (when the group levels up), they start to gain mutations and power.

The World of Asunder

The Black Isle

Soruva crouches at the edge of an outcropping, a drop before her, not far, but far enough and with jagged black rock jutting up from the bottom. She tastes the air, the acrid sting of it, but under it, buried beneath like a cloying aftertaste, that too-sweet flavor, the one she's tasting for. A demon. She can't see it, but it can't hide its scent, try as it might. She holds up her left hand, fist clenched, then extends two fingers to the sky.

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

"How many do you taste?" Soruva asks.

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

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

His eye twitches. "Maybe," he repeats. "It's masking somehow. It could be two but... it's hard to tell. There's another scent there, interfering."

"Fess weed."

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

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

"How many can you take?"

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

"Should I tell the others to stand down?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

My my, you’re a brave one, aren’t you? Are you here alone?

Soruva grins at the demon. “Are you?”

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

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

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

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

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

Arriving in The Black Isle

The seas are not kind around the Black Isle, and there is but a single port as you approach. Coward's Point — so called both because it is how outsiders arrive and it is how natives leave — is a bare stone dock that leads to a steep staircase cut into the cliff-face, the same hard black as the rest of the island, with little in the way of a town around it. The air here pungent, acrid, a smell like smoke hanging everywhere, mixing with the salt of the sea along the coasts. Perhaps the most striking thing about the Black Isle, though, is the thing it takes its name from.

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

When you enter the home of one of the Black Islers, the first word that springs to mind is utilitarian. They are not great craftspeople or artists; they build things to be functional and durable, and the only material they have to build with is the rock of the island. Their food is utilitarian for similar reasons: those who cannot hunt demons spend their days harvesting a thick, hardy gray moss from the cliffs and a mustard-yellow, melon-shaped spore from the caves; these two substances comprise most of their food, supplemented occasionally by fish caught from the sea. Most of it is eaten raw or treated with salt; no wood and little else in the way of vegetation grows here, so there is no fuel for fire. They also use these substances — spore sacks, moss, fish scales and fish bones — to fashion tools, sacks for carrying things, and other useful items.

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

The Way of Soruva

She is a demon-wrestler, one of those who are trained specifically to fight the demons in hand-to-hand combat, to wrestle them into submission and break them until they die. She does this for two reasons. The first, most important reason is to prevent the incursion of the demons into Asunder, to halt their depredations on humankind and to foil their plans. The other, more pragmatic reason, is that many of the substances that can be harvested from demon corpses are useful and valuable. Their blood can be brewed into medicinal concoctions, their skin fashioned into armor or weapons. Their eyes can be dried and crushed into a powder that allows people to see in the dark, and the tongue of a demon contains powerful hallucinogenics that the barbarian-monks of the Black Isle use in meditative rituals to induce visions.

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

Perhaps the most potent tool a demon-hunting party has at its disposal is the ability to enter into a gestalt form, a kind of group meditation wherein several warriors lend their strength to a single champion. Hunting parties work this way because demon hide is thick, thick like the bark of the hardest tree, and a single, powerful punch is far more effective than many weaker ones. The hunting parties learned this the hard way, after groups of twenty or thirty barbarian monks were wiped out by a single demon, none of their blows dealing any significant damage to the beast.

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

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

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

Within Soruva's village, everyone belongs to the same clan: the Barath-el. The clan is divided into distinct castes: warriors, gatherers, teachers, builders, elders. Each has a

job to do, each a responsibility, and each is reliant upon the others for their expertise. The elders lead the clan collectively, a council that makes decisions as one and who all defer, in turn to the King, who rules all clans.

There are no festivals here, no days off. Constant vigilance is required not just to halt the demonic incursion, but for simple survival. Every able-bodied person, man or woman, with any fighting skill at all is required to fight in defense of the clan; those who can't raise the children, harvest materials, and pursue other necessary, non-martial tasks. But the barbarian-monks of the Black Isle would not leave this place unless it was absolutely necessary. If they did, who else would stop the demons?

The Living World

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

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

Places of Interest

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

The Great Scar

Near the center of the Black Isle is a large rent hewn in the very stone, a hot, noxious steam pouring forth from it. This is the one place on the Black Isle where hunting parties do not venture, for demons pour out of the Scar in such high numbers that any hunting party venturing here would be overwhelmed. For some reason, though, the demons don't leave the scar; they simply dwell there. Nobody knows for what purpose. Perhaps they're amassing an army. Perhaps they're waiting for something. Only the demons know for sure.

Kingswatch

The only large structure to speak of on the Black Isle, Kingswatch is a fortress of black rock close enough to the Great Scar to keep watch on it. Its walls are ten feet thick and it houses more barbarian-monks and demon hunters than any other settlement on the Black Isle. Outsiders are welcome here, provided they assist with training and other duties, but they are watched carefully by the natives. Kingswatch is the seat of the King, whose duty is to remain vigilant against the Great Scar until his death.

Coward's Point

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

The Mines of Korunna

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

The Skyward Temple

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

The Green Valley

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

The Face of the Sea

Just beyond Coward's Point, jutting out from the sea, is a chunk of black rock that has formed into the visage of a grinning skull. The Black Islanders say that nobody carved this

skull, that it's always been there, even before humans walked the world. Its mouth, slightly open, is large enough for a human to crawl into, and legends say that there are great treasures and knowledge waiting for those who can brave the perils inside. Black Islers aren't specific about what those perils might be; nobody who's ventured in has made it back out to talk about them.

People of Import

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

The Circle of Six

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

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

Vakan the Purifier

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

Thorn-Eyes

A powerful and dangerous demon, Thorn-Eyes has been haunting the Black Isle for centuries, always one step ahead of the hunters who try to kill it. Thorn-Eyes is cunning and clever, evading traps, leading hunting parties into ambushes, and sometimes

simply vanishing entirely, without a trace. Thorn-Eyes is so-called because, where its eyes should be, two barbed, curved spikes jut out of its face. Though dangerous, Thorn-Eyes does occasionally approach humans to talk, often to offer them bargains. Most Black Islers know well enough to refuse these bargains and to either drive Thorn-Eyes off or try to kill it. Outsiders, on the other hand, have been known to fall prey to Thorn-Eyes' games, usually to their detriment.

Points of Conflict

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

The Growing Scar

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

Old Guard, New Blood

The people of the Black Isle have always been an insular, even xenophobic lot. Outsiders are seen as weak distractions, unworthy of walking the Black Isle, unable to help defend the world from the demonic incursion. Sentiments, however, are starting to shift. Many younger Black Islers believe that the only way to truly stop the demons is to enlist the aid of the rest of the world. Members of the Council of Six, following Venna, are starting to push for active change, for trade with the outside world. They want to establish positive ties with those not of the Black Isle so that, when the Black Isle must call upon them for help, they will come. Many still oppose this notion, though, and would rather die by the claws of a demonic horde than ask any outlander for aid.

The Usurper

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

Pacari

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

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

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

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

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

"No," he says calmly. "But neither do I acknowledge it. A claim with no proof is simply words and wind."

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

Harut pats Vati's massive flank, feeling the strength of the rhino. "You're welcome to try," he says, smiling. "Vati doesn't bleed easily, though."

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

Harut draws his spear back to thrust it into the cat's throat, but Betiru is beside him, has caught his spear-arm, and is twisting it savagely, her own speed and strength enhanced by her bond with the cat. Harut flicks his eyes over his shoulder and sees Vati behind him, fighting off Feka and his wolf. The big rhino can take quite a lot of punishment, but Feka's fighting smart, using pack tactics. The wolf harries Vati, keeping his attention, while Feka darts in for quick cuts with his long knife. Eventually, Vati will tire from exertion and blood loss.

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

That's when he hears it. [INSERT STUFF ABOUT THE BLIGHT HERE]

Arriving in Pacari

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

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

The people here live simply, bonded to great beasts who roam the wilds, and their way is a nomadic way, claiming territory but not staying in the same location for long. There are villages here and there; they mostly exist to grow crops, great beasts helping to till the fields and carry harvests, but occasionally a group of tribesmates settles for a time at a sacred place for spiritual renewal. Because of this nomadic lifestyle, visitors to Pacari often feel that there's nowhere safe in Pacari, no bastions of civilization or cities with walls to hide from the dangerous animals of the island. This is, for the most part, true. Pacari is a wild and dangerous place, but the people of Pacari have learned to live in equilibrium with the wildlife here, and to become just as dangerous as it is.

The Way of Harut

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

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

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

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

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

The Living World

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

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

Pacari use tools, but those tools tend to be simple in nature: a club or a hammer or a knife. This is because the beasts are the most effective tools at the Pacari's disposal, able to help them complete tasks far beyond what they would otherwise be capable. A snakebonded Pacari can send her snake down a rabbit hole to hunt rabbits for her. A Pacari bonded to a krogu bull can use that bull to move large deadfalls, to haul firewood, or to sound an alarm with its great bellow.

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

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

Places of Interest

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

The Great Menhir of Ordru

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

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

After one day, the animals disperse and go back to their normal lives.

The Jungle of Sorrow

It is said that the jungle that occupies a vast swath of the middle of Pacari Island is a place that does not see the sun, and that it knows only sorrow as a result. Whether or not the jungle feels anything itself, and whether or not it chooses to visit sorrow upon

those who enter in order to ease its own burden, the fact remains that the Jungle of Sorrow is one of the most dangerous places on Pacari. The tree canopy is so thick that the entire jungle exists in a perpetual state of dusk. Few edible plants grow here, and much of what does grow here is poisonous. The animals are similarly venomous, and nearly everything in the jungle is food for something else.

The Black Cloud

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

Scalegrass Desert

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

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

The God's Corpse

In the northern Grazelands are the skeletal remains of some great beast, impossibly vast, intact, sprawled amongst the grass, its bones turned to stone. The Pacari believe that, when the gods left Asunder, some of them died; this great corpse is one such casualty. Some tribesfolk come here to pay homage, but nobody ventures into the grounds contained by the dead god; the Sanholo tribe considers the God's Corpse sacred ground, and punishes anyone who defiles it by walking upon it. What most outside of the Sanholo tribe don't realize is that the tribe considers the God's Corpse to be both sacred *and* incredibly dangerous. They've learned of some power that dwells within the bones, and they believe that, were the wrong person to spend too much time

studying them, that person might be able to wield that power to devastating effect, and with little ability to control it. The Sanholo see their mission to keep people away from the God's Corpse as a way of protecting the world from a great danger.

Martu Canyon

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

People of Import

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

The Nanok Tribe

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

Atra Star-Eyes

Speaker for the Oema tribe, Atra makes it a point to greet and speak to outsiders whenever she sees them. The Oema are one of the largest tribes on Pacari, and their territory spans a large swath of the Grazelands. They seek trade, both with other tribes and with outsiders to Pacari Island; as speaker for the tribe, it's Atra's job to cultivate relationships, seek opportunities to trade, and ensure that outsiders know enough to survive in Pacari. Lately, Atra has been steering many foreigners toward Martu Canyon. She's interested in some of the artifacts that have come from the city at the bottom and, though Oema tribesfolk have no interest in venturing down there, Atra knows that outsiders often do, and she's capitalizing on that fact to get goods she otherwise might not be able to acquire.

The Wooden Man

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

Points of Conflict

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

The To'ato/Ishnualo Feud

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

Religious Zealotry

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

Vinich Recruiting

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

Sky City

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

As she runs, she holds the rolled up painting close to him. She rounds the corner and leans into her run, and then she sees the two guards turn toward her, waiting at the window. *Damn.*

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

Cassit struggles to control her freefall. She concentrates, makes herself lighter, slows her descent. She's never been strong enough with her gravity control to levitate, but she can slow herself, and she can make herself light enough to fly around with gas pods, if only for a short time. She remembers back to her Great Leap, the thousand-foot-jump she had to make, *did* make, in order to become a citizen, but her momentum is causing problems. She twists, turns herself so that the gas pods are facing down, tries not to think about the ground rushing up to meet her, and then she activates one of her pods, feels the rush of compressed gas shooting out of it, slowing her descent further. She hopes its enough.

Below, she sees open sky. *Damn*, she thinks, starting to panic. If it were a plaza or a bridge, she might be able to slow herself enough to land roughly, a landing she can walk away from. But open sky... if she's not careful, she'll end up in a drift that takes her all the way down to the sea, and then she's food for serpents.

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

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

Okay, she thinks. *Plan B.* Again, Cassit leans into her momentum, diving directly at the wyvern-rider in front of her, not even trying to avoid it. With her free hand she unlimbers the little grappling hook, attached to a fine linen cord. Under normal circumstances

she'd be able to make herself lighter so that she could climb the cord without breaking it. This is going to be... a little trickier.

At the last minute, just before she collides with the now-alarmed wyvern rider, she cuts her gas pods off and shifts her momentum downward into a dive. She twists, hurls the grappling hook and waits for a weightless, breathless moment... and then it wraps itself around the wyvern's neck. Not waisting any time, Cassit shifts her gravity, makes herself lighter but not *too* light, and feels the rope turn her into a pendulum, sending her on a smooth, upward arc. She's about to let go and fire her gas pods again, but the line breaks and she starts hurtling, tumbling, toward a wall.

Cassit twists, braces for impact, but she feels her wrist break when she hits the wall. The pain is dizzying; it nearly causes her to pass out, but she grits her teeth, flexes her muscles, and extends her legs, kicking off the wall, upward, toward a plaza several hundred feet above her. If she can get to that plaza, she can lose the guards in the crowd. That's when she realizes that, with a broken wrist, she's not going to be able to fire off her gas pods. Not with that hand, at least.

Damn, damn, damn, she curses, then fumbles to try to fire her gas pods with the hand that's still holding the painting. She fumbles with it, tries to keep hold of the painting, but it slips out of her fingers, tumbles down toward the sea. *No help for it now*, she thinks. She activates her gas pods and shoots upward, deactivating them once she's almost past the plaza, arcing down and landing lightly on the edge, then working her way into the crowd.

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

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

Arriving in Sky City

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

Sky City itself is a place of wonders. On the surface of each obelisk-shaped island is a collection of huge, impressive buildings, some of them ancient, some new, in a variety of architectural styles. Palaces, gardens, manor houses, museums, and other such ostentatious displays cover the islands' surfaces, the dwelling places of Sky City's

nobility. The common people live on the sides of the islands, in buildings grown out of plant matter and reinforced with ropes and gas spores. The islands are connected by bridges and walkways, some of them spider-webbing into hanging squares and plazas above open air. Nobody seems afraid of falling here except for the outsiders. Indeed, the natives sometimes leap from place to place, covering vast amounts of distance in a single bound.

Sky City is often intimidating to outsiders. Though the natives can bound from island to island and even, under some circumstances, fly, outsiders must use the bridges and walkways that connect the islands to each other. The Sky-Dwellers maintain these walkways, creating man-made rocks held aloft by blice and gas spores to help connect distant islands to each other, because commerce is important to Sky City, and outsiders must be able to navigate it.

The air up here is cool, crisp, filled with the sounds of talking, laughter, music, street actors, sea birds, and the buzzing hiss of the occasional flying lizard. People here are polite, friendly, welcoming, but most outsiders know that plotting and scheming is the way things are done here in Sky City.

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

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

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

The Way of Cassit

Cassit is a thief, a profession not uncommon in Sky City. While not a city of thieves, Sky City *does* have more than its share of artists and artisans, and a thief can make quite a good — if dangerous — living stealing their wares and selling them to less scrupulous members of the nobility. Though thievery is publicly frowned upon and punished severely, many of the noble houses employ thieves as pawns in their Great Game, a complex web of political maneuvering and illegal activity that happens in the shadows.

Sky City is different from many other regions of Asunder in that social status is very important here, and society is rigidly stratified. Nobles are born into nobility, and they live lives of power and privilege. They also live literally higher than everyone else, occupying the surface areas of the floating islands that comprise Sky City. Because

these areas are the ones that get the most exposure to the sun, nobles often have numerous farmers, gardeners, and ranchers living on their property; these people provide food and other goods to all of Sky City, but the nobles take a tithe of each harvest in exchange for the use of their land.

Each island that comprises part of Sky City is owned by one of the noble houses, and every person who dwells on that island and is not a part of that family is, effectively, a vassal of that family. For peasants, merchants, artisans, artists, and everyone else, the rule is the same: where you live determines who owns you. There are nine major noble houses that effectively rule Sky City, controlling trade, lawkeeping and justice, government, and even crime (though one would never accuse a noble of such a thing without sufficient proof, of course). There are innumerable minor noble houses, ranging from two to three people up to dozens, but their influence is limited and few if any of them have their own islands like the major houses do. These minor nobles vie with each other constantly, trying to rise in the ranks and become recognized as a major noble house.

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

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

Though Sky City has guards who keep the peace, there isn't a warrior caste to speak of. Because Sky City floats miles above the ocean, it's nearly impossible to invade, and outsiders are only allowed to enter the city in small numbers that don't present a threat. The nobility of Sky City has never instigated an invasion of any other country or land; they consider other lands inferior to their own, by virtue of the fact that they don't fly. That said, many people in Sky City know how to fight, even if it's only in an academic sense. Hand-to-hand combat is considered an art form similar to dance or acting, and many of the citizens of Sky City learn at least a little of the unique form of combat practiced on the floating islands, a style that makes significant use of mobility and Sky-Dwellers' ability to defy gravity at will. Many Sky-Dwellers learn how to wield oversized weapons that would be impossible to wield normally; the Sky-Dwellers' ability to

manipulate gravity, though, allows them to alter these weapons' weight until the moment of impact. Bow-shooting, too, is commonly practiced, because so much of Sky City's diet consists of birds shot down by the city's hunters, and crystal throwing shards are common as well. Some people also use shard-spitters: modified gas spore pods that are used to propel crystal shards further than one would be able to throw them.

Again, Sky City is not a city of thieves; but it *does* have quite a few of them. Many people aren't happy with the rigidity of the caste system, the difficult nature of moving upward in society. In response, those people become criminals, operating outside of society's strictures, taking what they want instead of waiting in vain for it to be given to them. Cassit, like many in Sky City, has simply had enough, and has decided to improve his lot in life by any means necessary. It's a common story in Sky City.

The Living World

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

The people of Sky City have a symbiotic relationship with blice crystal. Their Essence bonded with the blice, which had two effects. First, it gave the people of Sky City the ability to defy gravity, becoming just as buoyant as the crystal itself. Second, the people of Sky City learned from the crystals, themselves, that blice is *alive*, that it grows and can be cultivated, like a plant. Knowing that, without blice crystal, the floating islands of Sky City would plummet to the ocean below and that the people, themselves, would lose their ability to defy gravity, the Sky-Dwellers started growing and cultivating the crystal to ensure their own survival and prosperity.

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

Blice is also woven into clothing, called "sky-weave," that the Sky-Dwellers wear for both status and utility, and that they even occasionally trade with outsiders. Craftspeople use blice to create "skimmers," wooden skiffs buoyant enough to float from

island to island carrying passengers. Even the artists use blice, creating sculptures with floating components or tapestries that hang in mid-air.

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

Places of Interest

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

The Isle of Ascendancy

Sky City is made up of a number of small, floating islands, most of them connected by bridges and walkways and not too terribly far apart. The one notable exception to this is the Isle of Ascendancy, a floating island not tethered to any of the others, floating nearly a thousand feet away from its closest neighbor. A small contingent of monastic Sky-Dwellers lives on the Isle, tending to it and using their powers to ensure that it stays in the same relative location. Though few occupy the Isle and few visit it on a regular basis, the Isle of Ascendancy has great significance to the Sky-Dwellers. When a Sky-Dweller reaches the age of maturity — about sixteen years old — she must undergo the Rite of Ascendancy in order to become a full citizen of Sky City. The Rite is a day-long affair involving ceremonial garb, ascetic practices, consumption of blice potions and, finally, the Great Leap. The soon-to-be citizen must leap from one of the islands attached to Sky City to the Isle of Ascendancy, a thousand-foot leap that all Sky-Dwellers are expected to be able to make. Those who make the leap complete the Rite with the help of the monks on the Isle, and rejoin Sky City as a full citizen. Safety precautions ensure that those who fail to make the leap can try again in one year, though a few unlucky souls have plummeted into the ocean after a failure.

The Svit Swarm

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

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

The Blice Fields

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

Bessar Palace

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

Bazaar Square

Sky City is a highly mercantile culture, and one of the few places not on the mainland that trades actively with those city-states. As such, Bazaar Square is a place always bustling with activity, where nearly any kind of good or service can be procured for the right price. Foreign goods, information, deadly poisons, assassinations, thefts, and nearly everything else can be bought here, and the City Watch turns a blind eye to most of it. After all, for the Sky-Dwellers, this is just how things are done.

The Sky Bridge

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

The Rebel Islands

On the outskirts of Sky City are a number of islands peopled by outcasts, criminals, and other disenfranchised people. The nobility would like nothing more than to bring these islands to heel, but doing so represents an enormous, concerted effort of cooperation and, so far, the major houses haven't been able to cooperate long enough to undertake such a thing. The people who live on these islands call themselves "rebels," and they

eschew the rigid class structure of Sky City. Despite what the nobility says, the Rebel Islands are *not* lawless; rather, the rebels have a communal society led by a council of elected officials. Everyone is equal on the Rebel Islands, though outsiders visiting them are often surprised at the kinds of things that *are* legal there. The Rebel Islands use duels, for example, as a way to resolve disputes; to outsiders, this just seems like government-sanctioned murder in the streets.

The Academy

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

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

People of Import

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

The Noble Houses

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

Blue William

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

The Swallow

Nobody knows who the Swallow is, but everyone whispers her name with both reverence and fear. In a city where assassinations are all too common, the Swallow is anything but a common assassin. Death is her stock and trade, but the Swallow is an artist of death, able to get to anyone, no matter how well-protected, and with a signature killing style all her own. When people die by the Swallow's hand, they're found curled up on the ground, their skin white, their blood frozen in their veins.

Points of Conflict

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

The Great Game

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

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

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

Foreign Incursions

The city-states in the mainland have long had enclaves within Sky City, the better to support merchants who sell their wares and to protect their interests within the city.

However, lately, there have been rumors of foreign agents operating within the city, acting against the noble houses, possibly softening the city up for an invasion of some sort. Whether there's truth to these rumors or they're just wind and words is anyone's guess, but it's certainly true that there have been thefts, sabotages, and assassinations that don't seem to be a part of the Great Game lately.

The Blice Shortage

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

New Gaia

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

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

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

"Inefficient but safe."

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

"I double-checked everything," says Sebira. "We've only got a few minutes before the Council gets done with the presentations before ours."

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

Sebira nods, a half-smile on her lips. "I know. I'm just nervous. We've double-checked this thing into the ground. I know I second-guess a lot, but what could possibly go —"

The explosion knocks them both off their feet.

"What — ?" Sebira starts to ask, but Vetta's already on her feet, leaning over the railing, peering through the smoke now filling the room. The cloud is thick, a vast plume of gray-green spores like a billow of smoke, but she pulls something off of her belt and straps it to her face. The mask is made up of several different plants: shrike moss for filtering out smoke and toxins, night rose membranes over the eyes for heat-based vision, a mixture of seeds to provide nutrition and power to the whole construction. Vetta looks for heat signatures in the cloud, sees some.

"At least three injured," she says, her voice muffled by the shrike moss in front of her mouth. "One might be dead. Four alive. Looks like it happened at Atanu's station. Damn it, I told him his suppression matrix was faulty. Turn on our baby. I'm going to go help."

Without waiting for a response, Vetta runs toward the cloud, cuts into it. The mask will allow her to breathe for ten, maybe twelve minutes, and she's got about sixteen before her heat vision fades. "High Mother? Are you conscious?" she calls out.

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

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

Another coughing fit. "The others?"

"We're about to get this cloud out of here, so they'll be fine with a little luck. You're the priority right now."

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

"Are you alright, High Mother?"

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vetta nods in understanding. “Are you alright? I’d like to go check on the other injured, if that’s okay.”

The woman nods, making a shooing gesture. “Go.”

Vetta stands and jogs over to the wreckage of Atanu’s machine. Others are there already, helping the injured, but Vetta draws up short when she sees Atanu’s body, his head lying at a grotesque angle. Her jaw clenches. *Damn it, Atanu.*

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

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

Arriving in New Gaia

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

The vast majority of New Gaia is covered with thick jungle, plant life everywhere, tangles of vines, and abundant fauna. The air is thick and wet, heavy with moisture and full of the sounds of birds, insects, and other animals, and it carries with it the earthy smell of loam, along with a smell that can only be described as “green”. Near settlements, the smell of cooking food often fills the air, spicy and intensely aromatic. Settlements in New Gaia are also full of the sounds of people talking, going about their business, and working on the complex plant-machines that keep life going.

These machines are everywhere, and vary considerably in size, complexity, and intent. There are plant-machines to make life more comfortable for the weavers, plant-machines that defend settlements, plant-machines that tend to other plants, or that make food. Invention and industry are intrinsic parts of life in New Gaia and, according to the weavers, every plant has a purpose it was born to, and ten more that haven’t been discovered yet.

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

The Way of Vetta

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

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

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

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

Unlike the insect weavers before them, the Red Alliance is an underground organization; its membership is secret, and they've infiltrated various strata of society. In response, the Council of Mothers has created a new organization: the Inquisition. It's the Inquisition's job to hunt down dissidents and bring them to justice, by any means necessary.

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

The Living World

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

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

This ability to simply ask for things from the natural environment and receive it informs nearly every facet of weaveric culture. Clothes are made of vines, leaves, and other bits of plant matter. Weapons are made of wood, shaped and hardened into the form required. Weavers grow specialized plants for specific tasks: irrigation, ranged combat, hunting, heating and cooling homes, holding fire for cooking, and nearly everything else. Weavers even make complex plant-machines to handle advanced tasks, like filtering smoke from a room, providing light to an entire city, or creating a public transportation system of hollow root networks traveled by people in great seed pods. In many ways, New Gaia is the most advanced civilization on Asunder; their society not only has the most conveniences available, but is the most socially progressive, ensuring that everyone has what they need and is treated well.

This wasn't always the case; the insect weavers of New Gaia remember a darker time, when oppression was commonplace, and the two cultures unfortunately have yet to forgive each other for their transgressions. These other weavers bonded with insects when everyone else bonded with plants. They can communicate with the insects, control them, and — like the plant-bonded weavers — can grow specialized insects for specialized tasks. Among the insect weavers, one might see insects used for hauling heavy loads, insects for battle, insects for espionage, insects for harvesting resources from the natural world. It's this last function that is the major source of contention between the two factions of weavers.

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

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

Places of Interest

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

The Great Tree

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

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

Heartwood

Though there are settlements grown into the jungle all over the island, Heartwood is the largest such settlement, and is the seat of the Council of Mothers. When the weavers first discovered the Great Tree, they settled near it, and over time a city grew up around the Tree. That city became Heartwood. In every respect that matters, Heartwood *is* a city; it has the conveniences of a city, it has a massive population, it's well-defended, and you can find people and businesses in Heartwood of every stripe. Heartwood welcomes outsiders, though they're only allowed in Outer Ring, a district on the perimeter of the city. Outer Ring is primarily a commercial district, made up of

businesses, shops, and some dwellings for outsiders or people who prefer to live at their place of business. Beyond Outer Ring is Inner Ring, where the vast majority of native weavers live. Inner Ring is mostly residential, though there are a few businesses here that cater to weavers exclusively. In the center of Heartwood is Mother's Heart. This district contains the Great Tree and provides housing for all those who tend it, but it's also the governmental district of the city. It's here that the Council of Mothers resides and meets, and it's here that those who shape policy for all of New Gaia must come to do so.

The Poison Lands

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

The Starlight Caverns

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

Shipwatch

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

The Barrens

There is one place on New Gaia where plant life does not grow. This blasted land is small, but entirely empty and devoid of life. Stranger still, the Barrens are devoid of sound; those who venture in report that their voices do not carry, their footfalls make no noise. Some who venture in also speak of strange and terrible visions, visions that often

have a kernel of truth to them. Periodically, weavers make pilgrimages into the Barrens to experience these visions, though not all of them make it back out again.

Bugtown

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

People of Import

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

The Council of Mothers

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

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

The Crimson Mask

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

Grandfather Ash

Though few men develop bonds with the jungle as strong as those of women, it does occasionally happen. Grandfather Ash is once such man, a man whose bond with the plants was so strong that, one day, he walked out into the jungle and sat to mediate

and, eventually, simply become a tree. This happened almost a hundred years ago, but Grandfather Ash still sits, a few miles outside of Heartwood, a great ash tree with a face on it. He sleeps most of the time, but he is occasionally amenable to visitors and has a wealth of knowledge at his disposal. According to Grandfather Ash, he knows everything the jungle knows, and he's willing to share that information — for a price. Grandfather Ash never gives anything away for free; instead, he asks for a favor in return. These favors often make little sense to those they are asked of, but Grandfather Ash has a plan.

Points of Conflict

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

Oppression

Although open hostilities between the plant weavers and the insect weavers have been nonexistent for a few generations, there's quite a bit of bad blood between the two tribes, and neither has forgotten what the other has cost them. The tribes don't trust each other and don't like each other, and many say it's only a matter of time before the current peace turns into outright war again. The death toll in the last war was enormous; when one side can summon great swarms of insects and the other can control the jungle itself, people die by the score. There are some on the Council who believe a preemptive strike is the only answer, while others believe that they must broker a more lasting peace or face the extermination of both tribes. Councilmember Pressus argues for the latter, though few listen.

The Red Alliance

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

Old Guard Versus New Blood

Times are changing. New Gaia is a society based on innovation, but there are many — mostly younger weavers — who believe that technological innovation isn't enough. These weavers argue for social innovation as well, for changing the way things are done. For all its advances and conveniences, the society of New Gaia is still very much one of tradition. The government is ruled by a council of nine women (or, as is the case currently, eight women and one man) because that's the way it's always been done. Outsiders aren't allowed beyond the Outer Ring of Heartwood because such has always been the case. Insect weavers are shunted off into ghettos because that's the way things are. But many of the younger weavers argue that "because that's the way we've always done it" isn't a good enough reason to do something. These weavers argue for equality for all weavers regardless of gender or Essence bond, for allowing foreigners

free access to all of New Gaia, even for allowing them to hold office. At their best, these upstarts argue for things that could strengthen New Gaia and cure many of the ills plaguing its society. At their worst, they act and speak recklessly without regard to the consequences, causing more strife.

The Seafarers

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

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

Jezir looks back out at the sea, grips the long harpoon in her right hand in readiness. That serpent can feed the crew for weeks, and the heartstone at its core will replace the dying stone in the hold of the ship, generate heat for the crew and for the ship itself, to keep everyone from freezing in the coming months of cold. But any serpent could do that. *This* one is different. *This* one is the serpent that claimed her brother, her father, half of her crew. *This* serpent will die by her hand, and hers alone.

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

The helmsman nods at her, already steering the ship toward the beast, the maw at the front of the ship gulping water, the ship spewing it out the back, propelling the entire thing forward with a speed and maneuverability unmatched by the land-goers' ships of frail wood. Jezir's eyes scan the waters, and then she sees the fleshy scales of the serpent's back. The ship is sleek, made of chitin and bone, one great organism bred and grown by her people, acting in concert with Sevik. It bristles with spiked protrusions, and the fins and tentacles beneath the waves allow it to maneuver much more effectively than some ship of mere wood.

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

Jezir detaches the harpoon from herself before she can be pulled overboard, then signals Sevik. Beneath her, Jezir feels the jaws of the ship lunge forward, biting into the

serpent, locking in place so that the beast can't escape. "All hands," she cries, her voice muffled and garbled by her living mask. "Now!"

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

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

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

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

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

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

Still, she wonders at the cost.

Arriving on the Seas

The first thing that strikes you upon approaching one of the seafarers' vessels is how... alive it is. Most land-based cultures on Asunder make their ships out of wood and use sails to harness the wind and ply the seas. But the seafarers, those who are born to the oceans of Asunder, grow their ships. These ships are living organisms, often made up of multiple creatures living in symbiotic harmony, both with each other and with the crew. The hull of the ship is a great bony carapace, spiked protrusions jutting out at odd angles, rugged and dangerous in a way that a wooden ship is not. At the front of the ship is a great maw that gulps water. As the water enters the ship, it passes through an organic propulsion system, a series of bladders, and is ejected from the rear of the ship. Seafarers' ships have no sails; their method of propulsion obviates the need for them. Beneath the ship are several great finned tentacles that the ship uses to steer itself, granting it unmatched maneuverability in the water. Two more tentacles spout from a raised platform — the helm of the ship. A trained helmsman can bond with the creature through these tentacles, allowing him or her to command it mentally.

The second thing that strikes you is what a varied and strange lot the seafarers are. Because of their bond with the chaotic and changeable sea, all seafarers have physical mutations: extra limbs, mouths, or eyes; chitinous skin; a flexible skeleton of cartilage; gills; spikes, claws, or other natural weapons; and myriad other adaptations to their environment and lifestyle. Because most land-dwellers consider these mutations disturbing or grotesque, seafarers are shunned and even feared on land. Some seafarers, though, have no obvious mutation or have mutations that give them an appeal that land-dwellers find exciting and exotic. There are many stories of youths falling in love with mysterious seafarer captains and being spirited away to live on the waves, and at least some of these tales have a kernel of truth.

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

The seafarers are a tumultuous people, chaotic and unpredictable like the seas they thrive on. To outsiders, they seem dangerous, rash, wantonly violent. The truth is that they are what the sea makes them. The sea is a chaotic, unforgiving habitat, and so the seafarers must be equally chaotic and unforgiving. They adapt to whatever situation is

laid out in front of them, cull the weak from their ranks, and do not allow things like morality or law to get in the way of survival.

The Way of Jezir

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

On the seas, ships have different functions. Hunting ships, like Jezir's, exist to hunt down the great sea serpents and other beasts of the sea for the resources they represent. Most sea beasts provide food for the crew, allowing ships to stay out at sea for longer durations, but many beasts are hunted for the specific resources they provide. Dusk crabs provide huge amounts of chitin for plating ships, while schools of thresh whales can produce enough blubber and oil to keep fires and lanterns lit for weeks. The most sought-after, and most dangerous, beast, though is the great sea serpent. Serpent bones make excellent weapons, allowing the seafarers to create axes, knives, or harpoons. Their skin, tough and leathery, makes warm, durable clothing when cured. Their meat is considered a delicacy among the seafarers, and among many on the mainland. But their most valuable resource is the heartstone: a huge mass of bone and living tissue that produces enormous amounts of heat for several weeks. When kept in the hold of a ship, the ship can feed off of the heat of a heartstone, allowing it to move faster and with more agility. During the cold winter months, the heartstone also provides necessary warmth for the crew.

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

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

chances of your ship being attacked and boarded are virtually nil when you ride with the seafarers themselves.

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

The Living World

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

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

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

Places of Interest

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

Megalith

While every seafarer considers the sea his home, each one also has a home away from home: Megalith. Situated on the southern tip of the mainland, Megalith is a bustling freebooter city full of sailors, pirates, and traders. Seafarers bring the goods they take from the sea, or goods they've agreed to carry for land-dwellers, to Megalith.

Meanwhile, traders from every city-state on the mainland send caravans to Megalith to trade their own goods for the exotic wares of Megalith, making the city the central trade hub of the world. The city is situated both on the coast and at the junction of three rivers, making it easily accessible both by sea and by every city-state on the mainland.

The city itself is unique among cities of Asunder. Fully two thirds of Megalith is built over the water, on docks, floating platforms, rope bridges, and repurposed boats and ships. The architecture is a mishmash of styles; styles from all over the mainland exist here, right alongside the organically grown dwellings of weavers living here or the graceful spires of sky-dwellers. The seafarers' own dwellings are usually simply ships at dock or, for those who stay here permanently, ships and boats that have been permanently grafted to the structure of Megalith. But perhaps the city's most striking feature is the Father Serpent, the towering skeletal remains of a great sea serpent — the greatest known to have ever been killed — that arch over and encircle the city.

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

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

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

The Serpents' Graveyard

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

The Goddess's Eye

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

The Hungry Fleet

Every once in a while a seafarer ship goes rogue, throws off its shackles and takes to the sea to hunt and kill. The seafarers hunt these ships relentlessly, killing them when they find them, but not all of them are found. What's more, some crews report running afoul of a great fleet of unmanned ships, hundreds of them, that gave chase until the crew was able to escape. These ships, the Hungry Fleet, are little more than a legend... but legends often have a kernel of truth.

The Thousand Ports

There's an archipelago — a continuous ring of tiny islands — that surrounds the entirety of the mainland. Though a great many of these islands are too tiny to support any kind of life or settlement, there are still quite a few that *are* big enough for settlements, and nearly all of them are inhabited at least part of the time. Known collectively as the Thousand Ports, some of these small islands have permanent settlements that act as places to stop and replenish supplies, while a great many more serve as temporary homes for the nomadic sea people. In both cases, permanent residence is rare. On the occasionally-inhabited islands, crews will make landfall, set up a temporary camp, blow off steam or take shelter during a storm, and move on, ensuring that the dock and any other structures on the island are well-maintained for the next crew. On the islands that have a constant population, this population tends to be in flux. Seafarers live on these islands, then leave with a crew for a time, then settle on another island or in Megalith. Similarly, seafarers who need a break from the open seas will take leave of their crews on these islands and live on them for a time, until they take up with the same crew or another.

People of Import

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

Captain Vel the Water-Devil

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

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

The Custodian

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

Captain Leshik

It's not uncommon for seafarer crews to clash with or even prey upon each other; the occasional raid or sea battle is considered fair play, part of life on the high seas. There is one ship, though, that many seafarers fear and that nearly all would love to see sink beneath the waves: the *Blue Shark*. Captain Leshik of the *Blue Shark* is a notorious pirate, even among his own people, and he has a reputation for raiding any ship he sees. Numerous seafarer crews have met their end when the *Blue Shark* found them, plundered them, and scuttled them.

Points of Conflict

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

Black Molly

Some seafarers believe there's a great black sea serpent with a vicious disposition that's gotten it in its head to hunt down seafarer vessels and sink them, as retribution for the hundreds of serpents that have fallen to the seafarers. Many dismiss Black Molly as a myth, an excuse for cowards to argue against hunting sea serpents, but more and more reliable reports of the black serpent are starting to surface. This has led to a split

in seafarer culture. While most want to continue as they have, hunting the serpents for food and resources, there are a few who believe that Black Molly is a warning that the seafarers are killing too many serpents too quickly, and that they should find other things to hunt lest the serpents rise up and destroy them all. The general populace dismisses this vocal minority as a pack of raving fools, but that doesn't stop their ideas from spreading.

The Seafarers Versus the Land-Dwellers

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

The Allure of Mutiny

Mutiny is, by and large, frowned upon by seafarer culture. Your captain is your leader; it's her responsibility to keep you safe and fed, and so you owe her your fealty and support. Captain Vel's rise to power, though, has sent the message that mutiny sometimes works out just fine. This has had the unfortunate effect of making mutiny more common aboard seafarer ships and, while many of these mutinies are soundly put down, a few of them have succeeded, putting new captains behind the helms of ships. This, in turn, creates instability amongst the seafarers themselves; if you can't rely on knowing who you're dealing with, then you don't know who your allies are and who your enemies are.

The Mainland

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

But there was another part of that moment with the beast: the instant of avoidance, Krescien's desperate side-step, that final thrust of his make-shift spear, the giddy chaos of riding that beast to the ground, feeling the life bleed out of it, kicking and grunting, defiant even at the end, then silent, still. He spent the rest of that night skinning, removing meat from bones. The meat served as adequate sustenance on his march back to camp, but the bones were the real prize. The bones of a horok are hard, durable, capable of holding sharp edges and protective forms when shaped into weapons and armor. That process, a task that occupied two full weeks of Krescien's time, was crucial not just because it left him with weapons and armor of the highest quality, but because such weapons and armor are the signet of the Bone Army, and one must hunt a horok, kill it, and make its bones into weapons and armor as a rite of passage, proof that you belong.

Krescien steps to the side and brings up his shield. The Naga's club-blow is a meteor strike and he feels it reverberate through his entire body, setting his shield-arm to numbness, but it'll take at least a second or two for the creature to recover from such an attack, and that second or two is everything. The Naga is quick — quicker than Krescien would've though possible for a creature her size, and she gives Krescien only one second to react, spinning about and taking Terric's head from his shoulders in that second. Ardin steps in, shield raised, and jabs at the Naga with his spear. The creature easily dodges it, but the distraction gives Krescien the window he needs. He plants his feet, thrusts his spear forward, and feels it dig into flesh, break past bone, emerge from the other side of the Naga's body.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Vartu tilts his head, and frowns. "Yeah, but who's counting?"

Krescien grunts another laugh and kneels down next to the dead Naga. "These wounds are pretty clean." He looks over at Vartu, now sheathing his sword. "Where'd you get a glass sword, Vartu?"

"You really gonna comment on the illegality of the weapon that saved your life, Captain?"

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

"Maybe so, but not a good one."

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

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

"I'm serious."

"Yeah, I know," he sighs, holding up his hands. "You're right. I'll get rid of it in the morning."

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

"Looking for loose gems?" Vartu jokes.

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

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

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

"What?"

"These orders are from Captain Tevarian."

Vartu purses his lips, says nothing.

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

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

"I'm sorry, Captain," whispers his sergeant. "I have orders."

Arriving on the Mainland

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

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

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

Far East, on the other hand, has already lived through its revolution. Several years ago the Queen was overthrown and assassinated and a new one took her place, and the current Queen has made a number of sweeping changes to policy and life for the people of Far East. After capitalizing on Far East’s easy access to popular luxury goods like textiles and sugar, the new Queen set about establishing fair wages and working hours for the people of the city-state, as well as brokering a peace agreement with the nearby Naga. Few know the terms of this peace agreement; the truth of the matter is that the current Queen and her supporters had been in league with the Naga for quite some time, and cooperated with them to overthrow and kill the previous Queen. Now, the Queen of Far East has secret Naga allies that she uses to gain advantage over her rival city-states. The resultant mood in Far East is one of peace and prosperity, tinged with expectant wariness. The people of Far East are treated well and the city-state is

well-protected both by its standing army and by its secret Naga allies. Many are waiting for the other shoe to drop, though. While almost nobody knows about the alliance with the Naga, the citizenry are suspicious of the sudden peace, and are aware that the Naga continue to attack other city-states while leaving their home alone. Many wonder why, and what will come of it.

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

The Twins are one city in name, though they're sometimes more like two in practice. The city-state is bisected by a wide and vigorous river, and the two halves of it are connected by a few bridges and little else. While it's common to travel between the two halves of the Twins, East Twin and West Twin have grown into very different places, and their citizens are distinct. West Twin is the agricultural hub of the mainland. The urban portion of West Twin is sparse and primarily consists of homes and markets. What West Twin does have, though, is sprawling, fertile farmland for miles and miles. The people of West Twin use farming techniques passed down through generations; when combined with some of the best soil on Asunder, the result is a yield and quality of produce that is greater and more consistent than anywhere else on the mainland, possibly even anywhere else in the world. East Twin, on the other hand, is a center of business, trade, and banking. A common saying in the Twins is "What the West Makes, the East Takes." This is true to a point, but it's not the whole story. East Twin does indeed take a considerable amount of the produce grown by West Twin, but most of that is sold to other city-states or traded for other goods, and that profit benefits West Twin as much as it does East Twin. There's a fair amount of resentment and rivalry between the two Twins, and some people grumble that the two will split off from each other and become their own separate city-states. The truth, though, is that the Twins exist in a symbiosis. East would die without West's yield, and West would shrivel without East to sell their goods to the wider world.

The Way of Krescien

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

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

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

The Naga are, indeed, the most ancient and feared foe of the people of the mainland. Larger, more powerful, and far more dangerous than the average human, most people are terrified of meeting a Naga, much less having to fight it, though encounters are much rarer than they once were. The Bone Army, as well as the presence of soldiers who actually owe fealty to the individual city-states, makes the citizens feel better, feel safer. It makes them able to function during their daily lives without fear of monsters invading and killing everyone they know.

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

The Living World

Where the people of the Black Isle lacked anything for their Essence to bond with, causing their Essence to turn inward, many people say that the people of the mainland had too many things for their Essence to bond with, and so a similar thing happened. The Black Islers' Essence bonded with their bodies, making them capable of superhuman feats. The Essence of those on the mainland, however, bonded with their own souls. Unlike people from other parts of the world, the people of the mainland have no weird powers or mutations. They cannot defy gravity or punch through rock. Instead, they work hard, adapt to their surroundings, and rely on their ingenuity and perseverance to win the day. Mainlanders do make use of many of the pieces of living gear that come from other parts of Asunder, and they even make some of their own, but

their soul-bound Essence means that, individually, they're far more vulnerable than those from the islands or the sea. They are, however, much more numerous, and mainlanders tend to be educated and have varied backgrounds and skills.

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

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

Places of Interest

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

University of Chaos

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

No Man's Land

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

Moot Point

Within No Man's Land is an outpost known as Moot Point. It's belonged to every city-state over the years, but currently belongs to none. It earned its name by being considered a place where representatives of different city-states could meet with an expectation of safety during times of war. Once each year, each city-state sends a representative (two from the Twins) to meet and discuss the coming year. This is mostly a formality, a show of good faith, but sometimes important decisions are made at Moot Point.

The Thundering Plains

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

The Naga Swamps

Beyond the territory of Far East lies a vast and trackless swamp that is said to be impassible. People say this for two reasons. First, because nobody who's ever tried to chart a way through has ever come back. Second, because the swamp is inhabited by numerous clans of Naga. Naga are enormous, powerful, gifted with strange powers and great hardiness, and they tend to prey upon humans when the two groups encounter each other. Few venture into the Naga swamps, and those who do are mostly people seeking the power of Chaos.

The Beyond

There is a swath of land beyond the Naga swamps that is virtually unreachable by land, and the oceans around it are so buffeted by violent storms and riddled with jutting rocks and coral that few save the occasional seafarer vessel dares to brave the seas to make landfall. Those who speak of this place believe that a god lives there, one that was cast down and never left with the others. They believe this god hides in his land, hoarding great treasures and protecting them jealously from those who would usurp them. Some have gone and come back, though, and tell stories of a great well of Chaos there that offers unlimited power to those strong enough to take it.

People of Import

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

General Harrik

The General of the Bone Army is one of the most powerful individuals on the mainland. Though each city-state commands its own standing army and force of chaos-wielders,

nobody commands more able-bodied soldiers — each with a high degree of training, discipline, and loyalty — than General Larissa Harrik. With soldiers posted in every city-state and nearly every outpost and settlement on the mainland, the General has the power to take at least one city-state by force, if it were what she desired. General Harrik is a woman of honor and integrity, though, and she never goes back on a contract once signed, unless the other party breaches it first. Though not all of her officers and soldiers are as noble, those who aren't often act the part. Duty and honor are important facets of the Bone Army's code, and those who break the rules regularly don't last long.

Stormcrow

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

Betty Blue-Eyes

Each city-state is home to numerous cartels, thieves' guilds, bands of assassins, and other criminal enterprises, but none is quite so famous as Betty Blue-Eyes. Betty earned fame some time ago via a string of high-profile, high-risk assassinations in Storm Point. While those who hired her were eventually outed, tried, and executed, Betty Blue-Eyes remained at large. A few years later she surfaced in Far East, killing a minor noble who was proving to be a political obstacle to a number of prominent courtiers in the city. Again, nobody was able to find Betty or bring her to justice. Since then, she surfaces periodically, each time killing in the same fashion: a glass dagger through the eye, left at the scene. Nobody knows what she looks like or where she gets so many glass daggers, but she's both feared by the aristocracy and admired by the criminal underworld and some members of the commonfolk, and people have a saying: "When you see Betty's blue eyes, buy yourself a burial plot."

Points of Conflict

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

The City-State Saber-Dance

The city-states are always at odds with each other. They need each other — each produces resources or services the others don't — but they exist in a state of intense and constant rivalry, and the governors of each city-state would like nothing more than to muster their forces and swallow up one of their neighbors. Open warfare is rare, though, as no single city-state has a significant advantage over the others, and any city-state weakened by war — winner or loser — would be quickly swallowed up by its rivals. Instead, the city-states exist in a perpetual state of cold war. Trade and travel between city-states is common, and most citizens aren't particularly invested in the

political machinations of those who rule them, but the nobility, the politicians, and the military all want a bigger piece of the pie, and some say it's only a matter of time before something sparks a conflict.

The Naga

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

The Threat of Chaos

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

Chaos

Blood thrums in her ears, a steady, deafening pulse that pushes on the backs of her eyes and tints her vision red. She lifts a hand and wipes blood from her lip, smiles, spits out a tooth. She can feel her ribs, broken from the fall, and she's favoring her left leg, but all the pain drowns away in the whirling maelstrom around her. Her climbing gear was faulty — she'll have a talk with the merchant who sold it to her later, when she returns to the Twins — but she's here now, here in this nexus of power.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The world shudders.

—

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

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

"I do," he replies, unsure.

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

The merchant puts up his hands, placating. "I'm very sorry, miss, for your misfortune. All sales are final though, and —" He tries to continue but, to his horror, he realizes his mouth is gone, a patch of smooth flesh in its place. The young woman raises her head, lowers her hood. Her eyes are crackling points of blue light, her hair a mane of fire, but the most terrifying thing about her is her grin, manic and fierce, full of wild fury. He tries to say something, to plead for his life, but no sound comes, and when he raises his hands he sees them turn to sand and fall away. He can't even scream as his body crumbles.

The Way of Cati

One of the rare few who wields the primal forces of Chaos, Cati is a terrible force of turmoil and destruction when she wants to be. Like Cati, all Chaos-wielders must track down and seek a source of Chaos. Most such sources are shards that exist in remote or

dangerous parts of the world. The Naga Swamp has quite a few shards, and there are many out on the open seas, either above it or below it. Only those from the mainland, those whose Essence bonded with their souls, are capable of bonding with and wielding Chaos energy, and only a fraction of those who try survive the process. Chaos is an inherently dangerous and destructive force, and it seeks to consume any who try to control it. The rare few who learn to master it do so through sheer force of will, and the reward they reap is nothing short of the ability to reshape reality as they see fit.

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

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

For most, the risks of Chaos are just too great to consider trying to wield it. Those who do seek it out become powerful, dangerous individuals, but also become highly sought-after by the governors of the city-states. The city-states long ago realized that controlling Chaos-wielders was the key to controlling territory, and so the governors aggressively recruit Chaos-wielders. They hire them for large sums of money, give them drugs, food, sex, and other hedonistic pleasures, and keep them happy and sedated most of the time. The reason for this is twofold. First, the constant supply of earthly pleasures keep Chaos-wielders from drawing on their power too often and thus destroying the cities they're hired to protect. Second, the fact that everyone knows that this is how Chaos-wielders are treated encourages people to become Chaos-wielders, filling the ranks even more. After all, if you can learn to harness Chaos, odds are good that you'll have your every need attended to for the rest of your (admittedly short) life.

Places of Interest

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

The Naga Swamp

On the mainland, the place most aspiring Chaos-wielders seek out their power is within the Naga Swamp. Nobody's sure why, but the swamp is home to a large number of Chaos shards. Though the Naga can't harness Chaos in the same way that humans of

the mainland can, they guard these shards jealously because they know people will come to seek them, and those people make for easy plunder.

The Chaos Well

Few are even certain this place exists, but enough stories are told by people who have supposedly been there and come back that the legends persist. People say that, if you cross through the Naga Swamp to the Beyond, you'll find the Chaos Well there, a churning maelstrom of unnatural energy. The legends also say that, if you learn to attune yourself to and harness the Chaos Well, you will become a god. So far, nobody has proven that to be true.

The Goddess's Eye

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

People of Import

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

Stormcrow

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

Points of Conflict

Chaos is conflict, in its purest, most elemental form. Chaos-wielders tend not to have strong allegiances to any given power, and the only belief that tends to be strong among Chaos-wielders is their belief in themselves. As such, they get involved in external conflicts only when they must (because of a contract with a city-state, for example). That said, conflicts between Chaos-wielders are common. These individuals tend to be arrogant, self-important, entitled, and drunk on power. When two or more of them get in one place, conflicts are inevitable. The governors minimize this by keeping them in a drug-induced stupor most of the time, but little in the world can cause more devastation than two lucid Chaos-wielders in the same place at the same time.

Other Peoples of the World

[INSERT INFORMATION ON OTHER PEOPLES OF THE WORLD]

The Keeper

[GM ADVICE GOES HERE]

Bestiary

Chaos Beast

Chaos beasts are manifestations of pure Chaos energy, reality run amok. They can take nearly any shape and size but, thankfully, they're mostly found at Chaos sites and rarely venture outside of them.

Huge Chaos Beast Difficulty 500

Perception 15 (+5); truesight

Defense 20; **Health** 200

Strength 19 (+9), **Agility** 15 (+5), **Intellect** 14 (+4), **Will** 18 (+8)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 2 banes on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

Attack Options

Rend (melee or short range) +9 with 3 boons (6d6)

Special Attacks

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast makes an attack against each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.

End of the Round

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 2d6 yards in a random direction.

Large Chaos Beast Difficulty 250

Perception 15 (+5); truesight

Defense 19; **Health** 140

Strength 18 (+8), **Agility** 14 (+4), **Intellect** 13 (+3), **Will** 17 (+7)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 2 banes on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

Attack Options

Rend (melee or short range) +8 with 3 boons (4d6)

Special Attacks

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast makes an attack against each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.

End of the Round

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 2d6 yards in a random direction.

Medium Chaos Beast Difficulty 100

Perception 14 (+4); truesight

Defense 18; **Health** 60

Strength 17 (+7), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 16 (+6)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 1 bane on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

Attack Options

Rend (melee or short range) +7 with 2 boons (3d6)

Special Attacks

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast makes an attack against each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.

End of the Round

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 1d6 yards in a random direction.

Small Chaos Beast Difficulty 25

Perception 13 (+3); truesight

Defense 17; **Health** 20

Strength 16 (+6), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 11 (+1), **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 1 bane on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

Attack Options

Rend (melee or short range) +6 with 2 boons (2d6)

Special Attacks

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast makes an attack against each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.

End of the Round

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 1d6 yards in a random direction.

Tiny Chaos Beast Difficulty 10

Perception 12 (+2); truesight

Defense 16; **Health** 10

Strength 15 (+5), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 18

Immune damage from disease or poison; gaining Strain or Discord; dazed, fatigued, frightened, immobilized, impaired, poisoned, slowed, or stunned

Warp Reality A Chaos beast imposes 1 bane on anyone who makes an attack against it. If the result of the attack is 0 or less, the attacker must immediately make a second attack against a creature of the Chaos beast's choosing, whether or not the new target is within range.

Attack Options

Rend (melee or short range) +5 with 1 boon (1d6)

Special Attacks

Chaos Burst The Chaos beast makes an attack against each target within reach with rend, making each attack roll with 2 banes.

End of the Round

Warp Space The Chaos beast teleports 1d6 yards in a random direction.

The Green Army

Nobody knows what the purpose of the Green Army is or what it wants. All people know is that sometimes the dead rise, and when they do they kill the living, sweeping through an area before disappearing into the wilderness, not to be seen again for months or even years. There are rumors that the Green Army is under Gaia's control, but people often argue about what her purpose is. Some believe that she destroys communities that have displeased her, and that the appearance of the Green Army is an indicator that people must repent and seek to appease Gaia. Others believe that, according to natural law, Gaia must cull the herd from time to time, winnowing away those who are not strong enough to subsist. Still others believe that the Green Army is a perversion of Gaia's will, that the living beings seen among the Green Army from time to time seek to subvert her power and use it to their own ends.

Servant of Gaia

The servants of Gaia are living beings imbued with the power of the Wellspring, an ancient force that allows Gaia to bond with and enhance a human's Essence. These servants lead legions of the Green Army, raising the dead and commanding them for purposes nobody truly knows. Servants of Gaia are still human, and are often mistaken for weavers.

Servant of Gaia Difficulty 50

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 14 (+4)

Defense 14 (light armor); **Health** 50

Strength 11 (+1), **Agility** 13 (+3), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 12 (+2)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Memory Dagger (melee) +3 (1d6+1, and memory drain)

Memory Drain The servant of Gaia drains some of its target's memories and Essence. The target must make a Will challenge roll. On a failure, it takes 1 Strain, is impaired for 1 minute, and the servant of Gaia absorbs some of the target's memories. If the target has Essence powers, it loses 1 use of an Essence power determined by the Keeper, and the servant of Gaia gains a use of that Essence power.

Special Actions

Raise the Dead As an action, the servant of Gaia can cause 1d6 corpses within medium range to become compelled **green conscripts**. Once it uses this talent, it cannot use it again until it completes a rest.

Green Conscript

The least powerful and most numerous of the Green Army, green conscripts are animated corpses. They retain some of the training and knowledge they had in life, though not enough to pass for human, hold a conversation, or perform complex tasks. Their knowledge is sufficient to allow them to be effective in combat, though.

Green Conscript Difficulty 1

Size 1/2 or 1 frightening undead

Perception 8 (-2)

Defense 13 (medium armor), **Health** 10

Strength 10 (+0), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 8 (-2), **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 6

Immune damage from cold, disease, or poison; gaining Strain; asleep, blinded, charmed, dazed, deafened, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned, stunned.

Attack Options

Bone Axe (melee) +0 (1d6+1)

Green Stalker

Green stalkers are twisted things, their bodies warped and modified when they're created, turning them into monstrous creatures capable of great stealth and cunning. They scuttle about on walls and ceilings, hide in the underbrush, and spring out to eviscerate their prey with their deadly claws.

Green Stalker Difficulty 10

Size 1/2 or 1 frightening undead

Perception 11 (+1)

Defense 12; **Health** 18

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 11 (+1), **Will** 9 (-1)

Speed 10; climber

Creeper The green stalker gets 1 boon on any challenge rolls made to hide or move silently.

Attack Options

Claws (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6)

Green Champion

While the bulk of the Green Army has a bare hint of sentience and a basic ability to operate independently and pose a threat, green champions possess skills beyond those of their lesser kin. A green champion is the animated corpse of a veteran warrior. What's more, it retains many of its memories and skills, and is able to operate independently, complete complex tasks, and even understand language and tactics. Though green champions cannot speak, they are much more intelligent than they initially look.

Green Champion Difficulty 25

Size 1/2 or 1 frightening undead

Perception 9 (-1)

Defense 17 (heavy armor, shield); **Health** 22

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 9 (-1), **Will** 11 (+1)

Speed 8

Attack Options

Bone Greatsword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)

Living Mist

Living mist is a semi-sentient bioweapon engineered by the weavers of New Gaia during one of their wars. Though illegal in most civilized lands now, it's still used from time to time as a guardian or shock weapon by the unscrupulous. Not actually a mist at all, the living mist is a fungal pod placed in a specific area that generates a cloud of acidic spores with a motive force behind it. It can move of its own accord, even against the wind, and dissolves those creatures unlucky enough to find themselves in contact with the spores.

Living Mist Difficulty 100

Size 10 plant

Perception 20 (+10); sightless

Defense 5; **Health** 80

Strength —; **Agility** 5 (-5); **Intellect** 6 (-4); **Will** 6 (-4)

Speed 6; flier, Focal Point

Immune damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Strain; asleep, blinded, charmed, dazed, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the living mist's shape.

Misty Form A living mist takes half damage from weapons and double damage from fire. It makes challenge rolls to resist fire effects with 1 bane. Other creatures can move through and end their movement in its space. The living mist totally obscures its area. A living mist ignores difficult terrain and can move freely through openings wide enough to permit the passage of air, but treats liquid water as a solid object.

Once per round, when exposed to wind created by an Essence power or piece of living or Chaos gear, the mist takes 4d6 damage and is moved 1d6 yards in the direction the wind is blowing.

Focal Point The living mist emanates from a small fungal pod placed somewhere in the area, and cannot move further from that pod than short range. If it is forced to move further away than short range from its focal point, it takes 2d6 damage. A character can try to find the focal point by making a Perception challenge roll; on a success, that character can pinpoint the fungal pod and, thereafter, attack it. The fungal pod has the same Defense and Health as the living mist, but takes full damage from weapon attacks. Incapacitating the living mist without destroying its fungal pod does not kill it.

Special Attacks

Dissolve Each creature within the living mist's space must make a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes. On a failure, the creature takes 3d6+2 damage and becomes impaired for 1 minute. If the creature is already impaired from some other source, it becomes slowed and takes 2d6 extra damage.

End of the Round

Spore Generation If the living mist's fungal pod is still intact, it heals 2d6 damage.

Living Door

Living doors are doors, gates, or portcullises constructed from vines, wood, and branches. These doors are still alive, and are usually linked to a keystone that allows passage automatically. Anyone without a keystone is not admitted passage, and the living door attacks anyone who tries to force their way through. Living doors are popular among nobles who have enough money for them, but don't want to trust the guarding of their treasures to other people.

Living Door Difficulty 50

Size 2 plant

Perception 13 (+3); sightless

Defense 5; **Health** 130

Strength 16 (+6); **Agility** 5 (-5); **Intellect** 6 (-4); **Will** 15 (+5)

Speed 0

Immune damage from cold, disease, and poison; gaining Strain; asleep, blinded, charmed, dazed, diseased, fatigued, frightened, poisoned, prone, stunned, and any effect that would change the living door's shape.

Solid Construction A living door takes half damage from weapons.

Passive Guardian A living door opens automatically for anyone with the right keystone, and will not attack such a creature. It does not attack anyone else unless instructed to do so by someone bearing a keystone, or unless a creature attempts to force it open.

Attack Options

Lashing Vines (reach 3) +6 with 2 boons (2d6 damage)

Thorns (short range) +2 with 2 boons (2d6 damage)

Special Attacks

Lash Out The living door attacks all creatures within a cube, 2 yards on each side, extending from a point within its reach. Each creature in the area must make an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes, taking 1d6 damage on a failure or half damage on a success.

Characters

In addition to the creatures described here, player characters will often encounter other humans. In fact, in *Asunder*, other humans are often the biggest threat, and the beings best positioned to do harm to the Seekers. Many characters in this section are written as if they're from the mainland. If you want to give any of these characters abilities from other Origins, follow the instructions below. Adding an Origin to a character doesn't impact its difficulty. If a character's description specifies an Origin, you cannot add an additional Origin to it.

Pacari

No change to the character, but the character is accompanied by an **animal** (tiny, small, medium, or large).

New Gaia (plant)

Power 1

Plant Control *speak with plants (2), reclaimed ground (1)*

New Gaia (insect)

Power 1

Insect *tiny spies (2), tiny messenger (1)*

Sky City

When the character moves or takes the dash action, some or all of its movement can be a leap.

The Sea

The character gains the swimmer trait.

Bandit

All over Asunder, there are those who prey upon their fellows, robbing, killing, and otherwise taking from others what they wish. Bandits are often the product of desperation and, while a single bandit isn't a tremendous threat, they're rarely encountered alone.

Bandit Difficulty 1

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)

Defense 14 (medium armor, shield); **Health** 12

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 9 (-1)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Club (melee) +2 (1d6, or 2d6 against a surprised target)

Bow (long range) +0 (1d6+1, or 2d6+1 against a surprised target)

Bodyguard

Bodyguards are hired the world over to protect those who can afford protection.

Bodyguard Difficulty 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 11 (+1)

Defense 15 (medium armor); **Health** 18

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 11 (+1), **Will** 9 (-1)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Bone Sword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6)

Special Actions

Vigilance A bodyguard can use an action to choose someone as their ward. While a bodyguard's ward is within the bodyguard's reach, any attacks made against the ward suffer 1 bane. If the ward is hit by an attack, the bodyguard can use a triggered action to make themselves the target of the attack.

Bone Mercenary

A cut above the average mercenary, the mercenaries of the Bone Army receive the best training and support, and each must prove themselves by killing a horok single-handedly and crafting its hide and bones into arms and armor.

Bone Mercenary Difficulty 25

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 9 (-1)

Defense 19 (horok-bone armor, shield); **Health** 22

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 9 (-1), **Will** 11 (+1)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Horok-Bone Sword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)

Thorn-Spitter (long range) +0 with 1 boon (2d6+1)

Brigand

Brigands often lead bands of similar folk, looting and pillaging, preying upon outlying settlements and merchant caravans. They often have some form of military training or are otherwise well-equipped for combat. Brigands are dangerous folk, not to be underestimated.

Brigand Difficulty 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)

Defense 15 (medium armor, shield); **Health** 15

Strength 13 (+3), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 9 (-1), **Will** 11 (+1)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Bone Sword (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6+2)

Thorn Spitter (long range) +1 with 1 boon (2d6)

Chaos Wielder

Those who wield the raw force of Chaos are dangerous, unpredictable, and capable of great acts of destruction. Chaos wielders only come from the mainland.

Chaos Wielder Difficulty 50

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)

Defense 12; **Health** 50

Strength 9 (-1), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 14 (+4)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Chaos Spike (melee) +1 (2d6+2)

Essence

Power 2

Chaos *maintain the high* (3), *induce mutation* (3), *distort time* (2), *bend space* (1)

Commoner/Professional

Merchants, beggars, farmers, craftspeople, and other folk just going about their daily lives are numerous in Asunder. Most people the Seekers encounter are commoners or professionals.

Commoner or Professional Difficulty 1

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 9 (-1)

Defense 10; **Health** 11

Strength 11 (+1), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 9 (-1), **Will** 9 (-1)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Staff (melee) +1 (1d6+1)

Stone Dagger (melee or short range) +1 (1d3)

Hired Killer

All over Asunder, one can find people who murder for pay, should one have the inclination. Though not elegant or highly trained, hired killers are often good at what they do and willing to do all manner of dirty deeds, dirt cheap.

Hired Killer Difficulty 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)

Defense 12; **Health** 18

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 9 (-1)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Glass Dagger (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6)

Insect Weaver

While most from New Gaia shape and control plants, some are bonded to insects, and these people are often ostracized, downtrodden, and feared. Some rightfully so.

Insect Weaver Difficulty 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)

Defense 12; **Health** 50

Strength 9 (-1), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 14 (+4)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Chitin Dagger (melee) +2 (1d3)

Essence

Power 2

Insect Control *eyebiters* (3), *hungry swarm* (2), *summon huge insect* (1)

Insect Meld *poison spit* (3), *cling* (2), *chitinous shell* (1)

End of the Round

Biting Swarm Each creature within the Insect Weaver's reach takes 1d6 damage.

Mercenary

There are many people in Asunder who sell their swords to the highest bidder. Though not as highly trained as those of the Bone Army, standard mercenaries are quite a lot less expensive.

Brigand Difficulty 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 10 (+0)

Defense 17 (heavy armor, shield); **Health** 20

Strength 13 (+3), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 11 (+1)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Bone Sword (melee) +3 with 1 boon (1d6+2)

Thorn Spitter (long range) +1 with 1 boon (2d6)

Patroller

Patrollers are the guards, watchmen, and conscripts of Asunder. Though not highly trained, they are numerous and better armed than the common folk.

Patroller Difficulty 1

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 11 (+1)

Defense 15 (medium armor, shield); **Health** 11

Strength 11 (+1), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 10 (+0), **Will** 10 (+0)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Spear (melee) +1 (1d6)

Torch (melee) +1 with 1 bane (1d6 plus 1 from fire)

Pickpocket

Where there are valuables, there are those who seek to liberate them from their owners. Pickpockets pilfer, mug, and waylay in the city streets, seeking to take what isn't theirs.

Pickpocket Difficulty 10

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 12 (+2)

Defense 13 (light armor); **Health** 16

Strength 10 (+0), **Agility** 12 (+2), **Intellect** 12 (+2), **Will** 9 (-1)

Speed 10

Trickery Once per round, the pickpocket can make a challenge roll or attack roll with 1 boon.

Attack Options

Bone Sword (melee) +2 (1d6, plus 1d6 if the pickpocket had 1 boon from Trickery)

Sap (melee) +2 (1d3, plus 1d6 if the pickpocket had 1 boon from Trickery)

Special Actions

Threats The pickpocket uses an action or a triggered action on its turn to make an Intellect attack roll against the Will of one target creature within short range of it that can hear and see it. On a success, the target becomes frightened for 1 round. On a failure, the target becomes immune to that pickpocket's Threats for 24 hours.

Plant Weaver

New Gaians who have control over plants are in high demand all around Asunder, as they're able to create much of the living gear used by people in their day-to-day lives. Those who would steal from them or threaten them should beware: they're more than capable of defending their homes and shops.

Plant Weaver Difficulty 5

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 13 (+3)

Defense 11; **Health** 13

Strength 9 (-1), **Agility** 11 (+1), **Intellect** 13 (+3), **Will** 10 (+0)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Living Whip (reach 2) +1 (1d6+1)

Essence

Power 1

Plant Control *speak with plants* (2), *blood thorns* (1), *enhance shaped plant* (1)

Plant Form *plant seeming* (2), *raking branches* (1)

Veteran

There are many experienced warriors in Asunder, warriors who have learned the craft of fighting through hard-earned experience.

Veteran Difficulty 25

Size 1/2 or 1 human

Perception 9 (-1)

Defense 17 (heavy armor, shield); **Health** 22

Strength 12 (+2), **Agility** 10 (+0), **Intellect** 9 (-1), **Will** 11 (+1)

Speed 10

Attack Options

Chitin Sword (melee) +2 with 1 boon (2d6+2)

Thorn-Spitter (long range) +0 with 1 boon (2d6+1)

The Journey Begins

[ADVENTURE ADVICE GOES HERE]

Adventure Tools

The adventures presented in this chapter make use of the following three tools, which you can use for your own adventures to inject a little more excitement and intrigue.

Secrets

When preparing to run an adventure, come up with a **secret** for each Seeker. Customize these secrets to your individual players, keeping in mind what they'll find fun and what they're likely to enjoy pursuing. A secret is a hidden agenda for that Seeker, something they can use to inform their roleplay and that they can reveal at a dramatic moment in order to make things more fun for everyone.

While a Seeker's secret is hidden, that Seeker needn't do anymore than keep it in mind when making decisions and roleplaying interactions. However, whenever the Seeker feels it's appropriate, they can reveal their secret to everyone at the table. This causes two things to happen.

First, the Seeker must escalate the situation as described under "Fatal Flaws" in **Chapter 3**.

Second, the revealing Seeker gets a benefit based on the secret.

Third, once the escalated situation is resolved, all of the *other* Seekers each get Fortune (**Chapter 3**).

Each of the adventures provided has example secrets you can use in your own game.

Branch Points

When you're building an adventure, you can choose to include one or two **branch points** in that adventure. Pick a spot in the adventure where things might go in a few different ways. On index cards or pieces of paper, write down three possibilities for things that can happen as a result of the Seekers' involvement in the adventure at that point. When the Seekers get to that point in the adventure, lay the three cards face-down on the table and allow them to pick one. Discard the other two and read the one they chose; whatever's written on that card is now true.

Each of the adventures provided has included branch points.

The Countdown Die

The provided adventures use this mechanic from time to time in order to heighten the tension of a scene. Use a **countdown die** when the Seekers have a number of things they have to do in a limited amount of time, and when there's a consequence for taking

too long. Decide what that consequence is, then take a d6 and either roll it or place it on a specific face. Allow each Seeker to take an action (or allow all Seekers to take a group action). Once they have, turn the countdown die so that its face-up number decrements by 1. If it's already at 1, the consequence occurs.

If you're using multiple countdown dice at once, you might find it useful to label each die with an index card or scrap of paper, placing the countdown die on the label.

Chases

It can be exciting to run a chase sequence when the Seekers are trying to catch (or escape from) someone or something. Here's how they work:

Break the chase into rounds, as follows. Seekers are trying to get 5 successes between them before the enemy gets 3. This is true whether the Seekers are the pursuers or the pursued.

Fast Turns: A player who takes a fast turn can make an Agility challenge roll with 1 boon to try to gain ground. Once a player takes a fast turn, they're fatigued for 1 minute. If they're already fatigued, they're also impaired.

Slow Turns: A player who takes a slow turn can make an Agility challenge roll to try to gain ground. The player can take any number of banes on the roll; each bane removes one fatigued or impaired condition from the player.

End of Turn: The enemy makes an Agility challenge roll with 1 boon.

If the Seekers get 5 successes before the enemy gets 3, they catch their quarry or escape, depending on what they were trying to do. If not, their quarry escapes or their pursuers catch them.

Planting Seeds

“Planting Seeds” is an *Asunder* adventure for a starting party of level 0 characters. It features some combat, some investigation, a bit of negotiation, and some opportunities for stealth and trickery. The goal of this adventure is to get people acclimated to the world of Asunder, and to allow them to try a few different approaches to problems in order to determine which novice path they might want to pursue upon reaching level 1.

The end of the adventure also provides them with an important choice that can shape the way their career unfolds.

Briston

“Planting Seeds” takes place in the village of Briston, a small, rural holding within the territory of the city-state of Hyden, on the mainland. Briston is situated on the edge of a vast wilderness and is, in many ways, a frontier town. It takes three to four days to reach the city-state proper from Briston, and about a day and a half to reach the closest outlying settlement. It’s a large enough settlement that players can find common and uncommon items here, including living gear, though the latter two are typically sold by specific individuals in town. Illegal gear can be purchased from Iskaria Dust, if the player characters develop a good relationship with her.

The village is a spore village; that is, the wilderness that it’s situated on the edge of is primarily comprised of giant mushrooms, and the people of the village subsist by harvesting spores and fungus from the mushrooms, planting fungus crops, and hunting the creatures that feed on the giant mushrooms. The people of Briston use domesticated vvakirs — large, strong reptiles that are easy to control and don’t require much food or water — as beasts of burden and dray animals; if necessary, use **huge animal** stats for vvakirs, though vvakirs aren’t particularly aggressive and tend to shy away from combat.

Briston has few modern amenities. There’s a small inn, but for the most part all of the businesses in Briston cater to the hunters, trappers, gatherers, and farmers that live in and around the village. Briston is protected by a militia and, while members receive some training, they are not investigators or soldiers. Their job is to protect the town from outside dangers and to deal with rowdies and troublemakers within the town; any problem greater than this (such as a murder investigation) is beyond them.

Aside from the people listed under “The Suspects” later in this chapter, there are three important people the PCs might come into contact with during their investigation in Briston.

The governor of Briston is **Halid Deeks (professional)**. Halid is an appointed representative of the ruling council of Hyden, sent to Briston to govern it and keep the mushroom and spore crops flowing. He’s not cruel or unfair by any means, but the people of Briston see him as aloof and hard to relate to. He’s a big city man in a rural town, and he doesn’t particularly like being in Briston. The militia reports to Halid, so if

the PCs run afoul of them (or are deputized by them), they may very well have to deal with him.

Because Briston is a spore village, it has a resident weaver, **Vessari (professional** with New Gaia (plant) Origin). She's a transplant from New Gaia, and came to Hyden to seek opportunities away from home and see the world. She's only been in Briston for a few years, but she's become a cornerstone of the village's economy, helping the crops to grow more effectively and accompanying some hunting parties into the forest as a guide. Vessari also creates much of the living gear that Briston uses, and she'll gladly sell such gear to the PCs.

Finally, the ruling council has sent **Seng, a Chaos wielder**, to stay in Briston. He's there ostensibly to help defend the village, but most people see him as a danger. He spends quite a bit of his time drunk or high on dreamgrass, and he occasionally lights things on fire or turns them into sand. For the most part, Halid Deeks is able to keep him under control. He's unlikely to be much help to the PCs, but he could very easily be a thorn in their sides if he decides he doesn't like them.

Throughout the adventure, you might find it useful to ask the PCs about details of their lives here. Some of them might be passing through, but they might decide that their characters live in Briston. If they do, make a habit of asking them questions like, "What do you do for a living here?", "How do you know this person?", or "Why doesn't so-and-so like you?" Doing this can get them invested in the town and, more importantly, in the welfare of its inhabitants.

Secrets

Here are six secrets you can give your players before this adventure.

You've been selling contraband. Nothing too dangerous or lucrative, but enough so that you've got 1d3 pearls stashed away, which you can get by revealing this secret. The militia knows *someone's* been selling contraband, though, and is looking for you.

You and Harivar are lovers, unbeknownst to either Analee or Benet. You can recall information about Harivar easily and, if the Keeper calls for a challenge roll to do so, you get 1 boon. This benefit lasts for the entire adventure once you've revealed this secret.

Harivar owed you a great deal of money. Luckily, you know where he keeps his stash in his house. When you're there, you can reveal this card to get 1d3 pearls.

You stole a piece of living gear from the local weaver, Vessari. She's reported it missing to the militia, and they're keeping an eye out for it. However, you can reveal this secret to get a piece of rank 0 living gear, chosen by the Keeper.

You've been blackmailing Halid Deeks, the governor. You can reveal this secret to get a favor from him (work out the details with the Keeper), but doing so will complicate things.

You collaborated with Analee on a crime some time ago, and she owes you a favor. You can cash it in by revealing this secret (work out the details with the Keeper), but doing so may not endear you to most people in town.

Situations

“Planting Seeds” is a situation-based adventure. Rather than provide a linear story for the PCs to follow, we start in an opening situation that they have to deal with. From here, they can find themselves in any number of additional situations, and they can tackle these situations in virtually any order. This adventure provides a number of likely situations the PCs might find themselves in; run these in whatever order makes the most sense for your group, and feel free to add your own situations in when the need arises.

Opening Situation: The Body

It begins with a corpse, freshly dead, lying in an alleyway in Briston. The players, not yet seekers, are arrayed around the body, having been drawn by screams of pain. They’re the first on the scene.

Read or paraphrase the following:

Harivar the Hunter is dead, his arms splayed about, his neck at an odd angle, a growing pool of blood underneath him. It was clearly his screams that drew you here, and it couldn’t have taken more than a few moments for you to arrive. And yet, there’s no trace of Harivar’s killer.

You’ve each been in Briston long enough that Harivar was no stranger to any of you. He was loud, boisterous, generous with drink and stingy with praise. He could be rough around the edges, sure, but who would want him dead?

At this point, ask each of the players: “How did you know Harivar?” Use this opportunity to allow each player to define their relationship to the victim, as well as their role within the town of Briston. You can also use this opportunity to allow players to ask a few questions. The following questions, and their answers, represent common knowledge that any of the characters would know.

Who was Harivar?

Harivar was Briston’s best hunter, and he’s a native mainlander. He ventured out into the woods nearby and returned with meat, skin, bones, and other animal resources to sell and trade. Many of Briston’s cooks, merchants, and craftspeople did business with Harivar, and his loss will be an economic blow to the community.

What’s Briston?

Briston is a small town within the territory of Hyden. Hyden is one of the great city-states of the mainland, known for its academies as well as for the large number of Chaos-

wielders it keeps on retainer. Briston is situated on the edge of a large forest full of game and harvestable resources.

What killed Harivar?

It's hard to tell. He was definitely murdered, that much is clear. But you'd have to do some investigation to figure out what actually killed him.

Where in Briston are we?

You're in an alley behind the butcher shop.

What time is it?

It's mid-day. There are people nearby, walking around in the streets. Today is a market day, so the streets are more crowded than usual.

Choices and Urgency

The players have three basic choices at this point: they can investigate the scene, investigate the corpse, or go find help. They don't, however, have all the time in the world to do these things; eventually the militia will arrive and question them and, when that happens, they'll waste enough time that the trail goes cold. To add a sense of urgency to the situation, use a countdown die that starts at 4. Tell the PCs they have enough time to take that many actions before the militia comes to investigate the screams that drew the PCs here.

Each PC can take one action before the die ticks down one step. If multiple PCs cooperate on the same action, this counts as both of them taking an action. Ask each PC what they want to do and resolve each of these actions, then adjust the die. If it's already on 1 when it's time to adjust it again, the militia arrives on the scene.

Actions might include:

- Searching the area.
- Investigating a specific foot trail.
- Climbing the wall (2 actions without climbing gear).
- Scanning the village from the rooftops.
- Investigating the corpse.
- Turning the corpse over and investigating it further.
- Taking items from the corpse.
- Hiding the body.
- Making a challenge roll.
- Leaving the area.

Investigating the Corpse

If a player decides to investigate Harivar's corpse, have them make a Perception challenge roll. Read the following whether they succeed or fail:

Harivar is on his stomach in a pool of blood. His left hand is under his body, while his right is splayed out above him. There are no clear wounds on his back, so whatever wound he's bleeding from must be on his front.

If a player decides to turn him over, read:

His face is matted with blood, as is the front of his tunic. The cause of death is clear: a single stab wound in the center of his chest. He's gripping something in his left hand.

To a player with the medicine academic area of knowledge, read:

The wound was made by a short, narrow blade, and the incision severed an artery. There are traces of plant fiber in the wound, suggesting the blade was organic, possibly some form of living knife. Whoever was wielding it clearly knew where to strike in order to kill quickly.

If a player pries open his right hand, read:

In his right hand is a scrap of green cloth. Upon closer inspection, you realize it's not actually cloth, but a piece of a giant leaf.

If a player succeeded on the Perception challenge roll, they also find a few useful things on Harivar that they can take if they wish:

- A dose of sawgrass powder
- A bone glass hunting knife (light melee weapon, glass, deadly, thrown)
- A dose of rank 0 kalea venom

To a player who finds these things, explain that sawgrass powder is commonly used to treat injuries, but is also a mildly addictive narcotic. Kalea snake venom, when distilled, can enhance one's bond to their Essence. Neither of these things is particularly out of place on a skilled hunter. However, the glass dagger is a weapon that is both dangerous and illegal; the fact that Harivar has it is unusual, to say the least. Where would someone even find a glass dealer out here in the country?

Investigating the Area

If a player wants to take a look around the area, have them make a Perception challenge roll. Then, succeed or fail, read:

The alley has two exits, one on the north and one on the south. It widens behind the butcher shop, where Harivar's body lays. Someone fleeing the alley could have left through either exit, but your group entered through both exits, so that seems unlikely.

To a player who succeeded on the Perception challenge roll, read:

There are footprints all over the place, but you're able to narrow down which are Harivar's. There are three sets of footprints that could possibly be his killer's; one went

into the butcher shop through the back door, one left through the south exit to the alley, and one seems to have scaled a wall on the eastern building. Looking closely at the wall, you can see the tell-tale marks of some form of climbing claws.

Finding Help

A player who wants to can try to find a member of the militia to help. Briston has no town watch, but there are twenty or so members of the militia to safeguard the town, six to ten of whom are active at any given time. Militia members wear a uniform, so they're easy to recognize. If a player goes looking for a member of the militia, they find a woman named **Viria**, a stout mainlander woman with a stone-tipped spear. Use **patroller** stats for Viria.

Members of the militia aren't trained to investigate crimes; their job is to keep the peace and defend Briston from outside attack. As such, Viria's primary concern is removing the body and organizing a search party, which will look for anyone who looks suspicious. "Suspicious" in this case is anyone not from Briston, including any player characters who aren't from the town.

Seeking help *does* incline Viria to believe that the player characters aren't involved in the murder, and any player can make an Intellect attack against her Intellect in order to convince her that they're innocent. A player from Briston who makes this attack does so with 1 boon. Once they have, players can offer their assistance; if they do, Viria is happy to deputize them for the duration of the investigation.

If the players aren't able to convince Viria of their innocence, she takes one or more of them into custody. Such players have a choice: submit to arrest, or resist. If the players resist, Viria calls for help; on the third round of combat, four more **patrollers** show up and attack any aggressive-looking characters on the scene (use a countdown die to add tension, if you wish).

Waiting Too Long

If the players dither about too long, the militia finds them. A concerned citizen named **Corval** heard Harivar's screams and went to fetch the militia, and arrives with four **patrollers** in tow; use **commoner** stats for Corval.

As above, the players can make an Intellect attack to convince Corval and the militia members of their innocence, but they do so with 1 bane because they're standing around a body, and they're the only ones there.

Following a Trail

If the PCs decide to run off following one of the trails, the militia eventually learns that they've fled the scene and assumes they're the killers. They start hunting for the PCs.

What's Really Happening

Harivar goes hunting the woods near Briston frequently, killing game and bringing it back to sell. On his most recent foray, though, he found something he couldn't quite explain: a large, semi-translucent seed pod, pulsing with greenish light. This object is a **Seed of Gaia**, a powerful tool that a skilled user can break open in order to unleash millions of fungal spores, spores that, when they find corpses to grow within, will raise those corpses to serve the **Green Army**.

Harivar didn't know any of this; he just knew that he'd found a magic seed, and that it had to be worth something. When he got back to Briston, Seed in tow, he sent a messenger bird to contact **Iskaria Dust**, a black market dealer in Hyden. She agreed to come out and appraise the Seed and, if she decided it was valuable, to pay Harivar for it in gems or trade.

What neither Iskaria nor Harivar knew is that Harivar took the Seed from a being known as **the Umbrage**, a servant of Gaia. The Umbrage was growing the Seed while having assumed the form of a plant, a process that he can only undertake once every few years. Harivar stole the Seed and, once the Umbrage woke from his slumber, he found it missing. The Umbrage can sense the presence of the Seed and determine its direction, and he has tracked it back to Briston to retrieve it.

A few minutes ago, Harivar was meeting with Iskaria in the alley behind the butcher shop. He'd just traded the Seed for a glass dagger when the Umbrage appeared and slew him. He didn't get the Seed; Iskaria has it now. The Umbrage wants the seed back, though, it will hunt Iskaria down to find it.

After the Umbrage slew Harivar, three things happened. First, Iskaria fled through the south exit of the alley. She's adept at escaping notice when she wants to, and she's quick, so she was able to blend into the market day crowd easily. Second, the Umbrage took to the rooftops to try to spot Iskaria. He couldn't find her. Third, a young boy named **Sebi** was hiding behind a stack of barrels in the alley; he'd been enjoying a smoke break when the black market deal started, and after he heard screams, he ran back into the butcher shop where he works.

A few minutes later, the player characters showed up on the scene.

The Suspects

Whether the players enlist help from the militia or round up suspects themselves, these are the most likely people to be rounded up. Feel free to use some or all of them, depending on the circumstances.

Sebi is a **commoner**, a 16-year-old boy who's apprenticing to be a butcher. He's tall and strong, and he smokes dreamgrass, a bad habit his parents wish he'd kick. Though he didn't see the murder take place, Sebi heard the whole thing happen. He recognized Harivar's voice and he heard Harivar talking to a woman. He also heard the woman curse and run away after Harivar screamed, and he heard something else go up the

wall. He didn't see anything, though, and doesn't want any trouble. He could probably recognize Iskaria's voice if he heard it again.

Marya Deston is from Hyden, and is on her way to the Twins. She's visiting family there, and stopped in Bristown because it's a convenient place to sleep in a bed rather than on the ground. In actual fact, Marya is **Iskaria Dust**. She's laying low until there's an opportunity to flee Bristown, then she's gone. Iskaria is a **bandit**.

Sorok is a Pacari warrior on a pilgrimage. He seeks to see the world and talk to the animals not native to his homeland. He doesn't talk much, and doesn't take kindly to people who accuse him of crimes. He also dislikes those who hunt indiscriminately, like Harivar, believing they have no respect for the wild things of the world. Sorok is a **hunter** and travels with his wolf companion, Tishk (**medium animal**).

Analee is a local troublemaker and hooligan. She likes to drink and fight and dislikes authority figures. She's known to have had a tumultuous on-again, off-again love affair with Harivar, though nobody knows what the current state of the relationship is (it's off currently). Analee is a **bandit**, and is often accompanied by 1d6 of her cronies (**commoners**).

In their investigations, the players might fight **Benet** in Harivar's house. Benet is a local surgeon and apothecary, and he's in Harivar's house because the two of them are currently lovers. If the players find him quickly enough, he might not even know of Harivar's demise. They've been keeping their relationship secret because Analee is prone to jealousy. Benet is a **professional**.

Situation: Following the Footsteps

One of the most obvious leads is to follow the different trails of footprints in the hopes of finding the suspect still red-handed.

The Butcher Shop

Inside the butcher shop, the players find the butcher, **Rogar**, and his apprentice, **Sebi**. Sebi was outside when the murder took place and heard everything, though he saw nothing. He doesn't volunteer this information, choosing to stay quiet and let Rogar do the talking.

Rogar (**professional**) is foul-mouthed and cantankerous, with a permanent scowl on his face. He's not a cruel person, and actually treats Sebi fairly well, but he doesn't like people much and isn't inclined to be particularly helpful.

If the PCs start questioning him about the murder, his primary concern is asking them what authority they have to question him about anything at all. A PC can convince him to be helpful by making an Intellect attack against his Will, though any PC trying to do so gets 1 bane on the roll, unless one or more members of the militia are present and in support of the PC. Unfortunately, Rogar doesn't know anything about the murder.

He didn't hear the scream because he was busy butchering a pig, a loud, unpleasant task that took all of his focus and attention.

If the PCs try talking to Sebi, he stays quiet for as long as he can. Unless the PCs have convinced Rogar to be helpful, Rogar does what he can to prevent the PCs from talking to Sebi. If Rogar is inclined to be helpful, he'll goad Sebi into talking, at which point a PC can make an Intellect attack against Sebi's Intellect or Will to convince him to help. If successful, Sebi will tell them what he knows and what he heard.

The Rooftops

A PC can scale the wall by making a challenge roll to climb it with 1 bane, unless they have appropriate climbing tools. From the roof, they can get a good vantage point of the town. If they haven't delayed too long before climbing the wall, a PC on the roof can make a Perception challenge roll to notice two things:

- There's a woman in a green cloak moving quickly through the market day crowd, heading south.
- A figure is crouching on a rooftop at the edge of town. Once the PC notices it, it seems to notice the PC and drops down off the roof, out of sight.

The South Exit

Following the footprints through the south exit is, unfortunately, probably a waste of time. The market day crowd makes it impossible to follow the footprints any further, though a very perceptive PC who makes a Perception challenge roll with 2 banes notices a figure in a green cloak moving south through the crowd, provided not too much time has passed since the murder.

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What's Too Much Time?

If the PCs act quickly enough, they can spot things they might not otherwise see. What's "quickly enough"? Whatever you need it to be. Most of the time, when playing *Asunder*, you won't be tracking individual minutes as they tick by. While the PCs might take some time to talk through their potential actions, it's possible only a minute or two has passed in the game. Use your best judgment, and err on the side of giving the PCs information that moves the game forward.

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Situation: The Green Cloak

If the PCs manage to spot the figure in the green cloak moving south through the market day crowd, they can give chase. Moving through the crowd counts as difficult terrain. PCs can keep an eye on the green-cloaked figure without too much trouble, but she might catch their scent if they're not careful. If the PCs indicate that they want to keep a low profile, allow them to make Agility challenge rolls to hide in the crowd as they pursue the woman in green. Otherwise, she catches onto them when they get within about ten yards of her, and she bolts. Run a chase to see if the PCs catch her.

Catching the Green-Cloaked Figure

If the PCs catch the figure, whether through stealth or by giving chase, they discover that she's a young woman in her mid twenties, clearly a mainlander but, by her dress, from Hyden proper. She's perturbed at having been chased or cornered. The PCs can feel free to ask her questions.

Who are you?

"My name is Marya Deston."

Why did you run?

"I'm not from around here, and I've heard stories about ruffians out in the... rural parts of the territory. I was afraid."

Where are you from?

"Hyden. I live there, but I'm on my way to the Twins to visit family."

Observing Marya

A PC may wish to observe Marya, particularly if they're looking to see if her cloak is torn, or if it matches the plant-like fabric in Harivar's hand. A PC who wants to do so can make a Perception challenge. On a success, they learn the following:

- Marya's cloak is simple cloth, and it's not torn.
- She seems nervous.
- She has a shoulder bag, and she's clutching it, like it contains something valuable.

The Truth

Marya is Iskaria Dust, black market dealer. A PC who presses her hard enough can get her to fess up, though any attack rolls made to intimidate her suffer 1 bane; she's not easy to break. A PC who reasons with her will have a little more luck, and a PC who plays to her avarice gets 1 boon on social attack rolls. A successful roll of this sort causes her to reveal her true identity, and to admit that, yes, she just fled a meeting with Harivar. She's quick to point out that she didn't kill him, though.

Situation: Using the Militia

Assuming the PCs can convince the militia that they're not the murderers *and* that they should be deputized for the investigation, the militia's only too happy to round up some suspects for them to question. They do this in the most direct, clumsy way possible: by combing the streets, looking for anyone who looks remotely suspicious. After a few hours of this, they'll bring all of the characters mentioned under "The Suspects" except for Benet to the town's militia hall and allow the PCs to question them.

Nobody in the group is terribly happy about being rounded up for questioning, or about being accused of murdering Harivar the Hunter. Most will cooperate, even if under duress, but most characters won't be able to give much useful information. Refer to each character's entry when the PCs are questioning people in this situation.

Branch Point: Helgar

Though the militia might be helping the PCs, there are members who think the PCs are guilty, or just plain have grudges. A man named **Helgar** is the face of this faction of the militia; use **patroller** stats for him and his cronies. Introduce him at some point when the PCs are dealing with the militia, and present them with this choice point. The results of this choice point determine what Helgar's motives are, and how he acts against the PCs.

Dissident Voice

Helgar speaks out against the PCs and actively tries to have them arrested. He believes they're guilty of Harivar's murder, and it won't be easy to convince him otherwise. This prevents the PCs from being deputized as long as Helgar is speaking against them and, three times during the adventure, Helgar will send 1d3+1 of his cronies to go rough the PCs up and cause them trouble. These cronies don't fight to the death, and neither will Helgar.

Plotting Murder

Helgar hates one of the PCs in particular for some real or imagined slight years ago. He sees this murder investigation, as well as the suspicion surrounding the PC, as a perfect opportunity to get some revenge. Helgar quietly fomenting distrust of the PCs and, once during the adventure, he and 1d6 of his cronies show up to try to kill the PC and anyone who might try to protect them.

Framed!

Helgar speaks out against the PCs and actively tries to have them arrested. He believes they're guilty of Harivar's murder, and it won't be easy to convince him otherwise. However, after he's publicly denounced the PCs but before he's gotten a chance to do anything, he turns up dead. The PCs are the obvious suspects for this murder, but the murder was actually perpetrated by the Umbrage, seeking to keep the PCs busy long enough for him to get the Seed.

Situation: Getting Arrested

It's entirely possible that the PCs will get themselves arrested for murder, or at least that the militia will try to arrest them. If they fail to convince the militia that they're innocent and trying to help, the militia throws them in the sole jail cell, which is in the militia hall. The cell is big enough to hold all of the PCs and two or three additional people. It's made of wood and plant matter and is itself a living organism. There's a tendril that militia members can use to tether to the cell and communicate with it, using mental commands to open the cell or reconfigure its shape.

A PC can try to force their way out of the cell with brute force; doing so requires a successful Strength challenge roll with 3 banes.

A PC can also try to tether to the cell, though this is much more difficult. The tether is situated such that it isn't easily reachable from inside the cell; doing so requires an Agility challenge roll with 3 banes. Once a PC has the tether, though, they can try to bond with the cage and get it to open. Doing so requires a Will challenge with 1 bane

and, if a PC fails this challenge, they take 1 Strain. They can feel free to try again, though.

Even if the PCs manage to get out of the cage, though, the militia leave four members to guard them at all times, each of them **patrollers**. Breaking out causes the guards to immediately attack, seeking to subdue the PCs.

If the PCs escape, or if they flee the militia before being arrested, they become fugitives. All militia members are hostile to them, and are actively looking for them until they can find a way to clear their names. This isn't an ideal way to go about the adventure, as the PCs aren't high enough level yet to really deal with this kind of attention. If this is how they want to handle things, though, throw groups of 1d6 **patrollers** at them periodically, whenever things seem to be slowing down or stalling. Allow them to run away if they choose to; a successful Agility challenge roll allows a PC to escape the militia. If things go this way, it's entirely possible one or more of them will die. It's also possible militia members will get killed; even if the PCs solve the murder, the militia's unlikely to be happy with them and likely won't let them stay in Briston.

If the PCs decide to stay in jail and wait things out, eventually the militia throws three more people in jail with them: Iskaria, Sorok, and Analee. While Sorok and Analee are red herrings, Iskaria is a valuable source of information; if the PCs can get her to talk, she can clear their names and get them released.

Situation: Investigating the Mysterious Figure

If the PCs glimpse the figure on the rooftops across town, they can go investigate that area. The area itself is residential but, with a little digging, they can find traces of the figure. Have the PCs make a Perception challenge roll, then give them the following information:

- The walls here bear the same scratch marks that the alley did, indicating someone with climbing claws climbed this wall.
- There are blood stains on the ground here, enough to indicate that someone was killed.

A successful Perception roll allows the PCs to spot and follow a trail of footprints, which lead directly to Harivar's house.

Situation: Investigating Harivar

A PC might get the bright idea to go to Harivar's residence and poke around there. If they do, they notice that one of the upstairs windows is broken. The door is closed and locked, but a PC can pick the lock or force it open with an Agility or Strength challenge roll, respectively. Inside they find that, while the downstairs is in good order, the upstairs has been ransacked and there's a man lying in a pool of blood on the floor. The man on the floor is **Benet**, and he *is* alive, though he's badly wounded. A PC who takes the time to administer first aid can stabilize him and wake him up.

Benet is terrified when he wakes, and it might take some time for the PCs to calm him and convince him that he's not in immediate danger. Once they do, they can provide the following information:

- He and Harivar are lovers, but are keeping the relationship secret because of Analee's tendency toward jealousy.
- He clearly doesn't know that Harivar is dead.
- Someone broke in through the window and attacked him. He saw lots of green, and the figure stabbed him with some sort of blade. He thinks the blade was made of bark or some other kind of plant matter.
- He was waiting for Harivar to get home. They were going to have a celebratory dinner.
- They were celebrating because Harivar found something valuable in the woods, some kind of seed.
- Harivar was going to sell the seed to a woman named Iskaria, from Hyden, today.
- He doesn't know where the attacker went, but it's possible the PCs scared it off. It might still be nearby.

Throughout the conversation, Benet seems disoriented and slightly confused. Part of this is blood loss, but a PC who succeeds at an Intellect challenge roll can also notice the effects of an Essence break. Something has clearly placed a great strain on Benet's Essence, though he has no idea what that could be, as he's never had any Essence powers.

What happened, moments before the PCs arrived, was that the Umbrage broke in through the window, attacked Benet, and stabbed him with a blade that he generated from his own body. This blade was more than a weapon; it also allowed the Umbrage to drain some of Benet's Essence and, through that Essence, some of his memories. This means that the Umbrage knows everything Benet knows, and is now hunting for Iskaria.

Situation: Confronting Iskaria

At some point, the PCs are going to want to ask Iskaria some hard questions. If they've managed to pierce her Marya Deston disguise, she doesn't see much point in continuing the ruse and comes clean with them. Otherwise, a PC is going to have to convince her to talk with an Intellect or Will social attack. Once she's in a talkative mood, she can provide the following information:

- Iskaria is a black market dealer from Hyden. She deals primarily in narcotics and glass.
- She got a messenger bird a few days ago from Harivar, who used to be a regular of hers before he moved out here.
- Harivar's description of the Seed immediately piqued Iskaria's interest, because she thought it could be used to make a new kind of narcotic.
- Harivar was killed by a person covered in leaves and bark armor, with some sort of wooden knife. She thinks the attacker was probably a weaver.
- She still has the Seed. She's hesitant to part with it, but will if pressed.

Iskaria is willing to talk to the PCs and even give them the Seed, but she's not willing to help much beyond that. She's primarily motivated by self-interest, and just wants to leave Briston.

Situation: Investigating the Seed

The function of the Seed is to allow the Umbrage to raise a large number of **green conscripts** quickly. Spending an hour studying the Seed, running tests, and making an Intellect challenge roll allows a PC to learn that it's still alive, that it's fungal in nature, and that it contains millions of spores. All of this can be discovered without destroying the Seed.

A PC who tries to destroy the Seed can do so, to no immediate ill effect. The spores need the Umbrage to catalyze them, and are harmless if used by someone without a direct Essence bond to the Seed.

Once the PCs have the Seed, the Umbrage will eventually find them. He can sense the Seed's presence, and will be drawn to it.

Situation: The Dead Walk

At some point during the investigation, attack the PCs with a pair of **green conscripts**. The Umbrage has raised these two corpses from the local cemetery and dispatched them to deal with the PCs. Use this encounter when the PCs are losing momentum, when they're getting close to figuring out what's going on, or when you just need a fight to spice things up.

When describing the conscripts, emphasize the fact that these corpses fight as if they were trained warriors, and that they're covered in green fungal growths.

Situation: Confronting the Umbrage

There are three ways the PCs can come into contact with the Umbrage and confront him.

If the PCs get enough information about who they're looking for, they can go out searching or even mobilize the militia to help them search. If they do, eventually they find the Umbrage. He'll seek to escape if he's badly outnumbered, and you can feel free to allow the PCs to chase him. Call for challenge rolls and lead them on a merry chase, but eventually they catch up to him and can confront him.

If the PCs get the Seed, the Umbrage eventually finds them. He waits until they're alone and their guard is down, and attacks without warning.

If the PCs take a long time finding Iskaria, when they finally catch up to her, the Umbrage has found her first. She's been freshly killed, and the PCs can feel free to fight the Umbrage. He has the Seed now, so his primary motive is to escape; treat this the same way you'd run the chase sequence described in the first option.

The Umbrage is a **servant of Gaia**, a difficult foe for starting PCs. It'll be a tough fight, and one or more PCs might become incapacitated during it. If it looks like things are trending toward the party being wiped out, the Umbrage disables just enough of the PCs to allow for an easy escape, then does so. If he has the Seed, he escapes for good, going off to enact his plans. If he doesn't, he'll try to get it later after licking his wounds (and allowing the PCs to lick theirs).

During the fight, the Umbrage is talkative. He doesn't see the PCs as a real threat, and thinks that he might actually be able to convince them to help with his plans. As the combat progresses, make sure the PCs learn the following information:

- The Umbrage plans on using the Seed to raise a legion of the Green Army in Sky City's necropolis.
- The Umbrage serves Gaia, and seeks to do her bidding.
- He seeks allies. If the PCs join him, they, too, can serve Gaia.
- There are others who will fulfill his role, should he fall. The Green Army will be raised regardless.

It's possible one or more PCs might actually want to join up with the Umbrage and help him enact his plan. This is fine. Whether they join the Umbrage, defeat him, or he escapes, they have a lead to follow.

If the PCs do defeat the Umbrage, they find a potent piece of living gear on him: a **memory dagger**.

Aftermath

If the PCs manage to wrap things up neatly, finding out who the killer is, defeating him, and solving the mystery, the people of Briston are grateful. Discounts on goods are a good reward, and the militia pays them each a deputy's salary of 1 pearl apiece.

If things go very badly indeed, then the PCs likely have to flee Briston with the militia at their heels, and the Umbrage has escaped with the Seed.

What actually happens is likely somewhere in between; use your discretion as far as how to reward (or punish) the PCs for their efforts. In any case, if the PCs are true Seekers now, they'll want to find out more about the Green Army the Seed of Gaia, the Umbrage, and the others like him. This journey will take them to Sky City, and the next adventure.

At this point, the group's level advances to 1.

Isle of the Dead

“Isle of the Dead” is an *Asunder* adventure for a level 1 party of Seekers. It continues the story started in “Planting Seeds” and, as such, the Seekers can have a variety of different motivations for being in Sky City, where the adventure takes place.

This adventure is *Asunder*’s take on a traditional dungeon crawl. Whereas “Planting Seeds” was primarily based on the players moving from situation to situation, “Isle of the Dead” focuses on specific locations. There are still situations that can take place in a variety of areas, but many of the threats the PCs will face will be tied to specific locations.

“Isle of the Dead” is a combat-heavy adventure, with some social situations and exploration as well. The goal is to give the PCs a chance to get used to the combat mechanics of *Asunder*, now that they’ve chosen novice paths and have become powerful enough to really compete in a combat situation.

Locations

Where “Planting Seeds” was a situation-based adventure, “Isle of the Dead” focuses more on locations. There are still situations presented in this adventure; the primary difference between a situation and a location here is that a situation can happen anywhere it makes sense, while locations are specific places in the world. That said, the Seekers might encounter these locations in a variety of different orders. In one Keeper’s game, the Market Square might be very close to the Necropolis Entrance, whereas in another Keeper’s game, the Seekers might have to go to the Taxi Wharf to hire a sky taxi to take them to the Necropolis Entrance before they can proceed into the Necropolis proper.

Sky City is an enormous metropolis; as such, Seekers can find any kind of gear here, though they’ll have to hunt a little for rare gear and they’ll have to find an appropriate black market dealer for illegal gear. Common and uncommon gear is trivially obtained here.

The Necropolis

Sky City is exactly what it sounds like: a vast city in the sky. The city is built into a series of floating islands, almost too many to count. This adventure takes place primarily on one island: the Necropolis.

The denizens of Sky City inter their dead in one of three ways.

Common people are either cremated, their ashes scattered to the wind, or buried at sea, dropped from a great height into the ocean below after a ceremony. Which of these occurs is generally up to the traditions of the family in question, though burial at sea is much more common because it’s much less expensive.

Nobles, on the other hand, are interred in the Necropolis, a massive island set aside for this specific purpose. The island is full of graves, crypts, and mausoleums, and guards

from the various noble houses keep watch over it constantly, vigilant against grave-robbers and other ne'er-do-wells.

The Necropolis is one of the largest islands of Sky City, and about half of it is covered by graves and other forms of burial. The other half is undeveloped, waiting and ready for expansion. The island is divided into wards, and each ward is owned by a different noble family. Minor noble families often don't have their own wards, instead interring their dead in the wards of the major families to whom they owe fealty. Each ward is patrolled by guards of its own noble families, and there are a variety of other security measures in place in the wards and on the perimeter of the Necropolis.

The crypts of the Necropolis are a honeycomb of tunnels inside the island itself, and only the wealthiest of nobles are buried in the crypts. Generally speaking, the more wealthy and influential a person is, the deeper they're buried, the better to guard against grave robbers.

The undeveloped portion of the Necropolis is often used as a clandestine meeting site; thieves and assassins meet their clients here, and money often changes hands in the shadows of the Necropolis.

Secrets

Four of these secrets should be easily usable regardless of how "Planting Seeds" turned out. The other secrets presented here assume that specific things happened in "Planting Seeds"; use these to give players a sense that their actions have consequences and can lead to more interesting situations in the future.

You were in Sky City some time ago, and ran afoul of Yotari; you owe him some money. His terms are simple: steal a cache of blice crystals from House Tira and deliver them to Yotari. You can reveal this secret while in House Tira's manor to steal the crystals; you immediately get Fortune and, when you deliver the crystals to Yotari, he'll pay you 3 pearls for overdelivering on your promise.

You have ties to House Hazin, a rival of House Tira's. You can reveal this secret to meet with a representative of House Hazin, who will give you a target to kill in House Tira. In exchange, your contact will provide you with an easy way into the House Tira manor, providing you with 3 floating boons that you can use anytime you move around or hide in House Tira's manor. You can give any or all of these boons to your fellow Seekers.

You know a shady individual in Sky City who can get you something you need quickly. Reveal this secret to get a rank 0 piece of living gear, no questions asked.

A family heirloom of yours has been buried in the Sky City Necropolis for years. You want it back. Reveal this secret to get it back. Work with the Keeper to determine what, exactly, it is. It's worth up to 4 pearls.

If the Seekers Defeated the Umbrage:

When you took up the Umbrage's memory dagger, you were flooded with memories that told you how to use multiple memory daggers to assemble a map to something valuable. Reveal this in the presence of a memory dagger to get Fortune. What the map might lead to is up to you and the Keeper.

If the Seekers Spoke at Length to the Umbrage:

You're not sure how, but you know how to bond with a Seed of Gaia in order to gain power. Reveal this secret while in the presence of a Seed of Gaia in order to get a rank 1 piece of living gear.

Motivations

Depending on how "Planting Seeds" ended, the Seekers could have a number of different motivations for being in Sky City.

Chasing the Umbrage

If the Umbrage escaped with the Seed, the Seekers are in Sky City looking for him. They know his intent is to raise a legion of the Green Army in Sky City, and they're here to stop him. This is the default assumption; you won't have to change any of the locations or situations to run the adventure if this is the Seekers' motivation.

Investigating the Umbrage's Allies

If the Seekers managed to kill the Umbrage in "Planting Seeds," then they know there are others like him. They're in Sky City because they know the Umbrage wasn't the only servant of Gaia coming here to raise a legion. If the Umbrage is dead, remove him from any of the locations or situations where he appears and replace him with the Winnowing, another **servant of Gaia**.

Serving the Umbrage

The Seekers may have decided to ally themselves with the Umbrage in "Planting Seeds." In this case, things are somewhat different; refer to the "Serving the Umbrage" sidebars in certain locations and situations to see what changes.

Opening Situation: Negotiating Passage

Set this situation somewhere in Sky City where outsiders and commoners are allowed to congregate. Market Square and the Red Room are good locations for this situation.

Read the following:

Yotari looks at you, eyes half-lidded, smoke swirling around his head in a great plume. "Why would you want to go to the Necropolis? Everyone knows it's forbidden."

Behind him, Yotari's great bodyguard Kai repeats, "It's forbidden," as if to punctuate his statement. She does that a lot, you've noticed.

Yotari is a smuggler, drug dealer, and black marketeer in Sky City, one of many. He can get you nearly anything, and can get you nearly anywhere, but his services aren't

free and he doesn't particularly like working with outsiders. He's wary of being set up for a trap, and knows that noble houses often hire outsiders as disavowable assets to do their dirty work. He'll take some convincing.

Yotari is a **bandit**. His bodyguard, **Kai**, is a **mercenary**, and the two of them have three **brigands** with them for extra muscle. If combat breaks out, Yotari tries to escape while Kai leads the three toughs against the Seekers. Kai will fight to the death to stop them or drive them off, but the brigands won't; if Kai is killed, any remaining brigands flee. A brigand also flees if it becomes injured and at least one other brigand has been incapacitated.

That said, this isn't really supposed to be a combat encounter; the Seekers need Yotari's help. The Necropolis is forbidden for anyone but the nobility and those they hire to enter, and getting Yotari to smuggle them in is the easiest way to get onto the island. The Seekers are going to have to convince Yotari that they're not setting him up, though. They can do this with words, making an Intellect attack against his Intellect, with 1 bane. If they succeed, they put his fears to rest. If they fail, he's still suspicious of them and they can't retry the attack.

Yotari is also willing to put them to a test: if they steal something from a minor noble house for him, he'll not only smuggle them to the Necropolis, he'll count the value of the stolen object toward their fee. The test is simple: break into House Tira's manor, steal a particular emerald ewer, and bring it to Yotari. See the location, "House Tira Manor" for more information.

If the Seekers manage to convince Yotari to help them, he'll smuggle them to the Necropolis at a cost of one sapphire per Seeker. If they complete Yotari's test, he charges them only three slivers apiece.

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Serving the Umbrage

This situation assumes that the Seekers are here to stop the Umbrage or the Winnowing. If, however, they're in Sky City to meet with the Umbrage and further his plans, run a flashback during this situation. In this flashback, the Seekers talk to the Umbrage upon arriving in Sky City, and the Umbrage explains that his rival, the Winnowing, seeks to activate her own Seed here in order to gain Gaia's favor. He'd like the Seekers to help him stop the Winnowing, so that he (and by extension, they) can gain Gaia's favor instead. He explains that he has his own way to the Necropolis, but that the Seekers must prove themselves worthy by finding their own way and meeting him there.

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Location: Market Square

This square, like many market squares in Sky City, buzzes with activity this time of day. Vendors hawk their wares, citizens buy and trade, and minor nobles are carried through the square on palanquins, eager to be seen by their rivals. This market square is in

House Alachese territory, and their guards patrol the streets. Overhead, Alachese wyvern-riders circle.

Guards

The House Alachese guards are **patrollers**. They keep watch and don't initiate any kind of combat unless someone makes trouble. There are twelve of them in the square, and their first response is to quell trouble with threats and intimidation rather than physical force. They respond in pairs, but if combat breaks out, any remaining guards enter the fray at the end of the second round of combat.

Wyvern-Riders

There are two wyvern-riders circling the square overhead. Their role is to serve as backup and air support, should trouble break out. If trouble does break out, they follow the lead of the guards on the ground; in a combat situation, they make ranged attacks from the backs of their wyverns. Each rider is a **mercenary** on the back of a **wyvern**. While they can be targeted separately, each pair takes a single turn, using the wyvern's movement and the rider's attacks. If a wyvern is killed, the rider falls to his or her death. If a rider is killed, the wyvern is trained to retreat back to the House Alachese aerie. It's unlikely that the wyverns themselves will enter combat.

Pickpockets

There are a few **pickpockets** navigating through the crowd. If it seems like an interesting way to inject tension or excitement into the scene, have a pickpocket target one of the Seekers or an NPC the Seekers are interacting with. Have the pickpocket make an Agility attack against the Perception of each of the Seekers. Any Seekers that the pickpocket hits with this attack don't notice the pickpocket's presence; otherwise, the Seeker does notice, as the pickpocket is stealing something.

If the Seekers want to, they can give chase. If they do, run a chase to see if they catch the pickpocket.

Vendors

All vendors are **professionals**. Seekers can buy anything common, uncommon, or rare here in Sky City; illegal items are available too, but a Seeker has to make an Intellect challenge roll to find someone willing to sell something illegal and convince them to do so. If Yotari is here, he'll gladly sell illegal items to anyone he trusts.

The Crowd

In any combat situation, the crowd acts as difficult terrain during the first two rounds of combat. In addition, at the end of each of these rounds, the crowd makes an attack against each combatant (+2, 1d6 damage) due to trampling. After the second round, the crowd has dispersed enough that it's no longer a concern. The crowd is present everywhere in the Market Square.

Ledges

The Market Square itself is on the outer edge of one of House Alachese's islands. Three quarters of the square are surrounded by buildings and rock walls, while one quarter of the square has a ledge with a guard rail. People can fall off these ledges (or be forced off). If Seeker goes over the side, they can make an Agility challenge roll to catch the edge; they're effectively prone until they pull themselves back up. Anyone who goes over the edge and doesn't catch hold falls 30 yards to the next island (12d6 damage). If the character survives this fall, they find themselves in a residential area.

Location: The Red Room

The low murmur of voices surrounds you, and smoke hangs heavy in the air. The establishment is about half full and the lights are low; though it's a tavern at first glance, languid figures stroll about the room or lie draped over chairs and settees, advertising the fact that they, too, are for sale here.

Patrons

Most of the patrons are **commoners**, though there are a few **pickpockets**, **bandits**, and **mercenaries** here. If a brawl breaks out, most people scatter; assume that 1d6 commoners, 1d3 bandits, and 1d3 mercenaries stay to fight. They don't all necessarily attack the Seekers.

A few of these patrons are nobles (**professional** stats) who'd rather not be recognized. They don't necessarily hide their identities, but a Seeker who pays too much attention might get a short visit from a burly tough (**bodyguard**) who loiters around the noble. If a Seeker wishes, they can make an Intellect challenge roll to recognize any of these nobles. Doing so might carry benefits that the Seeker can work toward, at your option. A few examples include help breaking into House Tira's manor, information about the Necropolis, or simple hush money.

Bouncers

There are two bouncers, each a **brigand**. They step in to stop any trouble that might crop up, though they use intimidation as their first response and violence only if that fails.

Courtesans

At any given time there are about six courtesans (**professionals**) — male, female, androgynous, transgendered, and otherwise — strolling or lying stationary around the room. They don't participate in any combat that breaks out and, in fact, will immediately leave the area if it does. The Seekers can approach any of the courtesans in order to employ their services. Each courtesan offers two services: conversation and intimate engagement.

If a Seeker engages a courtesan in conversation (2 slivers), the courtesan is pleasant, funny, and attentive. They're also more than willing to share information about Sky City, the Great Game, the various noble houses, the necropolis, and a variety of other topics. A Seeker who spends an hour or so in conversation with a courtesan can gain specific

knowledge about a single topic. For the next 24 hours, the Seeker acts as if they have a profession related to that topic.

If a Seeker wants an intimate engagement with a courtesan (3 pearls), the courtesan gladly leads them off for an hour or two of enjoyment. Afterward, the Seeker immediately gains Fortune.

The Bar

Seekers can buy food and drink from the bar. Food is primarily fish, fungi, and the meat of a venomous flying lizard called a svit. Beer is available, as is a spirit native to Sky City called harati, distilled from fungal spores and svit venom. It's quite strong. The bartender is a woman named Roshi (**professional**); she doesn't talk much, but is friendly enough. She values her patrons' privacy and doesn't spread rumors. She is also fiercely protective of her courtesans' safety and autonomy. A Seeker can convince her (Intellect attack against Will) to sell illegal drugs and performance enhancers. She even has a few doses of rank 1 and rank 0 kalea venom.

The Common Room

The common room is full of tables and chairs, and these act as difficult terrain if a fight breaks out. They can also be used as improvised weapons if the need arises. There are three exits from the room: the main door, the back door (which opens onto an alleyway), and the stairs that go up to where Roshi lives and stores many of her wares. There are also a ten side doorways covered by thick velvet curtains; these lead to the establishment's entertainment rooms.

Entertainment Rooms

Each entertainment room is separated from the common room by a thick velvet curtain. Each room is about fifteen feet square, and contains a few phosphorescent lanterns, a bed, a settee, a washbasin, and a chest containing various costumes and implements of entertainment.

Roshi's Apartment

The apartment above the Red Lantern is small, and there's a storage room adjoining it. Roshi doesn't allow people up here, and anyone who tries to ascend the stairs will be reprimanded by her or asked to leave by the bouncers. If someone does get up into Roshi's room, they can find 2d6 sapphires in a small chest on a table, 1d3 doses of rank 1 kalea venom, 1d3 doses of sawgrass powder, and an ember beetle in a small wooden cage.

Branch Point: Burglary Complications

If the Seekers decide to break into the House Tira manor to steal the ewer, they have to deal with something they don't expect. The card they choose determines what complication they face.

Rival Burglar

There's another burglar in the manor, trying to steal the ewer! Whenever a Seeker rolls a burglary mishap, they run into this competitor (use **pickpocket** stats), a young woman named Shia. The rival burglar does what she can to try to get the Seekers caught, imposing 1 bane on any stealth-based challenge rolls a Seeker makes in her presence. If attacked, she'll flee. If the Seekers generate 4 burglary mishaps, Shia steals the ewer out from under them. They can give chase if they want to, but stealth will no longer be an option.

High Alert

The guards are on high alert; someone's tipped them off that a burglar might be coming! Any rolls made to hide from guards suffer 1 bane.

III-Timed Murder

The first time a Seeker rolls a burglary mishap, instead of rolling on the Burglary Mishaps table, that Seeker finds the corpse of one of the members of House Tira, strangled in the middle of the room. Hiding the corpse is the best option, in order to prevent the alarm from going up; doing so is an action. If a Seeker hides the corpse, set a countdown die on 6; this is how long the Seekers have until the body is discovered and the alarm sounded. If no Seekers hide the body, roll the countdown die instead.

Location: House Tira Manor

Though not large, the manor is well-appointed and guarded. You know the ewer is in the dining room, on display. Now you have to get in and out without alerting anyone.

Guards

When the Seekers first break into the manor, roll a countdown die. When the die runs down, 1d3 **patrollers** on a patrol route show up wherever the Seekers are; if they haven't taken the time to hide themselves, the guards spot them and try to incapacitate them. Once the guards have been dealt with, either with violence or stealth, reroll the countdown die.

Hallways

There's little to hide behind in the hallways, and they're well-lit. Any Seekers trying to hide here do so with 1 bane.

Rooms

Each of the rooms of the manor has places to hide, objects to use as improvised weapons, and valuables. A Seeker can take an action to search a room for valuables; this requires an Intellect challenge roll. On a success, the Seeker finds an easily removable object worth 1d6 pearls. Once a Seeker steals an object, they must move to another room before they can try again. Each object counts as an item for the purposes of encumbrance.

Moving About

A Seeker can use an action to move from a room to a hallway, or from a hallway to a room. Each time a Seeker does this, call for an Intellect challenge roll. Record the

number of successes they get; once they've gotten 5 or more collectively, they find the dining room and the ewer. Stealing the ewer is an action, and it counts as an item for the purposes of encumbrance. On a failure, roll 1d6 and consult this table:

Burglary Mishaps

D6 Mishap

- 1 The Seeker leaves something noticeably out of place. If this happens 3 times, the guards sound the alarm.
- 2-3 There are 1d3 guards in the room; the Seeker can try to hide from them as an action.
- 4-5 There are 1d3 servants (**commoners**) in the room; the Seeker can try to hide from them. They do not fight, but they do sound the alarm.
- 6 A noble is in this room (**commoner** stats); the Seeker can try to hide from them. They do not fight, but they do sound the alarm.

Puzzle Pieces

Whenever a Seeker succeeds on an Intellect or Perception challenge roll for any reason while in the manor, they glean a little information from their environment about the Umbrage and who he was before he became a servant of Gaia. Give the Seekers the following pieces of information, in this order:

- 1. A family portrait containing six people: a mother and father and four children. The oldest of these children bears a striking resemblance to the Umbrage.
- 2. A portrait of the eldest child from the preceding portrait. Mention the resemblance to the Umbrage again. The nameplate reads "Aveki Tira".
- 3. A bust of Aveki Tira on a mantelpiece. There are dates on the base of the bust; the first is a birth date, the second, presumably, a death date that indicates he was 36 when he died.
- 4. An old journal, written by Asoki Tira. A brief perusal indicates that Aveki was exiled on the death date and treated as dead to the family.

The Alarm

If a noble or commoner spots a Seeker, they flee and sound the alarm. If a fight with guards lasts more than 3 rounds, someone hears and sounds the alarm. Once the alarm is sounded, the Seekers have two choices: stay and fight or run away. Hiding is no longer an option.

If the Seekers stay and fight, they must fight 1d6 guards. Two more arrive each round until 15 have arrived; this is the full complement of guards in the manor. While this combat is happening, nobles and servants flee to find more guards; staying on the premises for more than a few minutes will result in a fight against an effectively unlimited number of guards. All things considered, this isn't a great option.

If the PCs run away, run a chase to see if they succeed. If the guards catch them, they must face 1d6 guards, but that's all they have to face unless they're in a very public area.

Situation: Navigating the Necropolis

There are a few different ways the Seekers can get to the Necropolis. The easiest way is to get into Yotari's good graces and get him to smuggle them over. If this is how they handle things, Yotari is good to his word. That evening, they meet with a representative of Yotari's named **Hari** (use **professional** stats). Hari owns a driftboat, a small blice-infused vessel used primarily in Sky City to ferry goods from place to place within the city. It's big enough to fit six or seven people, and it's propelled by gas spores on its rear. Hari ferries the Seekers over to the undeveloped portion of the Necropolis island, but leaves it up to the Seekers to actually get into the graveyard proper.

If the Seekers don't have Yotari and Hari's help, they'll have to improvise. They might steal a driftboat and pilot it themselves; doing so will require them to fight or sneak past 2d6 guards (**patrollers**), and piloting a driftboat effectively requires an Intellect challenge roll. Failure doesn't mean the Seekers don't get over to the Necropolis, just that they attract attention doing so.

Attracting Attention

If the Seekers attract unwanted attention getting to the Necropolis, the guards are ready for them. Every patrol they encounter includes two additional **patrollers**.

Ticking Clock

Somewhere in the Necropolis, the Umbrage (or the Winnowing) plans to unleash the Seed of Gaia and raise a legion of the Green Army, and the Seekers only have a limited time to stop him. Set a countdown die to 6 and tell the Seekers that they only have a few hours to find the Umbrage before the Green Army attacks Sky City. Each time the Seekers move from one location to another after spending time making challenge rolls or engaging in combat there, decrement the countdown die. When it runs down, move to the Aftermath section of this adventure.

Getting Past the Walls

Getting past the walls of the Necropolis requires the Seekers to climb over them, and also to avoid the patrols on top of the walls. Grave robbing is disturbingly common in the Necropolis, so the noble houses all pitch in to ensure the security of the place. In order to get over the walls without getting caught, they'll have to do it quickly. Roll a countdown die to represent the time before a guard patrol (1d6 **patrollers**) comes by. If the Seekers spend some time studying guard patterns first, instead set the die to 5, but decrement the ticking clock countdown die.

Each Seeker can take one action to get over the wall before the countdown die decrements. A Strength challenge roll is sufficient to climb the wall, but a Seeker must make three such rolls before getting clear of the wall. A Seeker can make any of these Strength challenge rolls with 1 bane; if they succeed, the roll counts as two successful rolls instead of one.

It's up to you where the Seekers end up after climbing the walls, and where the different locations in the Necropolis are in relation to each other, though the monuments always connect to the crypts. The Umbrage is in the crypts.

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Serving the Umbrage

If the Seekers serve the Umbrage, all of the obstacles left behind in the Necropolis by the Umbrage have instead been left by the Winnowing. Much of the Necropolis remains unchanged, with the exception of this reframing of the adventure.

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Location: Graves

Rows of orderly graves greet you, standing silent vigil in the darkness. Here and there, you can seek guards moving among the tombstones in pairs or small groups, looking for intruders.

Guards

There are 10 guards (**patrollers**) in this location, moving around in twos and threes. Any fight that lasts more than two rounds will attract any remaining groups of guards in the graves. Whenever the Seekers take time to do anything significant here, roll 1d6. On an even number, a group of guards is heading toward them; give the Seekers one action each to prepare for them.

Evidence

Seekers who search for clues here can make an Perception challenge roll. On a success they find a dead guard with a wound made by the Umbrage's *memory dagger*, or something similar. Taking some time to search the dead guard reveals that there's a broken leather cord on his belt where something was yanked away, probably a set of keystones, small carved stones imbued with Essence that allow the bearer to pass certain guardians or living doors.

Also in this graveyard is a grave marker for Aveki Tira, with the same birth and death dates as indicated on the bust. If the Seekers found the bust, they find this too.

Environment

The tombstones here can be used for cover, providing one-quarter cover. At night, the area is heavily obscured, with only occasional pools of light here and there. The ground here is mostly even, with no difficult terrain; the grounds are well-tended.

Treasure

Each guard is carrying 1d6 slivers and a set of keystones that can be used to get into the crypts.

Location: Mausoleums

The little stone building rises up in front of you, flanked by two more. You realize the mausoleums are everywhere, in rows and circles stretching out quite a ways in every direction.

Guards

There are no guards here, because something has killed them all. A Seeker who does even a rudimentary search of this area notices the corpses strewn about, their skin slashed open by some sort of bladed weapon.

Enemies

When the Seekers enter this area, a pair of **green stalkers** start hunting them. As the Seekers look around for evidence of the Umbrage, allow them to make Perception rolls; a success indicates that something is watching and following them. If the Seekers try to get a closer look, the stalkers leap out and attack.

Evidence

Two of the mausoleums have broken open; this happened when the Umbrage raised the two green stalkers. If the Seekers found information about Aveki Tira in Tira Manor, they also notice that the two mausoleums that were broken into belong to Kesichi and Rati Tira.

A Seeker who succeeds on a Perception challenge roll hears a weak cry coming from inside a nearby mausoleum. If they pry it open (a Strength challenge roll in combat; if out of combat, it automatically succeeds), they find a sixteen-year-old boy still alive inside the mausoleum. He's weak, near starvation and fairly dehydrated. If the Seekers give him some food, water, and medical care, he explains that his name is Cassari Sati and that he's the son of a minor noble in Sky City. He was sealed in here nearly a week ago for dishonoring his house. Cassari doesn't have any useful information, but you can use him to establish that exile and treating people as dead is a fairly common practice among the noble houses of Sky City. Once treated, Cassari can stay in the mausoleum to wait for the Seekers, accompany them (he's a **commoner** who's taken 9 damage and makes all attack and challenge rolls with 1 bane), or find his own way out of the Necropolis.

Environment

At night, the area is heavily obscured. The dominant feature of this area is the many mausoleums constructed here. Most are sealed shut, though two are open and can be searched. Mausoleums can be used for either three-quarters or full cover, and can be climbed with a Strength challenge roll and an action.

Treasure

In accordance with Sky City tradition, the nobles buried in these mausoleums are buried with ebony daggers worth 1 ruby apiece. Each of the open mausoleums contains one of these burial daggers.

Location: Monuments

Situated in an enormous semi-circle, statue after statue rises up out of the dark. These edifices are twenty feet tall each, depicting the rulers of the great houses of Sky City over the years. One is still in partial construction and, around it, a blue-green mist hangs.

Guards

There are no guards here; the mist has killed them all. A Seeker who makes a Perception challenge roll to find guards can see a pile of corpses in the mist. It's impossible to make out any features.

The Mist

The mist that clings to the partially-constructed monument was left by the Umbrage as a guardian; it's a bio-weapon of sorts, held contained within a specialized piece of living gear. The creature is a **living vapor**. It stays near the unfinished monument until a character approaches it, or approaches the entrance to the crypts; then it attacks.

Crypt Entryway

The crypt is guarded by a **living door** that blocks entry. It attacks anyone who tries to force it open, but it opens automatically for anyone bearing a set of the keystones that the guards of the Necropolis carry. A single Seeker with a set of keystones can escort up to two other characters through the crypt door.

Evidence

A Seeker who succeeds on a Perception challenge roll notices a monument statue depicting Asoki Tira. Its face has been destroyed by claws of some sort.

Environment

A statue can be forced over with a Strength challenge roll with 2 banes, though there's little in this area to crush with one. A fallen statue could be used as a battering ram; using it is a Strength attack with 3 banes; each additional character who helps beyond the first provides 1 boon on the attack roll. It deals 3d6 damage to the living door, but is too unwieldy to use as a weapon against anything else. Beyond that, at night this area is lightly obscured; phosphorescent lanterns hang about the area, ensuring the statues are visible at night.

Treasure

Each of the dead guards (there are six) carry 1 pearl and a set of keystones.

Location: Crypts

A tunnel yawns before you, stretching into darkness. The walls of the tunnel contain urns and sarcophagi, and branching tunnels spoke out in either direction. A phosphorescent lantern hangs at the doorway; the lantern on the opposite side of the doorway is missing.

Guards

There are no guards in the crypts. This is partially because guards don't typically patrol the crypts; the living door keeps the area secure. There were a few guards in here when the Umbrage arrived, mostly conducting illicit activities or shirking their duties. He slew them and brought them back as members of the Green Army, and raised a few more corpses to boot.

Navigating the Crypts

The crypts are confusing and difficult to navigate, and there are undead creatures under the Umbrage's control wandering them to ensure he isn't disturbed. When the Seekers enter the crypts, ask which of them wants to try to find the Umbrage. Once someone has volunteered or been chosen, explain that up to two other people can assist; each one who does grants the lead navigator a boon. Have that Seeker make an Intellect challenge roll. On a success, the party makes progress toward finding the Umbrage; three such successes allow them to find him. On a failure, the Seekers take a wrong turn and run into a group of 1d6 **green conscripts**, which attack immediately. Regardless of whether the challenge roll succeeds or fails, decrement the ticking clock countdown die by 1.

Finding the Umbrage

The Umbrage is in a massive cavern, its walls lined with sarcophagi, preparing to activate the Seed. If the ticking clock countdown die has already run down by the time the Seekers find the Umbrage, the Seed is already producing spores and animating corpses; the Seekers must fight 1d6 **green conscripts** along with the Umbrage, who is a **servant of Gaia**. If the ticking clock countdown die still has time left on it, the Seekers interrupt the Umbrage and must only fight him; they still must deactivate the Seed, though, to prevent it from releasing its spores.

The Seed

A Seeker can make an Intellect challenge roll to try to deactivate the Seed, regardless of whether it's producing spores or not. After three successful rolls, the Seed becomes inert and can be safely destroyed. If the Seed is destroyed before then (an attack roll against a Defense of 5), it releases a cloud of spores that creates 3d6 **green conscripts**, but does no further harm after that. If the Seed is actively producing spores, it creates 2 more green conscripts at the end of each round until it's deactivated.

A Seeker who has discovered the Plant Control Essence tree gets 1 boon on any rolls made to deactivate the Seed.

Environment

The crypt is in total darkness, and the corridors are cramped. A single creature can only be attacked in melee by two other creatures at any given time due to the narrow corridors. If a Seeker brings along the lantern at the doorway, it sheds bright light for 5 yards, and an area 10 yards beyond that is lightly obscured.

The room that the Umbrage is in is lit, and large enough to not restrict movement during combat.

<sidebar>

Serving the Umbrage

When the Seekers arrive here, they interrupt an argument between the Umbrage and the Winnowing. Upon the Seeker's arrival, the Umbrage uses his advantage to initiate an attack against the Winnowing. The combat plays out as described above, except that the Umbrage fights on the Seekers' side, and any Seeker trying to deactivate the Seed gets 1 boon from the Umbrage's presence and assistance.

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Aftermath

If the Seekers defeat the Umbrage (or the Winnowing), they can search his (or her) corpse to find a **memory dagger** and a map. The map depicts an area in New Gaia, though it's unclear where exactly on the island it is. There's a spot marked that indicates that something called "The Wellspring" is there. Run the next adventure, "Wellspring", to learn what happens.

If the Seekers are defeated, the Umbrage/Winnowing simply kills them and raises them as members of the Green Army. A new group of Seekers, along with any survivors who might have escaped, will likely want to assist in taking Sky City back from the undead that are about to sack it.

If the Seed isn't dealt with, it eventually creates enough spores to raise hundreds of **green conscripts**. If there's no servant of Gaia to control them, they simply go berserk, flooding the streets of Sky City, killing and destroying at will. While they're not smart enough to operate a skyship or driftboat, these undead were once nobles of Sky City, and still have a connection to their Essence. They can leap or fly back to Sky City proper without too much difficulty. If there is a servant of Gaia to control them, it's a more concerted, organized attack. The Umbrage/Winnowing starts a protracted siege on the city. Use this as a springboard for your own adventures.

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Serving the Umbrage

If the Seekers are serving the Umbrage, he gives them the map to the Wellspring and tells them to seek it out. Then he activates his Seed and unleashes a plague of walking corpses on Sky City. The Seekers can decide how they feel about this and what their next step is.

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The Seekers advance to level 2.

The Wellspring

“The Wellspring” is an *Asunder* adventure for a level 2 group of Seekers. In this adventure, the Seekers travel to New Gaia in search of the mysterious Wellspring, a source of terrible and wondrous power. It follows on the events of “Isle of the Dead,” and assumes that the Seekers learned about the Wellspring from the Umbrage, the Winnowing, or the map they can find on either character after defeating them.

This adventure focuses on exploration, character development, and some combat. It takes place in the New Gaian settlement of Skyseed and the jungle environs around it.

Skyseed

More than two centuries ago, something strange and wondrous happened in the jungle of New Gaia: a stone fell from the sky and buried itself in the ground. Weavers traveled from nearby settlements to investigate and found, half-submerged within a 15-yard-wide crater, a large chunk of stone still glowing with heat. There are two wondrous things about this stone.

First, the meteor contains a kind of rock unknown upon Asunder, which the weavers call “skyrock”. They’ve run tests on it and have discovered that it can inhibit Essence powers and that it requires a great amount of heat to shape. They’ve been careful with what skyrock they have and, to date, only a single dagger has been fashioned of skyrock, and it is treated as an artifact of great power.

Second, in the crater and around it, new plants grew, plants the weavers didn’t recognize. They found that they could bond with these plants, though, that the plants had a connection to Gaia, and so the weavers were able to sustain them in small numbers, and only around the stone that fell from the sky. A few brilliant inventors have learned to create living gear out of these plants.

The latter effect is why a town sprung up around the stone, which the residents started calling the Skyseed; eventually they named the town after it. Skyseed is a small town. It’s not situated on a river, so commerce here is rare. It’s not near any particularly important parts of New Gaia and it doesn’t exist along any trade routes, so travelers to Skyseed are rare. Only a small number of people live here, and those who do are inventors and those who support the inventors. Skyseed draws inventors because the alien plants allow them to do unique and interesting things with the living gear they create. As such, the living gear that comes out of Skyseed is some of the highest-quality living gear around. In Skyseed, common items are easy to find and uncommon items are a little harder to find. However, common, uncommon, and rare living gear is all easy to find and acquire. There is no black market to speak of here.

Skyseed has two defining features: the crater containing the Skyseed, and the great, green tower that rises above it. The crater itself is lined with a fence and guarded, though residents come here often to study the Skyseed or the flora around it, or simply to be in its presence. Above it, the weavers grew a tower of bark and roots and vines, alien plants woven into its structure. It is here that the offices of the inventors are.

Experiments occur here regularly, invention happens frequently, and living gear can be bought here easily.

Aside from that, Skyseed is primarily residential dwellings, a general store, and a couple of other specialty stores designed to cater to the needs of the inventors here. There are a few important people the Seekers might encounter while in Skyseed.

Kamala Vasten is the most senior inventor on site, liaison to the Council of Mothers, and the de facto mayor of Skyseed. She's extraordinarily intelligent but easily distracted by ideas that occur to her on a regular basis. As such, she seems absent-minded often, drifting out of conversations, stopping and staring into space for periods of time, and forgetting what she was in the middle of doing. Her inventions are some of the most brilliant and innovative things coming out of New Gaia right now, though.

Kamala's assistant, **Marey Sowl**, does much of the actual governing in Skyseed, what little there is to do. Marey is efficient and industrious, and speaks with clipped words. She often comes off as brusque or unfriendly, but she's willing to help outsiders as much as she's able, as long as it doesn't interfere with her duties.

Asha Heth is Kamala's biggest rival in Skyseed, though the rivalry is decidedly one-sided. Asha envies Kamala's position and prestige, and wants to discredit and supplant her. So far she's been unsuccessful, and is willing to stoop to nefarious methods to get what she wants. For her own part, Kamala isn't even aware of the rivalry and barely acknowledges Asha's existence — a fact that rankles Asha to no end.

Golen, **Fariha**, and **Uben** are the general goods merchant, specialty goods merchant, and living gear merchant, respectively. Golen is cantankerous and more than a little lazy, forcing his employees to do most of the work. Seekers can buy common goods from him. Fariha doesn't say much, and is studying to be an inventor herself. Seekers can buy some uncommon goods from her, but most of what she sells is designed to cater to the inventors here. Uben isn't an inventor himself, but is an enthusiastic living gear nerd and a bit of an inventor groupie. He'll talk at length about his stock and those who made it, and he has an encyclopedic knowledge of both topics. Seekers can buy any kind of living gear from him, though he won't sell anything illegal. Any living gear acquired from Uben has 1 additional charge on its highest-level power at no additional cost. Uben also maintains two *regenerative pods* in his shop, which Seekers can rent time in for a cost of 1 sapphire per 4 hours.

Kamala and Asha both use **plant weaver** stats, while everyone else uses **professional** stats. Unless otherwise specified, NPCs who aren't plant weavers in this adventure have the **New Gaia (plant)** Origin.

The Wellspring

Skyseed has one additional, little-known feature: it's near the Wellspring, a font of power connected directly to Gaia. Most New Gaians have heard of the Wellspring but believe it's a myth; only a very few know the truth of its existence, and even most of

those don't know precisely where it is. There are two important things to keep in mind about the Wellspring throughout the adventure.

First, it's a source of power, and that power stems from Gaia. This means that plant growth goes a little haywire the closer you get to the Wellspring, even for New Gaia. In part, this means megaflora: huge ferns, apples the size of melons, and other unusually large representations of plant life. But it's more than that: plant life near the Wellspring becomes semi-sapient. It watches the Seekers, responds to their actions and, in some cases, might even attack them or aid them. If you need stats for an animate plant, use **small**, **medium**, or **large monster stats**, though such monsters have a Speed of 0.

The second thing to bear in mind is that there are some weavers here on New Gaia who know about the Wellspring and where it is. These weavers have formed a secret cult that worships the Wellspring, and seeks to keep it safe from outsiders and those they deem unworthy. This cult will provide much of the opposition the Seekers face. The cult doesn't actually serve Gaia in any real capacity, though. Many of them have plant-based Essence powers, but they don't know Gaia's will and she hasn't chosen to mark them as her servants. They see the Seekers as unworthy, but the Wellspring might not.

The action of this adventure revolves primarily around trying to find the Wellspring. Once the Seekers have resolved the opening situation, they're free to talk to people, gather information, and explore Skyseed and the area around it. This adventure writeup details the various locations the Seekers might visit. In addition, there are a number of situations detailed that you can set in a variety of different locations and in a variety of different orders. The situations exist primarily to create tension, provide opposition, and give the Seekers the information they need to find the Wellspring.

Secrets

Here are six secrets you can use in "The Wellspring." Because this adventure is meant to help guide the Seekers toward their expert paths, these secrets grant additional benefits for taking specific expert paths. If these secrets to players who already seem interested in these expert paths.

You studied under Kamala for a time, and respect her greatly. She knows you, and remembers you fondly. Reveal this secret if the other Seekers decide to steal the skystone dagger or plant evidence in Kamala's lab. You've warned her ahead of time. If you choose the Inventor expert path after revealing this secret, and if Kamala survives the adventure, choose one Plant Control or Plant Form power you know; you get an additional use of that power.

You've been dreaming of the Wellspring for years, but only now know what you've been dreaming of. It calls to you now, offering you power. Reveal this secret in the presence of the Wellspring. If you choose the Child of Gaia expert path after revealing this secret, and if you commune in some way with the Wellspring at the conclusion of this adventure, you gain 1 resonance each time you complete a rest.

You were friends with Vaia a long time ago, and you recognize each other. Reveal this secret when you encounter Vaia. If you choose the Lasher expert path, and if Vaia survives the adventure, she gives you a rank 2 intelligent whip.

You've decided that theft and assassination are what you're good at. Reveal this secret if you accept Asha's offer. If you choose the Shadow expert path, and Asha survives the adventure, you gain an additional identity for your Many Faces talent that Asha helps you create.

You've developed strong protective feelings toward another Seeker in your group. Reveal this secret when that Seeker suffers damage to suffer that damage in their stead. If you choose the Storm Point Bodyguard expert path, and your chosen Seeker survives the adventure, that Seeker always counts as your ward, even if you have another ward. You can choose to end this effect at any time, but you cannot reestablish it once it's ended.

You once studied under the Mistress, and do not wish her to come to harm. Reveal this secret if your group confronts the Mistress. If you choose the Bug-Shaper expert path, and the Mistress survives the adventure, choose one Insect Control or Insect Meld power you know; you get an additional use of that power.

Advancement

At the start of this adventure, the Seekers are level 2. At the end of it, they'll reach level 3, which means they'll be picking expert paths. Throughout this adventure, you'll see "Advancement Options" sidebars. Use these as a way to provide your players with story hooks they can use to segway into expert paths they're interested in.

Opening Situation: Betrayal on the Path

Set this situation anywhere you like outside of Skyseed.

Read the following.

It started with an exchanged glance, a subtle signal that you barely caught in time to provide warning to the others in your group. Your guides, the ones you hired in New Gaia's sprawling capitol of Heartwood, told you they could take you to the Wellspring. They told you the journey would be dangerous, and it has been, but they told you they'd get you there.

But now your guides are bearing down on you, spitters firing thorns, sword-axes brandished. You've been betrayed!

Ask each player to describe one of their guides and to name them. Ask for a detail about the journey: some way they interacted with that guide, some shared joke or memorable moment. Each of the guides the players describe is a **mercenary**. In addition to the guards (one per Seeker), the lead guide is **Kravis**, a burly and boisterous man who smiles and apologizes to the Seekers as he moves to kill them. He is a **veteran**.

Once the Seekers have described their guides and you've introduced Kravis, start combat. Throughout combat, give the Seekers the impression that the guides want to kill and rob them, because that's the impression *they* want to give. They do not want the Seekers to know that they're protecting the Wellspring.

What's Really Happening

When the Seekers started asking about the Wellspring in Heartwood, the cult caught wind. They sent Kravis and his posse to get the Seekers to hire them as guides, with the plan of leading them out into the wilderness and murdering them. They won't fight to the death, though. Kravis is a true believer, and will fight until slain; however, if he's slain and at least one of the other mercenaries has also been slain, the rest flee.

After the Fight

After the fight is over, the Seekers are left in the middle of the New Gaia jungle. A character who is from New Gaia knows the area well enough to be able to determine that Skyseed is about a day's journey away, and knows enough to get there. Otherwise, a Seeker can find a map on one of the dead guides that provides them with the same information. Either way, Skyseed is the closest settlement and the place they're most likely to be able to recover and plan their next move.

The Seekers might have taken a captive that they want to interrogate. In this case, the captive reinforces their assumptions that the guides simply wanted to rob them.

Treasure

If the Seekers search the bodies of slain guides, they find 1d3 sapphires, 1d6 pearls, and 2d6 slivers, as well as 1d3 doses of sawgrass powder and a dose of svit gland.

Situation: Retaliatory Strike

Set this situation anywhere you like outside of Skyseed.

The Seekers are ambushed by a group of 1d3+3 **mercenaries** and 1d3 **hired killers**. If there were any survivors from the opening situation, they're present here and the Seekers recognize them. If there were no survivors, emphasize the fact that these people are dressed similarly to the guides who betrayed them: the same brown leaf garment worn in the same style, each with a hood they can draw up. The point of this situation is to illustrate that their guides were more than mere bandits, so pepper the enemies' language with phrases like, "We have to stop them!" and "The Mistress wants them dead!"

Again, they won't fight entirely to the death. If half their number are killed (round down), the rest flee.

After the Fight

If the Seekers search the corpses of those they've slain, they find at least one piece of paper containing written descriptions of each of them with instructions that they must

not be allowed to reach the Wellspring. This should be the first real indicator that somebody wants to stop them from achieving their goal.

If the Seekers interrogate a captive, he doesn't speak initially. A Seeker can force him to talk with a Will attack against the captive's Will; on a success, the captive smiles and says, "It doesn't matter what you do to me. The Mistress will see you dead. You will not defile the Wellspring."

He doesn't have any other useful information, but feel free to have him spout plenty of rhetoric.

Treasure

The remains of the hit squad contain 1d6 sapphires and 1d6 pearls, as well as a dose of sawgrass powder.

Situation: Cult Appeal

Set this situation anywhere you like outside of Skyseed, after the Seekers have already had a couple of successful encounters with members of the cult.

The Seekers are approached by a woman named **Vaia (plant weaver)**. She approaches with arms upraised, palm-out, signaling that she means no harm and only wants to talk. If the Seekers decide to kill her, she fights back and tries to escape. If they decide to talk to her, she expresses concern over their current path:

"You seek the Wellspring, but it's our task to guard it from outsiders, to keep it unsullied. We cannot allow you to find it. Please turn back."

The following are answers to some questions the Seekers might ask her. She's willing to speak to them, but she won't provide them with any information not provided below; her job isn't to educate them.

Who are you?

"I am Vaia. Our group has no name."

Why do you wish to keep it unsullied?

"It is our purpose. We've been set on this path by Gaia."

What makes you think we'll sully it?

"You don't know the proper way to communicate with it."

Can you teach us?

"No. Turn back."

Do you know the Umbrage?

She hesitates. "I do. What do you know of him?"

If the Seekers tell Vaia that they killed the Umbrage, she tisks, turns, and walks into the jungle. The cult will be openly hostile to the Seekers from here on out. If, however, they claim to be working for the Umbrage, Vaia demands proof. If they can furnish proof (or something suitably convincing), she's willing to entertain the idea of helping them. Feel free to call for an Intellect attack if the Seekers try to deceive Vaia.

Vaia's Help

Vaia's help comes in the form of a bargain: if the Seekers will do something for the cult, the cult will instruct them in the proper way to appease and communicate with the Wellspring. The "proper way" is all nonsense, but the cult believes it, and going along with it keeps the cult from being hostile.

If the Seekers agree, Vaia asks them to steal the skyrock dagger from the Skyseed Tower. If they do this for her, she's good to her word. Once they've stolen the dagger, Vaia finds them and brings them to the Wellspring.

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Advancement Options

If the Seekers ingratiate themselves to the cult, Vaia can teach a Seeker to be a Lasher.

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Situation: Asha's Plot

Run this situation in Skyseed, after the Seekers have been there for a little while.

Asha Heth took note of the Seekers when they arrived, and has been watching them since. Outsiders are rare in Skyseed, and Asha sees them as possible catspaws in her one-sided feud with Kamala. At some point while the Seekers are carrying on their business, Asha approaches them. If they've been asking about the Wellspring, she offers to tell them where it is. If not, she instead offers them the opportunity to make some money. Either way, her proposition is the same.

Asha has some fabricated evidence (she doesn't use the term "fabricated," but it is) that can implicate Kamala of neglecting safety precautions in her laboratory in a way that would put everyone in Skyseed in danger. This takes the form of a small plant that doesn't have an immediately obvious purpose; if asked about it, Asha assures the Seekers that it's perfectly harmless right now. If pressed, she says that the plant is potentially dangerous, but only once activated. She'd like the Seekers to sneak into the Tower, find Kamala's lab, and hide the plant somewhere inside. Sneak out, don't get caught. If they do all this, she'll reward them.

If she offers them information on the Wellspring, she's true to her word: she knows where the Wellspring is because she's a former member of the cult, and she'll tell the Seekers how to get there. If she offered them money, the reward she offers is one diamond apiece.

If the Seekers screw the job up or get caught, she disavows them entirely.

Branch Point: The Dagger

If the Seekers decide to steal the skyrock dagger, something happens that they don't expect. Use the cards to determine what.

Tracked!

The skyrock dagger has a special form of tracking splinter embedded in its hilt, and Kamala knows as soon as it's removed from the tower. When the Seekers meet with Vaia to make the exchange, they're ambushed by Kamala and a contingent of 10 guards (**patrollers**). They don't attack immediately, but they *do* demand the return of the dagger. Vaia won't live up to her end of the bargain without the dagger, though.

Defense System

The skyrock dagger is housed in a special piece of living gear. A seeker who tries to open it must immediately make an Agility challenge roll with 2 banes. On a success, the housing comes alive and writhes around, but the Seeker gets out of the way in time to avoid its attack. It has Defense 5 and 10 Health, and attacks with a **lashing vine** (melee) +3 (1d6 damage and burrow). If the Seeker fails, the burrow effect takes place. When this happens, the housing burrows into the Seeker, the strange plant's tendrils puncturing the skin and embedding themselves within the Seeker's body. In addition to marking the Seeker as a thief with a large, bulbous growth, the plant drains the Seeker of blood, causing 1d3 damage every hour and preventing the Seeker from receiving the benefits of rest. It can be removed, but doing so requires an hour of work and an Intellect challenge roll (with 2 banes if the Seeker performs the procedure on themselves), and removing the plant causes 1d6 damage.

Inflated Rumors

All the stories about the skyrock dagger are rumors, not truth. In actual fact, though the plants from the Skyseed are indeed wondrous, the rock is nothing special, and tests on the dagger have confirmed that. The weavers keep the dagger in the Tower more as a curiosity piece than because it has any real value; by the time they'd discovered its mundanity, the rumors had already taken root. The dagger is a light weapon with no additional properties. The Seekers can still steal it and give it to Vaia, but they'll have to do some convincing to get her to believe that this is, in fact the skyrock dagger and not a cheap replica. This requires an Intellect attack or two but, once convinced, Vaia will live up to her end of the bargain.

Situation: Sneaking Into the Tower

Run this situation in Skyseed, whenever the Seekers decide to steal the skystone dagger or plant evidence in Kamala's laboratory.

Guards and Defenses

When the Seekers first break into the Tower, roll a countdown die. When the die runs down, 1d3 **patrollers** on a patrol route show up wherever the Seekers are; if they haven't taken the time to hide themselves, the guards spot them and try to incapacitate them. Once the guards have been dealt with, either with violence or stealth, reroll the countdown die.

Stairwell

The tower is basically a great central stairwell with rooms that jut off of it like spokes on a wheel. Hiding in the stairwell is very difficult, imposing 2 banes on rolls made to hide.

Laboratories

Each of the laboratories of the Tower has places to hide, objects to use as improvised weapons, and valuables. A Seeker can take an action to search a room for valuables; this requires an Intellect challenge roll. On a success, the Seeker finds an easily removable object worth 1d6 pearls. Once a Seeker steals an object, they must move to another room before they can try again. Each object counts as an item for the purposes of encumbrance.

Moving About

A Seeker can use an action to move from the stairwell to a laboratory, from a laboratory to the stairwell, or to ascend or descend the stairwell. After visiting a laboratory, the Seeker must ascend or descend the stairwell before visiting another laboratory. Each time a Seeker enters a laboratory, call for an Intellect challenge roll. Record the number of successes they get; once they've gotten 5 or more collectively, they find the room they're looking for (either Kamala's laboratory or the skystone dagger's holding room). Stealing the dagger or planting the evidence is an action, and the dagger counts as an item for the purposes of encumbrance. On a failure, roll 1d6 and consult this table:

Burglary Mishaps

D6 Mishap

- 1 The Seeker leaves something noticeably out of place. If this happens 3 times, the guards sound the alarm.
- 2-4 There are 1d3 guards in the room; the Seeker can try to hide from them as an action.
- 5-6 An inventor is in this room (**plant weaver** stats); the Seeker can try to hide from them. They do not fight, but they do sound the alarm.

The Alarm

If an inventor spots a Seeker, they flee and sound the alarm. If a fight with guards lasts more than 3 rounds, someone hears and sounds the alarm. Once the alarm is sounded, the Seekers have two choices: stay and fight or run away. Hiding is no longer an option.

If the Seekers stay and fight, they must fight 1d6 guards. Two more arrive each round until 20 have arrived; this is the full complement of guards in Skyseed.

If the Seekers run away, run a chase to see if they succeed. If the guards catch them, they must face 1d6 guards, but that's all they have to face unless they're in a very public area.

Situation: Coming Clean to Kamala

The Seekers might want to come clean to the authorities about having been hired to steal the skystone knife or plant evidence in Kamala's lab. In this case, Kamala *is* that authority. Speaking with the guards is enough to get Kamala to come see them, and the Seekers can tell her whatever they like. If they inform on Asha, Kamala has Asha arrested, and she rewards the Seekers. If they tell her about the intended theft of the dagger, she sends to Heartwood for more guards and rewards them similarly.

Kamala's reward is either money (1 ruby apiece), living gear (one rank 1 piece of living gear apiece) or information about the Wellspring. She doesn't know precisely where it is, but she has some ideas and can point the Seekers in the right direction. Whenever they make challenge rolls to find the Wellspring, they do so with 3 boons.

Situation: Searching for the Wellspring

Run this situation if the Seekers don't have any other immediate way to find the Wellspring.

When all else fails, the Seekers can simply search the jungle for clues. In this case, have them visit a few different locations in the jungle. Each time they do, have them choose one Seeker to make a Perception challenge roll, and grant that Seeker 2 boons to represent the help the other Seekers provide.

On a failure, the jungle actively resists their attempts to find the Wellspring, and the plants come alive to attack them. Use the stats for 1d6 **medium monsters** or 1 **huge monster**, except that the monsters' Speed is 0.

Success or failure, they learn the following information in the following order:

1. The further east you go, the more verdant and abundant the plant life. Plants are bigger, more vibrant, and even seem to be animate.
2. You can feel a tug at your center, like something is drawing you forward.
3. The Wellspring is definitely this way. You can feel it.

Once they've gotten these three pieces of information, run "Arriving at the Wellspring" as the next situation.

Branch Point: Wellspring Effects

When the Seekers arrive at the Wellspring, it behaves in a way they may not have predicted. Let the cards decide how.

The Wellspring is Hostile

The Wellspring most certainly does not want to be found by the Seekers. Regardless of whether or not the cult is hostile, plants animate around the battlefield. Add 1 **large monster** and 1d6 **small monsters** to the fight, each with a Speed of 0. If the cult is hostile, the Wellspring fights alongside them. If the cult is friendly, the Wellspring attacks them too. If the Seekers actually make it into the Wellspring's chamber, there are 1d6 **medium monsters** with Speed 0 waiting for them inside. The Seekers must convince the Wellspring to aid them if that's what they wish; doing so requires 3 successful Will challenge rolls, each of which is an action. Once they achieve this, the Wellspring relents and calls off its servitors.

The Wellspring is Friendly

The Wellspring wants the Seekers to find it. If the cult is hostile, plants animate around the battlefield. Add 1 **large monster** and 1d6 **small monsters** to the fight, each with a Speed of 0. These plants aid the Seekers in fighting the cult, and do not attack the Seekers. If the cult is friendly, this has no mechanical effect, but the plants still animate and appear welcoming. When the Seekers enter the Wellspring's chamber, they each heal damage equal to their healing rates.

The Wellspring Demands Sacrifice

The Wellspring is neither hostile nor friendly, but will not speak with or aid the Seekers in any way unless they first provide it with a human sacrifice. Any human will do, and that human must be killed in the presence of the Wellspring. Once it's been satisfied, it will talk to and help the Seekers.

Situation: Arriving at the Wellspring

Set this situation at the Wellspring, once the Seekers have found a way to get there.

If the Seekers arrive escorted by Vaia, the cult members here are friendly. The Mistress asks for the skystone dagger and, if the Seekers hand it over, she spends the next several hours instructing them how to approach the Wellspring, then allows them to do so.

If the Seekers arrive on their own, the cult is waiting for them, armed and ready for battle. The Mistress gives the Seekers one last chance to turn back. If they refuse, the cult attacks.

The cult consists of 2d6 **mercenaries**, 1d6 **hired killers**, 1d6 **plant weavers** (possibly including Vaia), and the Mistress, who is an **insect weaver**. Not all of the members of the cult have the **New Gaia (plant)** Origin; roughly one third of them have the **New Gaia (insect)** origin instead. Every member of the cult fights to the death.

Treasure

If the Seekers defeat the cult, they find scattered among their remains 1d6 rubies, 3d6 sapphires, 3d6 silvers, and 3 doses of sawgrass powder.

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Advancement Options

A Seeker from New Gaia who is in the cult's good graces can get the Mistress to teach them the ways of the Bug-Shaper or the Razor Fiend.

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Location: The Jungle

Trees press in all around you, towering far above and creating a permanent dusk down below the canopy. You can hear the sounds of strange creatures, and the sense of movement is around you always.

The jungle is anywhere outside of Skyseed or the Wellspring, for the purposes of this adventure. All jungle locations have these properties.

Paths

There are paths through the jungle, primarily created by non-weavers (or insect-weavers) moving through the underbrush, but they are rare. While not on a path, all terrain is difficult terrain.

Light

During the day the environment takes on a dusky quality, but it's not dark enough to impede vision. At night, all areas are heavily obscured.

Creatures

If you'd like to throw an extra combat encounter or two at the Seekers, 1d6 **medium animals** or a single **large animal** are appropriate.

Trees

There are great trees all around, which characters can use to achieve any degree of cover.

Navigation

Navigating the trackless wilderness is difficult, but difficulties arising from it are covered by situations; refer to those situations, and don't bother calling for challenge rolls from players simply to move from point A to point B, especially if somebody in the group is a weaver or has an appropriate profession.

Other Features

In addition to the above basic jungle, you can add one of these unique features to a jungle encounter to make it a bit more memorable.

Ruins

The stone before you is no natural formation, but the remains of an ancient building, nearly swallowed up by the jungle around you. As you look about, you notice several more such buildings.

Buildings

Seekers can use the ruins of buildings to achieve any degree of cover. In addition, a Seeker could climb the remains of a building to get the high ground in a combat situation.

Gorge

A great chasm opens before you, several hundred yards wide and impossibly deep. At the bottom, you can see a roaring river. You wouldn't want to make a wrong step here.

The Gorge

A character can be forced off the edge of the gorge. Such a character can make an Agility challenge roll to keep from falling. Any creature that falls off the edge of the gorge has a 150-yard fall in front of them.

Remains

You step on something that crunches. When you look closer, you notice a skeleton peeking out from the underbrush, and then another one. Some unlucky group of travelers didn't make it any further than this.

Treasure

Seekers who want to search the remains for treasure find 2d6 slivers and 1d6 pearls on the remains.

Lake

In front of you is a vast pool of water, a lake in the middle of the jungle. Its water is cool, clear, and inviting.

The Lake

There's nothing supernatural or sinister about the lake; it's just a lake. If you wish, carnivorous fish can lurk within. These are **swarms of animals** with the swimmer trait.

Location: Skyseed

It barely qualifies as a town; Skyseed is more like a dig site than anything else. There are a few buildings around, grown from the materials and plants of the jungle, and they're arranged in a circular pattern around a great crater in the center: the Skyseed Crater. Above the crater, grown out of plant-stuff, is a tower that rises up into the trees.

Population

Skyseed is protected by somewhere around 30 guards (**patrollers**), about a third of them on duty at any given time. There are around 12 inventors on site (**plant weavers**), supported by 40 or so staff (**commoners** and **professionals**). This population includes Kamala, Marey, Asha, Golen, Fariha, and Uben, all of whom are described earlier in this adventure.

The details of Skyseed and what can be found there are earlier in this adventure; refer to that information for a more complete picture of Skyseed.

The Wellspring

The chamber you walk into is made of roots and vines, with bioluminescent fungus here and there to provide light. In the center is what looks like a great stone bowl full of dark water. A gentle energy pulses from the bowl and, whenever you look away from it, your eyes are inevitably drawn back.

Nobody knows how long the Wellspring has existed, but this is where many servants of Gaia come to get their powers. A Seeker who drinks from the Wellspring has all the justification they need to take the Child of Gaia expert path, and drinking from the Wellspring eases one's Essence, curing them of 1d6 Strain (this effect only works once for each Seeker).

The Wellspring can communicate with the Seekers. It's not language, precisely; it's more like empathy. It simply makes itself understood. What it wants is entirely up to you, Keeper. What do you have planned for your next adventure? The Wellspring can be an excellent way to launch the Seekers in that direction, particularly if it promises a reward in return. You can decide whether or not it's capable of delivering on such a reward.

Aftermath

This concludes the story arc presented in this book, and the Seekers are now level 3, able to choose their expert paths. What comes next is up to you. You can use this trio of adventures to launch a campaign of your own design, or you can seek out additional published *Asunder* adventures if you wish. If you want to design your own adventures, there's plenty of advice coming up next!

[ADVICE ON ADVENTURE-BUILDING GOES HERE]