

SUZERAIN



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Suzerain is a fictional depiction of our universe. Any resemblance between any proper noun we come up with and any real person/place/whatever is purely coincidental. By the same token, the book you are reading is a game based on a fictional depiction of our universe. It is not reality. The GM sets a scene in a fictional realm and the players play characters in it. Repeat after me, "I am not my character. I cannot do the things that my character can do because he is a fictional character in a fictional universe." Don't try to fly just because your character can fly. Don't kill anyone just because your character is a master of the Scottish claymore. Roleplaying is meant to be fun, but comes with serious responsibilities.

We would also like to explain that Suzerain is our take on reality with mythological and magical elements. It depicts religions and mythologies with a twist – that is to say, differently than a true believer might see them. We mean no disrespect if you are such a believer but ask you to respect our right to our own interpretation.

Thank You

I'd like to thank everyone who allowed me to text them in the middle of the night with questions about matters both sundry and relevant to this tome. Megan, Marissa, Amy, Stuart, Ashley, Andrew, and Alex, you know a lot about a great many areas.

Surely, you seven are not the only ones with something to say about Suzerain or its inhabitants. We're happy to receive feedback from anyone – all lines are open, as they say. Check us out at hello@savagemojo.com and say hello.

Have fun, friends.

Zach

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Alan's Dedication: To Martin for letting me play in and help shape his universe and to Genevra too, neither of them get nearly enough recognition for their myriad contributions. My parents also deserve a mention, especially mum – I wouldn't be the man I am without them and she'd be so proud.



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For Players



What Is Savage Suzerain?

Suzerain isn't a setting, it's all settings. You've heard that one before, right? It starts out with fun and high promise, but by the end you're a necromantic sharkman with six-shooters for hands and acid for blood and no idea what happened to your original character. We're not like that; we've got standards. Your character will begin in one setting – a particular world in a particular time and will grow in capabilities, achieve mighty deeds, and become a big fish in a small pond. From there he will attract the greater attention of the universe – or at least the universe's housekeepers, who will send your hero hurtling through the Maelstrom of time and space to places where only legends dare tread. This rulebook keys you in to our greater cosmology, some of its notable realms, and the domain of the spirits, which connects it all. All you need to start exploring is a copy of the [Savage Worlds Explorer's Edition](#)... and this book.

Right out of the gate, adventuring in a Suzerain realm is more or less what you'd expect. There are a few differences, but they're more along the lines of refinements than pulling the rug out from under you. Then your characters hit Heroic rank and the walls around their world begin to become more malleable, buckling under the forces of ascension. Before they know it, your young gods in training will begin influencing events beyond their immediate environs. It is at this stage most characters will first encounter other times and campaign worlds.

How big is the difference from Veteran to Heroic? Veterans will survive the alien invasion and help rebuild society. Heroes sail beyond the sunset and take the fight to their foes' inverted pyramids of crystallized ichor, battling through to the heart of the alien planet where the laws of physics are, well, inverted.

Once you make it to Heroic, the stakes get raised a notch and you'll find your characters in ever more demanding situations. At the start of Heroic a character might well be the guardian of a nation or the best con man in the star system. That's small fry compared to

what's coming: our reactive protector leads his nation through a world-spanning renaissance, while our con man becomes The Con Man, an idea given flesh. It's time to take him out to new places, and new times.

Come ascension to Demigodhood, those will be the cakewalk and salad days. Because once you are tightly tied to the universe as a Demigod, you begin to work not through time but also across alternate realities. Each could easily have the length, depth, and impact of one 'normal' plot campaign, and you will do them all, with one character, across who knows how many realms, through time and across reality. Welcome to Suzerain. Please drive carefully.

If you want to know more about the Suzerain universe, there's a place on the internet just for you. Visit www.suzerain.info for our website dedicated to the place, with all manner of interesting bits of information about the realms, the gods and the heroes who make up this great playground. And since it's a wiki, feel free to add pages with descriptions of your own creations! For roleplay material, free downloads, and rules discussion come to www.savagemojo.com where we handle all game-related matters.

What's New In Suzerain

The Suzerain experience is one that values grand, heroic scope over the slim-and-trim ideals of the Savage Worlds core system. No longer are heroes constrained to being merely Legendary. Instead they are able to access a wider stage where their very words will shake the heavens. In comic book terms, this is cosmic-level stuff. The fantasists would have you believe that it is epic, while classicists would prefer the term 'mythic.' Either way, your characters won't be spending a lot of time fighting rats and bugs in the sewers.

This is represented mechanically with a wealth of new options, both for building characters and interacting with their surroundings. Everybody who's anybody has access to minor special powers, which are fueled by natural wellsprings of bioelectric energy – Pulse. This invigorating life-force is the stuff of spirits: the human soul, specters without a physical form, and gods alike. These spirit forms aren't a natural part of any of the Suzerain realms, but they have ready access to them through the spirit world.

Mojo Rules!

Suzerain has a couple of versions of the second edition. This is the Savage Worlds version, intended for all your usual high-octane SW adventures – but in the Suzerain universe. There's also a version using the Mojo Rules! rules system, which covers the same universe, but focuses on a wider mix of play styles including detailed infiltration, complex social scenes, and all manner of investigation techniques. If you're interested, you can download a free copy of the rules from the shop at www.savagemojo.com.

The spirit world is a moonlit reflection of the solid world, where every action is suffused with pale light and symbolic gravity. The terrain surrounding spirits of pure emotion often warp and pool to reflect their inner states. Those rare sages and street-corner madmen who tell stories of such places of pure energy often tease their audiences further with the promise of a layer of reality even deeper than the spirit world – one where even Pulse breaks down and is reformed into the transcendental residences of the gods.

We'll get into all of that before we're done.

Suzerain uses the Savage Worlds rules, but adds a few twists; it is best if you are already familiar with those rules before reading this section, starting with....

Terminology

Bennies. Suzerain replaces bennies with Karma, giving them a few more tricks along the way.

Karma. See 'bennies'.

Power Points. Suzerain replaces this term with 'Pulse'.

Pulse. See 'Power Points'. Every Suzerain realm knows something about Pulse, but very few know the entire story. What is generally agreed upon is this: everybody possesses Pulse, and it is somehow vital to their living processes. All abilities that are powered by Pulse draw from the same pool.

Realms. Some people call these 'settings' or 'campaign worlds': you have your pirate world, your leprechaun world, your Gothic horror special. In Suzerain we refer to these as realms in order to avoid confusion. Consider for a moment a sci-fi story where you might

visit one hundred planets (or worlds). That is fine for roleplaying games where travel from one setting to another means a new campaign, but that isn't the way Suzerain rolls. Suzerain is the setting (we call it the Suzerain universe), and it is a setting with as many places and game genres as you wish to explore. We are always looking for new realm developers and the Suzerain universe has the potential to contain almost anything, so if you think you are up to it – drop us a line!

Telesma. A special gemstone, usually integrated into an object of some kind. Most often jewelry but sometimes found in other objects too. Your character has one. You'll find out more soon.

Advancement

Advancement works exactly as it does in Savage Worlds, with the addition of a new rank after Legendary. The rank table now looks like this:

Experience Points	Rank
0-19	Novice
20-39	Seasoned
40-59	Veteran
60-79	Heroic
80-119	Legendary
120+	Demigod

We recommend retiring your characters at 180 xp to become the founding gods of a whole new pantheon, perhaps even to be venerated by or become patrons to your group's next characters. It gives a nice sense of legacy, carrying on your old man's mantle and all that.

The Touch Of Greatness

There's something that links your character to greatness. This could be a profound inner transformation, a chapter in the tome of blood and glory, or the power to revolutionize the world through the boundless imagination of the mind. What it isn't is destiny – destiny's for saps without options. Instead, your character has access to an otherworldly conduit that grants access to Herculean opportunities... or titanic ruin.

This 'touch of greatness' as it's referred to by self-aware mooks and flunkies, is what insures your story won't slip on a banana skin or rot away in a dead-end

plot line. The Suzerain universe has detected some spark in your character, and it hasn't gone unnoticed by the gods in their immortal realms. One way or another, your character has wound up with a physical symbol of this connection – a Telesma. When several Telesmae come together with an adventuring group of heroes, they form a pocket realm within the fabric of the Maelstrom, that ethereal place beyond the Veil where divine entities live. Both these are explained in more detail in the 'Saving The Universe' section on page 39.

A lot of heroes will no doubt feel crowded by the ready presence of gods in Suzerain. Nobody likes knowing that there's someone bigger around, especially the BMoC (Big Men of the Campaign, natch). To be perfectly frank, the gods don't care enough about the heroes that this should be a concern. Don't get us wrong – the gods love the characters and hope they'll be able to help in all sorts of tight scrapes in the mortal realms, but there are dozens and dozens of heroes out there at any given time. The characters aren't unique and precious snowflakes. Sorry about that.

Not that you can't change that paradigm. There are always stories about the divine prince (or demon prince) falling in love with an earthborn maiden, and if that's your shtick go for it. As a whole, though, gods are pretty busy. The tides don't ebb and flow by themselves, and pushing the sun across the sky all day is tiring work. Messing with the moment-to-moment antics of a stable of strong-minded heroes on top of that? Not likely. The gods hire the characters to deal with problems while they run the universe, not to micro-manage them.

So how does it all work, working for the gods? It's really like being free agents, guns for hire with a sense of ethics, realm-based problem specialists. Your character can put whatever he wants on his business card. There are all sorts of actions required to keep the universe from tearing itself apart, and a gazillion problems that need fixing lest the Grand Machine busts a piston. For that stuff the gods pass the buck to their intermediaries: demigods or devoutly faithful spirits. From there, it's just a matter of time until the characters get a knock on their clubhouse door.

This isn't to say that the gods are entirely lazy and detached. There are solid political reasons for not fraternizing too closely with their sponsored

heroes. For one, it gives the heroes a protective level of neutrality. No one is eager to repeat the massive Hero Wars that spanned the universe in eons past, except for the occasional mad, one-eyed soul eater. And you really don't want to go back to that.

More importantly, it allows your heroes to go anywhere. If they're all wearing large, glowing crests of the Firelord on their tabards, chances aren't so great that the Icelord will let them into his lands. As a result, only the most devout or ground-shaking characters have any direct contact with their particular god. Everyone else can work for whichever mix of deities show an interest in the current crisis.

What sorts of things do the gods need doing? Well, you'll get the idea from the campaign in this book, but it tends to break down into the three stages of character development. Until your character hits Heroic rank you can expect him to be building his skills and proving his mettle to the universe. He'll be dealing with bigger and bigger adventures, but in his home realm, the world he grew up in. At Heroic he gets access to all of existence, every time and place. He'll be expected to fix the sorts of problems that could threaten entire worlds. Then he hits Demigod, and the universe itself is at risk. Well, it was probably at risk many times before, but this time it's your character's turn to stop the End Times from crashing the party. Hop around reality, and change it as needed to stop the big bad from happening.

Smiling Jack

To continue delivering great Suzerain flavor we've sneakily replaced the Smiling Jack icon from the *Savage Worlds Explorer's Edition* book with our own symbol. Being a sneaky-minded anarchist, we figured he'd approve!



This is our Telesma symbol, and it still means the critter, character or whatever it's linked to is a Wild Card.

Pulse

Pulse, also called the Pulse of All Things, is everywhere and in everyone. This makes it a derived Attribute. Pulse is 10 for all characters and goes up by 5 points with each rank. A Novice character without any modifiers has 10 Pulse, a Seasoned character has 15 Pulse, a Veteran gets 20 Pulse, a Heroic character gets 25 Pulse, 30 for a Legendary character, 35 for a Demigod. Should a character have to pay Pulse (perhaps because some evil entity is draining it...) and not be able to afford the whole amount or already be on zero he loses all remaining Pulse and gains a level of Fatigue.

Fatigue

In Suzerain we have extended the Fatigue track to a third box so characters can take an equal amount of Wounds and Fatigue. The third step after the existing 'Fatigued' and 'Exhausted' is called 'Debilitated'. Your character becomes debilitated just before he hits 'Incapacitated'.

Why do this? Well, we believe Fatigue should cover social/spiritual Fatigue and mental Fatigue too. To reflect this we have opened up new uses for existing skills allowing new methods for you to wear down opponents on the battlefield, as well as new options in places where conventional weapons are not appropriate, such as a courtroom or a fancy dress ball.

It isn't possible to Incapacitate or kill someone through normal taunts or intimidation, but supernatural forms of physical, social or mental Fatigue follow no such rules. There's no accounting for what the horrors of the undiscovered world or its perilous magic may inflict. Don't say you haven't been warned. Seriously, be extra wary of those octopus guys; they'll suck your brain and burn those Fatigue levels for breakfast.

Fatigue Recovery

Fatigue levels recover at the rate of one for every 15 minutes away from the situation where the Fatigue happened. We should point out this is a rule of thumb. You may decide there are certain effects that cause Fatigue you can't cure without a good night's sleep, for instance, and that's fine. Whatever suits your game.

Races

Just humans. That's because races work a little differently in Suzerain though, so don't feel like you've been snookered. If you want your character to be a dwarf, there's still hope! Races have been switched to background Edges for reasons that may become clear as your characters' adventures progress. Remember, background Edges may be taken freely at character creation but require GM permission to take once the game has begun. Your GM has more information on how and why this is possible – and why it's still only possible to belong to one race at a time. (Unless a particularly exotic Realm-specific Edge says otherwise....)

There are four broad categories into which all sentient Suzerain races can be divided. Their presence, role, and attitudes are culturally based and realm-specific, but their powers are pretty consistent. Here are some broad generalizations to get you started:

Shifters contain strong bestial elements along with their humanity. As civilized as they may be, shifters are able to reach back and call upon their primal Edge when necessary. The wolf-like furies are one example of shifters, but as many varieties exist as there are animals.

Channellers were once human, but exposure to intense Pulse processes has given them control over energy. Each race has a specialized type of energy that it channels, such as heat, electricity, or light. One example is the auroras, who control both light and shadow.

Elementals are the physical counterpart to the energy-attuned channellers. Every elemental is both more than flesh and less, a creation of dumb matter and living Pulse. They are the dwarves with mastery over earth and stone, the metallic gremlins, and the airy djinn.

Perfecteds claim a pure bloodline, with all genetic muck purged from their system generations ago... only problem is, each race disagrees on what was muck and what were the perfect traits. As a result, there are very different races out there who all claim they're perfect!



Followers And Animal Companions

What's a Gilgamesh without an Enkidu, Robin Hood sans Merry Men, or Batman without Ace, the Bat-Hound? Lessened, that's what. A good hero has allies, companions, sidekicks, or some form of a pit crew that ends up making him look better. That's not to say that the support staff are total slouches! After the core hero hits Seasoned, they advance every time he does. They're always one rank behind the character, but at least they do progress. And remember, they're not Wild Cards unless something totally unexpected happens.

Extras and animal companions get to travel between realms and to the Maelstrom with the character under the same principle of the 'emotional bond of ownership' as a character's trademark weapon, clothes and other personal effects. We'll come back to that when we talk about the spirit world in a moment.

Skills From Savage Worlds

All the Skills from Savage Worlds are available in Suzerain. A couple of Skills have had some additional effects added:

Intimidation: When used in a test of wills, if you win the opposed check with a Raise you may choose whether your opponent becomes Shaken as normal or takes a level of Fatigue. This may not reduce your opponent to Incapacitated.

Taunt: When used in a test of wills, if you win the opposed check with a Raise you may choose whether your opponent becomes Shaken as normal or takes a level of Fatigue. This may not reduce your opponent to Incapacitated.

Savage Worlds Edges

The following Edges are not used in Suzerain:

Arcane Background, Power Points, Soul Drain, Champion, Gadgeteer, Holy/Unholy Warrior, Mentalist, and Wizard.

Changing Races

With all of the realm-hopping that cosmic-level characters undergo, it's not much of a surprise that they'll be exposed to change-inducing phenomena. We can hope they will grow as people, allowing their life experiences to influence their thoughts and reactions to the outer world. They'll also pick up some cool powers. There's a more fundamental type of change out there though, especially for those who find themselves drinking from strange fountains every chance they get.

Race is a fluid concept in Suzerain, at least to a degree. Given the proper in-story justification, characters are allowed to change race once in their careers – any more and the strain on one's body and identity would be crippling. That said, the first change is easy as waking up one day and deciding to be a dwarf. The actual transformation, however, takes something special, such as a magical artifact of untapped power or a healthy dose of genetic therapy performed by the finest transhuman specialists.

Consider the Emergent Squall, as practiced by certain societies of djinn within the realm of Relic. In order to boost their numbers, the air elementals take on applicants for transformation. Following several weeks of intense philosophical teachings on the nature of change, the applicants purify their bodies with the smoke of rare herbs, which grow in only the most isolated of mountain valleys. If the desire for change is earnest, the applicants are then guided through dreams to a brilliant green crag, spiked with the spires of fallen towers. One by one they fling themselves into the clouds surrounding their great height. As their old bodies fall, that which is djinn separates itself and ascends toward the heavens. Not all racial transformations are as invested in ritual, but they should nevertheless be memorable. It is a major life choice, much more than deciding pointy ears are stylish this season.

The following Edges are modified in Suzerain:

Beastmaster: In addition to the Edge's normal effects, the animal companion is considered to be one rank lower than the character at all times for the purposes of choosing Edges and advancing Attributes. The animal can be saved from death in the same fashion as a character with a special use of Karma.

Followers (Requirements: Heroic): Followers have an effective rank of two lower than your hero for the purposes of choosing Edges and improving Attributes. Lost or killed followers are replaced in 2d6 days.

Rapid Recharge (Requirements: Spirit d8+)

Mr. Fix It (Requirements: Smarts d10+, Repair d8+, at least two other scientific Knowledge Skills at d6+)

All other Edges and Hindrances are allowed and work as normal.

The Spirit World

The spirit world is everywhere, and more than one or two places beyond that. It's a big part of the Suzerain universe, no matter how much of it is readily visible. So you best know how it works.

The most basic way of thinking about the spirit world is like a big, silvery sheet of packing material that goes around each realm to keep them from smacking into one another. That's certainly not the whole truth, but it will do for now.

Despite the cosmetic details, the spirit world isn't overly different than the physical plane. There aren't hook-handed horrors around every corner or pulsating waterfalls of souls – not usually, anyway. Adapting to its quirks is the work of mere moments. Everything glows slightly, revealing its animating Pulse as silvered sparks that throb to celestial rhythms. Communication is by telepathy. Physical matter doesn't exist here, at least not in the conventional sense. It's kind of peaceful, really.

If you're only peeking into the spirit world, the main thing to be aware of is its native inhabitants. Spirits have forms that are unique to the spirit world. For example, a simple invisible poltergeist on the solid world may be revealed to be a dead ringer for a murdered king once you look at it with the eyes of a spirit. Most spirits can have very little impact on the physical world, but once you're in their territory, that's a whole different matter.

If, for whatever reason, a character finds his spirit unshackled from its physical tethers, the spirit world feels no different than the real. He can walk around, pick things up, or get socked in the jaw for eye-balling someone's spirit wench. It's like flipping a switch: if you're keyed to the spirit realm, the solid world seems unreal and distant. If you're part of the solid world, it's the spirits who come off as spooky and insubstantial. Normally someone aligned to one world cannot interact with someone aligned to the other, but there are enough exceptions to that particular guideline that it's best to be on your toes at all times.

So what does change? Well, telepathic communication and neat visual effects aside, the role of Spirit and Vigor are reversed. When a character would normally be called on to make a Vigor check (on a Soak roll against a ghostly cutlass, for example), in the spirit world he would instead roll his Spirit die for the check. Likewise, when asked to make a Spirit check, the character would instead roll Vigor. This is why victims of unearthly possession so often receive physical shocks, such as pure-white hair and heart attacks. The Spirit/Vigor switch also affects a character's Toughness, as the Spirit die is used as the basis of the calculation. Natives to the spirit realm undergo the same switch when they manifest in the physical world.

'Dual-aligned' characters have it hardest of all, being present (and therefore vulnerable) in both worlds simultaneously. They can get their soul sucked by a hunger spirit and their body diced by a band of brigands at the same time! Their Spirit and Vigor remain the same as the world in which they're native – the spirit world for spirits and the physical world for the rest of us.

The oft-mentioned Maelstrom is an especially important part of the spirit world. Unlike the more traversable regions, it has no physical counterpart, existing in its own bit of the universe beyond the Veil. Whether that makes this a domain of limitless energy or unbound dreams, it's about as weird as you're going to find. To some, it's a never-ending Hell dimension peopled by the spirits of the unborn. Others describe it as the true heights of Mount Olympus, Shangri-la, or the Unending City Across the Sea. The truth is up to your characters to find out, isn't it?

The Emotional Bond

Let's talk about the 'emotional bond of ownership'. We all get attached to certain items, and develop a sense of ownership to things after we've had them for a while. When a character shifts between worlds, all the items that are bonded refocus too, for as long as he's holding them. If a shaman shifts to the spirit world, his clothes will most likely shift with him. Similarly with his favorite walking cane (if he's carrying it). It normally takes about half a week for a person to form a bond with an item after becoming its owner, as long as he's using it and doesn't just stick it on a shelf. On the other side of the coin, extreme emotional attachment can happen much quicker. Pick up a sword off a battlefield and immediately use it to save your life a couple of times during the furious fighting, then you'll get that bond pretty much instantly!

Optional Extras

Boom and Doom: Also known as jokers, for those of you who're more familiar with Savage Worlds. Traditionally, one joker in each deck of cards is red, while the other is black. Treat the red joker as normal – this is the boom card, and is all kinds of good. The black joker works exactly like the red joker, with just one little twist: the GM gets one extra point of Karma. She can use this Karma however she likes, although it is most thematic to apply it to the character who drew the doom. This represents a type of tainted luck, or jumping out of the frying pan and into the firing squad.

Adventure Deck: Pinnacle's solution to giving characters more surprising, luck-based powers. It's a fun addition to any game, and is particularly fitting for the increasing sway a Suzerain character holds over the unspoken favor of the universe. In Suzerain games, characters get one card per session until they hit Heroic, then two cards until Demigod, and three cards from Demigod to godhood.

Karmic Influence: Many people already use this option in their games, so we've decided to formalize it. Players may spend Karma to bribe the GM into giving them a taste of narrative authority – that's bordering on fancy-talk for working player suggestions into the



plot. Let's say your character is backed into a corner by a mob with pitchforks and torches, through no fault of your own. Instead of ending the game there, you might offer the GM a point of Karma or two for there to be a trap door under the rug. It is the GM's call in the end, but she should remember what a precious resource Karma is, and how long it took to earn.

Heroes And Demigods

As characters rise through the ranks, they become increasingly in tune with the rest of the universe. This isn't just hippie-talk – they physically change as their bodies begin utilizing Pulse more efficiently. Standing against these champions becomes tantamount to telling the universe it is wrong and you are right. It's like willfully disobeying the laws of thermodynamics (in a realm where they apply, naturally). That kind of burden isn't something that the universe would thrust upon the unprepared – even the smallest licks of phenomenal cosmic power have been known to drive mortals over the Edge. With the kinds of challenges that shake the fast-track to godhood, both internal and flesh-eating, the following bonuses are the least that the will of the universe could provide.

Karma

The Suzerain universe loves heroes – or at least those who have proven themselves. Characters receive the normal amount of Karma at the start of each session: 3. This increases to 4 once the character reaches Heroic rank and goes up again to 5 at Demigod rank. This is modified as normal by Edges and Hindrances (Bad Luck, Young, Lucky, etc.). A Demigod-rank character with Great Luck gets 7 Karma every session!

Shaken

Heroic rank characters get +1 to recover from being Shaken. This increases to +2 at Demigod.

Soak Rolls

Heroic rank characters get +1 to Soak rolls. This increases to +2 at Demigod.

Recovery

Time, damage and Pulse regeneration just don't mean what they used to when the gods are footing

your karmic expense report. Heroic-rank characters can make a natural healing check every three days (instead of the standard five days), and Demigods get to make a check every day. Furthermore, Pulse recovery increases by 1 at Heroic and by a further 1 at Demigod. Yes, that stacks with the 'recharger' Edges, so a Demigod with Improved Rapid Recharge recovers 3 points every 15 minutes.

Wild Die

The Wild Die for Demigod rank characters becomes a d8. Even the most unfamiliar task can be related to something that the character has accomplished at a prior time. As ground-shaking as this change is, would you really want a bunch of heroic tricksters stealing an alien moon with only d6's as backup?

Life And Death

Player characters can escape death with alarming ease, and there's nothing wrong with that. The universe loves a good story, especially the slam-bang kind where heroes aren't piling up left and right from boring-yet-efficient sniper fire. Ever since the Underworld replaced its three-headed dog with an honor system, death has just had a hard time sticking to the bold.

Novice, Seasoned and Veteran rank characters in Suzerain only require the expenditure of 1 Karma to escape death's clammy grasp. Instead of kicking the bucket, the character is spared by his Telesma sending out a mighty distress signal to the gods and they orchestrate a suitable coincidence or act of 'dumb luck'. The gods work in ways that can be as humble as a runaway kangaroo or as surprising as a last-minute religious conversion.

In practical terms, the player should look forward to controlling Extras, getting drinks, and ensuring other players never want for snacks for the rest of the session, but his character will return at the start of the next session – no longer Incapacitated but bearing whatever Wounds and Fatigue he had at the time of 'death'. The gods don't suffer foolish deaths gladly, however; the character starts his second (or third, or fourth) lease on life with no Karma for that session. If he dies in that session... well, that's just careless. He had it comin'. With no Karma it's time to roll the credits and think up another character idea.



At Heroic and Legendary rank, a character begins the post-'death' session with 1 Karma. Demigod rank characters begin the session with 2 Karma. These numbers aren't modified by Edges and Hindrances, nor by being Heroic or Demigod, nor anything else for that matter. Them's the breaks, but it sure beats the alternative.

Now some of you might ask, "What happens when my character flies the nukes into the sun to sacrifice himself for the greater good?" Simply enough... he's dead. Honestly, there's no coming back from that. The Telesma is fried and never gets to send out the distress call. Also, if a character volunteers to make a great sacrifice, his Telesma will pick up on that vibe and let him die a hero's death with full honors.

There are going to be some situations where it's genuinely not right for the story that the character survives, and this rule isn't there to stop that. Instead, consider the following option in those cases: the Telesma scoops up the life essence of the character at his instant of death, then somehow finds its way into the hands of another potential hero, about as skilled as the deceased character (same rank), and binds itself to him instead – create a new character, but he has the sum of the life experiences of the old character imprinted on his memories. He thinks it's a past life thing, but it's actually the pretty jewel he just found.

Which option you use when a character would otherwise die, that's up to you and your GM. Each situation is different and different results are appropriate for a gritty horror realm than a heroic fantasy realm. Bottom line, though... in Suzerain, death is not the end, even if you have to go questing to some shadowy afterlife realm to bring your character's soul back.

Flexing A Nexus

As your characters reach Heroic rank and above, they're going to find themselves in some pretty uncommon situations. Time and space will become far less familiar than they are now, and chances are good that you'll end up exploring your world's future or its past. There's a big, complex reason for why time travel doesn't tend to wreak havoc on all events that occur after the insertion point, but we leave that for the scholars (and the GM) to handle. All you need to know for now is that it's all right if you litter in the Italian Renaissance or give Hitler some art lessons – usually. Important historic events, known as *nexus points*, are resistant to change.

Demigod rank characters are able to temporarily subvert nexus points as part of their standard Skill set. They accomplish this by bending reality until a major nexus on the timeline pops and moves across to an alternate reality. After a while, reality responds to this change and snaps back into place. Although these changes are small in the grand scheme of things, they're still a gleaming shot of divine power that most characters are unaccustomed to. To flex reality, a character pays either 1 or 2 points of Karma:

1 Karma flex: Flexes of this intensity are able to introduce moderate physical changes into reality. We're talking about things like discovering an overlooked, fully operational hover tank in a post-apocalyptic setting. Or picking the key to an opponent's home out of a nearby flowerpot. It's also enough to drive a bitter wedge of hate between two lovers, ensuring that a particular Extra (but not Wild Card) was never born. The effect only ever lasts for about five minutes, and the effects need to be able to take shape in an area of about 100m, centered on the meddling demigod. For example, in the case of the disappearing Extra, he'll need to be within 100m of the character to be flexed out of existence (for those five minutes).

How's about another example of how this might work in a game? The characters are in France, 1944. It's shortly after D-Day and they need to hold a bridge in a small, half-destroyed town against a relentless assault by the enemy. Somebody plays an Edith Piaf record and then all hell lets loose. After furious street fighting the characters have been driven to the far side of the bridge. Five minutes from now the cavalry will turn up but for now it's a desperate situation. But what if the bridge was destroyed when the town was bombed a few days before. Suddenly, there's no bridge for the enemy to cross... though the characters know it'll be back in five minutes – just as the cavalry turn up. If there were any troops on the bridge when reality was flexed, the GM gets to pick what happens to them – do they appear on the river bank with their fellow soldiers, or suddenly find themselves trying to swim across instead (blissfully unaware that there was ever a bridge)?

2 Karma flex: At this level, demigods can get into the good stuff. Any historical point that you know about becomes a virtual “what if...” point, transforming every event that radiated out from it. For example, our guys in 1944 France could change history so

that Hitler was assassinated early on and the war was already over. Reality would warp outward, changing every necessary detail so that the portion of the realm around the character (again, about 100m) was reshaped to fit the divine vision. For five minutes, the bit of town around the characters is a bubble filled with a different reality, one of little pastry shops, happy schoolchildren playing by the river, and people talking about getting back to normal after that short but terrible war with Germany.

These changes are far-reaching, but limited to the 100m bubble around the characters. Those people outside the 100m zone of effect aren't aware of the difference around the demigod – they're part of one reality, but if they get closer than 100m they become a part of another reality in that instant, unaware of anything else.

In both cases, if you can't describe the changes within one reasonable sentence, the timeline proves too rubbery to mold. Generally, you tell the GM what you want to achieve (“I want to remove the Extra with the rifle from this scene”) and he makes it happen as appropriate (“It turns out he fell and broke his leg this morning, so never showed up for work” or “Years ago, his parents had an argument about the color of the wallpaper in their home, and the guy was never born” or whatever).

There is such a thing as a **3 Karma flex**. Nexus-flexes of this level are available only to true gods. They can remake entire realms, not just the area around them, but such power always comes with a price. Somewhere in time and space, someone is paying for what is done. Furthermore, these changes set quickly and can inadvertently become permanent. The resultant tremors along the timeline are something everyone wishes to avoid. No god wants to be responsible for bringing about the End Times.

While changes last up to five minutes, they can be extended with additional Karma with the GM's approval. There's something else you should bear in mind about flexing a nexus, before you go crazy and change the world multiple times per session: your character doesn't get the Karma he spent on flexes back at the start of the next game session. Rather like the death penalty in Suzerain, these are major ways to mess with reality and there's a longer term cost for that power. If you spent 2 Karma on flexing during a session, the next session your character will start with 2 less Karma.

Character Creation

If you're looking to create a Suzerain character from scratch, this is the right place to be. Before getting to Traits, Skills, and statistics, think about what role you want your character to have in the story. Will the character be a reluctant hero, dodging every speck of divine interference? A highly trained professional with abandonment issues? A muscled lunkhead with a heart of gold? Go over the possibilities with your GM and the rest of the group so that everybody has a unique, valued voice once play begins. This isn't as simple as making sure that every group of heroes has a tank, an infiltrator, a buffer, and a healer. What's more important is that the characters have points of interest where they will be able to interact with one another and the GM's stories without falling prey to boredom.

Race: All Novice characters start as humans, with the usual free Edge. If your realm has exotic races and you want to start as one of those, use the Edge to take the appropriate Racial Edge.

Attributes: As normal in Savage Worlds rules, you start with d4 in each of your Attributes and have 5 points to raise them. Each die type increase costs 1 point. For example, raising a d4 to a d8 costs 2 points.

Skills: As per normal Savage Worlds rules, you have 15 points to spend on Skills.

Derived Statistics: Pace is 6 unless modified by Edges or Hindrances. Parry is calculated normally as $2 + \frac{1}{2}$ the Fighting Skill die type. Toughness is calculated normally as $2 + \frac{1}{2}$ the Vigor die type. Charisma is 0 unless modified by Edges or Hindrances. Pulse is 10.

Edges And Hindrances: Standard rules apply. A character may take up to one major Hindrance (worth 2 points) and up to two minor Hindrances (1 point each). With these points a character may:

Points Effect

2: Gain an Edge

2: Raise an Attribute

1: Gain one extra Skill point

1: Gain additional money equal to your starting funds

Gear: You have the standard equivalent to \$500 with which to purchase starting equipment. Your GM should have (or create) a price list tailored to the realm in which you begin.

Starting At The Top

If you don't want to start at the bottom and ease slowly into the realm-jumping hijinx, you have a couple of options. All of them depend on the entire group deciding to operate at higher power levels, otherwise you'd just be hogging the spotlight. This works fine for television shows about specific individuals, but not so well with a circle of friends who all want equal input.

The first option is to create a character as outlined previously, and manually advance the character to the Heroic (60xp) or Demigod (120xp) rank. While normally a chore, the handy advancement tracker on our Suzerain character sheets makes this fun! Just follow all the standard rules for character advancement and you'll soon have a hero or demigod ready for action.

The other option is for those of you who are no doubt asking, "Why can't I just do the setting jumping/alternative dimension thing from day one, as a starting Novice character?" Well, if you want to, of course you can. This is your game now. Write your name on the inside cover if you don't believe us. Plenty of quality stories can (and have) been told about a small band of outmatched protagonists, jumping from dangerous setting to dangerous setting because they had run out of options at home.

Just keep in mind the same caveat as before: the GM and other players should agree that it's an interesting idea. If everyone is prepared to take on some seriously tough challenges with only the Skills and Edges available to standard characters, have at it. The official, Suzerain-approved way to run that kind of game is in the GMs section in the book.

New Edges & Hindrances

Hindrances

Doomed (minor or major)

Have you stolen from any gods lately? Born on cursed ground in the middle of a thunderstorm? Decided that a secret, universal truth is just a 'harmless superstition?' If you've answered yes to one or more of these questions, you may be doomed.

As a minor Hindrance this gives the GM one additional Karma each session to add to her general Karma pool. As a major, the GM gets two additional Karma. This Karma should be used against the character with this Hindrance, making his life less comfortable in fun and interesting ways. Remember, the gods of Fate tend to have the wickedest sense of humor.

Evil spirit (minor or major)

A malicious spirit stalks your character and does its best to make his life hell. Although it's not necessarily your character's fault, something happened to trigger this burst of ill-will. Is it too late to get this invisible stalker off your back? Probably.

The minor version of this Hindrance results in a distraction capable of making subtle noises and lights only the character can perceive. Once per session, the GM may use the spirit to give the character a -2 penalty to any Trait check. As a major Hindrance, the spirit has the previous power in addition to being able to physically manifest. It's not a very big manifestation, but enough to make minor physical changes to the world such as hiding keys, ringing bells, tripping traps and alarms etc. The GM is encouraged to make the most of this. Alternatively, the spirit may expend its entire power for the session to give the character a -4 penalty on a Trait check. These effects are used at the most inopportune or embarrassing time for the character.

Cha-ching!

Different times and different places use different ways of paying for things. From clam shells to precious metals to little bits of plastic, mankind has come a long way... and eCash is just around the corner. As for the future, who knows what a far-flung space colony will use? To keep things simple and not get bogged down in tracking the spare change of a dozen realms, Suzerain works in standard dollars as per Savage Worlds. A realm might use a different name for its currency - crowns instead of dollars in Relic for instance - but we always keep the exchange rate 1:1. That keeps a little flavor, but it's really simple to remember. 30 Crowns... that's \$30 to you. If you want more historical accuracy and detail, go for it. But we're happy to have some fast, furious fun rather than doing the precise accounting. Now, back to stealing that million clams we need to bankroll our audacious plan for world domination!





Fanatic (minor)

You gotta have faith. No really – you gotta. You're one of those religious types who just can't stop. Everyone must know your exceptional happiness, purity, and devotion. Characters who pair this Hindrance with the Empowered Edge should have it grow more noticeable with each increase of the Faith Skill.

Hungry Telesma (major)

Your character's Telesma isn't the most efficient of heroic companions. It may have expensive tastes, or maybe it's a secondhand-artifact, battered by the ravages of whatever destroyed its previous owner. No matter what the root cause, it takes out its flaw on your character.

Whenever your character uses Pulse, his Telesma consumes an additional point. This increases the cost of all your Pulse effects by 1.

Optimist (minor or major)

Your character is having a wonderful time being alive, and it's starting to get on everyone's nerves. It's not enough to be cheerful in silence, but your character must share the joy with everyone – especially those no-good pessimists who think they're only being realistic.

As a minor Hindrance, your character's perpetual chirpiness gives your character -1 Charisma and a pronounced tendency to get himself and others into trouble that could have been avoided with a little forethought. As a major Hindrance, the Charisma penalty increases to -2 and the character is blissfully immune to the concept of failure and actively encourages others into similar acts of bravado the likes of which would make the Darwin Awards with ease. On the plus side this grants a +1 bonus on all Guts checks.

Rebellious Telesma (minor or major)

Your Telesma isn't quite as helpful as you'd like, and may sometimes even be downright dangerous. It may believe that it's helping train a hero who can overcome any adversity, or there was an error in the initial synchronization process. On the other hand, Telesmae can be like people: some of them are just jerks.

Once per session (minor Hindrance) or twice per session (major), the GM can force your character to:
re-roll a Trait check and take the lower result
or
take the lower result after you spent your character's Karma to re-roll
or
discard your highest re-roll if you spent more than one Karma on a check.

New Edges

Bearer Of Ill Omen

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic

Your character was born under a bad sign, but didn't let it faze him. Instead of suffering fate's slings and arrows like a commonplace whipping boy, he fought back and learned some tricks about bad luck. All it takes is a slight nudge to redirect the luck toward a more deserving target.

When an opponent makes a check against your character and succeeds, your character may respond by paying as much Pulse as he likes. Every two Pulse spent reduces the opposition's roll by 1.

Bearer Of Ill Omen: Improved

Type: Weird

Requirements: Demigod, Bearer Of Ill Omen

Your character has flirted with bad luck and gone on to seal the deal, as it were. Coils of dodged fates flicker at the feet of his spiritual form, ready to be cast at less adept opponents.

When an opponent makes a check against your character and succeeds, your character may respond by paying as much Pulse as he likes. Every one Pulse spent reduces the opposition's roll by 1. If spending Pulse in this way reduces a check to less than zero, the action becomes a critical failure!

Carpe Diem!

Type: Leadership

Requirements: Heroic, Command

Your hero has seen enough of the battlefield that its swirling chaos is no longer a cause for alarm. Instead it is a source of new opportunities and split-second stratagems.

Immediately after initiative cards are dealt, your character may pay 1 Pulse to switch their order. Take the initiative cards from all willing (note – willing!) allied characters, including himself, and redistribute the cards as you see fit. While this doesn't guarantee acting before your enemies, it will allow you to optimize your side's attacks and time some perilous stunts.

Cat's Descent

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic

Through guided training or extended experience with pit traps, your character has learned to fall with preternatural grace. He may land on his feet after a fall of any distance so long as he passes an Agility check.

Furthermore, he may pay Pulse to reduce falling damage. Each point of Pulse reduces the effective distance fallen by 10 feet, so 10 Pulse would turn a 150 foot fall into a 50 foot fall in terms of damage.

Cat's Descent: Improved

Type: Weird

Requirements: Demigod, Cat's Descent

Your character automatically lands on his feet after every fall.

Furthermore, he may pay Pulse to reduce falling damage. Each point of Pulse reduces the effective distance fallen by 20 feet, so 10 Pulse would turn a 250 foot fall into a 50 foot fall in terms of damage.

Finally, as long as your character has at least one point of Pulse, he may pay all his remaining Pulse to ignore all damage from one fall.

Companion

Type: Weird

Requirements: Seasoned

You have a trustworthy, loyal, and able companion who follows your character and helps him out to the best of his or her ability. This character is the 'Tweetboy' to your 'Ratman' and might occasionally get in trouble, but is generally pretty good at watching out for himself. The companion has an effective rank of one less than your character for the purpose of improving Attributes and choosing Edges. Should your companion be slain he can be saved with a use of Karma just as you would to save your own character. Failing that, some other lucky individual will be drawn into the void your previous Companion left, appearing in 2d6 days.

Cool As Ice

Type: Combat

Requirements: Heroic

Your character has become a battlefield calculator, confident under pressure that would send lesser minds crawling for the nearest foxhole.

After making a Spirit check to recover from being Shaken, your character may spend 2 Pulse to improve the result. If the check failed, he automatically becomes unshaken. If the check succeeded, he may add a Raise to it.

Cool As Ice: Improved

Type: Demigod

Requirements: Demigod, Cool As Ice

If your character doesn't already have a godly portfolio in mind, he should consider looking at battle, tactics, or glaciers. Lesser blows are like sparks on a smith's apron to him, or gnats against a tank. When tempers flare, he stays cool, collected, and focused on victory.

After making a Spirit check to recover from being Shaken, your character may spend 1 Pulse to improve the result. If the check failed, he automatically becomes unshaken. If the check succeeded, he may add a Raise to it. Alternatively, if the check failed he may spend another 1 Pulse to make it a success with a Raise.

Crushing Blow

Type: Combat

Requirements: Legendary, Strength d12+

This character crushes bones and rips sinews with each blow. Whenever he gets a Raise in close combat he rolls +1d10 to damage instead of the normal +1d6.

Deadly Aim

Type: Combat

Requirements: Legendary, Shooting d12+ or Throwing d12+

The character deals death from a distance. Whenever he gets a Raise on a shooting or throwing attack he rolls +1d10 to damage instead of the normal +1d6.

Extreme Luck

Type: Wild Card

Requirements: Heroic, Wild Card, Great Luck

The best thing about being your character is everything. Events tend to work in his favor, even when he doesn't deserve it.

Whenever the character is dealt a joker, he gains 1 Karma.

Favorite Of Fate

Type: Weird

Requirements: Veteran, Luck

Fortune may favor the bold, but fate favors the compulsive gambler. To make your character's eventual downfall all the sweeter, Fate has decided to give him a slight boost. With all this luck, you're bound to get cocky someday.

The character may spend Karma to add 4 to the result of one of his actions. When he rolls multiple checks in one action (like casting more than one Bolt as an action, Frenzy, or rate-of-fire weapons), he adds 4 to ONE of those results, not all of them.

Fearsome Presence

Type: Social

Requirements: Seasoned, Intimidation d8+

Parades halt and guards shake when your character gets angry.

Your character can intimidate more than one extra at a time by placing a Medium Burst Template and making an Intimidation check. This is treated much like a ranged (2/4/8) attack with an area effect. Non-allied Extras under the template make a resistance check with the normal consequences for failure. Wild Cards cannot be affected by this Edge.

Fearsome Presence: Improved

Type: Social

Requirements: Heroic, Fearsome Presence

Crowds part and trained soldiers falter when your character gets mad. There's something about him that's just... unsettling.

Your character can intimidate more than one Extra at a time by placing a Large Burst Template and making an Intimidation check. This is treated much like a ranged (3/6/9) attack with an area effect. Non-allied Extras under the template make a resistance check with the normal consequences for failure. Wild Cards cannot be affected by this Edge.

Feel My Pain

Type: Combat

Requirements: Heroic, Vigor d6+, Spirit d6+

You can make your wounds look worse than they are, sickening and repelling your opponents. As a free action on your turn, your character can spend 1 Pulse to apply his Wound modifiers to all Trait rolls made by other characters under a Medium Burst Template centered on him. This effect lasts till the end of the round.

Feel My Pain: Improved

Type: Demigod

Requirements: Demigod, Feel My Pain

Even if your character looks like bloody hamburger, he's not the only one suffering from it. His wounds are so distressing that even the grimmest torture artists aren't sure how he carries on.



As per Feel My Pain, but your character may choose to use a Large Burst Template. Furthermore, when triggering the effect, he may choose to spend 5 Pulse instead of 1 Pulse to ignore all Wound penalties until his next action.

Fleet Footed – See Savage Worlds core rules.

Fleet Footed: Improved

Type: Weird

Requirements: Demigod, Fleet Footed

Some people start running one day, and never really stop. No world is too large for your character's journey.

Running is a free action for your character. Furthermore, by paying 1 Pulse he may move as if he were the wind and travel horizontally without regard for the surface underneath – so running over rice paper, wet cement, water or even thin air is possible. The only catch is that his movement must begin and end with solid ground.



Flight Of The Ascendant

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic

After a certain level of accomplishment, walking becomes far too prosaic for a certain breed of heroes. They recognize that they're larger than life, and as such must take large steps.

You may increase the distance your character can jump to a maximum of 12 inches. Each inch beyond his normal distance costs 2 Pulse.

Flight Of The Ascendant: Improved

Type: Demigod

Requirements: Demigod, Flight Of The Ascendant

Whether through sterling muscle control, daily exercise, or a strident disdain for gravity, your character can travel in great bounds that approach flight. Doing so is incredibly showy, and a great way to demonstrate one's superiority over lesser foes.

Your character's basic jumping distance is increased by 1 inch and he may increase the distance he can jump by any amount. Each inch beyond his normal distance costs 1 Pulse.

Indomitable

Type: Weird

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d8+, Spirit d8+

The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak? Not anymore! Your character can use his faith or unflagging willpower as a battery to power any action.

Your character may voluntarily take a level of Fatigue to re-roll any one roll. He chooses which result to use. This may be done as many times as required, until the character is Incapacitated. The newly gained Fatigue is not applied to the re-rolls.

Iron Inside

Type: Social

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+, Spirit d6+

Your character is accustomed to attempts to break his mind or spirit, and has learned special defenses to resist them. Perhaps he chants sutras, retreats into an alternate personality, or is simply too conceited to be

affected. Your character gets a +2 bonus on resistance checks against any check from a non-physical source that could cause Fatigue.

Living Banner

Type: Leadership

Requirements: Demigod, Natural Leader

The mere presence of some charismatic figures is enough to change the tide of an entire battle. His exploits have grown to be legends on several worlds, and victory is assured to those who follow his lead without faltering.

Your character's leadership radius is increased to 50 inches. He may pay 2 Pulse at any time as a free action to have any bonuses from his leadership Edges apply to allied Wild Cards and Extras until the end of the round.

Master Leader

Type: Leadership

Requirements: Legendary, Natural Leader

Master leaders know that they're only as good as the most vulnerable of their troops. In order to survive contact with the enemy, the character must look out for even the lowliest of his charges. The character can spend a point of Karma to give all allied Extras within his leadership radius a Soak roll, which they can each use when needed that round.

Monkey Grip

Type: Combat

Requirements: Novice, Strength d8+

Your character can use a weapon that normally requires two hands in a single hand. When doing so, treat his strength as if it were a die type lower for determining damage and whether he can effectively wield the weapon. This does not allow a character to wield a two-handed weapon in each hand. However, it does allow him to use a shield with a two-handed maul, or answer his cell phone while firing an AK-47.

Monkey Grip: Improved

Type: Combat

Requirements: Heroic, Monkey Grip

Your character no longer treats his strength as a die type lower while using the Monkey Grip Edge. Also, he may spend 1 Pulse to heave any weapon he can hold in one hand (it becomes a throwing weapon with range 2/4/8 for that round).

Opportunistic Push

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, Spirit d8+, Vigor d8+

Just being good enough doesn't always cut it. Sometimes it takes giving 110%, pulling out all the stops, or going completely overboard. Your character may spend 1 Pulse (and only 1 Pulse!) to give any die roll a +1 modifier, as long as that +1 would be enough to grant the check a Raise or additional Raise.

Patron God: Crafts

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A god or goddess of artists and craftsmen has looked favorably upon your character and offered him divine patronage. Hephaestus is one such god, as is Ptah. Such gods expect their representatives to promote creativity, and to act as protectors for craftsmen. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one on gaining this Edge and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).

Inspiration: By spending Pulse when making a Repair, Knowledge (Craft), or similar roll to make, improve or repair an item (even if it's mechanical, electronic, or magical in nature), the character can affect the outcome. If spent before rolling, he gains a +2 bonus per Pulse spent. If spent after rolling, he may improve the result by +1 per 2 Pulse spent.

Keen Eye: Before rolling, by spending 1 Pulse as a free action the character gets +2 to a check related to noticing visual details such as spotting forgeries or valuing an item. This affects a single check whether that check takes 3 seconds, 5 minutes, or 3 days. After rolling, the check may be improved by spending 2 Pulse to add +1 to the result.

Craftsman's Hands: Before rolling, by spending 2 Pulse as a free action, the character gets +2 to all actions related to fine manual dexterity, such as checks to make paper animals, Sleight Of Hand tricks, and less creative endeavors like lock picking and bomb disposal. This affects a single check, however long that check takes. After rolling, the check may be improved by spending 3 Pulse to add +2 to the result.

Patron God: Death

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A death god or goddess has looked favorably upon your character and offered him divine patronage. Among the better-known death gods are Hades, Anubis, and Relic's Pemephonae, goddess of the Storm Ascendancy. Many do not realize that the death god is not cruel at all – he is simply part of the natural order. Such gods expect their representatives to mete out death on their behalf but also to reduce suffering for those who are dying. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one on gaining this Edge, and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).

Ease Pain: As a free action the character lowers Wound penalties for himself, and anyone covered by a Medium Burst Template centered on him, by 1. This costs 1 Pulse and lasts for 3 rounds.

Wound Transfer: As an automatic action the character may transfer Wounds from a willing target within 2 inches of him. He spends 2 Pulse per Wound; the target is immediately healed of those Wounds, which the character immediately suffers. This cannot be soaked or otherwise prevented.

For a number of rounds equal to half his Spirit, the character may then spend 2 Pulse for every Wound he gained and make an opposed Spirit check against another target within 2 inches. If successful, those Wounds are removed from the character and inflicted on this new target instead.

Gaze Of Death: The character looks with his naked eye at a person who is badly injured and that person dies instantly. Spend 1 Pulse as free action to make an opposed Spirit check against a Shaken Extra or Shaken Wild Card who has sustained 3 Wounds

already. Success shakes the target again and counts as a damaging source which will wound even opponents with the Hardy ability or the Tough As Hell Edge.

Patron God: Fertility

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A god or goddess of life, healing, and fertility has looked favorably upon your character and offered him divine patronage. This could be Bes, Marduk, Osiris, or Relic's Istopa, goddess of the Growth Ascendancy, among others. Such gods expect their representatives to provide healing, comfort, and medicinal aid on their behalf. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one on gaining this Edge and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).

Divine Medicine: Before rolling, by spending 1 Pulse when making a Healing check (magical or otherwise) the character gets +2 to the check. After rolling, the check may be improved by spending 2 Pulse to add +1 to the result.

Fleshknit: As an automatic action, the character begins to heal his recent Wounds (any Wounds inflicted in the last hour). The first Wound heals after 1 minute, with another Wound healed every minute thereafter. Each Wound healed in this way inflicts a level of Fatigue on the character, and costs 3 Pulse.

Faithful Replication: By spending 5 Pulse as an automatic action that deals 1 level of Fatigue to the character, he bleeds onto the ground and on his action next round a replica of himself springs up where the blood hit the ground. This replica does not have this Edge, nor any Pulse of its own, though it may use its master's. The copy acknowledges him as its master and will do as he tells it, even to the point of death. This duplicate has a duration of 3 rounds; alternatively the character may spend an additional 10 Pulse when creating the duplicate to make the duration 5 minutes instead. When the time limit elapses, the replica collapses, 'dies', and fades into the ground leaving only a bloodstain.

Patron God: Knowledge

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A god or goddess of Knowledge has looked favorably upon your character and offered him divine patronage. This could be Athena, Odin or Relic's Etaro the Wanderer. Such gods expect their representatives to be wise and to pursue Knowledge for its own sake. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one on gaining this Edge and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).

Know Weakness: By spending 3 Pulse as an automatic action, the character gains an inherent understanding of the weaknesses of one opponent he can see within 24 inches. For the next three rounds (extendable by paying 1 Pulse per additional round) whenever he attacks that opponent and gets a Raise, he gains an additional bonus die. In other words, on a regular attack roll he would deal +2d6 damage on a Raise.

Borrow Knowledge : By spending 2 Pulse as an automatic action lasting 3 rounds the character may touch someone (requiring a touch attack for unwilling subjects) to become aware of every Edge and Skill that person has. The character may gain any single Skill the target knows at the same level he knows it for the duration, or until another target is touched using Borrow Knowledge . The duration may be extended by spending 1 Pulse per additional round.

Divine Understanding: By spending 1 Pulse as an automatic action the character gains the equivalent of Knowledge (some broad type) d6. For instance, this may be Knowledge (World Geography), Knowledge (Arts And Crafts), or Knowledge (Science) rather than Knowledge of a particular town, of a particular craft, or of a particular science. This affects a single check, however long that check takes.



Patron God: Love**Type:** Weird**Requirements:** Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A goddess of love (they tend to be goddesses rather than gods) has looked favorably upon your character, and offered him divine patronage. Aphrodite, Astarte, Freya, and Ishtar are the best-known, though there are many others. Such gods expect their representatives to sow love and lust everywhere, forming and easing relationships and enhancing sexuality. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one on gaining this Edge and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).

Silky Voice: By spending 1 Pulse as a free action, everyone within earshot of the character is impressed by him. He gets +2 to Persuasion checks for the purposes of seduction, and people who couldn't otherwise be seduced can now be (albeit at a -4 penalty). This affects a single check, however long that check takes.

Heightened Passions: By spending 2 Pulse as an automatic action for 3 rounds, the character causes one target he touches to become more susceptible to emotional stimulus, giving them -2 to resist Taunt, Intimidation, and Persuasion checks. This may require a successful touch attack – especially in combat! The duration may be extended by spending 1 Pulse per additional round.

Divine Compassion: By spending 2 Pulse as an automatic action, the character heals a willing target he touches of 1 level of Fatigue - but only if inflicted in the last 5 minutes.

Patron God: Nature**Type:** Weird**Requirements:** Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A god or goddess of nature has looked favorably upon your character and offered him divine patronage. Artemis, Ceres, Gaia, and Kupala are all nature deities. Such gods expect their representatives to help keep nature safe, and to make sure the natural order is maintained and supported. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one on gaining this

Edge and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).

Nature's Ally: By spending 1 or more Pulse after making a check to resist the effects of natural factors, the character gets +2 per Pulse spent added to the check. This includes exposure to extreme weather, snake venom, jumping out of the way of sudden jets of lava, etc.

Plant Manipulation: By spending 2 Pulse as an automatic action, the character takes control of one non-sentient plant (yes, in some realms there are sentient ones). He may cause it to grow to double its size, shrink to half its size, or move its branches/stem/trunk/vines (though it can't uproot itself), effectively allowing it to make physical Skill checks as per the character's Skill. Each effect takes about 1 round to happen. This control lasts 3 rounds, which may be extended at a cost of 1 Pulse per additional round, then the plant returns to its original state.

Animal Speech: By spending 1 Pulse as an automatic action, the character can talk to and understand animals. The conversation may be a little limited in the case of earthworms, but dogs and eagles tend to have more to say for themselves. This effect lasts 5 minutes.

Patron God: Trickster**Type:** Weird**Requirements:** Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A trickster god or goddess has looked favorably upon your character and offered him divine patronage. This might be Coyote or Susano-o or Loki, among others. Such gods expect their representatives to shake people up, confuse them, and make them question their lot in life, introducing change and creativity to their world. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one on gaining this Edge and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).

Aura Of Truth: By spending 1 Pulse as a free action, there is a -2 penalty to the next check to spot the character lying, whether that check uses natural or supernatural means. This affects a single check, however long that check takes, but if nobody has announced such a check within 5 minutes, the Aura Of Truth ends.



False Positive: By spending 2 Pulse and succeeding at an opposed Spirit check, the character can make one target within 2 inches become obsessed by something that isn't true, as per the Hindrance Delusion (major). The target absolutely believes in some lie, and that lie becomes the most important thing to him. For example, a guard who (falsely) thinks there are intruders in his town will obsess on patrolling and catching them above all else. This effect lasts 1 minute but it can be extended by spending a further 2 Pulse per minute.

Prestiocolation: By spending 1 Pulse as an automatic action, the character creates a static illusion in a small area, like making a book seem to have a different title or a drink appear to be a different liquid. People seeing the illusion may attempt a Notice check at -2 to see through the illusion. This effect lasts 5 minutes.

Patron God: Unknown

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A mysterious god or goddess has looked favorably upon your character and gives him divine patronage secretly, behind the scenes. Your character knows very little about this enigmatic figure, apart from the benefits that are being bestowed on him. Is it a benign or malevolent force in the universe? Only time will tell.

In exchange for devotion, your character is granted two supernatural abilities of his choice from those offered by other patron gods in his realm, or those can be used as guidelines for the creation of new abilities. The first ability is bestowed upon taking this Edge, while the second is activated at Demigod (both are active immediately if the character takes this Edge at Demigod rank). These powers give a hint of the god's hidden nature.

While this flexibility sounds great, your character suspects that his shadowy patron has big plans for him. While other patrons see characters as their messengers and representatives in the mortal realms, discussing plans with them openly and with trust, there is some reason this character is different.

This is a terrific roleplaying opportunity for the GM, a chance to weave the character into the heart of the epic that she's developing. There are bound to be some twists and turns along the way, and a shocking revelation or two before the dust settles.

Patron God: War

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A war god or goddess has looked favorably upon your character and offered him divine patronage. This might be Ares or Neit, or the goddesses Agrona, Brigit, or Menhit. Such gods expect their representatives to take part in battles on their behalf, ensuring that the god's preferred side wins. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one on gaining this Edge and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).

Steadfast In Battle: By spending 1 Pulse as a free action, the character gives allies under a Large Burst Template centered on him a +2 bonus to Guts checks for the next 5 rounds, allowing anyone who had previously failed a guts check the opportunity to reroll.

Resilient In Battle: By spending 2 Pulse as an automatic action, the character gives allies under a Large Burst Template centered on him a +1 bonus to Parry and Toughness, lasting for 2 rounds and extendable by paying another 1 Pulse per round.

Mighty In Battle: By spending 3 Pulse as an automatic action, the character gives allies under a large burst template centered on him a +1 bonus to Shooting and Fighting, lasting for 2 rounds and extendable by paying another 1 Pulse per round.

Patron God: Weather

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, No other Patron God Edges

A god or goddess of weather or the sky has looked favorably upon your character and offered him divine patronage. Thor, Zeus, Horus, and Quetzalcoatl are among the best known weather gods. Such gods expect their representatives to alter the weather as necessary to ensure a desired outcome, whether that means aiding a side in battle or helping crops grow or flooding a disloyal village. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one on gaining this Edge and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).



Deluge: By spending Pulse as a free action, the character can (as long as he's outside) start a torrential downpour of rain within 12 inches of him. The downpour covers an area the size of a Large Burst Template. Movement within the area is considered difficult and ranged attacks passing through the area suffer a -1 penalty to attack rolls. This costs 2 Pulse and lasts 3 rounds, extendable by paying 1 Pulse per additional round.

Static discharge: By spending 3 Pulse as an automatic action, the character can unleash a blast of electric force from the atmosphere on a target within 12 inches. This deals 2d10 damage or knocks out a single electronic system for 1 minute. This effect drains the area within 12 inches of the character of any static charge, and it takes 24 hours to build up enough to be used again in that location.

Purify: By spending Pulse as an automatic action, the character can remove harmful impurities – including poisons and radioactivity – from natural substances including air, earth, and water. A 1 inch square can be affected for each Pulse spent (a 2m cube of material, if you're being all rules lawyery about it).

Penetrating Strike

Type: Combat

Requirements: Novice, Notice d8+

Many warriors find that simply smashing away at their heavily armored opponents is a waste of energy that could better be spent elsewhere. They have learned to find weak spots in their opponents' defenses. Your character adds +1 armor penetration to all his attacks.



Penetrating Strike: Improved

Type: Combat

Requirements: Heroic, Penetrating Strike

Why have a little armor penetration when you can have a lot? Your character increases his armor penetration by +2. Furthermore, he can pay 2 Pulse to make his Fighting attacks for the round count as heavy weapons.

Penetrating Strike: Mastery

Type: Combat

Requirements: Demigod, Penetrating Strike: Improved

Why have a lot of armor penetration when you can have LOTS of armor penetration. Your character's bonus armor penetration increases to +3, which can be further increased by spending 1 Pulse per +1 armor penetration. This increase lasts until the end of round. Furthermore, he can pay 1 Pulse to make his Fighting attacks for the round count as heavy weapons.

Pulse Armor

Type: Combat

Requirements: Heroic

Sometimes Pulse has subtle effects that could be mistaken for luck. Other times it turns knives aside and deflects bullets. This is one of those other times.

After damage has been calculated but before making a Soak roll, your character may pay 1 Pulse to add 1 point of Armor across his whole body. This is effective against one attack and he may spend as much Pulse as he likes in order to boost the Armor rating. He may do this against a single damage result per round. For example, a person hit by a machine gun takes three serious hits. After discovering how many Wounds each would inflict he may spend Pulse to gain Armor against one of the shots – each point of Pulse buys a point of Armor.

Pulse Armor: Improved

Type: Combat

Requirements: Demigod, Pulse Armor

After damage has been calculated but before making a Soak roll, your character may pay 1 Pulse to add 2 points of armor across his whole body. This is effective against one attack, but he may spend as much Pulse as he likes in order to boost the armor rating, and may spend Pulse on multiple attacks that round. For example, a person hit by a machine gun takes three serious hits. After discovering how many wounds each would inflict he may spend Pulse to gain armor against one, two or all three of the shots – each point of Pulse buys two points of armor against one of the hits.

Perfected Races

A Perfected character has the benefit of being from a part of the gene pool that has been altered by the use of Pulse, making it particularly adept at one type of activity. Perfected characters are born to Perfected parents, and such bloodlines tend to be massively proud of their racial heritage. That said, there's nothing stopping a Perfected character from taking a racial type Edge as well – it's rare but not unheard of, and heroes are well known for being rule breakers. Such a case might cause social problems when the Pure Strain Human son comes home from his hiking trip to the mountains as a Pure Strain Dwarf... the roleplay possibilities are intriguing for sure. You can see the Pure Strain Human Edge at the top of the next page.

New Edge Type: Perfected

Perfected Edges are very powerful, but they're also demanding. A character may only take a Perfected Edge at character creation (never later in his career), and may only have one Perfected Edge. Perfected Edges 'cost' double a normal Edge. A human taking one could use his free Edge from being human toward the cost of the Edge but would still need another 2 Hindrance points to finish paying for it. Optionally you may choose to build your character with one less Attribute point than normal (4 for most or 2 if you've taken the Young Hindrance) to pay for half a Perfected Edge.

Pure Strain Human

Type: Perfected

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d10+

Your character's mind and body are perfect, absolutely flawless – and he probably does everything possible to keep it scar free because he's so proud of it. His Smarts can be raised as high as d12+2 over time with normal advancements (and beyond that with the Edges 'Professional' and 'Master' each increasing it by a further +1). He gains a +1 bonus on all Skill checks where Smarts is the linked Attribute and suffers only half the normal multi action penalty for additional cerebral actions. Having the perfect form also has social perks – the character gets +1 Charisma.

Reader

Type: Professional

Requirements: Novice, Notice d6+, Taunt d4+, Intimidation d4+

Careful observation has taught your character a library of personal quirks and 'tells' that suggest veiled truths. He is now skilled enough at social manipulation to gain +2 to all Notice checks to see through disguises and to mark lies (both overt and through omission). The character also gets +1 in all opposed social actions, including Tests of Will.

Resonance

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic

Your character's Pulse is such a roiling tempest of activity that it's just bubbling to get out. His spirit world representation looks like a chained thundercloud. When the fury is unleashed, every ready source of Pulse nearby sings in harmony. The effect is quite forceful.

As an action costing 1 Pulse, your character may place a Medium Burst Template up to Spirit inches away from him. He makes an opposed Spirit check against the Strength of each creature under the template. If he defeats any targets they are moved 1 inch away from the center of the template and 1 more for each Raise. Anyone moved in this way must make

an Agility check or be knocked prone by this burst of Pulse resonance. No damage is inflicted by the burst, but it's a way of making enemies fall off ledges for instance. Getting slammed into solid objects makes the target(s) Shaken.

Resonance: Improved

Type: Weird

Requirements: Demigod, Resonance

In the spirit world your character is now constantly sparking with untapped Pulse. In moments of strong emotion, the energy flares and dances visibly around him. Activating the resonance is no longer a song, but a penetrating howl.

As an action costing 1 Pulse your character may place a Large Burst Template up to Spirit x2 inches away from him. He makes an opposed Spirit check against the Strength of each creature under the template. If he defeats any targets they are moved 2 inches away from the center of the template for a success and 1 more for each Raise. Anyone moved in this way must make an Agility check or be knocked prone by this burst of Pulse resonance. No damage is inflicted by the burst, but it's a way of making enemies fall off ledges for instance. Getting slammed into solid objects makes the target(s) Shaken.

Sidekick

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, Beastmaster or Companion

Your companion or animal companion's fate becomes intertwined with that of your character – the companion becomes a Wild Card. Rare are the moments when he is not by his master's side, and most people have trouble conceiving of one without the other. Your character can also share his Heroic and Demigod-related benefits (bonuses to Soak rolls, recovery from Shaken checks, etc.) with his companion by spending 1 Pulse per round.

Stutter

Type: Weird

Requirements: Demigod, Smarts d8+, Spirit d8+, Vigor d8+

Your character's Pulse is so potent that time has started to warp upon contact with it. He may pay 1 Pulse to repeat an action in a combat round. For example, your character can make two Shooting rolls or two Intimidation checks. This may only be done once per round, and the multi-action penalty still applies.

Surge

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic

The blast doors are closing, the villain is escaping, the ground is crumbling beneath you. Just... a little... faster. Your muscles shriek, something surges within you. Jackpot!

Your character may increase his Pace by any amount for one round. Each inch of movement beyond normal costs 1 Pulse.

Surge: Improved

Type: Weird

Requirements: Demigod, Surge

Three seconds and nothing will be left of the city. The coruscating artifact is so close to the portal, but so far. Time slows, the faces of your companions begin to blue-shift as you rush past them. You're in the zone.

Your character may increase his Pace by any amount for two rounds by spending Pulse. Each point of Pulse spent adds two inches of movement to your character's Pace.

Tough As Hell

Type: Combat

Requirements: Legendary, Tough As Nails

Lesser heroes succumb to minor Wounds or scratches, but not this character - he doesn't suffer a Wound from a second Shaken result.

Trait Perfection: Heroic

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic, Relevant Trait d12+

Heroes known across multiple realms for their feats of strength do not have bad days where their efforts are stymied by a stubborn door. By the same token, heroes of the mind are able to reason their way through any problem beneath a specific threshold. When so much is at stake, bad days are a luxury heroes cannot afford.

On a failed check your character may spend 1 Pulse for a +1 bonus to the check and may continue to do so until the check is a success or he runs out of Pulse. In the case of checks with multiple Trait dice (such as when using the Frenzy Edge), the bonus applies to only one result, but Pulse may be spent to add a bonus on each result independently. This Edge may be taken more than once, but it may never be applied to the same Trait twice.

Trait Perfection: Demigod

Type: Weird

Requirements: Demigod, Trait Perfection: Heroic for the affected Trait

When was the last time that Hercules couldn't lift something? Exactly.

On a failed check your character may spend 1 Pulse for a +2 bonus to the check and may continue to do so until the check is a success or he runs out of Pulse. In the case of checks with multiple Trait dice (such as when using the Frenzy Edge), the bonus applies to only one result, but Pulse may be spent to add a bonus on each result independently. Additionally, when he rolls a fumble on this Trait, he may pay 5 Pulse to turn it into a failure with an effective result of 0... which he can then spend more Pulse to increase as above. This Edge may be taken more than once, but it may never be applied to the same Trait twice.



Pulse Paths

The source of magical power, whatever it may be, exists somewhere in the universe. Some claim it is hidden in the deepest cloud of the Maelstrom, among the crumbling bodies of petrified gods. Others have reams of evidence proving the primal source prospers in a backwater realm where it is shared among a coven of fierce guardians.

Whichever truth is the most popular in a given era, it is generally agreed that four rivers emerge from the source: divine magic, spirit magic, the power of sigils, and the unadulterated magic of spells. Each realm or culture has found different ways to harness and focus these four primal streams to create a profusion of schools, traditions, disciplines, and circles... and some realms have discovered other ways to harness Pulse which aren't easily classified in these categories (but that's a teaser to future books!). In generic Savage Worlds these would be called Arcane Backgrounds; in Suzerain they're Pulse Paths.

Each of the four branches of magic has a 'seed' Edge that must be taken if a character wishes to use magic. They are: Empowered, Enabled, Gifted and Sighted. These Edges allow the character the ability to work one type of magic, two powers selected from the appropriate list, and a d4 in the relevant Skill. The seed Edges can theoretically be found in any realm in the universe, but that doesn't confirm their legality, ease of use, or popularity. Rough-edged, hobo-scrawled wards of protection on the walls of a train car are as much the work of scribes as technological pyramids coursing with the rerouted Pulse of an entire planet.

Selection of a single seed Edge is enough to call your character a mage, shaman, or what-have-you. It's also enough to get pretty good at it. You can always pick up more spells and increase the related Trait. While the trappings of the spells may change from realm to realm, or even from one caster to the next, these are the basics. If your character concept is leaning toward being archetypal or you don't want magic to be the entire focus, this is the way to go.

However, if you want something with a more realm-specific flavor, there are further options. Those hobo scrawls from two paragraphs up weren't just a throwaway example. They'll be described in an upcoming release that shows you our take on the

Great Depression. A more immediately relevant example is anatomism, used by specially trained body-wizards who are prevalent in the Relic setting. For further information on them, check out page 50. Fitting your character with one of those Edges represents specialist training, granting greater focus to their power. The specialist Edge works exactly like the seed Edge, giving the character a d4 in the new specialty's requisite Skill and two powers from the new list. Your character can gain additional powers on the list by taking the Extra Power Edge, as usual.

Selecting a realm-specific Pulse path has more prerequisites than being a generalist, but also offers greater rewards for those who develop them to the highest levels. While there is no universal rule forbidding a character from branching into several different schools, the end benefits will not be as great. On the other hand, you could have yourself the shamanic equivalent of a polyglot, able to commune with the spirit of absolutely anything at a basic level. Generalization versus specialization... it's an age-old dilemma.

Basic Terms And Edges

Here's the lingo you'll want to know if you're planning on exploring the powers available to heroes and villains in the Suzerain universe.

Prayers. Mystical powers used by 'empowered' characters. Usually priests, but not always.

Rituals. Mystical powers used by 'sighted' characters. Rituals get spirits to perform a supernatural task for a shaman.

Sigils. Mystical powers used by 'enabled' characters. There are plenty of flavors of scribe, writing mystical symbols.

Spells. Mystical powers used by 'gifted' characters. This is your classic wizardry.

Empowered

Type: Pulse Path

Requirements: Spirit d6+

A divine patron has agreed to oversee your character's connection to the mystical source of all existence. The character does not need any formal connection to the divinity or its earthly organization, only faith

in the deity itself. Certain deities will have rules that their empowered must follow, but most don't feel that it's necessary except among their cloistered elite. On taking this Edge your character gains:

Faith in a particular god or pantheon (Spi) d4

Two prayers from the following list: Armor, Barrier, Beast Friend, Boost/Lower Trait, Burrow, Burst, Deflection, Detect/Conceal Arcana, Dispel, Divine Intervention, Elemental Manipulation, Entangle, Environmental Protection, Fear, Fly, Greater Healing, Healing, Invisibility, Light, Obscure, Puppet, Quickness, Shape Change, Smite, Speak Language, Speed, Stun, Telekinesis, Zombie.

Multi-Prayer: A divinely empowered character may recite one prayer multiple times in a single action. For example he may recite Boost Trait on three targets instead of one. Each additional target gets a separate Faith die (as with Bolt or rate-of-fire weapons), but the whole action gets only one Wild Die as normal. The full Pulse cost of the prayer must be paid for each instance. Each additional instance of the prayer increases the difficulty of reciting it and incurs a -1 penalty on the check. For example, a priest reciting Boost Fighting on 4 party members would roll 4 Faith dice and one Wild Die. He would then pick the four best results, apply a -3 modifier to each die to determine success or failure, and pay the cost of Boost/Lower Trait 4 times. He would only need to pay upkeep on the instances that succeeded.

Enabled

Type: Pulse Path

Requirements: Strength d6+

All scribes share one thing in common – their bodies have been enhanced to allow them to lay down magical symbols that would otherwise be beyond mortal control. Depending on the realm, the required change may take the form of cybernetic implants, ritual anointing of the hands, or 20 years of sequestered monastery training. Mental changes mirror the scribe's physical transformation; his mind is either warped or strengthened to allow for the terrible strain that the shape of magic brings to flesh and spirit. On taking this Edge your character gains:

Scribe (Agi) d4

Two sigils from the following list: Armor, Barrier, Beast Friend, Blast, Bolt, Boost/Lower Trait, Burst, Deflection, Detect/Conceal Arcana, Dispel, Elemental Manipulation, Environmental Protection, Fear, Fly, Invisibility, Light, Obscure, Quickness, Shape Change, Smite, Speak Language, Speed, Stun, Telekinesis, Teleport, Zombie.

Transference: Scribes can inscribe a sigil they know onto an object or person, then give someone else access to its power (or leave the sigil 'open' for anyone to use). Transferring a sigil's power this way costs 1 Pulse per rank of the sigil. Pulse spent in this way does not recover as normal. However, other people may now use the power. The Trait check required to use a transferred power defaults to Spirit, but a more logical choice may present itself in certain instances. For example, Shooting makes sense for a Bolt spell transferred to a wand. The scribe can break his link to the sigil at any time. The invested Pulse then replenishes as normal.

Gifted

Type: Pulse Path

Requirements: Smarts d6+

Traditional wizards fall under this Pulse path. They've acquired their control over magic through strict mental discipline and often invest years of research in the art of casting spells. As such, their view of magic tends to be an extension of the user's strength of will. Most people with the gift for spellcasting see their connection to the Pulse source as the purest form of magic, as it exists without the intermediary actions of other beings or objects – no gods or spirits are needed, and no bodily enhancement either. It's not something to get too vain about, though. The gift strikes at random, with some people discovering a talent for wizardry despite living a life of drudgery for decades. On taking this Edge, your character gains:

Spellcasting (Sma) d4

Two spells from the following list: Armor, Barrier, Blast, Bolt, Boost/Lower Trait, Burrow, Burst, Deflection, Detect/Conceal Arcana, Dispel, Elemental Manipulation, Entangle, Environmental Protection, Fear, Fly, Invisibility, Light, Obscure, Puppet, Quickness, Shape Change, Smite, Speak Language, Speed, Stun, Telekinesis, Teleport.

Flood The Channels: Gifted casters can make their spells harder to resist by paying more Pulse. Each point of Pulse spent in this way gives the target(s) -1 on opposed checks and Soak rolls against the power. This cost is paid after the character rolls, but before his opponent makes the resistance check.

Sighted

Type: Pulse Path

Requirements: Vigor d6+

Shamans – those in the physical world who deal with those in the spirit world. Most realms have some people who perform rituals to summon spirits with specific powers and offer them Pulse in exchange for their services. Different groups of shamans use different strategies for switching their sight to the world of the spirits, but it mostly involves chants, rituals, and secret blends of dangerous substances, which requires a certain amount of physical sturdiness to consume repeatedly over a period of years. On taking this Edge, your character gains:

Perform Ritual (Vig) d4

Two rituals from the following list: Armor, Barrier, Beast Friend, Blast, Bolt, Boost/Lower Trait, Burrow, Burst, Deflection, Detect/Conceal Arcana, Dispel, Elemental Manipulation, Entangle, Environmental Protection, Fear, Fly, Greater Healing, Healing, Invisibility, Light, Obscure, Puppet, Quickness, Shape Change, Smite, Speak Language, Speed, Stun, Telekinesis, Teleport, The Sight, Zombie.

Ritual Use: All sighted powers require a ritual to cast, with the exception of The Sight (see below). The specifics depend upon the shaman's culture, but tend to involve chanting, repetitive movement, and spiritually significant (but non-magical) components. Performing a ritual takes 5 minutes per point of Pulse the power requires. At the end of the ritual, the shaman makes a Perform Ritual check as usual. Rituals with non-instant durations remain in effect for 24 hours, during which time they can be dismissed as an action. Instant effects may be triggered at any point during the next 24 hours as an action. Pulse spent on rituals doesn't begin to recover until the effect is spent, dismissed or ends, at which point recovery begins as normal. Rituals both started and finished during the spiriting hour (midnight – 01:00) receive a +2 bonus to the Perform Ritual roll, as spirits are unusually co-operative at that time.

Two New Powers

Divine Intervention

Type: Prayer

Requirements: Novice, Empowered

Pulse: Special

Range: Self

Duration: Special

Trappings: Beseeching your god loudly and offering placating deals or proof of faith.

Your character has a hotline to his chosen deity and may plead with them for assistance – ideally you'll roleplay his platitudes to tempt your GM into being more generous. For 1 Pulse he may ask to be temporarily bestowed with any Edge for which he qualifies. The bonus Edge normally lasts for the duration of a scene. In combat, it lasts until the battle's end or until a joker is drawn, whichever occurs first. Your character can also request Edges for which he does not qualify. The basic cost of this is 3 Pulse plus 1 Pulse for each rank he is short of qualifying. No check is required to do this. If your character has been especially devout, his prayers may well be answered.

Prayers can be answered as the character expected, in a way more befitting of the patron divinity's philosophy, or not at all. Praying to Hela, the proud sun goddess of Valon, for the Thief Edge to better sneak into an enemy temple is unlikely. Instead, the request may be met with the boon of Command or Attractive so the empowered can take the more direct route. If the character is trying to sneak into one of Hela's own temples, he should consider himself lucky if all that happens is wasted Pulse.

The Sight

Type: Ritual

Requirements: Novice, Sighted

Pulse: 1

Range: Self

Duration: 1 hour

Some of the places that shamans go, eyes just get them into trouble. Normal eyes, that is. To see the spirits they converse with, shamans need sight beyond mortal sight. Despite its name, The Sight refers to all of the five basic senses.



For 1 Pulse, the shaman shifts all senses from the physical world to the spirit world for one hour, which shifts his body too, making him a ghostly presence in the solid world and a solid form in the spirit world. The duration increases to two hours with a Raise. He may end this effect prematurely by making a Spirit check with a -2 penalty. Unlike all other shamanic powers, invoking The Sight requires a single normal action rather than a lengthy ritual.

Saving The Universe

Suzerain makes your characters truly heroic and then turns them into demigods, before finally (hopefully) they transcend to godhood. That's about as epic as it gets. They're obviously going to need some help to face the challenges that inevitably turn up to sour their day. They get Pulse, and Karma, and once they hit Heroic rank they get improved Soak rolls and other perks, and a d8 as a Wild Die at Demigod. And let's not forget the ability to avoid death at the cost of a single Karma.

It's still not enough. Trust us, these challenges aren't little niggling issues like finding matching socks in the morning. They're not minor impish problems biting their ankles and trying to undo their shoelaces. We leave that stuff to other settings. These are serious challenges for mortals who are favored by the very gods themselves. As such, your characters get two additional bits of supernatural aid: a fortress of their own and a tour guide to the universe.

The Characters' Pocket Realm

After a few Telesmae get close to each other, they communicate with one another and start forming strange, interconnected geometries that burrow through the Veil separating the mortal realms from the Maelstrom. If the gods can strike an accord over the gathering of champions, the Telesmae's connections deepen, hollowing out a section of the Maelstrom for their bearers.

The creation of this pocket realm is a subtle event. Just because the gods have chosen to back a gathering of heroes doesn't mean they'll immediately break out the golden drinking horns and mythic taxidermy. More than likely, your characters will first notice

their new safehouse when they keep on returning to it, no matter how unlikely the circumstances. That'll be the Telesmae chirping amongst themselves, trying to return to their god-blessed home. As the forces of history bend around your characters' actions, the links between them, their Telesmae, and the Maelstrom will become ever deeper.

It's comforting to know your adventuring group has access to a base of operations – a pocket dimension crafted of Pulse and capable of surreptitiously transporting itself from one realm to the next, along with your characters. The pocket realm is a relatively stable area of the Maelstrom that is maintained for the characters by their Telesmae, but without your characters knowing about it at first. Until Heroic rank, Telesmae keep a low profile, and the pocket realm will look like any other accommodation that's suitable for the local environment – a cozy inn room, a fine, sturdy tent big enough for the whole group, etc. Your characters' Telesmae maintain this space, as well as its contents. For example, if characters leave some possessions in the closet of their cheap motel room while beating a hasty retreat, those same items will be waiting for them in the next dusty motel in the next tumbleweed town. This might give some sharper characters pause to think that things aren't exactly what they seem....

The pocket realm grows and becomes increasingly grand as the characters increase in rank. The quality of the hotel rooms they get seems to improve, until they have a nice suite at Veteran rank instead of a roach-infested basement at Novice. But it's still a place that looks right for the local environment.

As soon as the average rank in the group reaches Heroic, everything changes. The characters are contacted by their Telesmae, and it's time to see the universe for what it really is. Their souls are now strong enough to handle the transition to different times and places through the Maelstrom. As a first step, though, they need to meet the representatives of the gods, and that happens in the pocket realm. As the characters step through the door into their realm, suddenly they're aware they've traveled through a portal to another place. It's like a veil has been lifted and they see what's really going on – the space inside no longer matches the space outside (sort of like a certain blue police box...). And there, in the middle of the main room, is the welcome party made up of various senior spirits and demigods who want to check out the newbies. If the GM has any 'big reveal' secrets about the

workings of the universe, this is a good time to slip them in. Otherwise, the new Heroic characters are clued in to what you, the reader, already know about the wider Suzerain universe.

As part of their Heroic rank briefing, the new kids are taught how to rearrange their pocket realm. From then on the characters are able to modify the trappings of their realm to suit their tastes. Since it's a shared resource, dependent on the psyche of each of the characters, its architecture and particulars will be tailored to the group. Followers of the Grand Singularity can expect an eventual technotopia of free-flowing information falls; a group with strong patronage from Relic's Etaro, the Wanderer, is more likely to be granted an ever-evolving hunting lodge with room for a great number of interesting guests. As the heroes prove their worth to the universe, their Telesmae work to strengthen the realm's ties to the Maelstrom. By Demigod rank, the realm will be saturated with enough Pulse that it could easily reach the size of a palatial estate, complete with its own ecosystem.

No matter what its internal trappings, access to the pocket realm is always through an unassuming entryway. Everyone who isn't capable of traveling to the Maelstrom (including most mortals) will just see the normal room beyond, while the owners will see the entrance lobby to their realm. As they step through, they disappear from the mortal world – leaving any observers with a new tale to tell about our heroes' many wiles. Permanent animal companions and followers bought with Edges get to travel with the character who has the Edge, using the same rules as people carrying items to and from the Maelstrom.

When characters travel into a mortal realm, the flow of time in the pocket realm synchronizes with the realm. If characters hide in their pocket realm for ten minutes, ten minutes pass on the other side of that unassuming doorway too. If the characters go back through a portal to the Maelstrom, the pocket realm synchronizes to 'Maelstrom time' instead of 'mortal time'.

The pocket realm is a home away from home, a secret hideout, Fortress of Solitude, and private lodge. Because of the pocket realm's deep ties to the characters' great potential, the messengers of the gods also prefer it as their meeting area. When the higher powers want the heroes' help, they send a high-ranking functionary (say, an angel or a Demigod-level phoenix) into the pocket realm to share what's going on and what bold hearts can do about it.

The Character's Telesma

We've mentioned Telesmae a few times so far, but what are they exactly? Each is an individual gem, usually part of something else, like a ring that has been handed from seventh son to seventh son for generations. Or a smooth rock that your character picked up one day, and never got around to tossing. Or an ugly tourist charm, which nevertheless ends up hanging in conspicuous locations, that your character bought to get rid of that weird old lady at the side of the road. Just one of those things, right?

Wrong. That little gem casts eerily familiar patterns when it catches the light, and silently hums of nostalgic times. It feels like a mix between an old friend and a favorite pair of pants. Also, it's sentient. Maybe it's not very smart – in the area of a cat or dog – but that's still a serious step up from most jewels. Whatever shape the Telesma is in now, it was originally created by a divine power and designed as a conduit to a chosen one: your character. (Note the difference between being a chosen one and The Chosen One. Gods know that heroes often fail – heroically. It's good planning for them to keep a few spare chosen ones up their nigh-infinite sleeves.)

The gods discovered early on that repeatedly pulling mortals through the Veil between realities could destroy their very soul, shredding it like so much tissue. Not wanting to add to the growing pile of pulped heroes, one of the gods had an idea. Nobody remembers who, but it was a good enough idea that everyone took the credit, as divine egos tend to do.

At any rate, one of the gods created a small yet flawless gem, which he filled with one of his spirit servants. Its job: to guide the appointed hero as he fulfilled his divine purpose. Each major deity has hundreds of lesser spirits at his beck and call, so bonding a few to gems wasn't a great loss. The god set this gem into a piece of jewelry, divinely beautiful, and offered it to his hero.

This was the first Telesma, the first talisman of the gods.

A powerful bond grew between Telesma and human. Better still, the god could bring the human to and from the Maelstrom by summoning the gem back – it would then bring the human with it, safely cocooned in its power.

Time passed and more gods gave Telesmae to their followers, each creating new designs as they went. Not all Telesmae guided their appointed heroes as closely as the first. Over time, most gods agreed it was better to have a pool of free agents, unfettered by the eon-spanning politics associated with being a direct servant. If your character takes a Patron God Edge or has Faith in a particular deity, his Telesma will inevitably have been created by that deity for him. Otherwise, it's likely the Telesma was created by the gods as a group without a particular one-to-one relationship between a god and your character.

Although there are exceptions, Telesmae tend to have only limited consciousness. While they are generally obedient and are strongly loyal to the human they have bonded with, it's a narrow intelligence. Telesmae can be playful, or even mischievous, but also contrary if asked to work against their core purpose. Like any divine artifact with the intelligence of a golden retriever, bribery and tricks may be necessary to guide them toward individual goals rather than godly dictates.

Telesmae are incredibly useful items for your character. They transport him through portals and across the Veil, and they ease the transition into each setting. Telesmae can learn different additional powers, too. Characters start to feel the benefits of the Telesma before they even hit Heroic rank, but it's only then that the gods let the Telesma reveal itself and open its direct telepathic link.

It's impossible for a hero to lose his Telesma: the two are connected by a force deeper than Pulse. Each can sense the other's approximate location from any distance within a realm, and precise position from close range (within 1km). But that doesn't mean they are physically bound. Your character can still take off his Telesma just like any other piece of jewelry. That means they can be stolen. Certain mortal legends involve heroes seeking enchanted items, and growing in power and prestige once those are located – those stories may actually be about heroes fighting to claim stolen Telesmae, or reclaiming one stolen from them. Excalibur was encrusted with jewels, after all ...

There are also drawbacks to having a Telesma. The first is that it links the character to the gods, allowing the gods and their representatives to contact him and call him back to the Maelstrom. This can be annoying, because the view across the Veil is misty, fading

Telesmae In Play

There are three basic approaches to playing Telesmae. You can ignore the fact that they're sentient and just play them as powerful magic items. Or you can decide on a basic personality and let the GM handle all Telesmae like they're Extras. Or each player's Telesma gets played by the player on his left, and everybody plays both their character and occasionally a Telesma. Try them all out and see which is most fun for you.

in and out of focus, so the gods might choose an inappropriate time to call a hero back for an update. This can make for some fun roleplaying, and it also provides a handy excuse when one of the players can't make it to a session.

The second is that anyone with the power to see the spirit world will instantly notice a Telesma and recognize it as something not native to their realm. Beings of opposed philosophy are drawn to it, good to evil, chaos to order. The character stands out mystically because of the touch of the gods, making him a clear target for demons and devils and evil spirits and all manner of nasty beings who want to tear down anything good or heroic. And if your character is the sly, malicious sort, he'll find himself a target for every do-gooder in the universe. It's not fair, but that's why most heroes find themselves at the center of plots and plans, forever being assaulted from all sides. And there always seems to be a nemesis lurking in the wings. The character-and-Telesma's bonded aura draws danger to him and makes him a temptation to anyone who can see or sense his enhanced power. Subconsciously, unknowingly, opposites attract – and it's not a good thing!

The third problem is Telesmae do have some sentience, and aren't always perfectly obedient. Again, this is great for roleplaying – you get to give your item a bit of personality. The GM also gets to have some fun; if your character tries to use his Telesma to do something that's inappropriate for his patron god (if he has one), he needs to make a Spirit roll with a negative modifier based on how inappropriate the action is. Fail, and the Telesma stubbornly refuses to help out. The fallout could be embarrassing, or merely deadly, depending on the circumstance.



Only a mortal who has been flagged by the gods as a potential Hero can own or use a Telesma, and even then only the one that's bound to him. This describes all characters in a Suzerain game, even if they don't have the Patron God Edge – that's for characters who want an extra close relationship with a particular deity. Characters who don't know they have patron gods or don't believe in the divine right of the space faeries to control their destiny aren't exempt either. There's a Maelstrom full of gods and Great Spirits who've marked him for greatness, like it or not.

Other people may be able to force a Telesma to share its power, but their body, mind, and soul are not prepared for the exchange. The granted power is too much for them to handle, and they will go insane. All those tales of men and women driven mad by cursed relics has some basis in fact – many of those people foolishly tried to wrest power from a Telesma and were overwhelmed by the experience.

The Mechanics Of Telesmae

A Telesma becomes part of the character during character creation, and you have some say in its appearance and personality. A Telesma is like having a wizard's familiar, only it's a magical gem. It has some sentience and it has certain powers. The Telesma has a spiritual link with its owner, and is unlikely to disobey a direct order. But because it has intelligence it also has a personality. And that's something you can work out with your GM.

Is your Telesma snarky? Is it eager? Is it hesitant? Is it playful? Aggressive? Afraid to be left alone? And what form does it take? All Telesmae are gems, but the type, color, and cut vary. Is it a large square ruby, set in a heavy gold ring? Will it be a round star sapphire, suspended from a fine gold chain? Or a small, rough quartz attached to a watch fob? Decide what would be fun to play and what would suit your character.

A Telesma has a few inherent powers that it'll reveal at Heroic rank:

Focused Telepathy: The Telesma can mentally communicate with its owner and vice-versa, in either the physical world or the spirit world. Its range is limited to sight – it must be within sight of the character to hear him and be heard. This is a passive power, and costs no Pulse. Even if they cannot talk, a Telesma and its owner always have a sense of where the other is – as long as they're in the same realm.

Spirit Senses: The Telesma is a spirit, and even bound into a gem it can sense the spirit world, hear what's going on and see everything around it. By contrast, it's aware of physical beings in the same way that physical beings see spirits – as ghostly forms. This is a passive power, and costs no Pulse.

Control Portal: This is the bit that allows a Telesma to help the character get back and forth through the Veil around the Maelstrom, and through portals to different times and places in the mortal realms. The Telesma can find and manipulate portals which allow travel through the Veil between the mortal realms and the realm of the gods, the Maelstrom. To find a portal the character closes his eyes and lets his Telesma sense the essence of the nearest portal, seeing it with his mind's eye. This is a Spirit check costing 1 Pulse and taking 1 minute. If the nearest portal is more than 10m away the check is at -1, more than 100m away then -2 instead, -4 if more than 1km

away, -6 if more than 10km away. Portals more than 100km away cannot be sensed. Finding a portal the character has seen before gives him a +4 modifier to the check.

Once a portal has been found, the character can reopen his eyes. Once within 10m of it he'll be able to see it, shimmering like liquid glass caught in moonlight. He'll see through it, but the other side will be frustratingly distorted. He can increase the cost of a Find Portal action by 1 Pulse to share his sight of a portal he has found with other characters, as long as they're within a Large Burst Template of him when he makes that check.

To activate a portal, the character touches it and concentrates for one minute, expending 2 Pulse in the process, though some portals are harder to open than others, requiring greater Pulse expenditure or Spirit checks to ease open. Oddly enough, these are the portals that characters tend to find while being pursued across featureless plains, armies of troll legionaries on their heels. Once the portal is open, the character can see the swirling milky barrier of the Veil through it and can pass across to the Maelstrom. Your GM has information on what happens then. A portal stays open for 24 hours, useable by anyone who has a strong enough soul not to get bounced or utterly destroyed by the forces of the Maelstrom, before it closes once more.

Localization: When characters arrive in a new realm, they're unfamiliar with it and suffer a -2 penalty to all Trait checks for the first session there. Spending a point of Karma can negate this, and Telesmae have a few ways to help blend in, too. Its owner can communicate in any language as per the power Speak Languages with the following alterations: the effect costs 1 Pulse, is an automatic action and the effect lasts 5 minutes. The Telesma can also make the character look like a person native to his new realm. By spending 1 Pulse as an automatic action his face and body change slightly to give him a thicker or more slender frame, darker or lighter skin, local facial features, etc. This won't change his race or make him more than 5cm taller or shorter, and it won't make him look like a different person. The effect is subtle enough that most people won't even notice it – subconsciously they simply treat him as a local when he's using this ability. This effect lasts 5 minutes.

Finally the character may spend 1 Pulse as an automatic action while going through a portal into the mortal realms to tap into its essence, getting a subtle feel for the time and place he's entering. While in that realm he is allowed to make common Knowledge rolls about that world at -2 instead of being as clueless as a stranger has all rights to be.

Telesma Growth

Telesmae evolve along with their owners – indeed, many believe it is that constant contact with a Hero that allows the Telesma to change and grow and improve in the first place. However it happens, Telesmae cannot only become smarter but also more powerful, exhibiting new abilities and fine-tuning old ones.

This growth happens even before the character is aware of the true nature of the gemstone he never seems to lose. Every time a character gains a new rank, starting at Seasoned, his Telesma also gains an advance, which takes the form of an Edge from the following list:

Allure

Your character's Telesma is sexy, convincing or some combination of the two. This benefit is shared telepathically, granting your character +1 Charisma.

Assistant

Your character's Telesma can concentrate on maintaining his magic powers for him, reducing the concentration penalty by 1 per Telesma rank. It also grants +2 to checks made to keep powers going when your character suffers damage.

Attribute Synergy

Your character's Telesma is particularly adept in one of the five core Attributes and able to guide and influence the same Attribute in your character, increasing his Wild Die one step when rolling that Attribute. This option can be taken multiple times, applying to a new Attribute each time.

Balm

Your character's Telesma can soothe his Fatigue, reducing the Fatigue track by a single level once per day.

Forced Manifestation

Your character's Telesma can trick, tear, or finagle spirits into the physical world. This causes the targeted spirit to become dual aligned. Doing so costs your character 5 Pulse. This effect lasts for five rounds, and can be extended another 5 rounds by paying an extra 5 Pulse.

Karma Bank

Your character may store 1 unspent Karma at the end of a session. This may be used in later sessions. The bank can hold only 1 Karma at any given time.

Protective

Your character's Telesma emits a protective field of Pulse around his physical body shielding him from harm. This grants your character +1 Toughness.

Psychically Aggressive

Your character's Taunt and Intimidation checks can incapacitate opponents thanks to the assistance of his Telesma in the spirit world.

Pulse Battery

Your character's Telesma acts as a battery containing 1 Pulse per rank of the Telesma. This replenishes every 24 hours. This option may be taken multiple times, each time increasing the Pulse per rank by 1.

Spirit Interaction

Your character can pay 1 Pulse as a free action to become dual-aligned for 1 round so he affects both the spirit world and physical world simultaneously.

Telesma Radio

Your character's Telesma is capable of broadcasting information to familiar Telesmae within 1km without the need for line of sight.

Touch Link

In the spirit world, the spirit in your character's Telesma can move up to 10 inches from the gemstone. It can now touch things for him, such as to deliver a touch spell effect.

Unbounded Adjustment

Your character's Telesma is an expert in helping with quick adjustment to new realms – your character no longer suffers the -2 penalty for a session after arriving in a new setting.

Vigorous Spirit

When your character enters the spirit world, his Spirit and Vigor are not reversed. His Telesma prevents the change, keeping things 'right way round' for him.

Character Growth

Characters should never be static. They have new experiences constantly, after all – going new places, meeting new people, seeing new things, facing new challenges. And all of that forces characters to grow.

Characters who go on adventures are going to grow more than typical folks because they see and experience far more. Their ideals are tested on a grand scale, with many precious people at stake. This is especially true for those who pass through portals into other worlds. Imagine spending your whole childhood believing your neighborhood was the entire world, and that certain habits and traditions were universal. Then you grow up and get to see the rest of the city, and discover that some of those traditions make no sense anywhere else and actually get in the way of appreciating the wider world. That's exactly how it is for experienced travelers. A superhero from a crime-ridden world might think that fistfights and long declamations are the way to solve every problem, only to go to a world where fights are considered savage and quiet diplomatic conversations are used to sort out any conflicts.

The really important thing when growing your Suzerain character is not to let yourself be limited by anyone else, and this is important so listen up. Some games give characters a 'class' or 'clan' or whatever that squeezes them into archetypes. 'Fighter', 'leader', or 'sneaky guy', for instance. Things that limit what that they can do. Suzerain doesn't work that way. It's nice to know where your characters strengths are, but don't let your initial character concept serve as a straitjacket for what he will become. We are all shaped by our experiences, even if the effects are hidden.

When you advance your character at the end of a session, travel in the direction that feels right to you – and to him. Did your character discover that magic is real and that he has a talent for it? He might settle in some place and become a classical wizard. Maybe he'll just learn a few handy spells to enhance his detective skills and brawling techniques, making him more effective at both. It's all about who your character is and who he's becoming. The two should fit together, even if there's a sudden drastic lifestyle change (and what could be more dramatic than, say, a fantasy wizard appearing in cyberpunk world?).

Suzerain gives your character the freedom to travel every genre and every setting. Revel in it. Play the sneaky-fighting-leader guy if you want. He won't be as good at any one of those things as a specialist, but he'll be using his skills much more often and will be hugely flexible. Action heroes, legends, and those-who-are-as-gods aren't constrained to being one thing, and neither is your character.

Relic, Yr 208

There is no default Suzerain realm where everything works exactly as described in the preceding pages. In order to demonstrate these concepts more concretely, here's a quick look at Relic, our realm of sword-and-sorcery.

Relic has centaur tribes, dragon-men who evolve to be full dragons over their lives, sea elves with an Egyptian-style society, wizards and alchemists rubbing shoulders with the Church and her questing knights, a huge Greco-Roman civilization of intrigue and organized combat, shamans, warlocks, priests of a dozen flavors, elemental humanoids, barbarians, charging monsters the size of mountains, gremlins who have metal pass right through them, dwarves that pass right through stone, and much more. It is a proving ground for heroes, and a great first stop for the career-focused would-be god. An uncommon number of the most powerful Suzerain gods started their ascent to power here, so it has a well-earned reputation in the upper circles.

That's getting too epic, too fast, though. For now it's enough to say Relic is your realm if you're looking for high adventure and deep intrigue. If you don't have any other characters you want to use for your Suzerain campaign, this is a good place to start one.



The Past And Present

Past and present are interesting terms in Suzerain since characters can come from anywhere and anywhen. There are certain points in the history of each realm that simply resonate as junctions of the time stream. Called nexuses, these times and places tend to be incubators for potential heroes, and Relic has a couple of good ones in the first three Ages of existence. The biggest nexus forms in the 208th year of the Third Age, but it's worth knowing a bit about the rest of history too:

In the Second Age, the Trader Imperium built great walled cities and fortress-markets across the center of the grand continent of Austeria. The excesses of these metropolises have been relegated to folktales, but rare is the historian who doesn't express nostalgia for the misted corridors of the past. Iron-shod caravans connected the land, spreading peace and culture across a network of wide, paved roads, some stretching over a thousand kilometers.

The Traders were the dominant civilization of their age, their ziggurat temples towering over the landscape. Then the Warlocks came, destroying everything in their path with earth and fire, bringing about the War of the Wild. They called the earth to swallow entire towns, and all that now remains are buried ruins and overgrown stretches of the imperial road.

Now fast forward 200 years into the Third Age when the days of jumping at shadows and starving from spell-tainted wheat are at an end. Scavengers mine the land for Trader relics and sell them in bustling, if lopsided cities protected by knights who can trace their lineage back to old Caladon. Wizards tear into the fabric of reality, providing luxuries for the burgeoning nobility, earning new riches for their moldering universities. Across the Great Expanse where the Imperium once flourished, nomadic tribes no longer disappear without a trace on account of demonic predators. Life is still harsh, but for the first time in generations, there is a peaceful calm and hopefulness. Where there is hope, there are heroes, and that's why we'll focus on that nexus for a while. The War of the Wild is a pretty big nexus too, though....

Characters In Relic

The following are just a few of the new Edges available in the fantasy realm of Relic, a little taste of the sorts of things you can expect to see in our meaty realm books. If your character grew up in that realm, or spent a chunk of time there, he's eligible for these goodies.

Aurora

Type: Background, Racial

Requirements: Spirit d8+, Strength d8+

Following the War of the Wild, the shattered nations experienced a great number of dark days. Aurora tradition claims that they appeared during these years to drive back the worst excesses of the night. The way their skin and hair shine in the light lends credibility to the tale. However, auroras are as comfortable in darkness and shadows as they are underneath the sun-catchers that adorn the halls of Hela, the sun goddess. Indeed, in shadow the same skin and hair turns to midnight black, making them fine sneaks and assassins. Apart from the skin and hair thing, auroras tend to be tall and wiry people, strong yet lean.

Enhanced Vision: The character can see much better than normal in dark, dim, and extremely bright conditions – he only receives half penalties from them. If light levels change particularly extremely or suddenly, he takes one round to adjust.

Channel Light: The character can manipulate light using one of two effects, each an action requiring a Spirit check. The first effect is light as per the power Light, but the range is altered to self only and the character can choose to decrease or increase the intensity of the light. The options are puny (Small Burst Template), dim (Medium Burst Template), and illuminating (Large Burst Template). The second function is to create darkness around the character as per the power Obscure where the range is self only and the aurora may choose to use a medium burst template instead of the large one. The character sees normally through the obscured area. Light and Obscure are found in the Savage Worlds core rules.

Shadow Walking: Shadow-walking functions as per the power Teleport in the Savage Worlds core rules with the following exceptions: the character must be able to walk into a natural shadow or area of darkness



big enough to cover his whole body, and emerges from another such shadow in his line of sight within Notice x2 inches. This is an action requiring a Spirit check, and costs 1 Pulse (rather than the usual cost of Teleport). The aurora affects only himself, and may not carry passengers.

Aurora: Improved

Type: Racial

Requirements: Heroic, Aurora, Spirit d10+, Strength d10+

The character's Racial Edge is improved in three ways:

The duration of the character's Obscure ability is extended to minutes, as per Light. The range of shadow walking is extended to Notice x3 inches. His enhanced vision works in any conditions, from total darkness to searing sunlight – he ignores all penalties for such conditions.

Aurora: Mastery

Type: Demigod, Racial

Requirements: Demigod, Aurora: Improved, Spirit d12+, Strength d12+

The character's Racial Edge is improved in three ways:

The character adjusts to changes in light conditions instantly, no matter how extreme and sudden they are. His Channel Light ability no longer requires a check. He can take passengers when shadow walking by paying 2 additional Pulse per passenger (each passenger must hold the hand of at least one other passenger or the aurora himself).

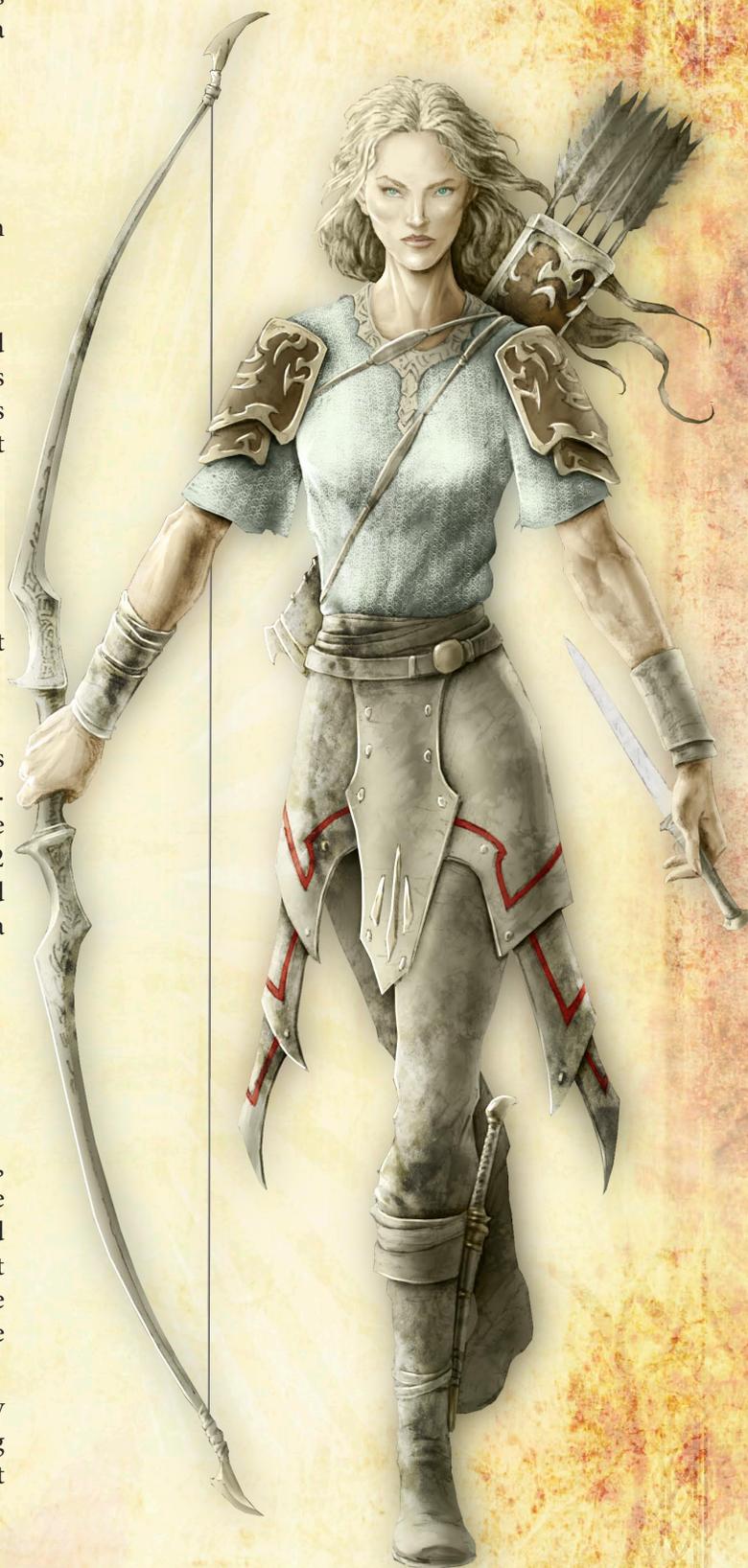
Child Of The Arrow

Type: Background

Requirements: Maximum Strength d8

Thirteen great constellations mark the months in Relic, each with its own myths and earthly resonance. The Arrow is swift and purposeful, constantly moving toward the object of its desires. It is the star sign of subtlety, not raw brawn or muscle-bound machismo. Children who are marked by these stars tend to become hunters, decisive leaders, and monomaniacs.

When your character's attack hits with a Raise he may increase the die type of the bonus damage die by spending 2 Pulse per step of improvement. The bonus die cannot exceed d12.





Child Of The Arrow: Improved

Type: Weird

Requirements: Maximum Strength d6, Child Of The Arrow

The stars have called to your character, and he has answered. The Arrow has a greater influence on your character's life, bolstering his greatest desires with celestial energy.

When your character's attack hits with a Raise he may increase the die type of the bonus damage die by spending 2 Pulse per two steps of improvement. Each step beyond d12 adds +1 to the d12. The bonus die cannot exceed d12+3.

Child Of The Arrow: Mastery

Type: Weird

Requirements: Maximum Strength d4, Child Of The Arrow: Improved

Your character's connection to the Arrow is complete. His purpose is evident, and the silent sky points the way.

When your character's attack hits with a Raise he may increase the die type of the bonus damage die by spending 2 Pulse per three steps of improvement. Each step beyond d12 adds +1 to the d12. The bonus die cannot exceed d12+6.

Dwarf

Type: Background, Racial

Requirements: Vigor d10+

For many years after the Warlocks were defeated, popular opinion was they took all the dwarves with them. The Warlocks' foul magic had corrupted the earth, turning farmlands to ash and tainting stone with corrosive impurities. Although scattered bands of dwarves fought back, the assault was too pervasive for anything but heroic last stands. True, many dwarves died during the War of the Wild, but a few families survived and as time passed, their numbers slowly rose again.

Dwarves are walking rocks, the elemental race of earth. Their stony nature means they are resilient to some attacks. Blunt weapons deal damage normally, but dwarves get +1 Toughness against slashing and piercing weapons. Being made of solid rock comes with a price, though; they just can't cover ground quite as quickly as other races and suffer -1 Pace.

Manipulate Earth: Your character can manipulate stone and rock as per the spell Elemental Manipulation (Earth) from the Savage Worlds core rules.

Transmute: Your character can pay Pulse to take on the spiritual signature of stone. He merges with the earth without it moving aside in any way. They simply become one. He can use his senses as if the earth around him was air for the duration, and breathe the earth like air (though he better get out before he stops paying the upkeep or it'll be the end of him). This allows him to move through stone and earth as per the spell Burrow from the Savage Worlds core rules with the following modifications: His travel speed is his base Pace (he may run), and the effect costs 3 Pulse and lasts 1 round, then 1 Pulse each round to maintain.

Dwarf: Improved

Type: Racial

Requirements: Heroic, Dwarf, Vigor d12+

The character's Racial Edge is improved in three ways:

The cost to transmute is lowered to 2 Pulse. The amount of earth your character can manipulate with Manipulate Earth is doubled. His Toughness bonus against slashing and piercing weapons rises to +2.

Dwarf: Mastery

Type: Demigod, Racial

Requirements: Demigod, Dwarf: Improved, Professional (affected Trait: Vigor)

The character's Racial Edge is improved in three ways:

The cost to transmute is lowered to 1 Pulse, then 1 Pulse every two rounds to maintain. The amount of earth your character can manipulate with Manipulate Earth is quadrupled (rather than doubled). His Toughness bonus against slashing and piercing weapons rises to +4.

Fury

Type: Background, Racial

Requirements: Vigor d6+, Strength d6+

Furies are a shifter race from Relic, a race of half-men half-wolves who can shift into human form for a while. Tall and feral humans paired with a beast's spirit, they are strong, fast, quick to anger, and possess impressive natural weaponry. In human form they tend to be taller, darker, and hairier than the average person. They also tend to be leaner; a fat fury is a rarity and most are sleekly muscled. Their hybrid animal form is a tall man-wolf combination much like the classic 'werewolf' with grey, black or white fur though some reddish varieties are known among the barbarian clans of the mighty Lehr Peaks.

Transformation: This is an automatic action costing 3 Pulse and lasts 1 hour which can be maintained by paying 2 Pulse to extend the duration for an additional hour. Transformation inflicts a level of Fatigue – as does transformation back. Furies in wolf-man form suffer a -1 Charisma penalty with non-furies because... well they're a bit scary to deal with. A fury in his human form suffers no charisma penalty.

Regenerate: Furies can regenerate wounds while in their wolf-man form. Five minutes after having sustained an injury, a fury can make a natural healing check. In the case of multiple wounds inflicted close together, such as during combat, make a single check five minutes after the fracas. Before you ask, this effect cannot bring a fury back from the dead.



Claws: Furies in wolf-man form also have claws – these count as a weapon and deal Str+d4 damage. Unfortunately they tend to get in the way of fine manipulation, and any action requiring manual dexterity (including wielding other weapons) is at -2.

Fury: Improved

Type: Racial

Requirements: Heroic, Fury, Vigor d8+, Strength d8+

The character's Racial Edge is improved in three ways:

The initial cost to transform is lowered to 2 Pulse and only 1 Pulse per hour thereafter. While the initial transformation still inflicts a point of Fatigue, the transformation back no longer does.

When making a natural healing check for his regeneration effect he ignores Wound penalties.

His claws gain armor penetration 1 and he is more used to using his clawed hands – the penalty for manual dexterity actions is reduced to -1.

Fury: Mastery

Type: Demigod, Racial

Requirements: Demigod, Fury: Improved, Vigor d10+, Str d10+

The character's Racial Edge is improved in three ways:

The initial cost to transform is lowered to 1 Pulse and only 1 Pulse per hour thereafter. Neither the initial transformation nor the transformation back inflict Fatigue.

As an action the character may pay 5 Pulse to trigger and accelerate his regeneration, making a natural healing check immediately (instead of five minutes later).

The armor penetration of his claws improves to 2 and he is completely used to using his clawed hands – the penalty for manual dexterity actions is removed altogether.

Patron God: Zanaua

Type: Weird

Requirements: Heroic

This is an example of how a specific patron god might cross the boundary from the standard faceless archetypes like Patron God: Fertility or Patron God: War. There are thousands of patron gods out there. As long as you and the GM agree on what powers the Patron God Edge might give, feel free to make up your own. We'll certainly have more for you in individual realm books as we release them.

As the goddess of deep thinking, strategic cunning, and righteous honesty in the Valon empire, Zanaua is rarely without her symbol – a round hoplite shield with a chess board pattern on it (complete with chess pieces set up for the start of a game). She is the helper of heroes and, as such, a perfect patron for a character. In exchange for devotion, your character is granted a choice from the following supernatural abilities. He picks one at Heroic rank and a second when he reaches Demigod (or two immediately if he takes this Edge once he's already at Demigod rank).

Aura Of Truth: By spending 1 Pulse as an automatic action, people get -2 to checks to spot the character lying, whether by natural or supernatural means. This effect lasts 5 minutes.

Resilient In Battle: By spending 2 Pulse as an automatic action, the character gives allies under a Large Burst Template centered on him a +1 bonus to Parry and Toughness, lasting for 2 rounds and extendable by paying another 1 Pulse per round.

Divine Understanding: By spending 2 Pulse as an automatic action, the character gains the equivalent of Knowledge (some broad type) d6. For instance, this may be Knowledge (World Geography), Knowledge (Arts And Crafts), or Knowledge (Science) rather than Knowledge of a particular town, of a particular craft, or of a particular science. This effect lasts 5 minutes.

Talk With Animals

Type: Weird

Requirements: Novice, Smarts d6+

A small proportion of animals in the world of Relic are capable of structured communication, being more intelligent than their brethren. Characters with this Edge are able to talk with the various intelligent animals they might meet along the way.

New Wizardry

Every realm has its way of tapping into Pulse to do 'magic'. In some realms it even changes from country to country. In Relic, for example, the Caladon Kingdom is the hub of all wizardry, centered around its universities and cities, where lore can be gathered and the gift explored to its full potential. Caladon is also a place of guilds; there seems to be a guild for everything, including guilds of wizards. We'll look at the anatomists, those spell-using doctors who heal the rich and occasionally become top class villains when their medical experimenting goes too far!

We've also got a couple of new general wizard spells developed at the Mages Guild at Garris, available to any wizard who lives in Caladon and registers with the guild (and woe betide any wizard who doesn't!).

Anatomist

Type: Pulse Path (Specialist)

Requirements: Gifted, Healing d6+

Body specialists extraordinaire, what they can't do to organic matter probably isn't worth doing. A talented

anatomist can heal the most grievous injuries and ailments. They can also animate the dead and curse the living. Anatomists are the best of friends and the worst of enemies, neatly wrapped up in one bundle. This is a specialized school of wizardry practiced in the Caladon Kingdom, and is an example of how special schools of magic work, whether they're wizardry or shamanism, fantasy or science fiction. On taking this Edge your character gains:

Anatomist (Sma) d4

Two spells from the following list of spells: Body Boost, Digits Expers, Greater Healing, Healing, Infestus Minor, Max Energis, Restoration, Sensory Limitation, Zombie.

Body Boost

Type: Spell

Requirements: Seasoned, Anatomist

Pulse: 2

Range: Smarts

Duration: 3 (1/round)

With their detailed knowledge and experience in the realm of body manipulation, anatomists have found they can milk greater effect from the Common Boost/Lower Trait spell by focusing its effect. The target of the spell increases the die type of one physical Attribute (Agility, Strength or Vigor) and one physical Skill (any Skill linked to a physical Attribute) by one step, or two with a Raise. Once the caster is Heroic rank or above the spell may boost a second physical Skill as well, but not the same one twice, by paying 3 Pulse during the initial casting instead of 2.

Digits Expers

Type: Spell

Requirements: Novice, Anatomist

Pulse: 2

Range: Self

Duration: 10 minutes (1/10 minutes)

This novel incantation turns the caster's fingers into implements suitable for surgery. The amount of control this gives the user is exceptional and grants a bonus to healing rolls based on the character's rank. The bonus starts at +1 for a Novice character and rises

one point at each rank, from +2 at Seasoned to +6 at Demigod. Surgical implements can hurt as well as heal – if used as a weapon in melee they deal Str+d4 damage, but the caster is still considered unarmed.

Infestus Minor

Type: Spell

Requirements: Novice, Anatomist

Pulse: 2

Range: 12/24/48

Duration: Instant

Anatomists generally don't like to talk about it, but their treatments can also curse their adversaries with ailments. This particular curse infects the target with an infestation of hungry slimy grubs. Any Fatigue levels inflicted by this power will not heal naturally. Instead, a Healing check (as if curing Wounds) is required. Magical healing will also do the trick.

The character makes an opposed Anatomist check against the target's Vigor. Success starts the infestation and shakes the target. Each Raise causes a level of Fatigue which can lead to incapacitation and even death. The anatomist may get a bonus on the roll based on his rank. There is no bonus for less than heroic rank anatomists. The bonus starts at +2 for a Heroic character and rises to +4 at Demigod.

Manifest Object

Type: Spell

Requirements: Novice, Gifted

Pulse: Special

Range: Self

Duration: Special

For some wizards, useful tools are only a thought away. This spell allows the character to transform his Pulse into physical form. This may be a sword for a legionary or a small set of lock picks for a thief. The object lasts until the end of the scene/fight and costs 1 Pulse per 2 points of 'bonus' the object grants, or 1 Pulse per 3 points of bonus on a Raise.

What's a 'bonus'? Since picking a lock without picks (or with inappropriate tools) would get a -2, using this spell to create the picks would require 2 points of bonus. Each point of Armor the created item has



counts as 2 points of bonus. A weapon that deals d4 damage also counts as 2 points of bonus, and each increase of die type would be an additional 2 points. Additions such as a +1 to parry or reach and so forth count as 1 point of bonus. The item can be dual aligned, thus influencing the physical world and the spirit world, at the cost of 2 points of bonus. Mechanically or chemically complex items such as war machines and explosives are beyond the scope of this spell.

Max Energis

Type: Spell

Requirements: Novice, Anatomist

Pulse: Special

Range: Smarts

Duration: Instant

The caster may transfer Pulse to one willing target. The cost to initiate the transfer is 3 Pulse, which drops to 2 Pulse when the caster reaches Heroic rank and 1 Pulse at Demigod. Once initiated, the caster can transfer any amount of Pulse from his own pool into the targets Pulse pool so long as doing so would not cause the target to exceed his maximum Pulse or the anatomist to drop below 0 – you can't transfer what you haven't got. A noteworthy side effect of this process is an increasing feeling of euphoria. For every 5 Pulse transferred the caster can remove a level of Fatigue. Heroic anatomists get this benefit for every 4 Pulse transferred and Demigod anatomists for every 3 Pulse.

Restoration

Type: Spell

Requirements: Novice, Anatomist

Pulse: 2

Range: Touch

Duration: Instant

A daily infusion of healing energies and general purgatives is what anatomists recommend for their patients (and their bank balance). There isn't much an anatomist can't heal in a person, and this treatment is the final tool in their considerable toolkit. The anatomist takes a penalty on his anatomist check equal to the Fatigue penalties the target is suffering,

but gets a bonus on the roll based on his rank. The bonus starts at +1 for a Novice character and rises one point at each rank, from +2 at Seasoned to +6 at Demigod. On a success, and for each Raise, the target is healed one Fatigue level.

Sensory Limitation

Type: Spell

Requirements: Novice, Anatomist

Pulse: 4/10

Range: 6/12/24

Duration: Instant

The Anatomists Guild charges a significant fee for their services and while few are foolish enough to even think about trying to con a wizard or attempt to skip out on payment, this curse is an excellent motivator against such behavior. The anatomist makes an opposed anatomist vs. Smarts check, and may receive a bonus on his check depending on his rank. The bonus starts at +2 for a Heroic character and rises to +4 for a Demigod. On a success he inflicts the Hindrance Hard Of Hearing (major) for 4 Pulse or Blind for 10 Pulse (chosen when the curse is cast). The effect is permanent, though it can be removed by another use of this curse to reverse the effect, or through an application of the power Greater Healing.

Shatter

Type: Spell

Requirements: Seasoned, Gifted

Pulse: 3

Range: Touch

Duration: Special

This spell is usually cast on a weapon or round of ammunition but may be cast on a person. The next time the enhanced object is used to attack, it counts as a Heavy Weapon. More importantly, if the attack was an attempt to break an object your damage dice can Ace and the Toughness of the object is halved – quartered if there was a Raise when casting the spell! The enhancement is good for only one attack but lasts until used or 5 minutes have passed, whichever occurs first.

For GMs



GM Section

In the Player's Section you've learned about the nuts and bolts of the Suzerain universe, been given an overview of the mortal realms and introduced to the idea of the Maelstrom, shown glimpses of the power of demigods and gods, and more besides... which is great, but now we're into the GM's Section. How's about we take the lid off and see what makes the universe tick?

- First up we'll look deeper at the nature of the spirit world, and give you some sample stats for spirit beings. From there we'll focus on the Maelstrom, and while we're there we'll give you a little walk-through of some god realms. Following that, we'll detail how portals and the Veil work, and what it means for characters who are trying to move around time and space. Yes, we'll cover what happens if someone tries to change the past or the future.

The aim here is to show the true flexibility of Suzerain, and seed your mind with various ideas on how to tailor the setting into that rarest of things – the perfect gaming environment for your gaming group. Flexibility and choice are really important, but you don't need to put all the options into one campaign. Rather, pick and choose. Take a new idea out for a test drive and see if your players like it. If not, swap it out for something else the following week.

- Having talked about all that, the next stage is to discuss the Heroic/Legendary and Demigod rank experiences, and what makes them special. We won't get into the Novice/Seasoned/Veteran experience here since we covered that in the Player's Section in detail (and there aren't too many secrets the players shouldn't know about).

- Finally, we're including a full campaign that goes all the way into Demigod rank, and along the way you'll find assorted stats for a variety of wonderful critters to populate those adventures.

Ready? Okey dokey then – let's go for it.

Playing The Spirit World

Welcome to the weird and less-traveled lands of the spirit world. Don't worry; the physical world will still be here when you get back. The spirit world is composed of shaped Pulse, with no physical matter

at all, yet the two impact each other greatly... well, as much as is right for your game!

The spirit world and physical world are living mirrors of one another, the yin and yang of matter and energy. Moving from one to the other requires special magic. Shamanism is the easiest way for physical beings like your players' characters to slip their fleshy prisons, and the Manifest ability is the easiest way for spirits to cross the other way. There are many and varied ways though, as many as your imagination chooses to use, from obscure relics created by long-dead gods to the future-tech 'ghost suits' we'll be introducing in the campaign.

Why Visit The Spirit World?

If the spirit world echoes the solid world so closely, you might wonder, why would anybody want to go there? If it's just a silvery, shadow-free look at what already exists, wouldn't a strobe light be cheaper? The primary reason is its inhabitants. Those who make the spirit world their home aren't necessarily paired up with anyone in the solid world. They are their own beings, able to observe, reason, and possibly even manifest, briefly becoming solid. It's important to know that spirits aren't all ghosts of dead people. While they *could* be run-of-the-mill poltergeists out to cheer up a dreary afterlife, they could also be fallen gods with a mere fraction of their former power or scientists trapped between the dimensions by an experiment gone wrong. Mostly, though, they're beings just like us... except without a body. Irrespective of their origin, they'll be different enough from the characters encountering them that their weirdness will be memorable.

Even though great swaths of the spirit world map directly over the solid realm, it's a much bigger place than that. Where the spirit world spills out beyond its physical twin, there you'll find reason enough to pay the place a visit. A waterfall of dying souls that sends them coursing off the edge of the world and into oblivion would make a great location for a parasitic necromancer to fill up on free souls; it would be an even better place for a team of heroes to stop the freak where he stands – and bid farewell to a fallen friend in the process. The characters just need to deck themselves out with a few shamanic charms to help get them jump the gap, and that climactic scene is yours for the taking.

New Creature Abilities

You'll find plenty of new creatures and NPCs in the following pages. Some of them use these new abilities:

Demigod Entity: This ability grants the creature all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for its own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

Heroic Entity: This ability grants the creature all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for its own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

Pulse Leech (range): As a ranged attack the creature has the ability to drain Pulse from a target who is in the same world as it (spirit world or physical world). Any damage dealt by this attack is instead taken as Pulse loss by the target, and the same amount of Pulse is added to the creature for its own use later. Some creatures may have additional rules or restrictions for their Pulse Leech ability.

Spirit: Denotes a creature native to the spirit world, meaning its ability to interact with the physical world is limited. See the sections on the spirit world and spirits earlier in this book for more information. If the spirit can manifest in the physical world, it'll be noted here.

Vitality: This creature automatically Soaks the first Wound in any encounter. The damage gets through, but the creature simply ignores it - it doesn't count as a Wound and the creature isn't Shaken. Particularly resilient critters might have Vitality 2, 3 or even higher. If a creature with Vitality 2 takes two Wounds, for example, it Soaks them both. If it takes one, it Soaks it and will still Soak the next wound it takes.

Regions of spiritual importance in the solid world tend to have more grandiose reflections on the other side. The site where a saint was martyred may warp the mirrored realm so that it contains a Pulse oasis, while the death of a god is enough to raise an entire immaterial mountain range (not that the gods should be outside of the Maelstrom, but that's another matter).

Both locations will throb with sympathetic Pulse, sending mortals on the flipside into unexplained ecstasies, or driving them to sinister ends.

Death isn't the only way to modify the spiritual landscape. All sorts of things leave their own impression, like the footsteps of enlightened monks, infernal devices, and consecrated shrines.

Religion also plays its part in shaping the movement of Pulse that creates the spirit world. If we're talking about a temple to proud ol' Zeus, chances are it'll look more magnificent in the spirit world. Lightning spirits will course up and down its ornamented columns, while a cluster of storm spirits lounge against the altar and talk about the gossip on Mount Olympus. A dilapidated old shrine to Guanyin, Bodhisattva of Mercy, is less likely to represent itself as a structure, but perhaps as a broad river from which Sighted travelers may refresh themselves - the echoes of physical objects can linger long after the object itself is gone. Lesser spirits may cluster in a nearby depression of forgotten piety, attacking or advising travelers depending on their mood.

In some far-flung realms, the spiritual reflection is the senior partner of the two, blasting duplication into outright control. Physical bodies are nothing more than ambulatory meat chariots here, discarded in fits of evolution or fashion. Slippery-minded fleshcrafters take up the mantle of shamans in these bizarre realms, championing the esoteric pleasures and mortifications of the physical body. It's an opportunity for a unique roleplay experience in a futuristic world of shapeshifters, an alien encounter, or all manner of other plot possibilities. Use the idea if you like it; ignore it if you don't - that's what the spirit world is to a clever GM, a bunch of opportunities.

Sight Beyond Sight

Characters tend to be more comfortable in the physical plane, so any excursions to the spirit world will be limited. Someone will pop in to converse with a spirit, explore an area's spiritual reflection, and then return to business as usual. Here are a few ways that trips to the spirit world can be worked into a predominantly solid-side adventure:

- The characters are exploring a grounded cruise ship that is suspected to be haunted. Unidentifiable fluid with the chemical composition

of tears leaks continuously from the walls, and whispered conversations can be heard at the end of several flooded corridors. Looking into the spirit world reveals that the ship's reflection is still in full repair, and the spirits of the passengers are reliving their final hours. They will break from routine to converse with the characters, but will not accept that they are dead – merely trapped on a cruise ship with a deadly neurotoxin.

- Members of a big-city social club have been having an uncommon number of psychotic outbreaks of late. What's worse, when the police attempt to restrain them, the crazed citizens respond with savage violence and sprout weedy tentacles from their mouths. This matches the pattern that any occultist worth his protective salt circles would be able to recognize. Viewing the spirit world, it's easy to see undulating, thick-bodied trees sprouting from each of the infected people. If they're allowed to blossom, the spirit will manifest and all sorts of havoc will result.

- A psychic detective in modern Chicago is able to detect peoples' inner thoughts as buildings that extend into the spirit world. A quiet, but imaginative accountant might project an office building filled with traps and gravity defying projections, while a tough-as-nails secretary would have a medieval fortress manned by spiritual sentries. Understanding the motives of the buildings' owners is as simple as infiltrating the spiritual constructs and talking to the correct facet of the person's personality. It's also the secret to solving a murder. The only problem? The detective being driven insane by his 'gift'.

- If people as buildings aren't your thing, how about flat-out ghost buildings? Certain locations have existed long enough to attract an aura of permanence, even if their physical forms have been destroyed. There's no better source for information on the ancient world than the ghost Library of Alexandria, and any hero would be glad to hide behind the walls of ghostly Troy to repel an invasion of rage shades.

- Many warriors have spiritual protectors – a boon from a goddess of luck perhaps, a guardian angel, or the ever-watchful eyes of their ancestors. If those spirits could be presented with strong arguments (or strong warding sigils) to convince them to rescind their aid, the mortals in question would be significantly easier to handle.

The key point to remember when using excursions to the spirit world is that not every character may be able to take part in the action. Unless everybody has the ability to interact with spirits, any trip beyond the pale is going to end up with part of the team staying in the physical world and babysitting the others. This isn't ideal, but there are two solutions:

- Give the guys in the physical world something dynamic to do during this time, like distracting the marks who're having their psychic joints cased, or hold off the horde of radiation-enhanced zombies until the spiritually sensitive characters can uncover the root of the infection.

- Invent a way to send everybody. This is the preferred option if the jaunt into the spirit world will take more than a short amount of game time. The group's shaman gets the perk of going into the spirit world for the short visits, but if you're planning a whole session over there, best arrange a way for everyone to travel.

Meeting With Spirits

Spirits are native to the spirit world. Some can be found in the part of the spirit world that overlaps the physical world, while others largely remain in the Maelstrom. You might find a Minotaur spirit in the spirit world around ancient Greece, for instance (or any place where there's a good maze), but mostly they are servants on Mount Olympus, and that's where you'll meet more than one at a time.

Spirits are different enough from solid folk that their ways of causing harm may come as a surprise. These abilities fall into two broad, painful categories. The first is through manifesting. Some spirits are able to use their Pulse to temporarily burrow into the physical world. Manifested spirits are physical beings for all intents and purposes. They may be clammy, dank, and barely cohesive, or as hard as steel, depending on the spirit in question. Some spirits are clever enough to only manifest parts of their bodies, such as the hands of a strangler spirit or the fanged tentacles of the gland-eaters of Zardozz IV. There are enough different types of manifestations to keep players guessing; what works for the ghost won't work for the salamander. And don't forget that a spirit manifesting in the physical world switches its Spirit and Vigor, just like the characters do when they go the other way!

The second means of assault that spirits have at their disposal is psychic in nature. These attacks cover everything from sanity-sapping Fatigue to vampiric Pulse drain. Although each is treated as an attack, many spirits are so alien that they cause damage by mere exposure to the human mind. Emotion spirits are good examples of this principle. A greed spirit does not desire to cause avarice to bloom in the breasts of men any more than a fire decides to burn. The spirit appreciates all of the ambient emotions that it creates, but it can hardly be said to be a predator. This is little consolation to prosperous merchant families who are tainted by spiritual backwash, nor the lives that they inadvertently ruin as a result. When this kind of spirit starts hanging around your neighborhood, then it's time to get a shaman! Please remember, though – while all this is possible, it's not necessarily fun. If the characters have no way to get to the spirit world to combat one of these spirits with psychic attacks, it'd be a pretty frustrating game where you populate your setting with them. Save it for the group of characters who want to fight that kind of opponent and who are prepared for the challenge.

Here are a couple of examples of feral spirits for the characters to get their teeth into (and vice versa!), and an interesting type of 'half spirit' to spice up your adventures, the Mael-born:

Spirits Of Feral Glee

Spirits of feral glee resemble small silvery men with goat-like features and a single horn in the center of their heads. Slow to fight, they would much rather caper about any new strangers and entertain (and bother) them with jokes and insipid observations. Despite possessing several abilities that should add up to utter annoyance, spirits of feral glee are hard to turn away. Even if their upbeat nature is overdone at times, it's nevertheless reassuring.

These spirits never stay in one place for long, always moving their herds in search of the latest rumor or shiny piece of optimism. They can be encountered anywhere, and as a result know a little bit about everything. Getting it out of them without a two-hour sidetrack is another story.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (Random Pet Subject) d8, Knowledge (Another Random Pet Subject) d8, Knowledge (Yet Another Random Pet Subject) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d10, Taunt d8

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 4 Pulse 10

Special Abilities

- *Size -1:* Small of frame, these spirits suffer -1 to their Toughness.
- *Bite:* (**Damage:** Str+d4)
- *Well Of Knowledge:* Spirits of feral glee keep fingers in every pie (and other culinary dish for that matter), getting +2 to Common Knowledge checks. They can make Knowledge checks for specializations they do not possess (which is not normally allowed). They get the usual penalty for being unskilled.
- *Spirit:* Cannot manifest.

Spirits Of Feral Empathy

Spirits of feral empathy are slight, bipedal creatures that resemble featureless humans. Their faces are blank except for large, round eyes and projecting ears. They're always looking for other sentient beings to examine, as they have no emotions of their own. When a spirit of feral empathy discovers a living being nearby, it begins to probe its soul with long, prehensile fingers and toes. As it feels out the mechanics behind its target's inner workings, it flickers rapid-fire through a dizzying array of colors.

When the process is complete, taking about five minutes, the spirit manifests fully in the solid world. Using the primary guiding emotion of its target, it is able to craft a makeshift identity. What happens next rather depends on that guiding emotion.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6 Persuasion d8, Streetwise d6

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Special Abilities

- *Spirit:* Once they have probed a target's emotions, spirits of feral empathy can manifest by duplicating a person. The process duplicates the target's face on the spirit, draining the target of 1 Pulse. This is an action that can be taken on a target who is either in the physical world or the spirit world at the time, and can be opposed Spirit vs. Spirit by the target. The newly manifested spirit then follows the goals of the target, perverted by their guiding emotion, burning 2 Pulse an hour until it can no longer sustain its existence in the solid world. For example, a gunslinger paralyzed by doubt while tracking bandits across the baking desert encounters a band of feral empathy spirits. They feed on him in his sleep, and take his form before he wakes. One returns to the town where the gunslinger set out from, and admits his failure in front of a full saloon. One continues tracking the bandits, but gives up as soon as the first shot is fired. A third waits by the gunslinger's fire until morning to commiserate about how useless the other two were.

Mael-born

Mael-born are the offspring of powerful spirits and mortal creatures, born in the Maelstrom but with one foot in both the spirit and physical world. Due to the variety of spirits and creatures out there, Mael-born may have many forms. Each is marked by one Trait that makes it stand out from others of its general form. Human-shaped Mael-born may boast horns or swooping wings, while Mael-born sired by efreet might shimmer with inner fire rather than cast visible heat. Although spirits themselves, many are able to manifest at will and pass for flesh-creatures despite their odd markings.

Because of their parentage, Mael-born are natural links between the spirit and solid worlds. Though they aren't Dual-Aligned, they're able to converse with spirits even when manifested, and are often accompanied by a squirming aura of lesser spirits including emotion wisps, feral spirits or sprites. Because of their ease in talking with spirits, Mael-born often become shamans when they choose to live in the mortal realms.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d8

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 6 Pulse 15

Edges: Level Headed

Special Abilities

- *Mael-born Trait:* One Edge or creature ability as seems appropriate to the Mael-born's origins.
- *Dual Voice:* Irrespective of which world a Mael-born is aligned to, his voice is clear to both physical beings and spirits at all times.
- *Spirit:* Mael-born can physically manifest as an action and can stay in the physical world for as long as they wish, but they do not recover Pulse while manifested.





Welcome to the Maelstrom

The Maelstrom is what happens when you're tripping the razor's edge between the solid and spirit world and you run out of land. The spirit realm keeps on going, more or less forever, kept afloat by a steady stream of Pulse; it's pretty much composed of 'beyond the edge of the map' territory. There's no longer anything with which to anchor the dizzying burst of spiritual emanations, so everything really goes nuts. The far reaches are a chaotic display of power and light and color, where dreams and beliefs tangle with the unthinkable. The logic of mortals is likely to get one killed here unless tempered with equal shots of willpower and legend.

Out beyond this weirdness lies the Veil, a barrier that signals the end of the mortal realms and beyond which exists the endless roiling Pulse of the Maelstrom. There is very little solid ground within the Maelstrom, and what substance does exist was

created by the gods as bastions of order amid the ever-changing patterns. The mountain of Olympus is just a giant cloud of raw Pulse sculpted by Zeus and the other Greek gods into forested slopes and marble columns. Fly too far from its sylvan splendor though, and the eternal storm resumes once more. This is the playground of the gods, their laboratories and natural habitat. Great, grand ideas have room to grow without the small Hindrances of finite realms, feeding off the chaotic energies until they influence the fates of millions or collapse under their own bloated weight.

Most pantheons echo the example of the Greeks, shaping a comfortable corner of the Maelstrom into a form that suits them. These are the sections of the Maelstrom that most heroes will be visiting: domains called Immortal Realms that follow a semblance of earthbound rules. These focus points can range in size from a single, chicken-legged hut to an entire realm populated by the scions of an alien intelligence. The deep reaches of the Maelstrom have their pleasures as well, but they are primarily reserved for madmen and martyrs.

Entering The Maelstrom

Without a god's protection the mere act of entering the Maelstrom would be enough to turn most mortals into sticky statistics as their soul collapses from the huge psychic pressure of crossing the Veil. Luckily for the characters, the standard-issue Telesma cushions the impact. There are still conceptual predators, nomadic gods' spawn, and mimetic parasites to deal with, but basic existence is possible.

Even after dealing with the Maelstrom's sensory overload and its inhabitants, it's not the greatest place for a mortal to vacation. The air feels thick, like a leaden apron tossed over a storm. That feeling is all around because there's no hard distinction between ground, sky, or water. Instead it's all closer to a gelatinous, cosmic gumbo. This isn't to say that slogging through the Maelstrom is anything like drifting through lukewarm chowder. It's more akin to a dream of flying, although many denizens prefer rather to swim or simply... move.

New visitors to the Maelstrom find themselves hovering perfectly still as the landscape swirls past at a breakneck pace. Trying to interact with the cacophony of energy is as appetizing as diving into

a maelstrom (aha!). A lot of first-timers try running and discover that they can move forward even though their feet strike nothing solid. Others sit down and find themselves sinking like they're in adventure movie quicksand. It won't devour them, though it will get ether into all sorts of unpleasant nooks and crannies.

Terrestrial boundaries disappear as soon as anyone tries moving vertically in the Maelstrom. Although a thought is all that's necessary, creatures from most realms are more comfortable pumping their legs as if climbing a steep slope or making arms-extended flying gestures. It's initially enough to throw anybody for a loop, especially those versed in two-dimensional tactics. Every direction becomes a potential ambush point, every patch of 'ground' somebody else's 'up'. The unsurpassed mobility can be viewed less cynically as well; some of those who visit the Maelstrom cavort like small children, spinning, leaping, turning circles and swooping like birds, twirling toward infinity through sheer force of will.

As if the Maelstrom wasn't dangerous enough to linear-thinking squares, time flows differently there. The daily grind as we know it doesn't exist within the Maelstrom. How could it? It touches upon every second of all realities, both bizarre and blasé, simultaneously. Upon first entering the Maelstrom, every living being drags a portion of their home realm's choral flow with them, like an invisible bubble. Over time (as you understand it), this pocket full of hours begins to decay.

On the GM-side, that means you have full and proper authority to play around with time when the characters exit the Maelstrom. Maybe they've been sloppy or had to leave in a dash, so they end up ten years in the future. Perhaps someone's spending too much time in the Maelstrom and not enough time being a hero? Oops, better get to work before his supply of native time runs out. Instantaneous aging ain't pretty.

If you want a neatly ordered sense of time then go with relative chronology instead – time passes one second at a time for the characters whether they're in a mortal realm or in the Maelstrom. Ten years of character time ages them ten years. It's easy to fathom and many of us find it comforting. Traversing the Pulse currents between immortal realms, though, it doesn't have to be that way. Time is as flexible as everything else out there.

Realm-Jumping Novices

In the Player's Section we hinted that it's possible for Novice characters to go from realm to realm rather than waiting to hit Heroic rank. Anything's possible, but you'll need to take care how you make it happen. The Maelstrom is a dangerous place which Novice characters will be ill-suited to handle. As a result, the best way to travel is to find another way. Our suggestion is to use the network of atrophied portals.

Many portals eventually stiffen and close up entirely, no longer letting characters through to the other side of the Veil. At that point they cease to be important... mostly. Heroes and demigods stop using them, taking alternative routes instead. However, some of these ancient portals still have a little life in them, and given enough of a jump start they might open from the mortal realms, even if they can't push through to the Maelstrom.

Where do they go? That's where the spirits of the Veil come in, linking the portals up inside the Veil itself. Yes, there are spirits living inside the Veil, as you'll discover when you get to the campaign later on. These spirits use the old network of portals to tunnel from one place to another, say from modern Manhattan to ancient Greece. There's no map of this network, and the links keep changing at the whim of the spirits, making it a perfect opportunity for lots of Novice adventures. It's not the conventional way of doing things, but it's possible. We'll let you figure out how the characters discover these portals and get them working.





Mapping The Maelstrom

As a domain of endless potential, it would be impossible to chronicle what every corner of the Maelstrom is like. At the same time, it would be an act of high treachery to throw you to the wolves unarmed. As a happy compromise, we've provided examples of some of the Maelstrom's most visited hotspots. This is by no means a comprehensive list; the price-point for infinitely paged tomes is pretty awful, in these troubled times.

There's one thing to bear in mind about the immortal realms, those permanent places created in the Maelstrom by gods and Great Spirits: these realms feel just as solid and real as any physical realm across the Veil (well, unless its creator wants an abstract region to live in). The immortal realms of the gods are places that are inherently dual-aligned, so spirits and visitors from the physical world interact equally. The boundary between spirit and solid worlds is blurred in most Maelstrom realms. In practical terms, it means that both the spirit residents and the characters keep their Spirit and Vigor the right way round – nobody needs to switch them over. This isn't true of encounters that might happen between the realms, in the broader infinity of the Maelstrom – that follows all the regular rules of the spirit world.

The Realm Of The Archangels

The Goddess Trinity is worshipped by her Hussar faithful in Suzerain's Untamed Empires realm. She is the Goddess, the Light, formless but eminently beautiful. She remains distant from her followers, delivering all communication through her council of Archangels. In Her Maelstrom realm, the Archangels' winged magnificence is the word of the Goddess, and they rule in Her name. Yet each of the pearly-white towers that rise from the clouds of Her realm is home to many other servants, including thousands of lower-ranked angels. Any visiting mortals are likely to live among them, lulled to sleep by the sourceless celestial choirs, despite the eternal brightness that lights the clouds with a diffuse white glow.

However, there is another side to this realm. A dark and shadowy side. Down, through the clouds under the foundations of those glorious towers there is perpetual night, lit only by the unending fires of war and torment. Here, deep below, is the home of

the Dark One, an Archangel who was cast down in chains for his transgressions against the Light. The Dark One slowly bleeds out in his rusted prison, kept conscious only by the souls fed to him by his demonic spirits. Twisted and bitter, he is utterly evil; rare is the soul that is not subjected to hellish tortures before being consumed.

Where Light and Dark meet there is an endless war being fought, with angels defending the base of their towers against waves of demons who hurl themselves at the gates above, clawing for freedom. For now, the Dark One remains caged in the lowest reaches of the realm, unable to breach the formidable defenses of his prison. But he has started a new war, a war of propaganda against Trinity and her angels.

On every world where Trinity is worshipped, heroes of devil-kind seek to infiltrate Her churches and strike at the untempered souls of Her clergy. If they can be turned toward heresy, the powers of the Archangels will falter and the Dark One will gain new grist for his ever-thrumming engines of despair.

The Realm Of Yggdrasil

The Realm of Yggdrasil appears in the Maelstrom as a giant oak tree with a huge snake wrapped around its entire length. Any who seek to enter must first navigate past the perimeter created by its snapping maw. Lord Odin, ruler of the realm, encourages the serpent. It is a fine first challenge for any who seek his pantheon of warrior gods or their thanes.

In the years before the beginning, Lord Odin and his allies fought a valiant war against a race of feral spirits who had powers equal to the gods themselves. The invaders struck deep and fast, tunneling straight to the core of Odin's realm. Its native civilizations fell one by one, buried with their honor intact. Odin's last remaining allies rallied and sealed the invaders on the site of their final battle, weaving a labyrinth of wood and courage in which to imprison them. This maze became the roots of Yggdrasil, the World Tree.

Inside the trunk of the tree is a world similar to our own, with cities, mountains, and lakes. Several different layers exist here, massive continents floating above, below, or even beside each other. It is not uncommon for a traveler to see cascading waterfalls tumbling from layers above, falling impossible distances, to finally pool into one massive ocean.

Guards!

Here's a sample inhabitant that you might find in a god realm, or in the mortal realms occasionally:

Minotaurs

Wherever there is a maze, underground deathtrap or crowded slum, there are decent odds a minotaur is hanging around somewhere in the spirit world nearby. Ever since the Greek gods left the mortal realms, the sons of Minos were left without the rich infusion of Pulse they needed to survive. Those who didn't escape to the Maelstrom to continue serving the gods began to fade until their physical bodies fell away. All that was left of them were memories – and that was enough. A few minotaurs now inhabit the spirit world of certain mortal realms, treading and retreading the forked paths of their bull-headed ancestors. As for the rest, they're now guards in the realm of Mount Olympus.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d6, Notice d4

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 8 Pulse 10

Gear: Great Axe (**Damage:** Str+d8)

Special Abilities

- *Size +1*
- *Gore:* A minotaur can use his horns to gore an opponent, dealing Str+d6 damage.
- *Spirit:* Minotaurs are able to manifest a fraction of their will. This costs 8 Pulse, lasts for 1 hour, and they only manifest their glowing bull's head (-2 to be hit) and big rough hands that can move objects, cut ropes, and – in dire situations – gore enemies. The rest of the minotaur (and his axe) stays in the spirit world throughout, making this an interesting form of dual alignment between spirit and physical worlds. Depending on the individual minotaur's temperament, this manifestation can be used to confound intruders into the spirit's maze or aide the lost.

Heroes from all over visit frequently, to trade, gamble, or to seek employment. As a result, many different leaders have emerged to make terrible war against the realm's cities, historic monuments, and layers. This sort of behavior is not only allowed by the ruling gods, it is encouraged. After all, it is only through the fiery furnaces of trial and tribulation that great heroes will emerge and provide guidance for the chosen people. The gods are always on the lookout for such hero potential, sometimes even appearing in person and giving the proper nudges and hints.

Inside the branches of the World Tree, Odin has created his grand palace of Valhalla and locked it away from the rest of the realm. Only brave warriors who have died in a great battle are allowed inside the broad halls of Valhalla. Odin's Valkyries are constantly sent out into the mortal realms in search of brave warriors, and if a mortal is deemed worthy he is guided by the maidens back to Valhalla.

Deep inside the roots of Yggdrasil, the feral god-spirits have not forgotten their embarrassing defeat. Having secretly broken the bonds of their prison long ago, they travel the Maelstrom and the mortal realms looking for allies, gathering their strength, slowly infiltrating the hearts of those who follow Odin, luring them to commit acts of cowardice and treason. One day, when they are ready, they will surge out of the roots of Yggdrasil and once more clash on the battlefield with their hated rivals. This time they will not lose.

The Realm Of The Pure Mages

The Realm of the Pure Mages is a cosmic concert of scientific genius and raw mathematics. From the outside it looks like a giant, ever-shifting puzzle box that completely reconfigures itself every hour, on the hour. Each of its 108 different layers is a self-contained world governed by the strictest scientific principles. These principles vary from layer to layer, always containing new systems to observe and integrate. Each world has, at its core, a riddle of sorts that, if solved, unlocks a door to the next layer. After the final layer resides the creators: the pure mages.

The pure mages do not consider themselves 'gods', in the religious sense of the term, but rather believe they are sentients who have unlocked the great mysteries of the universe and have transcended their mortal frames as a result. For all intents and purposes, each

of them is a god-rank character, but this is due to evolution and self-purification rather than any degree of belief or wizard tricks.

It is a rare event for any traveler to complete a circuit of the 108 realms, but rumors claim great rewards await any who succeed. Many try, but few are able to wrap their minds around the abstruse mathematical riddles and secular challenges that stud the trail. If anyone actually makes it, a seat among the pure mages themselves awaits. If the rumors are to be believed.

The inner sanctum of the pure mages is marked by bio-organic architecture designed to replicate a perfectly balanced cycle of life and death. It is lit by fractal pocket universes, which cast the light of a thousand miniature suns from each floating encasement. The optimal position for every aspect of sanctuary has been computed in advance, but new experiments are always spilling out from behind their reinforced lab doors.

Although the pure mages don't overly concern themselves with the subjective realities outside their labs, they do make it a point to intercede in events that supposedly break the laws of science. "Rubbish!" they scoff. "A sufficiently developed science can explain anything, given enough will." To this end, many followers of the pure mages find themselves sent on fact-finding missions to the most nonsensical of realms.

The Realm Of Mount Olympus

Among the Maelstrom's psychotic momentum, there aren't too many landmarks. Mount Olympus is one of them – and the only one where the roast mutton can honestly be called mythical. This realm is the abode of Zeus, Hera, and the rest of the god-spirits of Greek myth. From the air, it is a sprawling landscape of verdant valleys and snow-covered mountains, whose roots reach deeper than the basement of the World Tree. The walled city of Olympus tops the peak of the tallest mountain, shining into the Maelstrom like a marvelous, fractured beacon of stained glass and back-alley intrigue.

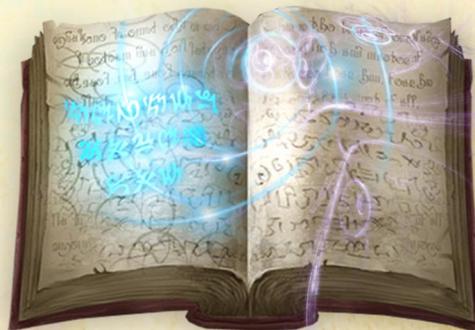
Spirits and heroes from a library's worth of mythology books call this massive city their home. During the day, even its spacious courtyards are packed with teeming bodies and busy hands. It is a city of art and light, saturated with marketplaces

bearing goods from across the realms. Locals tend to keep from the wilder markets, preferring to live in line with the Classical ideal.

The god-spirits who created this realm are far more involved with the lives of their subjects than most gods, and are often seen administering justice to individuals who anger, displease, or irk them. This is a cause of continued strife in Olympus, as it is difficult to please all of the gods all of the time. Zeus is the undisputed ruler, but those who he favors tend to get in trouble with the other gods, who are as jealous as they are bold. Each of the gods and goddesses who make Olympus their home has a string of palaces and shrines in the city, as well as a hand-picked priesthood to watch over them and act as a private spy network.

The favored shrine of each god is equal parts ministry of propaganda, center of religious ceremonies, and awe-inspiring collection of marble columns. Individually, each building is a wonder; together they're one of the sights of the Maelstrom. Functionality and craftsmanship kiss lewdly in the ivy-strewn halls, conspiring archly over the heads of senators and their shrine intermediaries. Unofficially, the shrines serve as the center of Olympus's government, as each of the priesthoods holds a great deal of influence among the elected senate of wise senior spirits.

Apart from their individual vendettas, the gods take little notice of the day-to-day affairs of the city dwellers. As long as their rules are being followed, they care not who gets stabbed, what gets stolen, or what breed of shady deals are being made. Such concerns do not pose any danger to them or their realm, and are thus beneath their notice. As a result, several interlocking hives of criminals and malcontents ferment inside the city walls, and political murder has taken on an almost festival air.





The Realm Of Fire

At a glance the Realm of Fire seems like a place no mortal would want to go. It's hot and dry enough that the locals have over two-hundred different words for 'hot', most of them on the far side of 'blisteringly unpleasant'. The realm's most generally acceptable features are its ubiquitous lava fields, marred only by the occasional pyroclastic surge. Serpentine creatures wend beneath the surface in violent dance, but those mortals who have viewed the mysteries can be counted on one charred hand.

The inhabited regions of the Realm of Fire are more controversial in travelers' minds. Yes, they can always be counted on for a nice, warm bed or a piping hot drink. Unfortunately, the inhabitants aren't exactly friendly. They live in the only habitable corner of the realm -- although legends of an inverted volcano archipelago persist despite lack of concrete

information. The inhabited oasis is located in the middle of an ever-burning forest, with rings of geysers and steam tunnels running above and below.

This is the Pyre, a grim, high walled town of soot and stone. The town is a lawless one, but only because of the mercurial nature of its iron-clawed enforcers. These native spirits can enter and leave the blazing flames at will, and thus care little for those who must hide behind the chimney-brick barrier. They care more about the hateful efreets, who ever plot the Pyre's downfall from their desert island of black sand.

Deep in the furnace realm stands a singular mountain top, which pierces the sulfurous clouds that roll across the glowing sea. It is here where the Great Spirit of Fire surveys its realm, pondering. It has been said that the Great Spirit of Hope posed it a riddle eons ago, and is still waiting for a response.

The Red Realm

The color red is symbolic of so many things such as romantic love and passion. Once, these elements were in harmony with the more violent aspects of 'redness' and the Red Realm was a balanced place. Not any more. The Great Spirit of Red had been descending into rage and pain, blood and anger, all the negative aspects of the color. He associated with the Great Spirit of Hate, whose influence is everywhere. Finally, sickened by what he was becoming, the realm's creator fled his creation and is rumored to be building a new realm elsewhere.

These days, the Red Realm is a sore upon the Maelstrom, a merciless tangle of rusty iron fortresses and crumbling bloodstone towers. It is a dark and twisted land, clouded by the stench of ever-present swamps and the deafening buzz of predatory insects that swarm the bloody River Crimson. Giant rats, spiders, scorpions, and more terrifying beasts provide additional hazards, most of them carrying diseased and poisonous bites.

This harsh realm now serves two purposes. The first is as a hunting preserve and testing ground for the Great Spirit of Hate's malevolent creations. Only the nastiest of fiends would be allowed to express the Great Spirit's utter contempt for creation.

Since the Great Spirit of Red left, the realm has been locked in a power struggle between the lesser native spirits. This spiritual battle royale centers on the Desolation Engine, a nightmare factory from the Great Spirit of Hate, where negatively charged Pulse is transformed directly into bitter monstrosities.

Because of what it has become, the Red Realm's second notable purpose is a prison, used by gods and other beings of god-like power. Evil mortals that cannot be killed due to prophecies, curses, or potential political backlash are deposited here to suffer for their ability to evade death. Trust us, this is not a place the characters want to end up. Not unless your players like a good challenge.

The Realm Of The Ascendant Order

The Great Spirit of Order looked upon the shrieking Maelstrom and was appalled at the furious disharmony in its clashing elements. It was as the din of copper pot cymbals to his refined ears.

Lordy!

Here's another example of an inhabitant of the god realms:

Lords Of Order

Each scale of the Great Spirit of Order is an individual Lord of Order. However, the term is more commonly used to refer to the fusion of a scale with a mortal host. The paired organism forms one being, like a knight wearing a sentient suit of armor. As the mortal's devotion to justice and order strengthens, the godscale evolves in shape and power. Initially it looks like armor formed of semi-opaque Pulse. Mid-ranking Lords of Order tower above their underlings, reaching 4-5m in height, their war mask resembling the fierce but noble features of mythical beasts. The elite among them no longer wear armor, instead operating immense machines made of pure light with additional armament befitting their gigantic stature. Eyebeams are a good start, but really we're going to need missiles too. A mid-ranking Lord of Order might look something like this:

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+5, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Guts d12, Notice d4, Throwing d8, Swimming d8

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 17(4) Pulse 25

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Trait Perfection: Heroic (Fighting), Pulse Armor, Improved Sweep.

Gear: Armor Of Order (+4 armor, all locations), Blade Of Order (**Damage:** Str+d10 AP 2). Both are manifested spiritual constructs and part of the Lord of Order itself. As such, they can only be wielded by the honored mortal host the Lord of Order is attached to.

Special Abilities

- *Size +6:* Big. Like a big thing. Also takes up a 2x2 inch space on the field of battle.
- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants the Lord of Order all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for its own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.
- *Spirit:* Lords of Order act as armor and weapon for their host in the spirit world, but they can also physically manifest for 1 hour at the cost of 4 Pulse. Each additional hour costs a further 1 Pulse.



With a shake of his heavenly mane, stars died and he declared war on the very nature of the Maelstrom. Compromise was not possible. The Realm of Ascendant Order stands as a redoubt against the raw power of the outside universe, a perfectly measured society that is nevertheless in a state of constant war.

In this ever-expanding fortress realm, the numbers of the Great Spirit's troops swell regularly thanks to pilgrimages made by strong-willed mortal heroes. Any sentient with order in his heart is given one of the Great Spirit's scales to wear as armor in the grand crusade. As the wearer's sense of devotion to justice increases, he syncs with the scale causing it to grow into a massive construct of solid Pulse. For this reason, the Great Spirit grants special boons to crusaders who join before attaining adolescence. Saved from the confusing influence of the outside world, none are able to doubt their devotion to order or to beating back the eternal wave of the Maelstrom.

To some, the mighty walls of the Realm represent the epitome of divine creation, standing proud as seas of Pulse crash against them and are repelled. To others, the same walls are an unnatural abomination, holding back the pure and natural chaos of the Maelstrom. By choosing to wage war on the very nature of the Maelstrom, the Great Spirit of Order has made friends of orderly-minded gods, but others whisper the word 'hubris' and eagerly await his downfall.

The Fey Realm Of Dreams

The realm of the fey is a magical place where Pulse-laden breezes blow like an eternal spring night. Wild, picturesque forests cover most of the realm, each gnarled and ancient tree dusted with enough greenery to hide the grasping branches beneath. Animals frolic in great abundance, satisfying the fondest of dreams and rending flesh with every star-blessed leap and flicker of their shapely forms. The sameness of the forest is broken from time to time with radiant fields of flowers that could dope a crash of rhinos, and gentle peaks of beauty and terror. Underneath run crystalline caves that spiral downward into the soil's frozen heart. Travel down and you shortly emerge on a new landscape, the upside down of the realm above... or are they the other way around? This reversed twin is identical to the land above, but day replaces night and night replaces day, always the opposite where fair becomes foul, deadly become benign.

The rare thatched cottage, surrounded by well-kept apple orchards, are the only signs of civilization in either land, but they're more unsettling than comforting. Who would live so casually in such a place, where a single breath could kill?

At night, the moon gives off an eerie glow like the Great Fey Spirit's single, winking eye. This is when the realm's true masters come out to play. They are the fair-folk of Earth's legends, the mind-killers of colonial Mars, and the bright-eyed revelers who flit across a thousand realms. They are silly faeries who spin razor-ribbon garlands, industrious sidhe who craft gemstone mazes never meant to be seen by mortal eyes, and many other types of fey besides. The trees move as they see fit, going from diversion to diversion with patience unshared by the smaller beings, whose lives are measured in mere centuries. Fragments of world-shattering incantations mingle with children's rhyme, carried ever onward by the multi-layered lovers' lips, and all is right with the realm.

Great power and insight can be found in the Fey Realm of Dreams, but their acquisition is a task unlike most. Conventional logic does not apply, nor do the prevailing mores of Suzerain, where daring heroics are rewarded. Instead, the masters of the realm are those who can understand dream logic, with all its symbolic traps and abstract forms. Nothing is what it seems to be on the surface, except when it actually is. Familiar faces and echoes of the past reveal themselves in the most innocuous of places, first taunting visitors then bowing gladly to their wills, before spinning off once more into the night.

It is said the fey are able to cross the Veil directly from their realm, visiting the dreams of sleeping men and manifesting in their world during the night time hours, bringing the dreams (and sometimes the dreamers) back with them. If so, they have one of the few conduits between the mortal and immortal realms that do not require portals. This may be a useful thing to remember for your games....



Travels In Time And Space

With all the upcoming information about time travel, this is a good place to kick in and explain exactly what characters of each rank are able to do. Heroes are able to use the Maelstrom to travel through time and space. Demigods are able to do all that as well as knock down the doors into alternate realities.

What this means is Heroic rank characters can reach any conceivable type of world or setting or genre, but not alternate versions of existing places. For example, the characters cannot go to a 1970s Europe where the Allies lost World War II. Why not? It doesn't exist on the timeline. That said, there are plenty of blank spots on the cosmic map of reality, just like that chart from *Time Bandits*. Remember that? If not, go rent the movie; it's a good model for an atypical Suzerain campaign that dials down the heroics a few notches.

What we're getting at is this - even if your campaign is set in the 'real world', feel free to spice it up. In the distant past, Camelot existed if you say it did. If you want there to be centaurs in enchanted parts of ancient Greece and modern archaeologists have just mistaken their remains for man/horse mass graves, then that's what really happened. Another option is that most of the weird aspects of ancient history have been obscured as a result of, say, Zeus showing up and leaving huge Pulse ripples wherever he trod during his searches for comely females. Really, it's no surprise the gods have an agreement to stay out of the mortal realms after something like that happens a few times.

As for the future, that's unwritten. If you say that there's a cyberpunk cityscape realm in the future, so be it. After the technocratic oligarchy that funds that city crumbles, why not have the realm grow into one of shiny starships-and-spandex sci-fi? No problem there. Even the grandest utopia can't last though, so there's also room for a scoured post-apocalyptic world of genetic rejects and filthy scavengers. Not every era needs to be plotted out before the story begins, but it is a fun thought exercise to fill your notebook. Just remember to leave space for your heroes!

Once you decide on the core timeline, it's your Suzerain. That's your supplement-spanning metaplot, right there! But once you've set reality, it's concrete

for Heroic rank characters and below, with the standard battery of provisos and notable exceptions. Full-out alternate histories, like Viking Mars or the Earth where the Black Death killed 99% of Europe, are reserved for Demigod rank characters. Theirs is a noble stature, able to cross into That Which Never Was with impunity.

Of Travel: Portals

The Maelstrom and the mortal realms - both spiritual and physical - are bound together, much like two twists of bread braided into a single loaf. Just like those twists, there are points where the two planes touch and points where they are farther apart. At points of contact between the two planes, the Veil is the most receptive to being crossed. Gods use these regions to pry into the mortal realms, gather their agents, and generally play havoc with the whole 'free will' game. Travelers who have tired of their own realms also frequent these weak points between realities. You know these places as portals.

On the Maelstrom side, portals are visible as hungry-edged patches of darkness or light, little more than shadows or subtle auras. The mortal world isn't as lucky: go solid-side and portals are much more difficult to notice - in fact, they are invisible to anyone without the necessary mystical sight. Telesmae have the ability to sense portals, and it's rumored that a wizard once trained a portal-sniffer dog. Otherwise, most people can't see them.

Portals aren't absolutely necessary for travel to and from the Maelstrom. The gods can breach the Veil at other points, but only do so in times of dire emergency. That said, they have an agreement not to enter the mortal realms in person - not since a string of incidences that embarrass them to talk about. They rely on their representatives to, well, represent them. That's why heroes are so important to them. Even the most black-hearted rabble-rouser will stick to these rules; if nothing else, godhood is about politics on the big screen.

Portals don't stay open long; Telesmae can force them open for a while, but only the gods have the power to hold a portal open indefinitely. A portal might also have material defenses... which means when it does open, it's showtime! Spirits surge forward to hit the

next stop on their structured pilgrimages, desperate prisoners hop worlds without a second glance, and plots that may have been decades in the making receive their vital shock. Portal-jumping will become pretty routine if the characters are good at their jobs, but that doesn't mean that it can't also be wonderful. This is the safety valve on reality popping open; take that as license to be unexpected.

But wait! Fun with portals doesn't end there. Gods and heroes aren't the only ones who know about portals. Demons, spirits, and demonic spirits know all about portals, as do villains of a more arcade bent. Given the chance, they could use portals as choke points where they ambush the characters.

Some scholars have theorized that portals are the source of magic in the mortal realms. Pulse flows through them like water from the grand reservoir of the Maelstrom. If this is true, damming up a realm's portals would not only put a lock on inter-realm travel, but put a number of honest wizards out of their jobs. Far be it for us to suggest that only magic-hating simpletons would want to put a stranglehold on portal operation, however. They do add a random element to the terrain that causes city planner and tree-hugger alike cause for concern.

Common opinion among portal-watchers is that the landscape surrounding portals tends to take a turn for the... uncommon. This may have some truth to it, if only because the gods are more likely to send their agents through at those points and because those with mystic sight may be drawn to portals out of curiosity. Also, some portals leak traces of latent Pulse into their surroundings, which tend to soak into the ground, imbuing local trees, water supplies, and animals with supernatural abilities. Use that to create weird and wonderful locations at your discretion.

Talk About Moving

Remember, you can make time travel as difficult or as effortless as you like. What kind of mood are you going for? Do you want to ruffle the minds of your more impressionable players by messing with their senses, or will the group just brush you off as an armchair thespian? Consider the mood of the night and tailor your dramatics accordingly. Sometimes it's fun to drag out the process, describing in detail what it's like to feel your atoms pulled apart as your very being is sieved through the barrier that is the

Veil, every iota strained through that filter and barely allowed passage, then slowly and painfully reassembled at the other end, back safe in the mortal realms. However, that can get old after the first few sessions, just like stock footage in a low-budget action show. Unless you're mixing it up and the group is staying entertained, "You push through the portal, faces almost blistering from the heat of the volcano on the other side", should be enough.

Put another way, how does your favorite movie treat scenes where the main characters are riding their horses, driving their car, or otherwise moving from place to place? Is it just an assumed action, unworthy of your time? Does it build suspense, highlighting the special nature of the characters? Or is it not a statement about the characters at all, but a chance to focus on the sweep of the background? Consider a bedraggled caravan, tiny as it struggles against stinging winds and never-ending hills. Here, the focus is not on the caravan, but the dangers that the travelers are hazarding on the way to the exciting part of their adventure.

Alternatively try using portal travel to key the players in to how a scene sounds and feels before they arrive. Imagine two criminals, meeting in the ruins of an abandoned cathedral. They are grateful for the rain, for nobody else would be out on such a rotten night. One of them hears voices. He tenses, ready to bolt. His comrade assures him that it's nothing. The voices get louder. Ghostly faces appear, laughing and jeering. Your characters burst through the Veil, interrupting the deal. The thieves scatter! You've established a mood for the realm, and everyone has just arrived.

Another way to interact with portals is to play up their attachment to objects in the mortal realm. Some portals masquerade as common items - which doesn't mean they always go unnoticed, however. While it's unlikely anybody would suspect anything amiss about a portal hidden at the back of a stuffy wardrobe, a free-standing drawbridge, or a glittering force-door at the peak of a mountain are more conspicuous.

Then there's the prospect of additional defenses to deal with. Some defenses are built by the local populace, such as barricades and warning signs placed around a pulsating rift in the sky. Others are created by the portal itself in order to blend in with its surroundings. Examples include a rusted iron lock and a numeric keypad whose combination is

only known by the local electricity spirits. Not every portal needs to be as ostentatious, but remember that they are an option – especially when characters are Unlucky or on a travel god's bad side.

The Veil

Because the Maelstrom exists outside time, it overlaps the mortal realms, both solid and spiritual, at every point simultaneously. The barrier between the two is the milky, cloudy Veil. It's not unknown for heroes to dive into the past to match arms and minds with the great legends before flashing forward to the future to complete their training. In fact, we encourage it. Shake hands with your idols and save your grandchildren from your crazy mistakes! It'll create a story with a personal timeline as well as a worldwide one.

Before setting off on the time traveler's Top Ten (the Crucifixion, JFK, and the Second Great Robot War), be warned: heroes aren't the only ones who have access to time travel. Craven villains who would fain strike from the shadows of the past rather than enter a head-on confrontation prefer this route. To make the characters' jobs even more difficult, Maelstrom travelers aren't limited to 'official' timelines and histories – even places we would consider the stuff of myth, legend or idle speculation have their place in the Maelstrom. Not all of them, mind you, but enough to make one wonder if the writers of ancient tales knew more than they were letting on.

What this means is you can travel to any time period, any setting, and any genre. 1940s New York, where two-faced triple-crossers match wits with steely eyed dames and men of tarnished honor? Not a problem. A medieval fantasy world where knights battle acid-tongued dragons? You hardly need our help on that one. How about a realm of silicon and high-impact plastic torn asunder by virtual hotshots and dripping biological monstrosities? Absolutely.

The only limit is what you can get away with. There are some guidelines to avoid the worst excesses of time travel and multiversal goat rodeos, however. Demigods and higher are able to muck around with these guidelines, but we'll get to that later on. Let's focus on characters up to Heroic rank for now.

The foremost guideline for realm-travel is that outsiders follow the realm's rules rather than

Meeting Gods

If and when the characters in your campaign meet a god in person, it's worth remembering that gods are spirits rather than physical beings. They can all manifest at will, should that be necessary, but their native environment is the spirit world (which the Maelstrom is a part of). Since the gods have sworn away from crossing the Veil and messing with the mortal realms, this might not be an issue. But there's always that one bad guy rogue of a Great Spirit who breaks the rules and needs tracking down (as you'll see in our campaign). Should the characters become gods themselves, they will shed their physical bodies and transcend to a purely spiritual form... but that's a lot of gaming away for most groups!

vice-versa. This means outsiders' internal clocks synchronize to whatever realm they visit. There's no outrunning Death by continually sprinting into the past, or hiding in pocket dimensions with favorable chronal exchange rates. Everyone dies one minute at a time, heroes included. That's one of the reasons immortality is typically painted as being so appealing.

As a side effect of internal chronal synchronization, no individual can exist more than once in the same point of time – at least without some serious wiggling. If the wily White Warlock fails in his mission to lift the Amulet of Greed from Victorian London, he can't simply re-enter his favorite portal and try again under the same conditions. Every time he jumps to Victorian London, he'll always appear where and when he left, plus as much time as went by according to his internal clock. If it was midnight on May 9, 1871, and he leaves for exactly 24 hours, he can try to come back a few days earlier, or a few miles away, but he'll end up in the same place he left at midnight on May 10, 1871. If he tries to reappear using a portal that's in Paris, he'll still wind up in London, at the same portal he left by. If he wants another shot at the Amulet of Greed, it will have to be through more conventional measures such as mystically tracking it to its new location. It's not the phenomenal cosmic power that merchant gods make realm travel out to be, but at least it keeps the timeline intact. Those who aren't as accepting of such petty restrictions have an additional reason to strive to become Demigods.



What's the limit to an anchor point's stickiness? Wiser minds than us have tried to calculate it, and were only able to settle upon a general rule of thumb. Here it is: characters appearing within a decade of the point they have already visited, or within a few hundred miles, tend to snap into the same anchor point as they have already established. Anchors do fade over time though, and lose their stickiness. Give it a few years (according to the character's internal clock) and it shouldn't be any trouble at all to use new, nearby portals.

From a GM's perspective, it may be easier to establish a handful of popular eras and limit the players' access to portals leading anywhere else. For example, throughout the course of their adventures, the characters discover portals to 12000 BC, 1000 AD, 1999 AD, and 2300 AD. After a year of adventure, each portal will kick forward to 12001 BC, 1001 AD, 2000 AD, and 2301 AD. You would then only be responsible for four realms, each connected by time's bonds, rather than the myriad suggested by unchecked time travel.

That said, rampant time jumps can have a rush like none other. It's exciting to go to different places, especially if they're linked by a little thing like shared history. The Maelstrom connects to every time and place that can be imagined, even if they aren't always the easiest to enter. Maelstrom-side threats, chronal synchronization lock-outs, and especially well-hidden portals are three common limits to finding such realms as the Land Where My Hero is Praised as an Eternal Super King. A final difficulty is the opacity of the Veil. Even the gods have a distorted view of what's on the other side. A character might think he was going to ancient Rome and wind up in a Romanesque fantasy world instead.

Of course, this uncertainty is part of what makes time travel so exciting – realm travelers never know where they will wind up, even with an airtight promise from the mouths of angels. That confusion helps keep the elite few from taking too many vacations, forcing them to be ready to adapt at a moment's notice. It also makes those rare adrenaline jockeys who flip through realms as if they were infomercials into patron saints for heroes and fools, both.

Elastic History

Adventures being what they are, it's easy to imagine some over-zealous hero killing the wrong butterfly or romancing the wrong grandmother and irrevocably changing the course of the future. This is a time-travel game, after all. Certain shenanigans are to be expected. So what's to stop a gang of dissatisfied historians from appearing in London every week to assassinate Churchill, and then bopping over to America and killing off FDR? What if they prevent the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Won't that allow the Axis powers to win the war?

Nope. Every time that anybody has tried that, they return to the Maelstrom to discover it had been a security stand-in for Churchill, Eleanor masqueraded as FDR for the rest of his term, and back-up bombs were already in place to carry out the bombing run. The Japanese surrendered, Hitler disappeared and was presumed dead, and the Allies won.

So what does that mean? Is history unchangeable? Is man's life really without purpose?

Not entirely. The way it works is this: Each timeline is given structure by a number of nexus points. These nexuses are key people, places, items, and events throughout history. Alexander the Great, Hitler, FDR, JFK, Stalin, Lenin, Nelson Mandela – all of these people were nexuses. They were crucial to our history, which means they're crucial to the timeline. The individuals aren't as important as their actions and the repercussions of those actions, but the individuals do gain a degree of universal significance as a result. The timeline fiercely protects its nexuses, rolling and shifting lesser figures to insure that the basic shape of time remains stable. God-level intellects who are able to compute billions of independent variables at a time are able to maneuver around nexus points if necessary, but even then there are many risks requiring countless teams of agents. Demigods are able to affect more temporary nexus changes, but more on that on pg 14.

When a realm-traveler steps through a portal he carries traces of both Veil and Maelstrom with him. Those clearly mark him as an intruder, an out-of-place element, and the timeline senses that the newcomer does not belong. The realm tolerates his presence –

the gods and their Telesmae have too much power for him to be thrown out on his ear – but it relaxes the timeline to accommodate any potential interference.

Once the outsider disappears back into the Maelstrom, the timeline tightens back up, shifting everything back into place like an expert butler after a surprise house party. Minor changes are overlooked and are left alone; treasures can be plundered, Extras can be slaughtered, and the potential for change exists. If a nexus has been altered or removed, the timeline notices and flies into overdrive to repair the damage. Coincidence and happenstance conspire to draw bystanders into the nexus's place and carry out the actions it should have performed. If the nexus was forced into acting out-of-type, the realm minimizes that damage as well; Ghandi's not getting a 12-step lesson in knife-fighting in our game. In the long run, history continues as it always has.

Killing Hitler when he's a young man doesn't prevent World War II, it just means some other young man steps up and assumes Hitler's name and identity and continues his plans. Funny thing – turns out it was never Hitler at all, but some stand-in working for a secret organization of dubiously defined power. Your players may have revealed a greater conspiracy, and they should feel proud. If that's not enough, and they travel back to defeat that organization, they find that World War II still happens because of another set of factors that they hadn't even considered. Pinpointing all of the elements that support nexus points requires so much hacking through seemingly unconnected eras and events that most attempts end in failure and divine reprisal. Each interconnected network leads to others, and untangling them becomes as task for only the most dedicated. Sydney Bristow from Alias was clearly a character from a Suzerain game!

Because of time's elasticity, characters on standard missions can alter the world around them with impunity. Anything too outrageous won't have a lasting effect. Kill a random passerby? Fine. Steal some silverware from the Hindenberg? As much as you like. Leave a radioactive fuel container in a Babylonian well? No such luck. Some other god's troubleshooters will fish it out before it gets out of hand, or a prehistoric sea creature will gulp it down and absorb the worst of it.

But The Future Changed...

Players being as they are, it's pretty likely that at least one per group will become fed up with the elastic nature of time. "What's the point," this hypothetical gamer may ask, "if I can't lord over time and reshape it to my will?" There are options for such players, but be sure to drive home how risky and unlikely the task will be before exploring them. The player is asking for a challenge, so you should take this as an invitation to release some of the limiters on your nasty plots. This is uncharted territory, so the potential for loss should be great. Utter erasure from history is a good place to start for failure, as a great number of gods have vested interest in the stability of their own pet timelines.

If the character still refuses to falter, he will need a guide. Gods are the only intelligences sure to have the necessary processing power for the task, but the Maelstrom is vast and rife with both rebellious Great Spirits and forgotten god-machines. The hero will also need knowledge of alternative timelines with similar conditions to those he seeks to create. These may be provided by the guide, or experienced directly.

After obtaining a guide, the nexus-cracker will need to actually change the countless number of situations required to unseat the nexus from its original location along the timeline. These should take several fully fleshed adventures, loaded with high octane complications and double-crosses by the fistful. By now you should be able to tell this isn't a process that should be undertaken lightly; it's easily meat enough for an entire campaign!

Traveling Technology

One common feature of time-travel stories is the effect of technology when removed from its original context. The classic example is the "Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court" – he created gunpowder and firearms back in Arthurian times and made himself the big boss because no one could stand against him. That's dangerous. So what do you do when a pulp-era character goes back to the Stone Age, wielding his twin .45s? Or a well-meaning futurist starts passing out jetpacks to his favorite samurai? How do you keep that from becoming unbalanced, and from completely shattering the timeline?

Let's talk about balance first. Cavemen are primitive, but not dumb. Every moment of their lives is spent centered on survival. Anyone who has seen Return of the Jedi knows where we're going with this one. If that seems too unlikely for your game, consider environmental solutions: ammo gets wet, batteries die, and cavemen are constantly evolving to protect against their key predators. Now we've evened the odds a bit. Likewise, samurai may have little-known cultural biases against the use of jetpacks in all but the most isolated incidents.

The goal here is not to penalize your players by stripping their characters of their equipment and cunning plans. It's all right to do, temporarily, and may force them to come up with some spicy moves to get them back, but what's Johnny Laser without his laser? There are other ways to level the playing field. Let's keep on thinking about those cavemen. Cavemen are far stronger and tougher than people of the twentieth century, and they hit a lot harder – especially if there's no one in the group who cares about anthropology or fossil records. Those stone clubs they wield can really pack a punch; those who weren't so great at clubbing never made it past adolescence. Moreover, they're surprisingly good at flinging those crude, stone-tipped spears while on the run. And that's without unleashing the stampeding mammoths, or the characters worrying about jammed weapons and limited ammo.

Part of the fun of a time travel game is making the characters (and the players) reevaluate a setting. "Oh, the Wild West! What do you mean those guys draw faster than I can, and I was tricked by a rail baron?! I'm their better – their god!" Let the characters and their players see the strengths each setting has to offer, and the dangers. Just because someone has more advanced tech doesn't mean they're more dangerous. Nor does having less tech mean you're going to get crushed – if wily Odysseus were transported to a world of flying cars, he could do an incredible amount of damage despite never having brushed his teeth or shot a gun. That he wouldn't need to rely upon an internal processor for directions means he could stab and trick people out of his way while they're still accessing the mainframe. The human (or dwarf, or gremlin) brain is the best weapon in any setting.

So what sort of impact will inappropriate tech have on a setting? What do the cavemen do when someone shows up with a pistol or a laser? How do the knights react to a man armed with a Tommy gun? Will introducing such devices into a world change its – and our – history?

The short answer is no. Just bringing tech with you won't alter the setting. After all, it's self-contained and will leave again with the character. The cavemen might tell stories and paint pictures of a strange figure who could draw lightning from the sky and strike down those who angered him, and the knights might share tales later of the evil sorcerer who could fling a hail of metal and stone that could pierce armor, but that's all they'll know about it. Even if the objects get left behind, who's going to understand them? You won't find cavemen figuring out how to mix gunpowder and shape bullets, or knights learning how to create a new ammo drum.

Nor will teaching the locals about scientific advances have much effect in the long run. Remember that the timeline protects itself. A character can lecture all he likes about electricity and lightbulbs and the internal combustion engine – once he passes back through the Veil, the Visigoths will only remember him as a strange man with mystic powers and odd notions about lightning and horseless chariots. Detailed drawings will disappear as the years go by or simply become too smudged to read clearly. Journals will get lost or damaged. Stockpiled weapons and machines will rust or be caught in a lava flow. The world will right itself, as it always does.

That's just on the broad scale though. Dry your eyes, tender reader! There's nothing saying that characters can't have fun training a pack of Neanderthals in the use of rifles and leading them against a band of displaced WWI soldiers. Or giving a noble knight a jetpack and a laser gun and setting him loose on a cyberpirate with dreams of creating a new plunderarchy. But the effect will be temporary, and the knowledge will quickly fade back into myths and legends – creating new legends in the process. If used to achieve a goal that would be tougher without it, technology is fine. If used to try and change the way technology will be used once the characters are gone, that just won't work. In short, technology will serve the crazy fun of your game, not break history.

The Gods' Role

The gods are natives of the Maelstrom, as well as its most powerful residents. They've mastered the art of tapping the Maelstrom's power for themselves, and have learned how to ride its timeless wave, seeing from one end to the other at a single glance. With this knowledge, they comprehend how the Maelstrom fits together with each realm, like an enormous trans-dimensional puzzle. The gods are even able to see through the Veil where it is thin... though the picture they get can be somewhat garbled. Their messengers and followers are legion.

Gods are a powerful bunch, but they do have their limits: the other gods for one, and their common agreement to stay out of the mortal realms for another. Despite their subtle cosmic purpose, many gods seek to exert their influence as much as possible. To this end, they engage in politicking and favor-trading on an astronomical scale. If Ochun, She of the Sweet Waters, desires the prayers of a newly sentient race of crystal spheres, she cannot just send a few miracles and start reaping the glory. First she makes sure that none of the more powerful gods have interest in the same development. If they do, she builds up a pantheon of smaller gods who will support the move. Some will require later concessions, while others will need a demonstration of the crystal beings' worthiness. This is where the gods' interaction with the heroes of Suzerain begins. Someone needs to defeat the plans of jealous rival gods, gather the gifts from perilous realms, and guide the new race through its travails: heroes!

Many of the gods within the Maelstrom have familiar names: Thor, Hermes, Quetzalcoatl, etc. That's because they've peered into the mortal realms and occasionally stepped on through. Those days are in the past though, consigned to a mythic age of antiquity and maybes. Every realm has its own specific reasons for the gods' eventual withdrawal to the Maelstrom, but it all boils down to the truth that manifesting as showers of gold or horny bulls (that's right Zeus, you're on notice) wasn't doing anyone any favors. In all but the strangest realms, the gods now choose mortals to act as messengers and representatives on the other side of the Veil. In return, the mortals gain a touch of divinity. When a job needs doing in the mortal realms, the gods call upon heroes and demigods to intercede.



Importantly, not every person with a Telesma is beholden to do as the gods ask. There's free will involved, after all. The gods tend to be generous employers though, especially for those who prefer to be paid in glory. Heroes and demigods with more direct divine links (such as Empowered characters or those with Patron God feats) have a more traditional god-mortal relationship with the pantheons, but even they are not slaves (unless they happen to worship the God of Tyranny). At Heroic rank and higher, characters are rare enough that the gods start to treat them as valued freelancers – as long as they realize that they're still just mortals and keep some semblance of humility.

When needed, a god will call on one or more heroes to travel to particular times and places and perform mighty tasks. Sometimes these tasks don't make a huge amount of sense, but if the Great Fey Spirit needs a prehistoric mountain moved 300m to the right, it is far older, wiser, and more complicated than any mortal. It's perfectly normal to think that the Great Spirit has gone senile through the eons of its wild revels, but just as common for the eventual truth to seem so natural that it was the only way.

For a GM, it's useful to know that most gods work toward their own goals and don't always do so with other members of their pantheon. For instance, the characters might get visited by Shiva, Loki, Athena and the Archangel Mihel. Though they're part of four different pantheons, together they have a task for the characters – the recovery of a long-lost scroll that's turned up at auction in London in the year 1968. That allows the characters to get friendly with an eclectic mix of divine beings and still find adventures that involve them all. They might well ask why those four gods are so interested in that particular scroll, but figuring out the link is part of the fun that can lead to all sorts of follow-on adventures.

Heroic Games

One of our goals with *Savage Suzerain* is to get you to agree that 'Life begins at 60'. While many *Savage Worlds* campaigns finish around 60-80xp, *Suzerain* is just getting started. At 60 xp, characters break into the big leagues; they become heroes in the eyes of the universe and get a chance to strut their stuff on the universal stage. Here are some thoughts on running games for Heroic and Legendary rank games.

Playing a Heroic rank character doesn't have to involve a patron god. Some characters become Heroic without ever stepping into the Maelstrom. They simply reach a point in their own development where they grow beyond the role of a normal person, even a normal adventurer. Their abilities and powers increase to levels no regular mortal could hope to attain, powers that appear legendary to those around them. These heroes know nothing of the Maelstrom, the gods, or the Veil – nor do they care. They find their own problems to solve, their own goals to strive toward, and their own enemies to face. And they do all that within their own native setting.

Despite this book's focus on the traveling hero, there's nothing wrong with playing a character who sticks to one realm and timeframe. Not every realm is going to knuckle under the first time a few Heroic rank characters get together for a good time, especially expansive ones or regions known for their eye-gouging toughness. A sufficiently advanced sci-fi galaxy will have its fair share of heroes no doubt, able to provide ample challenge to even the most shiny-toothed of star captains.

Sticking to one realm allows characters a chance to focus, cultivate networks of friends and allies, and build far-reaching influence. With that kind of familiarity, the people who the characters meet have time to evolve past their initial, possibly flat, characterizations and into full, complex personalities. As the inner world deepens, its outer counterpart expands similarly. Heroic rank characters are skilled enough to influence the fates of nations; even if they stay at home on the dimensional scale, they'll be asked to travel quite a bit by the movers and shakers of their realm.

All Times, All Places

Not everyone wants to be so confined, however. Some players want the excitement of trying different settings and different genres, and doing it without having to change characters or rules systems. For those people, the Maelstrom is the logical next step.

Playing in multiple times and multiple settings can be fascinating. One minute your character is at home in 1930's Chicago, the next he finds himself following a series of esoteric clues back to 13th century France. After discovering the necessary evidence, he's on a spaceship hurtling toward Alpha Centauri at

impossible speeds, and then he's traipsing through fog-shrouded mountains hunting yetis for the final part of the cipher. Playing through different settings keeps everyone on their toes because each realm has its own unique challenges. A character designed for fighting bog mummies isn't going to have an easy time befriending 28th-century socialites, but that's part of the fun. If it's not working out, there's always a new realm through the nearest portal. That way the adventures of Mummiesbane Mendoza can continue, even if his career as a futuristic man of mystery is cut short.

Away Missions

One of the realities of a roleplaying game is that it has to fit around everyone's schedule. Often someone can't make a particular session because outside commitments get in the way. We hate that sort of thing, but it's a reality we all face. Although some groups take great joy in watching terrible ill befall characters whose players are absent, we have a different way of handling it.

We tackle this all-too-common problem in Suzerain with... the Maelstrom! Any character with a patron god will have to accept that gods work along different timeframes than mortals. Said god may pluck said hero from the midst of an important mission for a quick check-in. Longer absences are better covered by urgent side missions to nearby realms. These meetings can be played at the leisure of the GM and any absent players, or swept under the rug and left as convenient blanks for filling in later.

Another option is for the gods to call the players who are in attendance to take a sudden side mission, leaving the absent player's character behind to monitor their current task. This is a good time to pursue plot threads the missing character wouldn't necessarily care about. Has a particular NPC been vexing the players who were able to show up for a shortened session? Spin a side mission around her. Are two of the characters money-grubbing hucksters, always at odds with the upstanding-yet-absent character? Give them an excellent adventure where they can indulge in their avarice. What tales survive until the next session will give the returning player added incentive to make it to future games!

If the absent character doesn't have a patron god, it's an opportunity for some new deity to take an interest in him and haul him over to the Maelstrom for a closer look. Dreams and portents work for some, but the real hands-on sort go for full-out kidnapping if the individual in question is anywhere near a portal.

Naturally enough, disappearing characters might need some serious explaining if the group was in the middle of a social encounter when the session starts. Luckily, the timeline has ways of smoothing over the cracks. Perhaps onlookers assume the missing character stepped out to use the restroom, or he's so unmemorable that they barely notice he's gone at all, or any number of other possibilities.

No matter how you handle missing players, the meddling Maelstrom dwellers allow play to continue without a hitch. Better yet, those absences become part of the story itself.

Nature Of The Heroic Game

Most Heroic games start with a bang. It makes sense – whether the player has been with his character for months or is just introducing him now, the character has suddenly ascended to a new level of power and ability. Something in him has changed – maybe he finally won his mentor's approval and was granted the last secret of his training, maybe he discovered a new aspect of his superpowers, or maybe he suddenly realized he was meant for bigger things than facing down muggers and bank robbers. No matter how it happened, the whole world looks different to the character, and his place in that world has definitely changed. And that requires a big response, a serious dramatic moment.

If the Heroic game is an extension of a campaign that progressed through Novice, Seasoned and Veteran then the session after a character advances to Heroic rank should begin with a reflection upon this new status. Talk with the player before the session to see if he has any especially cool scenes in mind. Did he finally split the steel bar with his bare hands, swinging his fists through the hammering blows of a mid-summer storm? Does he meet his patron god in a dream and receive a token pushing him toward new horizons? This should be a gratifying moment, even if the rest of the character's life is sodden with bad luck.

It's a great time to introduce the gods and the Maelstrom if they haven't already become a part of the campaign. Most likely, they'll be a big part of the stories to come. If it's not the right time for the big reveal, there should still be something to mark the change. Perhaps a new crime boss has moved in and taken over all the old gangs – and his first heist has the papers running red with his new methods. It could be that the hero slew a dragon – only to learn that it was a mere infant, and now its parent vows vengeance! Maybe the characters' great benefactor died under mysterious circumstances, leaving them on their own for the first time. Whatever happens, it should be apparent very quickly that new threats are out there – ones fit for true heroes, leaving previous challenges in the dust.

This doesn't mean that everything needs to be Capital Letters and Epic Threats to Humanity from here on out. A character who has pledged to protect Boston from unearthly crimes shouldn't give up on the pixies and gremlins just because an 18-wheeler full of hopping vampires has pulled into town. He may need to find a way to delegate those problems, whether to a junior partner or to the local police, but it's still part of his responsibility. So are maintaining his business contacts, going to his day job, meeting with his friends, caring for his aged parents, eating right, and getting enough sleep. It's often these mundane details that help keep heroes grounded even as they're facing massive evils that could blot out the very sun.

Heroic Direction

The players all know how to make their characters and they're ready for the big time. You're the GM, and they're looking at you expectantly. Now you have to deliver. There are so many directions to go with a Suzerain game that the number of options can be daunting at first. How do you make the most of them to create a memorable, unique experience that they'll reminisce about for years to come? Your players are waiting, the pressure mounting.

One of the biggest questions with a Heroic rank game in Suzerain, and one of the first questions you should ask both yourself and your player, is: multi-setting or single-setting? Obviously you'll all need to agree – don't force your players into a single setting when they want to explore a bunch of settings and

Group And Troupe

If you're lucky enough to have a stable gaming group where everyone trusts each other, we highly recommend everyone has a player character in the story – even the GM. Play that character as a key extra, never hogging the limelight and just being there to add another opinion and another sword to the characters' resources. He's a henchman or the brother of one of the others who tags along, and they tolerate him because he turns out to be useful every now and again.

What's the benefit? Well, it adds survivability to the group, and gives the GM a voice to point out additional information if the players' creative energy has temporarily flagged. It also allows you to switch GMs every now and again while keeping the same pool of characters. And that's a really useful thing to be able to do. This form of 'troupe play' is already popular in many places; we highly recommend you keep an open mind and give it a go sometime.

That said, we would like to repeat the 'trust' portion of troupe play. One of the most popular topics for player horror stories is the scene-stealing GM-PC. This character appears to be a character's sidekick, or perhaps a white-bearded messenger from the gods, but he ends up being far more effective than the tale's nominal heroes. He's the one who has the plan for defeating the Oshkosh Ooze, and it's his flashing blade that finally defeats the Invincible Sword Princess. These characters are no fun and it's a low blow from a GM.



genres, and don't kick them out into the vastness of time and space when they just want to focus on their own neighborhood.

Here are some pointers compiled from seven years of development. Relax – it's all going to be just fine.

One World

Single-setting epics offer a more traditional play experience. One setting, one set of genre conventions to internalize and adapt to. If the characters are ongoing ones, both you and the players already know the setting. It's familiar territory, comfortable grounds. Of course, that should change... and quickly. Don't let the players or their characters become complacent and lazy. They're playing with the big boys now.

Throw a new threat at them, one they've never encountered before and don't know anything about. That should wake them up. Up the ante, not only with bigger and badder villains, but larger stakes, higher risks, and more potential for collateral damage. Heroes would be nothing without their opposition, so give them something to struggle against!

Don't focus on the new threat right from the start, though. Give it time to build. Throw a few minor but distantly related problems at the characters first, to lull them into a false sense of security. As a case study, consider an invasion of shape-shifting aliens, doppelgangers, or underfolk. The first inklings of the assault shouldn't be the discovery of an entire country of replicants. Perhaps there's a crooked cop who's acting more bloodthirsty than usual. Upon closer study, he's not human! A few weeks later, a disturbed madman gives the standard, "Fools, I will kill you all!" speech, with a few notable changes. He refers to a world of falsehoods and symbolic lives without honest backing.

After a few scenes like this, the players will start to catch on that a storm is brewing. That's when you either confirm their suspicions with the discovery of a small town entirely populated by pod people, or pull the rug out from under them and reveal the true threat to be hallucinogenic spores released by a furious nature spirit. Wham! That's the second punch, but still not the big one. Knock the characters around, make them realize they're no longer the new kids on the block. They'll need to adapt, develop new strategies to confront their greatest challenge yet.

That's when you bring in the alien mothership, the invaders' true forms, or their ultimate goal.

One-setting campaigns are about exploring the same world on a grander scale than was previously possible. If the characters were focused on their hometown, take them up a notch to saving the whole country. We call the life of heroes an 'epic' for a reason, and this is where the players get to feel that.

Quantum Sliders

A multi-setting epic is more difficult to set up, since it can be hard to keep track of all the different backdrops to the action. That's OK; it's all part of the rush. You can literally set your game anywhere, anywhen, and in any genre. Want to run a pulp game with two-tone morality for a while? Put the characters in the 1930s or '40s and set everything four-color. Want to do noir? Turn everything dark, gritty, and melancholy. When the characters get on the wrong side of the corrupt mayor, let them recover with the splendor of a high fantasy realm. That place where dragons fly and wizards cast fireballs and kings wield enchanted swords... it's only a portal away. Because of the way the mortal realms exist in Suzerain, any setting you can imagine is part of Earth's timeline somewhere – the idea is that our history is only the latest layer of the world's true history, and places like Atlantis and Lemuria and Camelot existed in previous eras, now forgotten except as confused myths. As for the future, that's not been written, so you can have anything you want happening there.

The trick to a multi-genre game is getting the pieces to fit together. Sure, it's fun to do a high-tech science fiction world one session and a medieval fantasy setting the next, but what's the connection? You can just have gods sending the characters to various times at random, of course, but what's it all leading up to? The players expect you, the GM, to make sense of it all. They expect you to have a plan. Don't disappoint them.

Figure out a larger plot first, something that can tie different eras together. Are the gods concerned about the whereabouts and activities of a certain immortal? They send the characters to several key points in the timeline to check up on that immortal and foil her plans (or make sure they succeed). Do the gods need the characters to retrieve certain items scattered

through time? At their core the items are just an excuse to get the characters into different scrapes, but don't make it so obvious. Maybe the items will be able to fulfill a specific character goal when they are assembled, such as the destruction of a nexus point or the resurrection of a friend.

For a more proactive game, introduce a dark mirror to the characters – another god or a demon – recruiting agents for his own nefarious plans all along the timeline. The characters will then need to identify and defeat those enemy agents, who are backed by patrons as powerful (or more!) than the heroes' own. There are just a few quick examples; your overarching plot doesn't need to be any more laid out in the beginning. Players being what they are, they will no doubt introduce complications to your plot and pursue leads that you never expected. As long as everyone's having a good time, there's nothing wrong with that. If the players aren't scrabbling for a grand narrative right away, the behind-the-scenes explanation could just be that the gods want their champions to experience as much of the mortal realms as possible.

One of the most entertaining things about using different genres and settings is the 'fish out of water' syndrome. Think of any anime series where a normal high school student is sucked into a nostalgic world of magic – it's fun to watch (or play!) a character who's thrust into a time he doesn't know or understand, where he has to do his best to fit in and winds up using his own skills and abilities to get ahead. Players love games like this, because it's a chance to show off their ingenuity and to have some really funny scenes as well. These hijinks can be carried a step further when multiple timelines clash, forming groups of characters from several different times and places.

Take a group that has a dwarfish knight, a cyborg, a hardboiled detective, and Kid Thunder, heir to the Nemean Lion's hide, and wait for them to show up in the cyborg's neon-lit streets. Even if the cyborg has been the group's comic relief up until this point, he'll be the voice of reason when the knight thinks cars are demons and the detective tries fermenting FlavoSoy to refill his dwindling flask. Toss the same group into a classic fantasy setting and it's the knight's turn to laugh as the cyborg tries wiring himself into a well and Kid Thunder's 'devil music' attracts angry mobs.

Don't be mean-spirited – it's not about putting the characters in settings to make them uncomfortable or cripple their character concepts. It's about the disconnect between their previous experiences and their new environment, and the good-natured humor that results. Put that same group in the Holy Roman Empire and make everyone mistake them for Centurions and you've got a fun game that could still have some very high stakes to it – the characters have to pull off their masquerade well enough to be accepted as part of the Emperor's Honor Guard so they can save him from an assassination attempt by a killer from the late 20th century.

Multi-setting games are a bit like the TV series *Quantum Leap*, but they'll take your characters to every bit of our universe, from forgotten past to far future. Use the different realms to highlight characters goals and differences, or just provide new challenges and interesting set-pieces. You've learned your history, now it's time to put it to good use.

Mix And Match

Keep in mind that you don't need to lock your campaign into a specific mode. You could center the game around the relations between two or three realms, or spend an extended period of time with a particularly important setting after many sessions of realm-trotting. You can also start the characters out in their native setting and then segue into a multi-setting campaign.

Of the Suzerain epics we've seen, the final possibility is actually the most popular and it's easy to see why. We all love our characters, but there's usually a point where we've been playing in one setting and the 'been there, done that' feeling has set in. We're itching for big stumpy robots, and a troll in plate armor is no longer cutting it. Thanks to portals, our disenchanters are able to cruise the universe in search of bigger, stompier adventure. The characters keep developing, and soon we have three wizards in color-coordinated mecha. We laugh and play and stomp, and are finally able to answer the age-old question of who would win in a fight between giant robots and short, rural demihumans with a fondness for smokeable plants. Malaise sets in again until we see that cool movie with the invisible sci-fi predator and

those great aliens who eat marines for breakfast. Time for the armored re-enchanter corps and their friends to step up to the next challenge!

Make sure your players know what you're doing, however. If they've stated explicitly that they don't want to do multi-setting, don't pull a fast one and suddenly have them yanked out of their world. Nothing's worse than starting a game about zeppelin pirates only to discover three sessions in that it's a computer simulation. By the same measure, if the players have established that they never want their characters to make it back home from their run-in with a timequake, don't force it upon them.

If you're not sure how to proceed, test the waters with a few brief encounters. The characters might encounter someone from their own past while on a mission elsewhere, for example, making them wonder what he's doing out of their native time and what's happening in their home as a result. Or they might see a stranger in their world, one who clearly doesn't belong, or find a thug using a weapon whose technology is far beyond anything currently available. If they're itching for wider skies, they'll follow the lead. If not, it's business as usual. If done smoothly, the ability to shift gears can keep your game exciting and your players entertained and their characters involved, all without losing your storyline or leaving any one portion of the epic feeling awkward and forced.

Our last bit of advice? Do what's fun, and don't be afraid to change what you're doing as time goes by. Sure, have a plan for a great epic before you start, but if a few months go by (or a few years for that matter) and everyone agrees that a change is what you need – then change! Take the characters through a rollercoaster of a few sessions where each one is a short away mission to a different place (try out the free One Sheet adventures from the [Treasure area of our website](#) to see how those work). Why not let different people be guest GMs for each of those while you recharge your imagination? Then, with a fresh plot idea in mind, you can take the same characters to a setting where a new long adventure awaits... the next bit of their rambunctious struggle towards godhood.

Suits You, Sir

Here's a hint to making fun, memorable, and compelling epics for your group, which is even more important in Heroic rank games than at lower ranks: suit them to the characters involved.

What does that mean, exactly? Well, you may have come up with an incredible game to run. It's a mystery, with subtle clues, tons of red herrings, devious Extras, lots of twists, and a final diabolical reveal. It's brilliant!

The problem is, the players all have rough-and-tumble characters. They're not detectives. They're a motley assortment of killbots, scions of Ares, and femme fatale snipers. Not even close. The nearest they get to detecting is beating up a street gang and then demanding information from them.

So, not a good game. Why? Because it doesn't suit the characters.

When building your epic, think about the players and their characters. Who are they? What do they like? What sort of game would they enjoy? If no one in the group likes subtle mysteries, clearly creating a finesse-based story is going to fail on two accounts: the players will ruin your 'dream game', and they won't have fun doing it. Think about their interests and tailor your sessions accordingly.

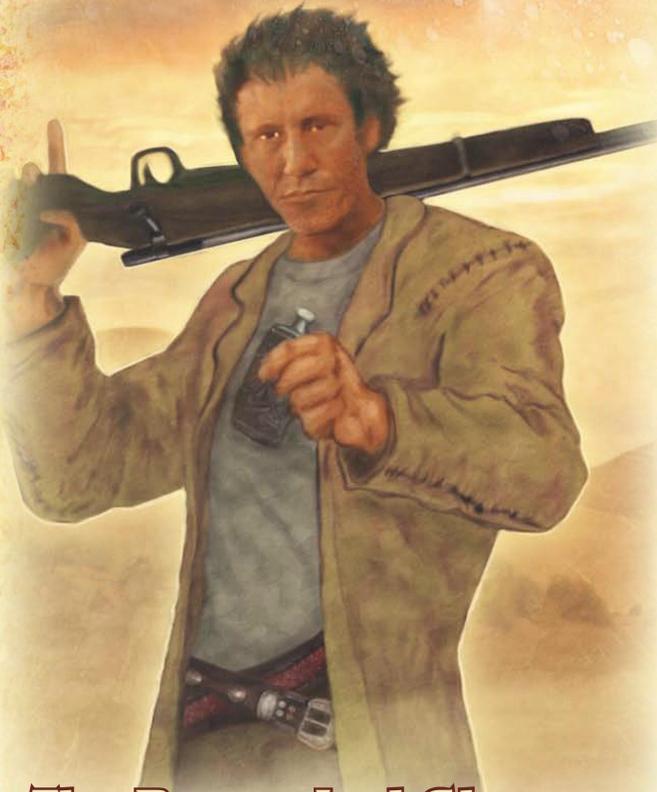
Keep in mind that the characters are larger than life. While they should have small doses of everyday humanity to ground themselves, this isn't the time for counting copper coins or describing every routine bus ride. Build the central plot around something that only your group of characters can do. It can be as small as rescuing a kidnapped heiress from an Indian snake cult, or as big as saving the entire world from a madman with a freeze ray the size of Rhode Island. You may have some untapped plans for games about public relations or investment banking, but this isn't the greatest setting in which to unleash them... unless the characters are specially trained mediators who run PR/threat evaluation for the giants of industry in a world of corporate espionage and mimetic assassination. It was a minority who thought of archeology professors as sexy Nazi-punchers until Indiana Jones came along, but now the globe-trotting academic has become an accepted (and eminently mimicable) archetype.

You can always stand convention on its head, of course. Go ahead and let the bruisers have their chance at solving the Case of the Battered Blade. The story may develop a more comedic edge as a result, but you could do worse than a session where everyone's laughing so hard that they can't breathe on account of the demolitions expert using the conclusive evidence as a makeshift bomb. Just be sure you leave yourself an out if the tone isn't building as planned, and that the final focus of the story will be properly suited to the characters involved.

Demigod Games

Where do realm travelers go after proving themselves legends in their own time? They are second in skill and knowledge to the very gods who shake the foundations of creation at this point. They are demigods. As with attaining Heroic rank, there should be some sort of grand event to celebrate the promotion. More traditional gods prefer to go the thunder, lightning, and chorus of angels route, letting everyone in a realm know that one of their chosen has lived up to his name. Trickster gods (or patronless heroes) may need to steal their divine rights, infiltrating the inner sanctum of the Maelstrom and outwitting its inhuman guardians. More modern gods err on the side of restraint, informing their favored with a quick phone call and light lunch. No matter what the route this ascension takes, it should be an in-game event that boosts the players' egos and puffs them up for the challenges to come.

What sorts of conflicts remain to challenge a neo-pantheon of demigods? How about a galactic mystery that has the gods themselves flustered and coughing nervously into their sleeves? Whether it turns out to be the grandest conspiracy in creation or simply a fundamental inevitability, getting to the bottom of it will require travel to realms of non-existence. These areas exist on maps, but most frequently in the shared minds of fantasists and doubters. These are unofficial versions of history, the what-ifs, maybes, and nevers. Only within these apocrypha can the truth be dredged forth.



The Power And Glory

Your players' characters are demigods. They have the power of the divine, and they want the glory of becoming gods. Make them work for it. As their epic enters its third act, it's time to make them realize they'll need all that power if they're to survive, let alone earn their transcendence to godhood. Trouble is, that's easier said than done.

Think about the amazing arsenal at the characters' disposal. Stacks of Pulse to fuel plenty of supernatural abilities and powers. A fistful of Karma each session, which they can use to change reality. Three cards from the Adventure Deck (if you're using it). A more powerful Wild Die than any character ever had. An array of fine Edges. And let's not forget those seriously impressive Traits they're bound to have amassed.

Oh, and death is just a Karma point of annoyance, making characters almost immortal.

Put it that way and it's quite a challenge to build a significant challenge for them. Don't fret, though. By this stage you know your players well enough to make life interesting. You're the GM and you have two great tools at your disposal that will help you out:

You control what happens off-stage. That allows you to rob the characters of some of their resources at the start or as the sessions go by. Demigods who get to heal up and replenish their Pulse every session can handle almost anything. Don't let them get a good night's sleep and keep hurrying them, heaping more and more trouble on their heads until they're struggling to keep up. They should be saving the universe at this stage of their career, and the kind of evil god who wants to bring about the End Times isn't likely to wait while they retreat to their pocket realm for some R&R. In fact, finding a way to disable their access to the pocket realm isn't a bad place to start. Say, we should use that in our Demigod campaign some time!

You control the NPCs. Use this to force the characters into making really tough ethical choices. All the supernatural artillery in the world won't help when it's a choice between sacrificing the souls of innocent children to hungry demon spirits and saving mankind from the eternal tyranny of the Great Dragon Spirit (a choice you'll find familiar when you meet poor Gregor in our campaign later on). Or what about saving the life of one character's kid sister, who's been hanging around with the group since they were first put down on paper, weighed up against saving the Archangel Gabel who guards the prison of the Dark One? If a character has an Edge or Hindrance that comes associated with an NPC... use that person to put the characters into an impossible situation. You'll find they try to get the best of both worlds and shock you how close they get to succeeding despite the odds – they're demigods after all. It'll be a great game for it.

Gods And End Times

Even gods have myths, and all residents of the Maelstrom have one myth they share. One we mentioned just a moment ago. The gods tell of a moment when the Veil will be torn apart, merging the mortal and immortal realms. The time stream of the Maelstrom and the time stream of the mortal universe will collide, briefly coexist in the End Times, and then the universe will implode into a single particle, destroying all things, even the gods themselves.

The myth frightens many gods, depresses others, and drives one or two to bouts of drinking. Yet there's one positive crumb within all versions of the story: the particle that's left when our universe is destroyed will grow to become a new universe, the seed of another set of beings and realms and gods. Few take this as any consolation.

For all their power, none of the gods can prove or disprove the myth of the End Times. In many ways, that makes it even more frightening in their minds. Surely, someone with mastery over time and space would be able to tease out a clue? Instead... nothing. There's no sign of an apocalypse coming, but many residents of the Maelstrom just have a gut feeling that the myth is right, and that one day everything that ever existed will just disappear.

Alternate Reality

As mentioned earlier, demigods are able to bypass the gates of never-was to enter genres and settings that could not exist along the main timeline. These realities are good opportunities to pull out ideas for worlds and cosmologies that wouldn't maintain player interest for extended campaigns, but vibrate with shock-and-awesome when they're first introduced. If Heroic multi-setting campaigns are Quantum Leap, Demigod multi-setting campaigns might be Sliders.

It's in these shadow almost-realms that demigods are able to do the hands-on detective work that full-fledged gods are barred from undertaking. As the bold divinities-in-training trek across humming alien landscapes unlike any they have encountered before, the truth of the End Times will come to light. This isn't something that we're going to hold over your heads, waiting for the right moment to provide a grand reveal. This is the End of All Things. Paradoxes be cursed, something this big should be deeply personal and keyed to each group.

One classic way of personalizing alternate realms is to base them on a character who is important to the story. For example, what if one of your player's characters almost made a deal with a black-hearted alien intelligence during one of the Heroic rank highlight reels? Why not explore the episode a little further in the alternate reality where the deal was signed, sealed, and delivered, and said character now

rules over it with a fiery fist? Running with this idea a little further, it's not beyond reason to think the corrupted hero has also heard about the End Times, and is doing everything in her power to bring them to pass in order to erase her moment of weakness from the universe.

As with time travel, the number of available alternate reality portals depends on your comfort level. Players should not have access to an infinite library of portals right away, unless you're willing to give them access to anything their hearts desire. A good compromise is to think about it in terms of resource management. Access to alternate realities should give the characters more and grander ways to solve their problems, but the realities should not be answers in and of themselves.

Or Not

Just because the characters are now Demigod rank doesn't mean our basic advice has changed. All these fancy options for alternate realities are great, but if they don't suit your group then simply ignore the possibility. Aside from letting the characters flex a nexus for five minutes, shut the door on Hitler winning WWII and all other non-realities. Let the characters continue moving from realm to realm, taking on bigger challenges in new bits of the real timeline. Time and space is big enough not to need the extra razzle dazzle if it's not your style.

And let's leave you with a truly revolutionary thought... what if the characters never leave their home realm, not once they hit Heroic, and not when they get to Demigod? As Novices they saved their village from evil cultists. At Heroic rank they stopped invaders pillaging their nation. Now they're demigods it's time to save the whole world, but is there really a need to save a thousand worlds when one well-told story is enough for the characters to reach godhood with a sense of great satisfaction?

Suzerain doesn't tell you what to do. It doesn't punish you for choosing one epic over another. It was always your choice, from the moment you opened this book. With that thought we humbly present you with our unconventional campaign, spanning everything from Novice to Demigod in one set of scenarios.



Gamescapes

From the [tumbleweed towns of the Wild West](#) to the [command complexes of the far future](#), we've got you covered. Suzerain goes to a lot of places in a lot of times, and we pride ourselves on helping you visualize them all. Over time we're developing a range of high art game accessories for you to use at your gaming table including maps, cards and more.

We call that range our [Gamescapes](#) (check out our shop), and they include useful sets like a beginner's collection of [fantasy dungeon map tiles](#) for PDF download – print off as many as you want to make any dungeon you need! As it happens, they're all the tiles you might need for Gregor's lair in Act II of the campaign you're about to read.

We've also started a new and exciting line of Gamescapes – physical prints of fan favorite map sets which we're releasing together with Cubicle 7 through your local gaming store and online. The first went to print at the same time as this book, and you can expect a couple of new sets each month, all double sided, full color, and as rugged as a [wasteland terrain](#)... which just happens to be one of the first sets we've made.

What makes this extra super wonderful news for you as a Suzerain GM is that we're trying to cover as many of the locations in our Suzerain campaigns as possible. Lay out our [Grasslands terrain](#) when the characters are making a dawn raid on enemy lines in Act III of the campaign. Move to the [Cathedral of Light](#) set for Act IV. Act V could do with that wasteland terrain we just mentioned. For Act VI you'll need the [Scaling The Great Dragon](#) maps... you can play the scenarios without them, but they're beautiful and well worth checking out.

Plot Point Campaign

The place is the fantasy realm of Relic and the time is the last days of the Second Age. The Trader Imperium is on its last legs, besieged at the walls of their last city, Garris, alongside their Caladonian and Valon allies, bravely holding the line against the armies of the Wild and the dragons. In the midst of this conflict, a small unit of dragon kin has overrun the new Cathedral of Trinity, only to discover the place has enough power to summon the Great Dragon Spirit if they re-consecrate it to their master. Bringing a Great Spirit into a physical realm is one of those 'Things You Don't Do', like summoning a god, but these guys are fanatics – fanatics who were just handed a spiritual construct of cataclysmic importance.

Only one thing stands in the way of re-consecrating the cathedral for draconic worship of their Great Spirit (apart from the characters in Act III). They need a divine incantation that's inscribed on a scepter belonging to the Caladonian king, who's safely commanding the troops on his side of the battle lines. Instead of risking a head-on assault, the dragon kin call on the spirits of the Veil using a little-known mystical ritual.

The spirits of the Veil are milky nebulous beings who reside inside the Veil between the mortal realms and the Maelstrom. Although the price is extortionate, they're able to open portals between different realms and times. The dragon kin use their new allies to open a portal to the future, to Yr208 of the Third Age, and send one of their elite demi-ogres to break into the now-crumbling catacombs where the scepter should be resting in the sarcophagus of the long-dead king.

It's not there, having been extracted in the 208 intervening years and is in the museum at the university instead. Curses. The demi-ogre goes to get it, which is where he comes to the attention of the Guardians of Austra, in particular their senior hunter of supernatural evil, a man called Gregor.

Gregor is a rare case, in tune with a protection Avatar of the city who nobody else thinks exists. Gregor's Avatar tells him of the demi-ogre and its plans; he heads the creature off but not before it memorizes the incantation. He knows that the beast is too powerful for him, so instead he rushes to the buried cathedral and sets up the most powerful binding magic he can.

Just in time.

The demi-ogre returns, and Gregor shackles him before he can get to the portal. But the shackles won't last long, and the buried catacombs are a long way from any help.

The spirits of the Veil have been watching all this, and spot an opportunity. They emerge from their portal to make Gregor an offer he can't refuse – if he sacrifices a number of children, 'harvested' at astrologically important times in the coming weeks, they'll close the portal for good and trap the demi-ogre, stopping it from returning to its home and stopping the summoning of the Great Dragon Spirit. A few lives to save so many generations who will otherwise be enslaved and murdered at the hands of the dragons....

Gregor snaps, and accepts the terrible bargain. The spirits strengthen the binding magic so the shackles will hold the demi-ogre for forty days – the exact time it'll take to kidnap and bring the children back to the catacombs and sacrifice them in a terrible ritual. Gregor goes completely insane, but in that insanity understands he has no choice. He hires some henchmen and rushes to abduct the children the spirits tell him about, at the exact moment they're needed. Which is where our heroic characters come along, with about 30xp to their name and plans to become gods over time.

Starting The Campaign

So you were expecting a regular plot point campaign and here we are jumping in at Seasoned rank. Understandably you're wondering what gives. Well the plot point campaign here spans an entire career for Suzerain characters, all the way into demigodhood. That makes it quite a bit bigger than the traditional plot point campaigns you might be used to. Three times bigger we reckon, and laying all that out in every detail... well that would be a whole lot of book.

Instead we've gone ahead and taken the liberty of giving you the focal points of the campaign and a heap of Savage Tales to keep you busy in between so you can have as much fun as possible. Up to and including running your own plot point style campaign intertwined with this one if you wish!

There are two ways to approach the start of the campaign. If you want to jump straight into the action,

make up some characters in the middle of Seasoned rank and jump straight in. Alternatively use the pre-generated characters you can download for free from the [Treasure area of www.savagemojo.com](http://www.savagemojo.com).

If you'd rather grow your characters organically, the world of Relic has plenty for them to explore and you can make as much or as little of the capture of Gregor as you (and your players) like. Just remember the characters and players don't know all that stuff about the Great Dragon Spirit, spirits of the Veil and the fate of millions just yet. Mostly they just know some gibbering madman who saw too much evil in the world is kidnapping children for some dark ritual or other foul purpose. If you choose to start with total Novice characters and have thrilling adventures before Act I starts, try not to give the game away in the process!

Once you're into the plot and have run Acts I and II you have another choice to make. You can keep the campaign running, with other scenarios filling the time up to Heroic rank (where Acts III and IV take place), or you can turbo-charge the characters, bumping them up to 90xp artificially to get a feel for Suzerain's Heroic play style quickly. Similarly, you can take the characters at the end of Act IV and increase them to 150xp characters in an instant, then play Acts V and VI. It's not a Plot Point Campaign if you do it that way, but you do get a taste of Heroic and Demigod play very quickly. Playing it all as part of an epic campaign, interwoven with other plots of your devising and the Savage Tales, will take a lot longer but will be hugely satisfying. It's your call.

Celestium

Celestium is a super ceramic created by a well-guarded Pulse infusion process. Several realms have access to it, though very few can actually manufacture it. Celestium is light gray, shiny, and often thought to be a metal by those who don't know better. It's phenomenal for making Pulse-based computers, much better than silicon, but it also makes pretty good weapons. Those who can work with such a tough material are always in demand, and the Trader Imperium of Relic was expert at turning it into... relics. When the Imperium fell apart after the War of the Wild, the knowledge was lost to the world, making Trader items like the arc gun massively valuable.

Handwritten text in a South Indian script, likely Grantha or Tamil, covering the majority of the page. The text is arranged in approximately 25 horizontal lines. A large, dark, irregular shadow or smudge is present on the left side of the page, partially obscuring the text. The ink is dark and the paper appears aged and slightly textured.

Return Of The Dragon God: Act I

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

The first two acts of our campaign, Return of the Dragon God, are intended for characters with about 30xp each. They should have seen some action, but not enough that they're sure of their place in the world. These heroes are still essentially street-level. Taking down a whacked-out Guardian and rescuing a band of children will be right up their alley. What's more, it'll be enough to springboard them into the thick of Garris society, if that's their style. Up-and-coming merchants will want to make their acquaintance, and formerly tight-lipped guardsmen will be eating their hats.

Before this scenario begins, the characters have already tracked Gregor, captured him, and handed him over to the city watch. It's the James Bond beginning where things start half way through the action. If you want to play through some scenarios where the characters chase Gregor and his people, trying to stop him abducting children, go right ahead. There are plenty of stats below to help you plan those. Then it's time to get into the thick of the action.

Breakout

At the start of this scenario, the characters should know that Gregor is a madman who used to work for the Guardians of Austra, a noble organization of law-keepers. Since he snapped, he's been travelling the countryside with some henchmen, abducting children in pairs, always at astrologically significant times. He needed two more victims and then he'd be ready to carry out some kind of terrible ritual involving the sacrifice of the children. The ritual was scheduled for this night. But the characters captured him and he's safe behind bars. So all's well, right? This is just one of those introduction scenes that has nothing to do with the main plot you've got planned. That's what the players should think, at least.

No one has had any luck gleaned the location of the missing children from Gregor in the hours since he was captured. As the characters leave the jail and enter the mid-day traffic, explosions rock the building. Several robed figures emerge from the crowd, and fling firebombs at the building for additional chaos.

By the time the smoke clears, a cart is tearing down the bumpy road with Gregor's face leering from the back. Traffic is dense with merchants seeking to fix their smashed trade stands, passers-by who couldn't get out of the way quick enough, and panicked animals. The chase is on. Somewhere during the grand ruckus, a heavily armored woman – Nova – hops aboard the escaping coach. One young child is slung over each of her broad shoulders. Make it clear that she's carrying the last two kids Gregor needs to carry out the sacrificial ritual.

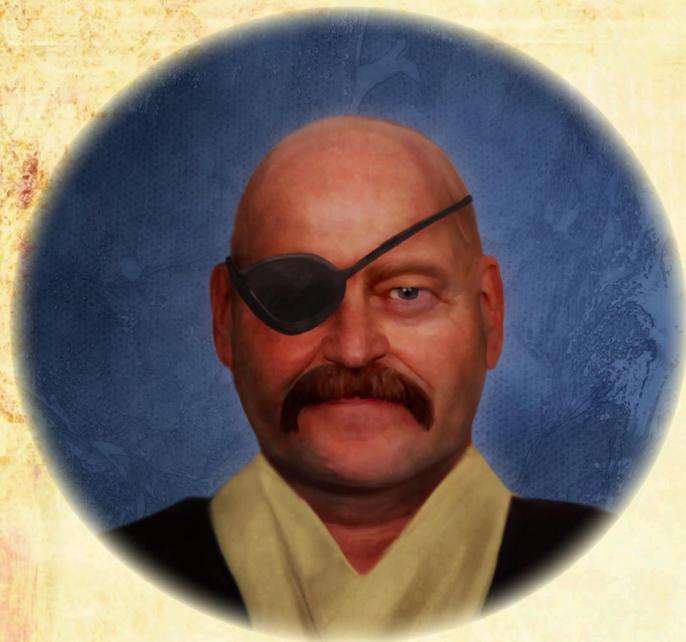
Your players will miss out on some interesting scenes if they catch Gregor straight away, so don't be afraid to spend Karma in aiding the carriage's escape. After the characters have made several attempts to wear it down, the carriage will speed across a narrow bridge crossing a deep gully. Otto, a discredited guild wizard is waiting on the other side to cast two spells on the bridge: first, an Obscure spell to raise a bank of mist for the cart to escape into. Next, he raises a stone Barrier to cover his own escape. Four members of Gregor's gang, all Extras, aid in Otto's escape, but they're only buying Gregor and Nova time to set the traps in their lair. If Otto is captured, he's more than willing to sell out his employers.

Thugs

These miscreants, brigands, and ne'er-do-wells have been assembled from the worst alleys of Garris to slow down the characters. When they're not cracking heads for Gregor, they're moving boxes or suffering from sporadic infections. If the characters find themselves tussling with them, use the standard soldier statistics from the Savage Worlds rules, supply them with clubs (**Damage:** Str+d6), and you're good to go.

Otto

After his once-in-a-lifetime streak at the card table ended, Otto was no longer welcome on any Wizards Guild premises. Although no one could prove that he had cheated, they had all lost enough money that they didn't care. Otto lived off his 'severance package' for as long as he could before admitting to himself that freelance mischief was the only career that suited his temperament. Although he's in his mid-30s Otto is prematurely bald, though he sports a slick moustache to make up for it.



Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Gambling d8, Guts d4, Notice d4, Spellcasting d8

Pace 6 Parry 4 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Edges: Gifted (Barrier, Obscure, Speed)

Gear: Knife (**Damage:** Str+d4)

Even without Otto's help, the lair is easy enough to find. It's in a poorer district, where the locals are quite skilled at getting out of the way of oncoming carts. They're able to give directions all the way to where the vehicle has been abandoned in a nearby alley – right across the street from Gregor's lair.

Entering The Lair

The building itself is a simple single storey affair with no access to the roof (though a Climbing check would do the trick for anyone who wanted to get up there, where they would find a curious box with a tarpaulin thrown over it – more on that later). Inside, the building is pretty barren. There is a rickety old table in one corner and a couple of just-as-rickety-looking old chairs, a small, old chest against one wall, and a threadbare rug on the floor. There is no door, but the entrance does have shutters made of badly warped wood.

Any attempt to search the room reveals a trapdoor beneath the rug. A Raise on the Notice check will reveal that the chest is secured to the floor by metal rails, and has been shifted slightly to the left of its normal position along the rails.

Moving the chest back to its original position results in a muffled but audible 'click'. This disables the trap on the trapdoor.

If the characters don't disarm the trap, opening the trap door will trigger a crushing stone slab. Directly above the trapdoor there is a patch of roof that looks much newer than the ceiling around it. On the roof, above this new ceiling, is a box covered in a tarpaulin that houses the rest of the trap – a heavy slab of rock. When the trap is triggered, it tips a potent bottle of acid into pre-cut grooves in the ceiling to give the trap a slight delay. One round after it is tripped, the acid will have weakened the roof enough to let the slab crush through the roof and slam down directly on top of the trapdoor. Anyone hit by the falling block trap can look forward to 2d8 damage with AP 2. The falling slab makes enough noise to serve as a suitable alarm for anyone hiding in the lair below, and then there's the little problem of moving the heavy slab out of the way in order to continue the pursuit... (A Strength check at -4 is required to move the slab; up to six characters can pitch in and do it together.)

The trapdoor leads to a basement via a stepladder; a person opening the door and descending swiftly might escape the trap. Any companions intending to follow will likely get a stone slab on their head. The basement mirrors the dimensions of the floor above but has a set of stairs in one corner, leading down into the gloom. The room is quite clearly in heavy use, containing basic foodstuffs, water, beer, rope, etc. There are enough crates and barrels in here to feed a decent-sized group of people for a week.

Deeper Into Darkness

After several flights of wooden stairs, the wood gives way to a much older staircase of stone, which descends deeper still. The stone staircase is smooth and lacks any sign of life – no moss, fungus or even insects. Act I ends here, but segues immediately into Act II. Through this first session the players should have been settling in and getting used to the way Suzerain works (and what their characters can do), trying out interesting actions while chasing escaping bad guys, gaining confidence all the time. Next, they get to pit their characters' skills against a small, traditional dungeon crawl. By the end of Act II we'll take the training wheels off and it'll be time for the full experience.

Return Of The Dragon God: Act II

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

As the second act begins, remind your players of Gregor's insanity, and the great pains that he has taken to secure these children. Give them something to think about as their characters descend into the bowels of Garris. There's a bigger picture here, but what?

The last step of the stairs is unstable – it's on a pivot so should a person step on it, it will roll forward under the weight, triggering a spear trap. The trap inflicts 3d8 damage with AP 1 to the poor sap in the lead unless he can successfully make an Agility check at -4.

The Old Fort

Under the city of New Garris lie the ruins of Old Garris, swallowed in the last great siege of the War of the Wild, 208 years before. Gregor has dug into and refitted one small section for his own purposes, including the old catacombs of the former cathedral where he's got the demi-ogre bound and plans to carry out his terrible ritual.

The characters should be able to follow his trail easily until they get to the makeshift barracks inhabited by his hired muscle, who get to use the space for their own purposes as soon as the sacrifices have been made.

Unless the characters have been especially stealthy in pursuing Gregor and infiltrating the lair, the thugs are ready for them. The group enters a large area with four small bunk rooms to their left, sectioned off from the main room. On the other side of the main area from the entrance is an exit, in front of which two tables have been overturned to serve as firing screens for two crossbowmen. They're backed up by their boss and two swordsmen.

To cross the area, the characters will pass the doors to the small rooms. Four more swordsmen are waiting in the small rooms, watching through spy holes, ready to burst out as soon as the characters get into the middle of the main space or when the boss calls for them. Once the fight starts, they will go on hold and wait for any close combatants to come charging

past them before rushing out to stop the charge from reaching their crossbowmen.

Thugs

This hired muscle is little different from the thugs from earlier. Use the standard soldier template again. However, these men are better equipped, with Short Swords (Str+d6), Crossbows (2d6, AP 2, 1 round to reload), and Leather Jack Armor (+1 armor to the torso and arms).



Boss Thug

The leader looks similar to his men, except he is a Wild Card with the Edges Command and Fervor. Also, he is two inches taller and sports a well-trimmed beard.

A Notice roll after the encounter reveals each of the thugs wears a pendant around their neck. The pendants give the wearer +2 on any check to resist Fatigue. They also allow the wearer to use the shackles (coming up shortly). As magic items, they are shoddily made enchantments and lose their power after one week.

There's an alcove on the far side of the room, with a locked door closing it off – the thug leader has the key. It contains a glowing red Pulse portal and a crate of pendants similar to the ones worn by the thugs. Each character can draw Pulse from the portal once (and once only) by paying one Karma and making a Spirit check. The result of the check is the amount of Pulse regained.

Shackles

After plowing through the thugs, the characters travel through a door. This might lead to more of the dungeon if you fancy adding more, or just head into the next encounter. Either way, at some point they'll get to the room where the kidnapped children were kept. Straw mattresses litter the floor and the smell is stomach-turning. Jutting from the ground near the straw mattresses are several metal spikes with surprisingly strong Pulse signatures.

If a character who isn't wearing a thug's pendant approaches within 2 inches of a spike, a set of Pulse shackles shoots out and wraps about his wrists and ankles in the spirit world. Once ensnared, every inch

a character moves away from the spike deals one level of automatic Fatigue. The shackles can be easily removed by anyone wearing a pendant (or by simply dropping a spare pendant over the head of a trapped character).

Searching the straw mattresses reveals a chilling message scrawled in the filth by tiny fingers: Let us die. One of the children has come to understand the true nature of what Gregor is trying to do (save the world), and wants to stop any ill-conceived rescue attempt. But since when did roleplay characters listen to hostages and kidnap victims, or anyone else for that matter, when they're convinced they're doing the right thing?

Nova Attacks

The characters move on. It's another opportunity to add rooms and ambushes if you want, or to go straight to the next encounter. The fiery chasm is Gregor's last line of defense, but it's a good one. It is blocked by a large set of double doors marked with many strange glyphs. Anyone passing through this door must make a Spirit check (with +2 if in possession of a pendant from earlier), or take a level of Fatigue as the bound watchdog spirit tears at their confidence.

On the other side of the door is a bubbling pit of magma, bridged by a single span of hardened lava. Gregor has called in a favor with a powerful spirit of flame to create this room. Waiting at the far end of the gantry, where it is at its narrowest, is Gregor's accomplice, Nova. She is under the influence of an

Environmental Protection spell and therefore does not suffer the same discomforting heat as the characters, who must pass Vigor checks at -2 or receive a level of Fatigue each round. Nova believes in Gregor's cause, and refuses to let anyone pass.

Nova

Nova grew up on the mean streets of Garris, and they made her hard. Rock hard. She has been Gregor's partner ever since rescuing him from a surprise barbarian attack in a tavern five years ago. Although they've had their differences since then, she supports Gregor's mad crusade fully: she knows what's at stake in the room behind her. Any sacrifice is acceptable for a clean slate for the future.

Nova's job is to hold the bridge at all costs, and she will only move from that spot when she is dead. If the players engage her in conversation she will attempt to convince them that Gregor is working for the greater good and will rationalize it any way she can – it all buys Gregor the time he needs. Failing that, she will begin by Taunting or Intimidating her would-be attackers to get the +2 on her next action against them, opting for the Fatigue penalty over shaking her opponents on a Raise, knowing full well the room's heat can be a powerful ally if she can tough it out long enough. Once people close, she will sweep when multiple targets are present, going on hold to maximize her blows. Wild attacks may well follow.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6+2, Notice d6, Taunt d6+2

Pace 6 Parry 8(2) Toughness 9(3) Pulse 15

Gear: Longsword (**Damage:** Str+d8) Breastplate (+3 armor, torso) and Chain (+2 armor, all locations), Large Shield (+2 Parry, +2 armor against ranged attacks)

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Strong Willed, Sweep

Special Abilities

- *Environmental Protection:* This power has been cast on her before this encounter to make her immune to the room's Fatigue effect.



The Final Countdown

After Nova falls, the characters are free to enter Gregor's ritual chamber, which should follow straight on from the lava room. It was once the catacombs of the cathedral in Old Garris, as evidenced by its crumbling sarcophagi and decorative stone pillars. Any guarding ghosts of great knights have long departed, leaving the place cold and desecrated.

A portal into the Veil stretches between two of the pillars, appearing as a region of buckling, distorted air. Ten dirty and scared children are chained to plinths located around the room.

As soon as the characters enter the room, Gregor finishes his chant of summoning, "Come forth and earn your payment!" he screams. At this, five Veil spirits spill out of the portal, manifest, and make their way at normal Pace to the chained children. Each child's soul takes one round to harvest, and

each spirit returns to the portal after obtaining two souls. Meanwhile, Gregor will fight like a caged tiger to prevent the characters interfering with the spirits.

During all of this there is a great, brutish demi-ogre in the corner. He's unable to die in this era, but is unable to move due to Gregor's supernatural shackles, supercharged by the spirits' power. If Gregor dies, the shackles will break and the demi-ogre immediately charges into the portal and back to his own time.

Once the demi-ogre is gone, the spirits have been destroyed, or have finished their task and returned to the portal, it closes. The shackles on the demi-ogre break (if they haven't already), and it's not inconceivable that the characters will have to fight a very angry bad guy – see Act III for his stats. If he fails to get through the portal he'll focus on killing Gregor first (if Gregor's still alive), then the characters.



Gregor



After serving Garris' Guardians for too long, Gregor has seen too much. His deal with the Veil spirits was too much for his mind and now he cares for nothing but the completion of his mission. Only success will be able to justify his existence and assuage his tormented mind, despite the terrible price he's paying for their help.

In spite of his mental instability, Gregor is in good shape and a dangerous foe to underestimate. Years spent trailing Garris' elite and observing the depravities of the supernatural world have toughened him up and eroded his compassion at the same time. He is hollow-eyed and ragged. There is little left to suggest Gregor's once proud bearing, but hints of strength shine through when his speech turns toward justice.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d8, Guts d10, Investigation d10, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Pace 6 Parry 7(1) Toughness 6 Pulse 20

Edges: Arcane Resistance, Combat Reflexes, Nerves Of Steel, No Mercy

Gear: Spear (**Damage:** Str+d6, Reach 1, +1 Parry)

Veil Spirit

Like their cloudy home, Veil spirits are difficult to define around the edges. They resemble nothing more than dark gray humanoids made of coiled fog, lit by flashing neurons of Pulse. Although they look like they'll drift away at any second, their physical bodies are deceptively solid. Are these residents of the Veil merely spirits like others of their kind, or something more sinister? The nature of the deal they've struck with Gregor should hint to something more... demonic in their nature, something that might make an interesting plot hook for a sub-plot later in the characters' epic career. We leave that to your discretion.

The spirits are only interested in collecting their payment. They ignore the characters as much as they're able, knowing that once they have the souls of the children, the destruction of their physical forms will only hasten their return through the portal. However, once attacked they will fight back against any characters preventing them from claiming their payment.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8, Taunt d8

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 8 Pulse 15

Special Abilities

- *Demonic:* +2 Toughness
- *Claws:* (**Damage:** Str+d6)
- *Aura of Torment:* The first time any character is adjacent to a Veil spirit, he must make a Spirit check or take a level of Fatigue. A Raise on the roll makes the character immune to this effect from all Veil spirits for the rest of the scene. A character must make a check against each Veil spirit he comes into contact with. The Fatigue from this ability cannot Incapacitate a character.
- *Spirit:* Veil spirits can manifest while within 12 inches of a portal as an action costing 1 Pulse. It is only while manifested that they can 'harvest' the souls of the children, by killing them.



Return Of The Dragon God: Act III

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (final year of the Second Age).

Time passes. Relic adventures are adventured (from the Savage Tales here or others of your devising). The characters develop till they hit the magic mark – Heroic rank!

After the characters have gotten a taste of what being Heroic and Legendary is really about (we're assuming they'll be about 90xp for the next part, but it's up to you as always), the gods will assign them a task: return to their home realm to deal with the fallout from one of their earliest adventures. Isn't time travel great? Despite their best efforts in Act II of the campaign, the demi-ogre with the incantation escaped back to the War of the Wild, 208 years earlier. The armies of the true dragons, working alongside the evil Wild, will use it to bring about a terrible abomination unless someone can stop their ritual. Three guesses on who gets that job.

But what if the demi-ogre didn't get through the portal? That could derail the whole plot and leave you with some free sessions for other adventures, or you could explain that the dragon kin sent another assassin robot to terminate the leader of the... no wait, that's a different story altogether. The dragon kin sent another demi-ogre that even Gregor didn't know about. The first one was just a decoy and the second one got back in time to kick off this part of the story.

Preamble

The gods send the characters back to fix their mess, but the characters may not know much about any mess. After all, they might think they foiled a madman's ritual and saved the lives of many children. What could be bad with that? If they didn't learn much of the plot before, this is your chance for the gods to enlighten them. Pick gods the characters have associations with, patron gods in particular, or just a group of gods you'll enjoy playing.

Bottom line, it was really important to stop the demi-ogre getting through the portal (or the second demi-ogre if they stopped the first one!), and now it seems there's a massive flare-up of the nexus around

Garris that means something big is about to happen. And the prognosticators say it's definitely something bad. Oops.

It doesn't matter how much time has passed for the characters between the two bits of the story. Time is a strange thing, especially once characters become Heroic and start hopping through portals. In the mortal realms everything happens neatly, in chronological order, but on the cosmic scale of things it's taken a while for the nexus flare to pierce the Veil and alert the gods. The characters can get their gear from their pocket realm, prepare themselves mentally, and then pass through the portal that a friendly representative of the gods is holding open for them like some spiritual doorman.

What the gods failed to notice, because such details are beneath them, is that the nexus in question is in a different time, 208 years before the characters ever met Gregor in fact. Appearing in the middle of the Siege of Garris, one of the most famous bits of Relic history, should be a bit of a shock. Fortunately, the siege is a crazy chaos of people milling around in the shadow of the huge old city walls, and the characters don't stand out too much.

The city walls protect the Trader city that's behind them. What they don't protect is the Caladon town that's in front of them. The Caladonians are refugees who were displaced from their own lands by the armies of the Wild and the Traders were good enough to let them create a settlement just outside Garris. It has plenty of medieval style buildings and, a little way off, a cathedral in honor of the Caladonians' Goddess, Trinity. Now though the Wild is knocking at the door and in an attempt to save the Caladonian settlement the Alliance army has set up battle lines to try and repel the Wild.

Within minutes of arrival, a messenger approaches the characters who relays the message that Commander Jessop, in charge of the Caladonian knights, is waiting for them in the command tent. Upon entering the tent, they are greeted by the distinguished lady Commander who is destined to become a heroic figure in Caladon's history books. After identifying the group as elite mercenaries and going through introductions, she returns to a table displaying the state of the battle lines. She fills them in on the situation:

“Bad news. Reports tell us the Wild are using the cathedral they took from us yesterday as the focal point for something big. Big enough to destroy it. The occupation of the cathedral was a massive blow to morale; its destruction might well be the last straw. We can’t let that happen.”

Jessop turns to a statue of Trinity and offers a short prayer, “Trinity gives us hope, be the Light in the darkness.” It’s an ancient blessing spoken in an old dialect, a bit like Shakespeare talking to a modern audience. Then she continues her briefing:

“The cathedral lies here, behind the new enemy lines. The dragon kin and their elite demi-ogre warriors hold that end of the line for the Wild army, but we have a way in. We’re fairly sure the dragon kin don’t know about the escape tunnel from the cathedral catacombs; the entrance is well concealed at both ends. It surfaces here,” she points to the map just where the front lines are, a few hundred yards from the cathedral, “which is as close to good news as it gets. I plan to launch a dawn offensive tomorrow against the whole of the line. The engagement will be a smokescreen. My real objective is to push back their front line far enough so we can get a team into that tunnel to stop the dragons desecrating or destroying our holiest site. That’s where you come in. Get into the tunnel and drive the dragon kin from our most sacred house of Trinity.”

The battle line can be as simple or as complex as suits your group, but at bare minimum the section of line they are attacking should contain several large troop tents (3 or more) in a neat military line. Behind the tents a single Arc Tower looms, providing fire support.

Before the characters can get to the tents, there are large camp fires, one burning between each pair of tents (and a few meters in front). On the periphery of the light provided by the fires, there’s a line of patrolling ratten sentries whose unenviable job it is to walk back and forth checking in with one another or playing ‘spot the corpse and raise the alarm’ when someone isn’t at a checkpoint.

The characters can ask as many questions as they like and gather any last-minute resources. Any reasonable request will automatically be granted – this is after all a crucial mission. Bear in mind, however, the Alliance’s resources are hugely limited and whatever they take

another warrior has to give up. Make them meet the soldiers who are giving up their equipment for the characters, watch knights taking off their armor and hand it over. That sort of thing.

The map of the enemy lines in front of the tunnel entrance shows their defenses like this:

Here are some of the things the characters may find out as they ask questions:

- The arc towers belonged to the Traders (who built Garris originally and who led the Alliance against the Wild), but were turned around as soon as the dragon kin broke through their perimeter and took control of them. Each one is an elevated stone bunker armed with a fast-firing lightning engine.
- The characters will have command over 30 warriors, including a sergeant to lead and hold the breach until the mission is complete. Each player should be given a proportion of these troops to control so that they act on different initiative numbers.
- Each tent contains around a dozen enemy troops who may be awake at dawn, but not battle ready. The characters can expect to meet dragon kin, demi-ogres, ratten guards, and possibly ‘larger threats’.
- The hidden tunnel entrance is 12 inches beyond the arc tower. The exit into the catacombs is a small elevator concealed in the base plinth of a large statue. It is not catastrophically noisy, but anyone in the catacombs would surely hear it.

The meeting with Commander Jessop ends mid-afternoon, and the assault is the following morning. As soon as everyone is ready, plunge headfirst into the fray.

Pushing The Line

The scene as the characters sneak forward in the pre-dawn should be pretty close to the setup shown on the description given, but feel free to spice things up to account for misinformation and battlefield surprises. The one suggested surprise is that overnight some clouds rolled in, and a fine misty rain seems to hang in the atmosphere. It has a rank smell and feels slightly greasy on the skin – a reminder of the perverting nature of the Wild magic. The specifics of what happens next depends on everyone’s plans. Consider the following:

The sentries are alert but not expecting an attack. As soon as they are attacked, or even reasonably suspicious, they will sound the alarm. The guards around the arc tower will then open fire on any visible targets. If none are visible they will either go on hold or use suppressive fire on an area close to where the alarm was sounded.

Each tent contains 10 troops and 1 leader. It will take two whole rounds for the inhabitants to prepare for battle before they start to emerge, at a rate of 2-3 a round.

Two rounds after the soldiers in tents have responded, a squad consisting of one ogre per character plus their demi-ogre squad leader (the one from Act I, if he made it out alive) will come crashing in from the rear. They head straight for the largest mass of troops or the unluckiest character.

Remember that the goal is not to wipe the map clear of everything that moves, and that the battle may end as soon as everyone makes a mad dash for the tunnel entrance. That said, 'surrender' is a dirty word to the agents of the Wild and their allies. The dragon kin and their soldiers will pursue unless a diversionary force is available to handle them. Make sure enough reinforcements are available to the enemy so the characters have to leave the sergeant and his surviving troops to hold that end of the line, buying the characters time to get to the cathedral.

Wild Soldiers

The characters are assaulting the part of the Wild army controlled by the dragon kin and their demi-ogre servants. Although they wear no standardized uniforms, regimental markings are common. Many dragon kin dye their facial scales to differentiate between their units. Demi-ogres prefer to drape themselves in the looted garments from their vanquished foes, mixing Trader insignia with jewelry and other, fouler trophies.

These soldiers are asleep in the tents when the action begins, but will rouse quickly and efficiently at the first sign of trouble.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Throw d8

Face 6 Parry 6 Toughness: 9(3) **Pulse** 10

Gear: Draconic Blade (**Damage:** Str+d8), Partial Draconic Plate (+3 armor, all locations), Mass Crossbow (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1, AP 4)

Edges: Combat Reflexes





Wild Sentries

The wiry, twitchy ratten don't get the nicest jobs. Sentry duty is a fine example of that. It's what they get for being practically human. If it weren't for their pointed muzzles and their slick, matted body hair, the rat-people would have found themselves enslaved long ago. As it is, they constantly need to prove themselves tough enough to roll with the dragons and ogres. Every intruder that sneaks past them is a new scaly tail adorning the belt of a demi-ogre overseer... which is quite an incentive to be super-vigilant.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Throw d8

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 7(1) Pulse 10

Gear: Draconic Blade (**Damage:** Str+d8), Leather Armor (+1 armor, all locations), Mass Crossbow (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1, AP 4)

Ogres

Big and crazed, these beasts are the larger, less human cousins to the demi-ogre troops who serve the dragon masters. Each one stands tall as a tree, with legs like squat columns. Although their sloping brows and tiny, shining eyes suggest stupidity, most ogres are simply uneducated. They know what they're built for, and treat each situation accordingly. They're hulking and easily angered, everyone else is easily crushed without resorting to more thought-intensive tactics.

One in ten ogres is completely hairless, a fact that has confounded soldiers on both sides of the battle lines for the duration of the war. This apparently means something within the ogre community, but nobody's quite sure what.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace 8 Parry 7 Toughness 11 Pulse 10

Gear: Great Mace (**Damage:** Str+d10, AP 2)

Edges: Berserk, Combat Reflexes

Special Abilities

- **Size +4:** These beast are exceptionally large and take up a 2x2 inch space. Opponents get +2 to hit them due to their size.

Demi-Ogre Squad Leader



Although smaller than their brutish cousins, demi-ogres have better muscle tone; they're more than capable of tearing an armored warrior in half with their bare hands. What's more, they possess a mean cunning that allows them to enjoy the mayhem they cause twice as much as your standard ogre. What's even scarier about their leaders is they move fast around the battlefield, delighted to rush in and engage dangerous foes one-to-one.

Demi-ogres stand a few inches taller than most human warriors, and squad leaders stand head and shoulders above the average demi-ogre. They use serious armor and serious weapons. As a result, the sound of an approaching demi-ogre leader is akin to that of a runaway garbage wagon.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d6

Pace 8 Parry 7 Toughness 13(4) Pulse 10

Gear: Demi-Ogre Sword (**Damage:** Str+d10, AP 2), Draconic Plate (+4 armor, all locations)

Edges: Berserk, Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Fleet Footed, Improved Frenzy

Special Abilities

- *Size +1*

Arc Tower

Each arc tower is an elevated stone bunker manned by two ratten sentries. The arc gun inside the bunker is a bulky Celestium emplacement capable of spitting blue lightning with the range and speed necessary to dominate a skirmish. Although none among the Wild are able to replicate these marvels of Trader technology, some ratten show a natural talent for operating them.

A small ladder on one side of each bunker leads up eight feet to a trap door. Attempting to open it may alert the sentries within, depending on the climber's Stealth roll.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Throw d8

Pace: 6 **Parry 5 Toughness 7(1) Pulse 10**

Gear: Short Sword – sheathed unless alerted (**Damage:** Str+d6), Leather Armor (+1 armor, all locations)

Arc Gun: **Ranges:** (16/32/64, **Damage:** 2d8+1, AP 2, Snapfire, ROF 4)

Stone Bunker: Toughness 10. Ranged attacks made at the slit where the gun peeks through are made at –6



Return Of The Dragon God: Act IV

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (final year of the Second Age).

Having had a session of grand scale melee, it's time to return to normal adventuring fare – the characters against the big bad, one on one. Feel free to have the characters join in with further clashes along the line before clearing the cathedral, but when they've satisfied their lust for heroic warfare on the open battlefield they should make their way, single file, along the secret tunnel to the cathedral catacombs. If the characters aren't running for their lives at this point, it's a good time to reflect upon the closeness of the walls and how far they're removed from aid. They are the cavalry, and no backup is coming after them (at least it isn't if you've played your cards right).

Inside The Catacombs

The cathedral catacombs are exactly what you'd expect: walls honeycombed with coffin bays, statues and ornate carvings everywhere, and a central chamber filled with sarcophagi for Trinity's favored. One sarcophagus is open, displaying an ornate silver chalice cupped within mummified hands. An observant character might realize this is the same place Gregor was performing his vile ritual, 208 years in the future (Heroic rank Suzerain is one of the few places you get to mix past and future tenses in that way!).

Apart from dozens of stony carvings of the pious, there are no signs of life. Anyone who checks with spirit sight will realize that this is not completely true; many of Trinity's honored dead are hanging around in spirit form.

The spirits of these holy men and women became restless the moment the dragon kin laid foot in the cathedral. As the heroes further disturb their place of sanctuary, the spirits begin to rise from their sarcophagi. Give each player a Notice check at -2 to spot them before they're fully manifested.

The spirits are a stern-faced lot but they are reasonable. If the characters demonstrate proper respect for Trinity and her exalted host, they will be allowed to pass in peace. If they simply must have the silver chalice, make jokes at the expense of the

architecture, or generally disrespect the religion in any way, the spirits will be far more likely to invoke their curse – everyone in the catacombs (apart from the spirits themselves) makes a Spirit check at -4 or suffers -2 to all actions while they are in the cathedral and catacombs. Oh, and the characters can expect to have some explaining to do when they get back to their pocket realm next – an upset Archangel or two are likely to be waiting for them with some particularly dangerous mission for them to perform by means of atonement.

If the encounter with the spirits is a peaceful one, there are many boons they could grant. The upcoming encounter is intended to be difficult though, so consider limiting their aid to a free Karma point or two, or distracting a major foe at some point. Additionally, if the characters find themselves in a bind and can't get through the Barrier the spell priests will cast (you'll learn more about them in a second), the spirits can dispel one segment of it – their contribution to getting these desecrating dragon kin off holy soil.

Showdown In The Cathedral

After heading up from the catacombs, the characters will find themselves by the main doors of the cathedral, at the opposite end of the building from the main altar. There are three spell priests on the raised altar area at the head of the cathedral. Elite demi-ogre bodyguards are spread around a black stone monolith, with as few blind spots as possible. There are two bodyguards plus one for every three characters. They are led by Hursk, an imposing mass of sinewy muscle and blood red dragon scales. While the priests are concentrating intently on their prayer of desecration, the guards are alert and ready for almost anything.

The monolith is carved with scenes of the Archangels fighting hordes of capering demons. It radiates Pulse strong enough to be visible to the naked eye, tossing off flares of burning light at an irregular tempo. Looking at the monolith with spirit sight is akin to staring at the sun.

Destroying the monolith will be difficult, but necessary. It has 16 Toughness, and is an inanimate object (Remember: Damage rolls can't Ace against inanimate objects, called shots reap no extra benefits, and one Wound will destroy it.) If the monolith is

destroyed, the Pulse it is focusing will feed back into the priests. This will cause the lesser priests to explode in messy chunks and destroy any remaining Barrier segments.

Once a fight starts, the dragon kin spell priests will siphon enough Pulse from the monolith to erect an enhanced Barrier spell (Toughness 14 and the height of two men) across the room, extending from the monolith to both side walls of the cathedral, cutting off the far end of the cathedral and the priests from the characters. The elite demiogres will not hesitate to sacrifice themselves to buy the priests enough time to finish their incantations, and will call upon all of their (considerable) training to do so. They will focus their attacks on tough targets, dog-pile the wounded, and murder every wizard they see. They're smart and nasty opponents.

When the Barrier is breached, one of the dragon kin spell priests will step back from the desecration prayer and hurl spell after spell upon the intruders. If that doesn't do the trick, the second dragon kin spell priest will try. When they run out of spells, they draw swords and engage in melee – who'd have guessed; it turns out they're pretty good fighters too.

The primary spell priest is a demi-dragon, and a pretty imposing sight. Luckily for the characters, she will move to defend herself but won't attack - the prayer continues until her dying breath.

When the demi-dragon is finally stopped, all is quiet for a beat. The sickly rain outside trickles to a halt. Has the day been won? A great, booming clap shatters the sky. An enormous flaming mass tears through the sky and rockets over the cathedral and off over the far horizon leaving a sonic boom in its wake. The characters may see it as a sign of great victory (certainly the demi-dragon's last breath, as the meteor streaks overhead, is a scream of, "Noooooooooooo!!!"). The day is saved and the gods are pleased. The nexus is no longer flaring, the divine prognosticators are nodding in approval.



As for Garris, it will be destroyed and sink into the ground in the weeks to come, but not before the Alliance army breaks the back of the Wild, sending the surviving Wild troops scattering, with Trader and Caladon and Valon heroes in hot pursuit.

To decide the ultimate fate of the Great Dragon Spirit, tune in for the next act of our campaign. He's a little harder to beat than just interrupting a prayer to him mid-stream. That said, if the characters did anything to stop the ritual early in the fight, or dispatched the primary spell priest especially quickly, consider giving them a small bonus in the final showdown. The Great Dragon Spirit may be weaker than we list him.

Elite Demi-Ogre Bodyguard

These bad boys are similar to standard issue demi-ogres (see the Wild Soldiers in Act III above), only leaner, meaner, bigger, smarter, and covered in more steel. Each one has committed numerous atrocities, and has plans for several more as soon as the current ruckus has ended. They cut intimidating figures in their red and gold plate, always ready to shout abuse and challenges from behind their crude, yet powerfully wrought dragon maw helmets.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Climb d12, Fighting d12, Guts d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Swimming d12

Pace 8 Parry 8 Toughness 15(4) Pulse 20

Gear: Two Draconic Blades (**Damage:** Str+d8), Draconic Plate (+4 armor, all locations)

Edges: Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep

Special Abilities

- *Size +2:* They're big lads.
- *Slice 'n' Dice:* Elite demi-ogre bodyguards are trained to attack with twin swords simultaneously, even against different opponents, and suffer no penalties for it (treat them as having the Ambidextrous and Two-Fisted Edges).

Hursk, Dragon Kin Champion



The leader of the demi-ogres bodyguard is readily noticed due to the skulls of two Caladonian knights that are hanging off his belt. Each one was defeated in

single combat, a matter of which Hursk is inordinately proud. He's not as large as the elite demi-ogres he commands, but that doesn't matter because he knows he's invincible – well, no enemy has been able to kill him yet. His cleaver is hefted and ready. It's time to smash puny heroes!

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Climb d12, Fighting d12, Guts d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d12, Swimming d12

Pace 8 Parry 8 Toughness 13(3) Pulse 20

Gear: Hursk's Draconic Cleaver (**Damage:** Str+d10, AP 2), Partial Draconic Plate (+3 armor, all locations)

Edges: Brawny, Combat Reflexes, Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep

Special Abilities

- *Size +1*
- *The Blood Of Dragons:* Hursk has been through a rare draconic ritual and bathed in the blood of one of the true dragons. The enchantment on his blood red scales shrugs off the greatest of blows (the equivalent of the Hardy ability and Improved Nerves Of Steel Edge).

Dragon Kin Spell Priests

The Great Dragon Spirit's chosen people resemble him in many particulars, from their scaled bodies to their impassive, draconic faces. As they age, their bodies crack and warp under the unnatural strain. Walking upright becomes uncomfortable, their claws lengthen, and their thoughts sink ever deeper into the preternatural impulses of the reptile brain. At the end of their transformation, they are both magnificent and terrible.

The dragon kin priests have not yet gone too far down the path of transformation. They resemble tall dragon kin with more of a draconic head perhaps, and have grown impressive wings. These guys are fanatics, and each has a lot to gain from summoning the Great Dragon Spirit. Despite their personal rivalries and egg-oaths, they've all banded together to protect their leader and defeat the characters.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d12, Notice d10, Spellcasting d8

Pace 8 Parry 6 Toughness 13 (3) Pulse 25
(Unlimited while the monolith is intact, but can't be used to fuel the Gifted ability 'Flood The Channels')

Gear: Draconic GreatBlade (**Damage:** Str+d12), Partial Draconic Spell Priest Armor (+3 armor, all locations)

Edges: Gifted (Barrier, Blast, Bolt, Boost/Lower Trait, Burst, Dispel, Puppet)

Special Abilities

- *Size +3*

Aara, Demi-Dragon (Primary Spell Priest)

While still bipedal, the primary priest is further along the transformation to full dragonhood. Human emotions no longer register on her armored face, and human tools are far too delicate for her monstrous talons. When she moves, it is with a slithering grace that tracks the eye; nothing so large should move so effortlessly.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d12
Strength d12+1, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d12, Notice d10, Spellcasting d8

Pace 8 Parry 5 Toughness 14 (4) Pulse 30
(Unlimited while the monolith is intact, but can't be used to fuel the Gifted ability 'Flood The Channels')

Gear: Celestium-Tipped Claws (**Damage:** Str+d8, AP 4), Full Draconic Spell Priest Armor (+4 armor, all locations)

Edges: Gifted (Barrier, Blast, Bolt, Boost/Lower Trait, Burst, Dispel, Puppet)

Special Abilities

- *Size +4:* This beast is exceptionally large and takes up a 2x2 inch space. Opponents get +2 to hit her on account of her size.
- *Vitality:* Aara automatically Soaks the first Wound in any encounter. The damage gets through, but she simply ignores it - it doesn't count as a Wound and she isn't Shaken.





Return Of The Dragon God: Act V

Realm: Mortal realms, Wilderlands, long after the Pulse War.

Once again, time passes. The characters travel from realm to realm, battling evil and being every inch the heroes of the universe. Day after day they save the day, and sleep at night content in the knowledge that they're getting the job done. They probably forget about that little incident with the cathedral – it's just one hurrah among many.

By the time they are well into Demigod rank (about 150xp), they'll be thinking they're pretty hot stuff. That's when you tell them a bit more about what's going on. As before, it's up to you whether you roleplay the intervening adventures or advance the characters artificially.

The gods gather the characters and actually look worried. They explain what they've just been told by one of their intelligence gatherers; they finally know what that whole dragon kin cathedral thing was all about. The dragons of Relic were trying to summon the Great Dragon Spirit to the mortal realms, breaking the rule about god-power entities crossing the Veil but massively unbalancing the future of mankind... in favor of the dragons taking over and enslaving all non-draconic races for all time. With a Great Spirit in the mortal realms they could easily make permanent changes to the necessary nexus points.

"So what?" the characters might say. They stopped the ritual after all. Except they didn't stop the Great Dragon Spirit landing on Earth, just threw him off target. That's what the meteor was, the physical body of a divine entity coming crashing down.

Oops.

It gets worse. The gods and their representatives overlooked the whole thing because the Great Dragon Spirit landed in a part of time and space that was barely inhabitable – the Wilderlands, a post-apocalyptic nightmare landscape with very few people left in it. Because of the gods' oversight, he's had time to build an army of dragon kin and true dragons, all working away at regenerating their master.

The characters are considered very competent demigods, and because they're so competent it's their job to finish what they started... to infiltrate the

draconic army and slay the mortal body of the Great Dragon Spirit, spending him back to the Maelstrom where the gods will be waiting to capture him and imprison him.

One more thing: the dragons are besieging a base run by survivors of the war that created the Wilderlands. It's a new nexus that has appeared, a place where history could be remade. The dragons need fresh blood to regenerate the Great Dragon Spirit, and the base might just contain enough people to complete the process. Luckily, as often happens with nexuses, a portal has appeared in the base as well. Which gives the characters a chance to turn up and save the day!

Hangin' On

The action starts in a futuristic base manned by the Pure – genetically perfect humans who are hanging on against hordes of dragon kin out for their blood. It's only a matter of time until the defenders are captured.

The characters' welcome to the Wilderlands takes place in a fortified sci-fi hangar with the Maelstrom portal in one corner. Reinforced barricade blocks give the Pure some cover; a gutted hover tank is flipped on its side in the middle of the hangar. The Pure control two sentry guns, aimed at the main entrance to the hangar, and the defenders are protecting a single corridor leading out behind them. This, however, is where they're making their stand for now.

The characters appear in the hangar through an experimental portal device that has long been scavenged for useful parts, and is assumed not to work. They probably scare the heck out of the Pure, who are understandably paranoid about strangers since being attacked. Oh, and we should mention that they're massive xenophobes and human supremacists... if any of the characters is clearly not human, give the group -2 to all social checks with the people they're supposed to save.

To make the situation more dangerous, the characters appear in the middle of one of the assaults by the dragons – wave one died in the corridor but wave two has just established a foothold in the hangar having dealt with the hover tank. Deal initiative straight away and expect a few shots to be fired at the characters from both factions while everyone figures out who's on whose side. All the time there will be

plenty of gunfire and other unpleasantness between the defenders and assaulting force. The characters are demigods, and it's time to prove their demigod diplomacy skills. They'll need to communicate quickly and efficiently to save the situation.

Once the characters convince the Pure whose side they're on, things should get significantly easier. Dr. Aman Scilene, nominal leader of the cell of survivors, doesn't much care who the characters are as long as they have weapons and they're pointing them in the right direction.

The dragon kin have stolen a few matter destabilizers, which burn holes through the Pure defenses as if they weren't there. As soon as the initial barrage is over, slaver teams with concussion grenades, and energy rifles set to stun rush in and grab as many defenders as they can.

A wave consists of one dragon (use the standard dragon from Savage Worlds but remove its Wild Card status and add the new creature ability Vitality), 4 dragon kin raiders + 1 per character, and a demi-dragon Sergeant. Gruul is the Sergeant of the second wave; subsequent Sergeants are Wild Cards at your discretion. Wave three will be along 5 rounds after the characters arrive on the scene, further waves can be sent if you feel the need to keep the action going longer. There are 6 Pure survivors and Dr Scilene holding the line.

This is your chance to run a claustrophobic sci-fi ruckus, with unending swarms of dragon kin, some over-the-top technology, and a few demi-dragon champions/leaders thrown in for good measure. Once the initial assault has been repulsed, Scilene will take the characters into the corridor, down to the maze of rooms that make up the basement level where the remaining Pure are sheltering. It's a scared group of a dozen or so children, elderly folk, and wounded fighters. The rest of their base has already been over-run, with a hundred people killed or taken by the dragons.

In addition to the two sentry guns, the Pure have access to six ghost suits, a collection of Pulse ports, and a colony of Celestium nanobots. Each ghost suit allows its wearer to travel into the spirit world for one hour for 4 Pulse. The Pulse ports are easily installed cyberwear that allow the use of Pulse rifles and pistols, as well as access to the sentry gun

controls and powering the ghost suits. The nanobots are composed of Suzerain's rarest of rare Pulse-conductive materials – Celestium. The Pure have 100 Pulse stored in total. Every Pulse point of nanobots can dismantle a 5 meter cube of inorganic material or five mook-level opponents, atom by atom. This stash of nanobots is the greatest treasure of the Pure, once used for mining operations but now irreplaceable. Given the circumstances, though, they're willing to use it all if necessary.

Breaking Out

Staying in the base would be suicide. The characters will need to do something bold, and fast! A popular rumor among the survivors suggests that everyone who's captured by the outsiders is brought somewhere far off for an apocalyptic purpose. Could this ragtag group of Pure be inspired to rescue their companions? Possibly – all they need are leaders and transport.

The hover tank's no longer operational, but there's a fully-stocked motor pool in the next cluster of buildings, less than 500 meters from the hangar entrance. There are a good 10,000 dragon kin encamped in this bit of the Wilderlands, but this is hardly a time for quibbling about numbers.

Diversions are the way to make it across No Man's Land and to snag a VTOL Pterodactyl or a couple of fortified ATVs. The dragon kin have numbers, control the guard towers, and may have mines at their disposal. But they're not expecting a counter attack. The hangar entrance is the center of the dragons' attention, but those nanobots could chomp the earth up from the basement and create a new tunnel out – the nearest they could get is 250 meters from the motor pool, but that's half the distance covered and the group will appear somewhere the dragons aren't expecting them.

Make them the longest 250 meters the characters have ever travelled. Remind them that they have children and wounded people with them. Remind them that they can't let the dragons capture any more people alive. Make them make hard choices and use every power at their disposal as you count down the distance and more dragons of various sizes appear.

And then, as soon as the characters hotwire their new rides, the dragon kin will release a brace of hydras to give pursuit.

Road Trip

The characters are in the middle of a dragon army. Many of the larger dragons have wings, so being airborne isn't any guarantee of safety. The characters will want to get the heck out of there, and fast. Except that their target is the epicenter of draconic activity, an enormous crater that's easily visible from the base. That's the landing spot of the Great Dragon Spirit, and that's where the characters need to go if they're to stop all of mankind's future suffering the fate of these Pure.

Everywhere they go is marked by scorched rubble and hints at the realm's past. Flaming crevasses in the ground are not uncommon. Some days their glow is the only light not swallowed up by the frosted brown cloud cover. More dangerous than the flame pits are the localized gravity wells. These invisible killers are fallout from before the Wilderlands went by that name. The first sign that one's nearby is the sudden, crushing pressure and crippling pain. Next comes the inexorable pull toward the center of gravity. Anything not rescued before reaching the center is utterly destroyed by the process. On top of all that, everywhere they go there are dragons and dragon kin, some armed with technology scavenged from the rest of the Pure base, others with nothing but their formidable natural weaponry.

Unless the characters are planning some post-apocalyptic tourism, they'll be heading straight for the crater, which is where we move on to Act VI for the thrilling conclusion to the campaign!

Dragon Kin Raider

Dragon kin look pretty much the same, no matter where you find them. These raiders are about the same size as Hursk, the champion in Act IV of the campaign, but not as developed as the casters, and their claws are sharp enough to use as weapons. They're still capable of displaying human emotion, but there's something off about it. They're perfectly still most of the time, seemingly moving at the last second in pursuit of their inscrutable goals.

Although well-armed (using stolen tech scavenged from the Pure base!), the raiders wear a motley assortment of human uniforms from several eras, animal skins, and spiked leather biker gear. Because, well, it's a post-apocalyptic setting after all.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Shooting d8, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 9 Pulse 10

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Gear: Concussion Grenade (**Ranges:** 4/8/12, **Damage:** 2d10, Medium Burst Template, Agility roll vs. damage or be knocked prone), Energy Rifle (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d8, AP 2, 3 RB, can be set to stun so damage Incapacitates only and recovers like Fatigue). A few raiders also have access to Matter Destabilizers which are a bit like single-shot bazookas (**Ranges:** 24/48/96, **Damage:** 4d10, AP 20, HW, single shot)

Special Abilities

Size +1

Claws: (**Damage:** Str+d6, AP 2)



Gruul, Demi-Dragon Sergeant

Gruul's midnight blue scales contrast with red and black of her troops. She modifies her coloration further with bright yellow war paint. Although impractical, it has an inspirational effect on the raiders. Even broken and bloodied they will follow her over the next shattered wall; that is how it has been and nothing can change their fanatical willingness to serve her.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Shooting d12, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 14(2) Pulse 20

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Inspire, Fervor, First Strike, No Mercy

Gear: Concussion Grenade (**Ranges:** 4/8/12, **Damage:** 2d10, Medium Burst Template, Agility roll vs. damage or be knocked prone), Energy Rifle (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d8, AP 2, 3 RB, can be set to stun so damage Incapacitates only and recovers like Fatigue)

Special Abilities

- *Size +4:* This beast is exceptionally large and takes up a 2x2 inch space. Opponents get +2 to hit her on account of her size.
- *Tough Hide:* +2 armor
- *Claws:* (**Damage:** Str+d8, AP 3)



Hydra

Somewhere along the line, some bright dragon kin decided that normal fire-breathing dragons didn't have enough oomph and demanded more. The Great Dragon Spirit provided. More heads. More attitude. More muscle. Just more.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d12+11, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Guts d8, Intimidation d10, Notice d10+2, Shooting d12, Throwing d8, Tracking d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 22(6) Pulse 20

Edges: Awareness, Improved Sweep, No Mercy

Special Abilities

- *Size +8:* These things take up a 2x3 inch space and attacks against them are made at +2.
- *Double Tough Hide:* +6 armor/ all locations.
- *Double Sharp Double Strong Bite:* (Damage Str+d10, AP 6, Reach 2)
- *Breath Fire:* As the power Burst, use Shooting as the 'casting' die
- *Fear:* Seeing this monster inspires Guts checks with a -1 modifier
- *Fearless*
- *Vitality:* A hydra automatically Soaks the first wound in any encounter. The damage gets through, but it simply ignores it - it doesn't count as a Wound and the hydra isn't Shaken.
- *Many Heads:* The hydra has 5 heads and each is considered separately, meaning they take no multi-action penalty for all attacking. Wounding a head disables just that head and does not take the creature out of action unless it's the last head. Killing the body is the quickest way to shut down the beast. Each use of Improved Sweep requires two heads to work in co-operation. Every head can use the Breath Fire ability.

Pure Survivors

The few Pure tough or lucky enough to have survived the initial onslaught are a rare breed. Even in times of peace their people were known for being skilled and resourceful technologists. Those who remain are a particularly hardy bunch. Due to their extensive

genetic therapy, the Pure are disconcerting to those from other realms. Even in the middle of a sustained firefight, they don't appear overly disheveled; every move they make flows as if it was rehearsed several times before execution.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Notice d8+1, Shooting d8, Taunt d6+1

Pace 6 Parry 7(1) Toughness 9(4) Pulse 15 Charisma +1

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Pure Strain Human

Gear: Energy Blade (**Damage:** Str+d6+2, AP 2, Parry +1), Pure Combat Fatigues (+4 armor, all locations), Pulse Rifle (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d10, AP 4, Auto, 3RB), Pulse Port (allows use of Pulse weapons and internal targeting computer gives +1 to hit when using them)



Dr. Aman Scilene

By virtue of a cool head and a quick mind, Dr. Scilene has become the impromptu leader of the band of survivors. Although combat and tactics are not his core strengths, the last several weeks have revealed talents he never expected. Still very much the brainy scientist, Dr. Scilene is prone to giving overly technical explanations and verbose suggestions when out of immediate danger.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6, Knowledge (Advanced Particle Science) d12+1, Notice d8+1, Repair d8+1, Shooting d8, Taunt d6+1

Pace 6 Parry 7(1) Toughness 9(4) Pulse 20 Charisma +1

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Command, Dodge, Level Headed, Pure Strain Human

Gear: Pure Blade (**Damage** Str+d6+2, AP 4, Parry +1), Pure Fatigues (+4 armor, all locations), Pulse Pistol (**Ranges:** 10/20/40, **Damage:** 2d8+1, AP 4, SemiAuto), Pulse Port (allows use of Pulse weapons and internal targeting computer gives +1 to hit when using them)

Vehicles

VTOL Pterodactyl

It moves like a helicopter, but there the similarities end. Vaguely egg-shaped and heavily armored all around, the Pterodactyl is completely sealed when buttoned up. Internal view screens take the place of windows, though no external cameras (or weapons, or anything else for that matter) can be seen. The hideously complex multi-layered interface, which is only accessible through a Pulse port, is enough to confuse the best pilot. Non-Pure attempting to pilot the craft do so at -2, and there is a further -2 penalty for any pilot whose Smarts is under d10.

Type: Aircraft

Acc/TS: 24/70

Toughness: 26(10)

Crew: 1+8

Cost: Not for sale!

Notes: Climb 24, Heavy Armor, Counter-Sensor Measures (-6 to detect with sensors), Sealed Environment, armaments including Missile Rack with 4 missiles (**Ranges:** 24/48/96, **Damage:** 3d8, AP 8, HW, ROF 4) and Rail Cannon (**Damage:** 3d8, AP 8, HW, ROF 4, **Ranges:** 24/48/96), Other suitably high-tech toys at the GM's discretion.



Sentry Guns

The Pure's sentry guns are ball-mounted armored turrets capable of a full spectrum of rotation. For those with a fondness for ordnance, the sight of twin rail cannons tracking and leading targets must be the most inspirational sight in the world. The world can't be in that much trouble, with all these fireworks in the air! For the rest of us though, it's downright terrifying.

Type: Stationary Emplacement

Toughness: 21(12)

Crew: 1

Cost: Unknown

Notes: Twin Rail Cannon (**Ranges:** 24/48/96, **Damage:** 3d8+2, AP 8, HW, ROF 4), Targeting Suite (+2 to operator's Shooting rolls). These guns are large, taking up a 2x2 inch area, and attacks against them are made at +2.

Fortified ATV

It's a good thing the Wilderlands are so empty because otherwise you'd never be able to find a parking spot in this thing. The standard-issue fortified ATV is tough enough to survive the worst of the post-apocalyptic terrain with only minor scratches in the paint and an oil change every 10,000 miles.

This pretty little piece of hardware features multiple axles, massive, acid-resistant tires, and armor plating like nobody's business. It's perfect for military support, picnics on the beach, or even salt-flat death racing. The typical Pure ATV is unarmed, but dragon kin flout this generalization all the time.

Type: Land

Acc/TS: 8/40

Toughness: 30(10)

Crew: 1+20

Cost: Unknown

Notes: Heavy Armor, Counter-Sensor Measures (-6 to detect with sensors), Sealed Environment, Everything the enterprising grunt needs to ascend massive inclines and plow through the stickiest quagmire. Various armaments are possible, but communications arrays and enhanced sensor suites are more common.

Return Of The Dragon God: Act VI

Realm: Mortal realms, Wilderlands (long after the Pulse War).

No build-up is necessary here. You should know what to expect by this point: the characters are going to take down the Great Dragon Spirit's physical form, so the gods can chain him somewhere in an unfathomable backwater of the Maelstrom.

The rim of the crater is lined with dragon kin warriors and larger dragons, waiting in barely contained ecstasy for their master's return. Blood pools around the physical form of the Great Dragon Spirit, allowing Pulse to sink into his regenerating flesh. We should point out that the crater is simply huge and the half-fleshy, half-skeletal dragon fills it all. Let's put it this way - his mouth alone could swallow a football field. This task isn't going to be as simple as walking up to him and socking him on the jaw.

As the characters close in, their Telesmae start getting talky. The gods want to make sure that the characters get it right, so they're opening up all the lines of communication. The gods are aware of the four steps necessary to banish the Great Dragon Spirit from the mortal realms, and will explain them as the characters approach the crater and get their first glimpse of the opponent.

To Kill The King Of Dragons

1. Raising The Scale: His physical form can only be destroyed at the heart, yet that's also the place where he already has immeasurably hard scales. However, several of the Great Dragon Spirit's scales have not yet hardened into their final position. One of these can be pried up to reach the new, tender flesh below. Each round a character must succeed at a Strength test at -4 to either lift the scale or keep it held aloft. As soon as a scale is hoisted, stage two can begin.

2. Exhausting The Dragon: Hammering at the Great Dragon Spirit's flesh brings the brave character into direct conflict with the spirit's personified endurance. The character making the attempt must pay 1 Pulse and make a Vigor test at -4. Every success and each Raise inflicts a level of Fatigue on the Dragon Spirit. Every level of Fatigue dealt reduces the Vigor penalty by -1. After the flesh receives three levels of

Fatigue, it is exhausted. The player who wrestled it into submission may pay 1 Karma or 10 Pulse to 'seal' the damage. Otherwise, the flesh will fully regenerate whenever a joker is dealt and the characters are all pushed back to the surface and need to start the whole process again.

Exhausting the flesh is only one part of the process. The characters need to exhaust the opponent completely, mind, body and soul. Exhausting the spirit works in the same way as exhausting the flesh, only Spirit replaces Vigor and the Great Spirit has a whole new Fatigue track for its spiritual Fatigue. Because the Great Dragon Spirit is a being of god-like power, his Fatigue tracks don't stack. Exhausting the mind works similarly, only Smarts replaces Vigor and he has a whole new Fatigue track for mental Fatigue.

After the mind, flesh and spirit have been exhausted and sealed (in any order) the characters have torn a deep enough hole in the Great Spirit to reach his pulsating viscera. As they descend, gore is everywhere.

3. Shredding The Heart: The Great Spirit's beating heart is the final obstacle before reaching the very core of his being. Some brave character has to tear into the house-sized heart by dealing two Wounds with a single attack (against Parry 5 Toughness 12) and then plunging in, expending 1 Karma and 10 Pulse as he does so. Having fought his way into the center of the Great Spirit's heart, all that's left is to wrestle his spiritual signature - time to head to the spirit world!

4. Scattering The Pulse: The vital essence of the furious enemy lies exposed and vulnerable before the characters. In the spirit world it looks like a man-sized diamond with a dragon of pure light coiled around it. Unraveling it requires the characters to make Smarts, Spirit or Vigor checks against the central core. Any character who is in the spirit world may attempt these checks. Each attempt costs 1 Pulse. The Great Dragon Spirit does not suffer multi-action penalties for resisting several times in one round, but he does if multiple characters attack simultaneously. Every success and each Raise allows the character to sacrifice one point of Pulse permanently (yes permanently - this process is bound to leave some scars) to repel a proportion of the Great Spirit back across the Veil and to the Maelstrom. Once 10 Pulse



have been sacrificed in this way, the Great Dragon Spirit will be forced up into the heavens and in a blaze of blinding light his spirit will be ripped through the Veil. Looking up, the characters will be able to see the hands of gods reaching through to wrestle him and pull him through. In the physical world, his body will collapse on the ground, lifeless.

And... Fight!

The four stage process doesn't sound too tough for hardened demigods like the characters. Bear in mind, though, they'll have just been fighting their way through an army of dragons and might well be bloodied. Also, the Great Dragon Spirit has no intention of letting them act unopposed.

The first obstacle for the characters is the sheer scale (if you pardon the pun) of the task. When the characters get on to the semi-regenerated body of the Great Dragon Spirit, each of the characters must make a Guts check at -4. No matter what they've seen in their long and epic career, this is worse; it's definitely worth a roll on the Fright Table.

Deal initiative as usual during this combat. At the start of the round, compare the Great Dragon Spirit's card to the following table, which decides how he acts that round:

Suit:	Effect:
Clubs	Nothing
Diamonds, (numbers)	Shake
Diamonds, (faces)	Impact
Hearts	Breath Weapon
Spades	Roll

Shake: The Great Spirit shudders in torment. All characters must make Agility checks at -2 or fall prone.

Impact: Seeking to dislodge the impertinent insects on its hide, the Great Spirit scrapes against the side of the crater. All characters must make Strength checks at -2 or slide 1d10 inches in a random direction and fall prone. If they fall over the edge, this could be bad news.

Breath Weapon: A long, snaking neck topped with an array of misshapen mouths sprouts from the

punctured flesh of the Great Spirit and spits fiery doom over the characters. Place the cone template wherever it seems most advantageous. This deals 3d8 damage to everyone in range.

Roll: The god pitches from side to side, shrieking in rage. All terrain is treated as difficult, and the characters must pass a Test of Wills against the Great Spirit's Intimidation of d12.

As if all this wasn't enough, 2d6 bloodlings seep from between the Great Spirit's scales every round. These creatures are never affected by spirit attacks – the characters should feel constant pressure from all sides while they try to carry out their four tasks.

Once the Great Spirit has been sent back to the Maelstrom, the vast majority of the dragons and dragon kin in the vicinity die, their existence linked to their master's. The surviving Pure will be eating juicy dragon steaks and ribs for decades.

The day – and the universe – are saved, and our demigods have killed their very first god-powered being. Congratulations to them! Their own path to godhood is well under way.

Bloodlings

Everyone knows that dragon teeth can be harvested for a crop of expert warriors. The blood of the Great Dragon Spirit works on a similar scientific principle. Within moments of contact with air, the god's spilt blood begins to coagulate into the shape of dragon

kin warriors. They are under the Great Dragon Spirit's immediate control; it can sense what they sense and command them as it wills.

Although bloodlings possess a rudimentary intelligence, everything they know is blood and fury. Communication should be nigh-impossible.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Any that are needed are at d6

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Special abilities

- *Claws:* (**Damage:** Str+d6, AP 2)
- *Flesh Of My Flesh:* Unaffected by the Great Dragon Spirit's Shake, Impact, Breath Weapon and Roll actions.

The Great Dragon Spirit

The Great Dragon Spirit is the lord and master of all dragonkind. He hates mankind for the violence men have inflicted on dragons in dozens of realms. His current physical form is a titanic slab of regenerating flesh studded with twisting bones and surging viscera. When fully healed, the Great Dragon Spirit is girded in impenetrable scales, not all of which have grown in yet. This is the chance for the characters to strike decisively!

- The Great Dragon Spirit has Spirit, Smarts, and Vigor at d12+2, with a d10 as his Wild Die.





Savage Tales

The following eight tales take place in the city of New Garris in the Relic setting. Feel free to rip, tear, and otherwise alter the parts that don't fit your idea of a rollicking good time, changing names and faces as necessary to fit your stories. You can also use them as encounters to spice up your own long-term epic. Someone important to the central plot didn't show up one day? Run everyone who's left through a Savage Tale. Problem solved.

Ultimately, the aim of these Tales is to give the characters some new angles on fantasy roleplay in Suzerain's Relic realm. While those characters are still Novice, Seasoned and Veteran ranked their time will be spent in that realm exclusively, and it's good to have a variety of scenarios to take them through. Use them as a wrapper for the campaign above, developing a rich sense of the world where the dragon kin plan to unleash their Great Spirit.

Skulls And Crossbows

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

Not all of those who live beneath Relic's seas are content to stay there. The Aquassar race of water elemental merfolk is normally reluctant to mix with the cultures of the mainland, preferring to stick to their distant island home. Occasionally, though, one of their number is enticed by the lure of riches.

An Aquassar trader named Kesi is looking to set up shop in the city of Garris, but her first shipment of weaponry and alchemical supplies has gone missing. She promises the characters generous discounts and assistance in dealing with Garris' upper crust if they help her.

The barge that was supposed to transport her goods from the uppermost reef of the sunken city of Ulm never made it up the Lehr River where Garris sits. Kesi's family has enough enemies that she suspects sabotage – and what self-respecting Aquassar would destroy the goods instead of trying to resell them?

The missing weapons are pretty high-tech... repeating crossbows. This batch is identifiable by a small starfish marking on each one.

Entering The Spirit World

By this stage of their epic, the characters should be able to get in and out of the spirit world without problems. They have the ghost suits from Act V if nothing else. However, if there's no other way the gods will temporarily grant the Telesmae a power that lets the characters go to the spirit world for 5 Pulse, lasting 1 hour. The campaign shouldn't fail because a bunch of demigods couldn't get to the spirit world!

The obvious thing would be to retrace the barge's potential path downstream. If the characters take this route, they'll find the nomadic Yando tribe first, a day out from the city. A few hundred meters beyond their camp, the missing barge is smashed upon a sand stretch of river bank.

Meeting The Nomads

The Yando tribe is an ancient one, with history covering most of the Great Expanse. They're known for their particularly sturdy breed of horse, as well as their ancient grudge with the Bournia tribe.

Anyone looking for signs of the missing weapons will notice that a few Yando warriors are practicing with crossbows that are several technological advances beyond their typical short bows. Each weapon is stamped with a starfish insignia. If no one thinks to ask, a random Notice check will provide the same information.

The Yando are quick to say the barge drifted ashore on its own. There were several Aquassar bodies on board, which the tribe's shaman purified and cremated. They had died unhappily, and he helped their spirits escape the anger.

Scavenge has been a long-standing tradition among the Yando, and they will not return Kesi's goods. If the characters press the point, they will attract the attention of Ruce-of-Many, the tribe shaman. Ruce explains that even if the characters could prove anything, his people need the weapons more. A band of ogres has taken up residence in the area, and they've been stealing horses. To turn away any advantage would be the height of foolishness.



Careful examination of the barge will reveal signs of violence, including bloodstains and smashed crates. These should be used to confuse the characters; if they believe the Yando, why was there such a struggle? If they're willing to write the tribe off as murderers, how was the boat smashed?

A truly wicked GM would leave the matter undermined until the last possible moment, calling in the runner from the next scene before the characters find definitive information (if ever). The official answer, however, is that the Yando had nothing to do with attacking the barge. It was an inside job, sparked by a bag of coins from Kesi's family's enemies in Ulm. The mutineers made their move while the barge was traversing treacherous shallows, causing the barge to lose control.

Surrounded By Ogres

At a suitably dramatic moment, a nomad runner bursts into the camp. Ogres have attacked the camp of the unmarried men! They're holding out for as long as they can, but will without the aid of the tribe's more experienced warriors they'll fall soon.

This is a good chance for the characters to show their goodwill to the Yando. Without aid, the nomads will only be able to drive back the invaders with heavy casualties. If the characters are intent on recovering the weapons for Kesi, defeating the ogres would go a long way – and possibly win some more customers for their employer.

The unmarried men keep their tents on the other side of a low rock-studded hill. As soon as they're able to support a wife, they marry and move into the main camp. At least three of them will never have the chance though, laid low by ogre clubs. The fight is desperate when the characters arrive, untested warriors dodging and fighting a holding action against their hulking opponents.

The battle includes two ogres per Player Character, ten warriors (use the standard soldier from *Savage Worlds*), and ten to twelve unmarried men (who are standard soldiers, but only have a d4 in Fighting). The warriors will move first to secure the safety of their tribe members, and secondly to drive off the ogres. The characters' safety isn't high on their list of priorities unless there was some serious diplomacy involved in the previous scene. Five of the warriors have access to the special Aquasaar crossbows (**Ranges** 10/20/40, **Damage** 2d6, **AP** 2, five shots then three actions to reload).

What happens at the end is really up to the characters. They may not fight the ogres at all – they may even resort to force against the Yando. The dilemma at the core of this tale is trickier than it appears to be at first, but the potential rewards – both material and personal – could be great.

Ogres

Although wild ogres have gotten less tough since their hey-day in the Second Age, it's not by much. Wielding tree branches for clubs, they aren't the smartest tacticians in the world. They don't really need to be.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12+1, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d4, Intimidation d8, Notice d4

Pace 8 **Parry** 6 **Toughness** 10 **Pulse** 10

Gear: Ogre Club (**Damage:** Str+d8, AP 1)

Special Abilities

- **Size +4:** These beasts are exceptionally large and take up a 2x2 inch space. Opponents get +2 to hit them on account of their size.



Ruce-of-Many

Two years ago, Ruce-of-Many watched as the Yando's shaman was devoured by a starving spirit-ogre. Since then, he has been his people's sole line of defense against spiritual threats, as well as their moral compass. Although younger than the shamans of the nearby tribes, Ruce is afforded great respect by his people. They recognize his many sacrifices for the tribe, readily excusing his occasional periods of quiet introspection.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d6, Perform Ritual d6, Persuasion d6, Survival d6

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 7(1) Pulse 10

Gear: Club (**Damage:** Str+d6), Light Bone And Hide Armor (+1 armor on the torso), Bronze Spyglass

Edges: Sighted (The Sight, Stun – a stinging powder concoction infused with Pulse and carried by anemone spirits, Healing)

Special Abilities

- *Rituals:* Given the violent times, Ruce performs 2 Stun rituals and one Healing ritual each morning. He is fairly well-prepared for any action, but currently has only 3 Pulse available for other uses.

My Generation

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

This scenario runs best after Act II of our campaign, but it can be any time after. Children are disappearing from Garris again, and the city leaders are concerned that Gregor's group of fanatics have resurfaced, with or without their master. The characters are called in because they have the most practical experience with Gregor and his methods.

A quick trip to the city's underworld reveals that slavers from the Imperial Ministry are to blame. Their totalitarian theocracy festers far from Garris' borders, but its corrupting influence is inescapable.

Searching For Clues

Through careful observation or dumb luck, the characters will eventually catch wind of a story that has been circulating among Garris' urchins about Ol' Sawguts. They say he's the spirit of a miner killed in a cave-in. He's back, with saws for teeth! Adults are too big to fit in his pinched, jagged mouth, but kids are just the right size. No one knows where the story started, but everybody knows that Ol' Sawguts prefers street kids from the Rookery, Garris' bustling guild plaza.

Careful observation of the Rookery will reveal that children aren't the only ones talking about Ol' Sawguts. He's also a part of the stage patter of a scarecrow-styled illusionist named Veran, who operates outside of the Garris public baths. At the climax of his show, he calls eleven children onto his makeshift stage and makes them disappear. Only ten return, while the unfortunate eleventh is hustled off to a nearby warehouse belonging to the brewer's guild. Veran is no more than a lazy criminal who happens to put on an okay stage show – he has no Fighting skill, no Guts skill, and is a flight-rather-than-fight kind of a guy.

The children are kept in an empty brewery vat until there are enough of them to fill a large cart. When the characters track this operation down, be sure to use the warehouse's many of barrels in the battle.

The chief slaver reveals that several of the barbarian clans who live around the Jorna Peak are offering a premium on young children. He was heading to meet some Jorna barbarian representatives, far in the Great Expanse, before being so rudely interrupted. He can be persuaded to draw a map to the Jorna foothills, but vows bitter revenge.

The Jorna Guard

Even if the children in brewery vat are safe, there are still the ones who've already been shipped away – and slavers will continue to steal for the clans of Jorna until they can be stopped. It looks like a trip to the mountains is in order!

The slaver's map leads to a Jorna outpost in the low foothills. It's a ride of several weeks, with all manner of adventure possibilities along the way, so don't rush things. Throw in a couple of other Savage Tales before the characters get to the destination and the end of this on.

Thick timber walls protect three no-nonsense longhouses, each housing a dozen Jorna clansmen. A watchtower rises above the base, allowing a view of the paths leading into the mountains, as well as the worn road back across the Great Expanse towards “civilization.”

A tiny, pitiful marketplace runs twice monthly, bringing a woeful assortment of merchants to trade their pitiful wares. This is when the children are typically transferred and dispersed among the various clans. Getting in touch with the right people will require a convincing cover story and an impressive Persuasion roll. If the characters offer to buy the children, they’ll be met with stern faces and told the clans need them more than the money.

Outsiders unfamiliar to the outpost’s regular inhabitants are treated with suspicion, and are monitored wherever they go. Mentioning the stolen children is a good way to be invited behind a longhouse and ambushed.

No Time For Talk!

Eventually the characters will discover the head of the outpost, or she will find them. Bulla ek-Jorne likes to think that she runs a tight ship; she’s always accompanied by a pair of messengers who’re prepared to dash off and confirm rumors. Her favored tactics for dealing with intruders are threats and intimidation. Surely, it would be better for the clans to focus on internal matters rather than resume the dreadful raids of the old days?



If pushed to say more, Bulla explains how her peoples’ blood has grown thin from their seclusion. Ever since the clans backed the forces of the Wild two-hundred years ago, they became outcasts from civilization. Battered from their defeat, they eked out what living the treacherous mountains allowed. Many died from hunger and exposure. Fresh blood would make the clans strong again, not to mention appease the old clan gods. Jorna altars have lain bare since the War of the Wild, their priests unable to get any kind of regular communication with their deities.

What kind of heroes are in your story? The sort to try for a diplomatic solution, attracting new settlers to the Jorna lands while working to erase generations of hatred? Brave leaders who won’t bow to the demands of fear-mongers? This is the moment where their mettle is tested once more... can they live with the consequences?

Chief Slaver

The chief slaver is a well-fed bully with enough knowledge of numbers to appreciate the margins of the slave trade. He was a handsome man at one point, but the replacement of hygiene with strong drink has started to show its toll on his rugged looks. He’s always looking for future business opportunities, and despises “peasants” – anyone who bothers him on a particular day.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d6, Spirit d4, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Drive d4, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Intimidation d6, Taunt d6

Pace 5 Parry 5 Toughness 7 Pulse 10

Edges: Strong Willed

Hindrances: Obese

Gear: Club (**Damage:** Str+d6), he may or may not have several poorly paid, poorly equipped thugs to handle rough customers. Use standard soldiers if you want to make the warehouse with its brewery vats more of a memorable fight.

Jorna Clannsmen

Although barbarians, they're hardly barbaric. Jorna warriors are ferocious in battle, but more interested in bringing in new blood than spilling it needlessly. Although Jorna traditions are proud and boastful, their hard lives have tempered the glorious excesses of former times.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Pace 6 Parry 6 (1) Toughness 7(1) Pulse 10

Edges: Brawny

Gear: Hand Axe (**Ranges:** 2/4/8, **Damage:** Str+d6), Furs And Helmet (+1 armor, all locations, +1 to resist effects of cold weather), Medium Shield (+1 Parry, +2 armor against ranged attacks)



Bulla ek-Jorne

Bulla's a large, fearsome warrior with hands like hams and a snear that could wither fruit. She enjoys playing the part of the big bruiser, keeping her more reasoned observations hidden until the last moment. The stakes of her current mission are too high for weakness, so she allows none in herself or those under her command. Any attempt to compromise with her will be met with suspicion and strong countermeasures to prevent being scammed.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d10, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8, Survival d6, Throwing d6

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 7(1) Pulse 15

Edges: Brawny, Fearsome Presence

Gear: Maul (**Damage:** Str+d8, AP 2), Furs And Helmet (+1 armor, all locations, +1 to resist effects of cold weather)

Ourobrous Emergent: Episode I

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

The treasure-digging world is in an uproar! A prime dig site has been located underneath the shrine to Hezekiah the Elder, a minor Caladonian prophet. When his skeletal remains were moved to Garris, they were interred in a makeshift tomb fashioned from the remains of several Old Garris residences located at the far end of Godspeakers Street, the two-tiered avenue of temples. Hezekiah's sole disciple planted a garden on top of the tomb, which later expanded into a park. Anonymous donations soon provided for a modest wall decorated with icons and a small chapel. The elevated halls of the Valon gods cast long shadows over the shabby park, but also protect it from the bustle of the rest of the city. The shrine is a popular location for laborers to rest and swap gossip.

Cale Poplin, penniless scholar-rogue, spent many a lunch-hour sitting outside of the shrine, engaged in Garris' most noble profession: treasure hunting. He badgered the groundskeeper and became a nuisance to passers-by with constant questions about the prophet's connection to the Trader Imperium. Every image of the prophet depicted him in fragmented Trader garb, cut in a fashion that was unsuited to his humble origins. Clearly, there was more to the story.

One night not too long ago, Poplin took a shovel to the park and unearthed the prophet's tomb. Before he could get more than an eyeful of what lay within, the city watch arrived. He would not be allowed to dig any further without approval from Maltho, the shrine's groundskeeper. Knowing that other treasure hunters would poach his claim, the enterprising Cale tracked down the characters to speak on his behalf.





Behind The Veil

A Knowledge (Religion) or Faith roll will reveal Hezekiah the Elder's claim to fame was the so-called Ouroboros Chronicle. These poems describe Hezekiah's journey to a world of wonders where sleek towers kissed the sky and their perfectly proportioned inhabitants wanted for nothing. Modern scholars agree that this is an allegory for Trinity's home, the Realm of the Archangels. Unfortunately, little study has been done on the matter since the sole copy of the chronicle disappeared from the Three-Point Cathedral over twenty years ago.

Maltho the groundskeeper knows what happened to it; he's the one who took it. He suspects that the story of a distant world is true, and attainable under the proper circumstances. No one could spend as much time polishing the iconic carvings of Hezekiah without noticing how strangely he was garbed; fie on allegory!

In his haste to decode the manuscript, Maltho opened a small portal to the spirit world to find a tutor. Unfortunately, all he was able to manage was a swarm of emotion wisps, primarily of the rage and greed varieties. These spiritual nuisances enjoy the shrine as much as its mundane visitors, and refuse to leave – even after poisoning Poplin with blinding greed and Maltho with magnified spite.

Breaking And Entering

If the characters need an altruistic reason to engage in a little shrine exploring, all they have to consider is the collateral damage caused by the wisps. As they become more content with their new home, the nearby temples become infected with unnatural mood swings. Without aid, the situation is not going to get better; there's enough ambient Pulse surrounding Hezekiah's treasure that the wisps have already started forming a nest around it.

The tomb is an empty affair consisting of five crumbling rooms connected by rough tunnels. Maltho's emotion wisps have claimed the entire tomb as their home, and will attack with the intensity of wild dogs.

The final room is the prophet's burial chamber. His consciousness has passed into the Maelstrom, leaving naught behind but some bones. One skeletal hand clutches a wooden staff. Rolled up within the staff is a magically preserved map, which changes at the touch. It is hyper-advanced Trader-tech from an alternate timeline; the characters will not even begin to unravel its mysteries until they are Heroic rank. For now, it's enough to know that it's burning with Pulse, and both man and spirit want it.

Several minutes after Poplin gets the characters into the tomb, his rivals will arrive. They've been watching the site for their chance to bust in, and there's no way they're letting a group of newbies walk off with their loot. The emotion wisps have clouded their minds, and reasoned debate will prove difficult. If they don't leave with Hezekiah's map, there will be blood.

If Maltho is made aware of the map, he will not allow it to leave the shrine. Moreover, he will not allow anyone resembling a no-good, dirty bandit to examine it; that rules out Poplin and his ilk. Have the characters treated the old man courteously? Are they knowledgeable enough to help him with the map or political enough to win control of it?

Cale Poplin, Treasure Hunter

Formal education never agreed with Cale. It was far too abstract, stuffy, and above-ground. Getting to the good stuff took months of slogging through disintegrating texts, licking the dusty boots of his seniors, and above all, not getting paid. When he was in his mid-20's he left academia to pursue the active life of a professional scavenger. Despite the occasional rolling boulder or poisonous dart, the perks are worlds better. For a shot at the mother load, most anything's worth it.

Although Cale doesn't know what he's looking for in the grand scheme of things, he knows that he'll know it when it sees it. As a result, no lead is too small to investigate; there's a grand mystery out there and it won't solve itself.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Notice d6, Survival d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Gear: Backpack Containing Exploration Kit, Hooded Lantern, Short Sword (**Damage:** Str+d6), Parchment, Quill And Ink

Maltho The Groundskeeper

Maltho could have been somebody. If his parents hadn't sold him to wandering monks when he was a youth, he could have been an actor of some acclaim. If he hadn't slept in that once, he wouldn't have missed the meeting with the investors from Elenium who were looking to donate to some of Garris' little-known temples. Maltho's not bitter though. The pious are awarded good fortune in their own time. He's getting old though, and opportunities have been getting fewer and further between.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Investigation d8, Notice d8

Pace 6 Parry 4 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Edges: Awareness

Gear: Gardening Implement (**Damage:** Str+d4 and a lifetime of ridicule from your peers for being blindsided by a spade/rake/trowel etc)

Greedy/Enraged Treasure Hunters

As is to be expected from a city built on top of the gem of a lost civilization, Garris is filled with treasure hunters of all stripes. This group is an inexperienced band of diggers with only a few minor finds between them. All of their finds have gone into paying for living expenses and street medications. They're angry, they have picks, and they're not going to take it any more.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6+1, Guts d4, Shooting d6, Survival d4, Swimming d6

Pace 6 Parry 4 Toughness 6(1) Pulse 10

Gear: Pick (**Damage:** Str+d4, AP 2), Leather Jack (+1 armor to torso and arms)

Special Abilities

- *Rage/Greed:* Having been under the influence of well-fed emotion wisps for some time, these gentlemen are heavily affected by them. They receive +1 to hit, -1 Parry on account of their less than rational state.

Emotion Wisps

These little guys rest at the bottom of the spiritual totem pole. They're the cats and dogs of the spirit world, and are often trained as pets or guards by the spirit world's more intelligent residents. Like cats and dogs, emotion wisps range in danger from the kittenish spirit of playfulness to the saber-toothed rage specter.

Among solid-side shamans, even the most benevolent seeming wisps are seen as pests, albeit potentially useful ones. This is because of the unique makeup of the spirits' diets. Even the most ravenous of schadenfreude hounds doesn't deal any damage in grazing, sucking up the ambient thoughts and dead-end tangents of sentient beings. It's the byproducts of consumption that cause problems.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Climbing d4, Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d8, Stealth d6, Tracking d4

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 3 Pulse 5

Special Abilities

- *Size -1:* Being cat/dog sized these spirits suffer -1 to their Toughness.
- *Bite: (Damage: Str+d4)*
- *Spiritual Malaise:* Every minute spent within 10 inches of a grazing Emotion Wisp has the potential to deal a level of Fatigue as the area is bathed with waves of pure emotion – a successful Spirit check avoids this. Any character can willingly reduce the damage by opening his mind to the psychic assault. Every rank of Fatigue Soaked in this manner sticks the character with the equivalent of a major Hindrance: Overly Emotional for 15 minutes. If there is not an appropriate flaw available, such as Mean or Optimistic, use -1 Charisma and roleplaying cues as a guide. This malaise can affect characters in the physical world even while the spirits are in the spirit world – which can make them a real pain.
- *Spirit:* Cannot manifest.

Ghosts Under The Earth

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

We mentioned earlier that spirits aren't ghosts; they're beings like us, but without a physical body. That's mostly true, but occasionally the soul of the departed lingers in the spirit world instead of going to its final rest. In a city like Garris, swallowed whole during a mighty battle, a lot of them stayed behind rather than accepting their demise.

These ghostly inhabitants of Old Garris are rebuilding their city beneath the earth. Throughout the city, ghostly spires thrust out of the earth, causing all sorts of unsightly Pulse fluxes. In order to expend Pulse near one of these ghost towers, the user must first pass a Spirit check. Failure results in the Pulse being drawn to the tower like a lightning rod, aiding its manifestation into the solid world.

The spires are only visible in moonlight or when sucking up nearby Pulse. They appear as half-completed examples of Old Garris architecture, inhabited by flicker-flame inhabitants. It's a bit creepy, for sure, but what's it got to do with the characters?

The wizards in their guilds are pretty annoyed about the Pulse fluxes messing up their experiments and might be willing to hire the characters to investigate. That, or your characters are just curious to know more.

In-Spire-A-Flon

Travelling to the spirit world allows the characters to the top stories of the ghost towers. Any deeper would require digging through several dozen meters of solid rock. For more information on the lower levels, see "Down in the Mine." Most of the ghosts are soldiers, shoulders steeled in determination to drive back long-dead foes. Any character with a Telesma will be able to speak with them.

The soldiers don't realize they are dead, believing the rare flashes of New Garris they see to be distracting illusions conjured by the Wild. Their situation is too desperate to give the matter much thought, however. Dark forces have taken the guardhouse below!

Any attempts to convince the soldiers that they are dead, spirits, or creatures out of time will activate their passive defenses. All signs of life will drop away from their faces, revealing terrible networks of lethal blows. Characters who do not succeed on an opposed Spirit check receive one level of Fatigue at the sudden shock.

Down In The Mine

Despite their clouded perceptions, the ghostly soldiers are correct. Dozens of meters below the surface, dark forces have roiled with anger since shedding their mortal bodies. Every thirteen years they make a sally against the soldier spirits, corrupting a few more every time. The recent spate of buildings were designed to hold back the spirit-wild, no matter the cost.

If the characters want to put a stop to the inconvenient towers and the dark spirits, they'll need to navigate the mazes of Garris' subterranean artifact mines. Local scavengers will be able to relate numerous tales about the weird happenings down below. These stories don't stop at flashing lights or eerie sounds; many diggers will swear that they saw the ghosts of buildings, visible in the physical world. One of their braver pals got too close, and was recruited into an army of spirits.

The rumors are pretty spot-on. Ghostly battlements jut from the walls of the most common dig sites, and each intersection is guarded by a spiritual guardhouse, existing half inside piles of tightly packed debris. As they progress deeper, the Garris spirits manifest more completely. Not recognizing the characters, they'll challenge their presence in such a contested zone.

Anyone with Strong Pulse (more than 5 current Pulse qualifies) will eventually encounter the recruiting Sergeant. This career soldier was crushed by falling masonry more than twenty decades ago, but refuses to miss a quota. Anyone who refuses to share their Pulse under his draconic rationing measures will be accused of stockpiling and forcibly detained. Mad as he is, the spirit is not unreasonable. The characters will receive a service exemption if they help drive back the Wild spirits in a more direct fashion.

Cleaning House

Every time the spirits of Old Garris drive the Wild spirits back, the dark forces recuperate within the remains of an arc tower. That's where they keep their most potent relic: the desiccated body of one of Old Garris' most distinguished defenders: Commander Jessop. Micro-runes carved into her flesh transform her bound spirit's eternal struggle into a vile beacon. Worse, the spirits can command her ancient body as a puppet, defending them from any physical intrusions. Using their battery as a defense system has its downside though: if Jessop's body is defeated in the solid realm, her spirit is able to break free. Cut off from their power, the Wild spirits will no longer have a battery to sustain their terrible raids.

Jessop's arc tower has decayed over the years, but still crackles with ambient energy. As the characters approach if from the broad access tunnel, it opens fire. The possessed tower has enough of a charge to fire on the characters for three rounds before running out of juice. After that it will lie dormant until a nearby Wild spirit sacrifices itself to provide energy for three more shots. While they're pinned, Jessop's body will stride from within and attack the intruders.

Once the Wild spirits no longer have their Pulse generator, the spirits of Old Garris will consider their duty complete. The construction of new spiritual towers will grind to a halt, and the old ones will fade in a matter of weeks.

Commander Jessop

When Old Garris was consumed by the earth, Commander Jessop was there. She gave her life so that one last knot of priests could escape, saving their sacred treasures from the charging Wild. Although her spirit has not yet given up the fight, her body has become a necrotic prison. Despite the indignities visited upon her, Jessop remains a staunch soldier. She has had generations to consider every aspect of her situation and is ready to pass on. All that she needs is a little help.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Taunt d6

Pace 6 Parry 8 (1) Toughness 12(4) Pulse 20

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Improved Frenzy, No Mercy

Gear: Trader Hammer (**Damage:** Str+d6+3, AP 2, Parry +1) Trader-Forged Battleware (+4 armor, all locations)

Special Abilities

- *Regain Control:* If Jessop's initiative card is a heart, she's able to control the body for a round. Otherwise the dark forces are in control. Her first free action will be to identify herself and ask for release. Identifying herself is important – it'll make it all the more poignant when the characters meet her in the campaign scenarios after hitting Heroic rank.
- *Micro Runes:* +2 Toughness.



Spirit Soldiers

These soldiers are the spirit world Pulse signatures of soldiers the characters may meet in Act III of the main campaign. Still believing themselves to be Garris' last hope, they aren't in the mood to take any guff from interceding hero-types. Grab a sword and join ranks, if you want to help.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 9(4) Pulse 10

Gear: Trader Saber (**Damage:** Str+d6+2, AP 2, Parry +1) Trader-Forged Battleware (+4 armor, all locations)

Special Abilities

- *Spirit:* They cannot manifest, but the whole area around the arc tower and the underground foundations of the new defender towers is dual aligned... so they don't need to.

Recruiting Sergeant

The recruiting Sergeant always had a way with words. Even in the final days, he was able to lure the able-bodied from their families and parched dirt farms to strike against the dark heart of evil. After his death, his honeyed words soured. No one was good enough; they were maggots, weak-willed, and probably just waiting to betray their allies. Good ol' discipline would fix 'em though. It's all that he had left.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d8, Notice d6, Shooting d6, Taunt d6

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 9(4) Pulse 15

Gear: Trader Saber (**Damage** Str+d6+2, AP 2, Parry +1) Trader-Forged Battleware (+4 armor, all locations)

Special Abilities

- *Spirit:* He cannot manifest, but the whole area around the arc tower and the underground foundations of the new defender towers is dual aligned... so he doesn't need to.

- *Drain Pulse.* On a successful Intimidation check the Sergeant may, instead of gaining any other benefit, draw Pulse from the target. He gains 1 point of Pulse for every two points his Intimidation check was higher than the target's. On the plus side, everyone within hearing distance learns 1d4 new vulgarities, which may be of interest to certain esoteric scholars.

Wild Spirits

When Old Garris was consumed by the earth at the end of the War of the Wild, plenty of Wild troops were dragged down as well as defenders. These are ghosts of wicked humans, slippery ratten, and the occasional small dragon kin. The very definition of mooks.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Throw d8

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 8(2) Pulse 10

Gear: Longsword (**Damage:** Str+d8) Chain Armor (+2 armor, all locations), Shield (+1 Parry, +2 armor against ranged attacks), Mass Crossbow (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1, AP 4)

Edges: Combat Reflexes

Special Abilities

- *Spirit:* They cannot manifest, but the whole area around the arc tower and the underground foundations of the new defender towers is dual aligned... so they don't need to.

Possessed Arc Tower

As per standard arc tower (see pg. 101), only surrounded by a dead zone of burnt electric air.

The whole tower is dual-aligned, including the Arc Gun itself, thus able to hit targets in both the spirit and physical worlds.

Arc Gun (**Ranges:** 16/32/64, **Damage:** 2d8+1, AP 2, Snapfire, ROF 4)

Festival Of Blood

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

The Festival of Saphron is coming, and Garris is ready for it. The young and hardy have been building makeshift wooden forts, cleaning their wooden swords and shields, and discussing battle plans with their friends. Soon, mock combat will sweep the streets as everyone attempts to steal the flag from the neighboring districts.

This lusty celebration of the Valon god of battle never ends well, but the citizens of Garris love it. It gives them a chance to settle old feuds without the trouble of arranging formal duels, shows the merchant down the street who's boss, and provides an excellent chance to blow off steam.

As if that weren't enough excitement, Grillax Par, the greatest gladiator in Valon, is in town. So far he has received offers from the temple of Saphron, the blacksmith's guild, and two wealthy families to fight for their teams. Instead of committing, he's stringing them along while enjoying free wine and easy company. This is one way to show the characters what to look forward to as their fame spreads. Moreover, it gives them someone who they can look back upon someday and say, "We were scared of him?!"

Grillax Par

Despite being one of Saphron's chosen, Grillax never really paid much attention to the side of his patron's teachings that involved tactics or restraint. He's a glory-hound through and through, preferring to showboat rather than engage in measly little fights. His martial prowess and raw physicality have been enough to get him through everything so far, so why change?

Par's popularity extends farther than even he knows. Everywhere he travels, he is in the perpetual center of a spiritual coliseum. The stands are packed with his vocal following, egging him on toward greater displays of skill. If that's not enough, they hurl metaphysical debris and emotional wisps at his surroundings until an interesting situation develops.

The audience is primarily composed of voyeur spirits: enormous, goggle-eyed heads on top of shriveled bodies. Many of them keep spirits of feral

rage as pets, which they whip into violence whenever ennui strikes. The voyeurs live for spectacle, especially the loud and bloody variety. To them, Par has been a godsend... though nobody can agree which god to thank.

Day One: Pumped Up

The first day of the festival, Grillax Par works hard to drive up demand for his services. He declares himself his own district, attaching a flag to his back. Then he goes on the warpath, taking on whole groups of merchants and young nobles. Perhaps our PCs have to defend their civic pride against this foreign juggernaut, or one of their allies needs advice in defending their fort from the one-man army. Alternatively, the characters could be agents of Kesi (see the Skulls and Crossbows Savage Tale above) looking to convince Par that her district has the best offer.

During this phase, the voyeur spirits are relatively well-behaved. If anyone tries surrendering to Par, they'll loose an emotion wisp or two in the area. Their hero's causing a scene though, so all is good.

Day Two: The Letting

By the second day of the Festival of Saphron, Par has decided to lend his considerable strength to the most interested buyer. Whether it's the temple of Saphron or Kesi, one district has just received a substantial boost. This displeases the voyeur spirits. Where's the challenge if their favored one fades into an organization like everyone else? The contest is hardly worthy of him... unless they make things more interesting.

The voyeurs begin the day of culturally-approved street fighting by scanning the surface thoughts of the most enthusiastic revelers. The ones who're looking to settle old grudges get a face full of emotion wisps to further enrage them. In no time, good-natured stick fighting turns to something altogether more dangerous. If that's not enough, the voyeurs release their spirits of feral rage on the city. The beasts manifest and add to the confusion, giving Par a truly chaotic scene to wade through – unless the characters can restore order.

The manifested spirits should clue the characters in that there's some sort of shamanistic tomfoolery going on. A quick peek onto the spirit plane will confirm this, coupled with the ethereal roar of Par's fans. Can they convince the showman to leave town before his followers cause irreparable damage?

Grillax Par



Hair of darkest raven waves, flesh of burnished bronze, there is no doubt that Grillax Par is a hero. He knows it, and is quick to demonstrate it in word and deed. That's all right when an alderman needs rescuing or a wizard's cave is on fire, but less pleasant when he's staring you down and demanding your seat at the bar. His many victories were not small, a fact that he will not let anyone forget.

Although it's possible to win Par's respect, it requires a casual disregard for injury and firm martial prowess. After all, any sturdy warrior would be glad to drink with the man who defeated the Eastlands Wyrms, with naught but a bucket of tar!

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Guts d10, Notice d4, Persuasion d6, Throwing d8, Swimming d8

Pace 6 Parry 10 Toughness 9(2) Pulse 25

Edges: Improved Block, Improved Dodge, Trait Perfection – Heroic (Fighting), Improved Sweep, Opportunistic Push.



Gear: Legionary Armor (+2 armor, all locations), Gladius (**Strength:** Str+d6, AP 1) though during the festival he will be using a wooden replica (**Damage:** Str+d4)

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Par all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rate, and so on.

Spirits Of Feral Rage

Spirits of feral rage have sleek and wiry, hairless bodies. Badger-like in shape, they are red skinned, marked with flashes of black from their rippling spiritual muscles. They are rarely seen alone, preferring others of their kind, but in-fighting prevents the packs from getting too large. Although their intelligence stops at animal cunning, Spirits of feral rage are mean and will always finish off their opponents if given the option.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d4,

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 4 Pulse 5

Edges: Frenzy

Special Abilities

- *Size -1:* Being smaller than humans, these spirits suffer -1 to their Toughness.
- *Bite Of Hopeless Anger:* (**Damage:** Str+d4). The bite of a spirit of feral rage infuses the target with a taste of hopeless anger that cannot easily be sated. Their bite attack deals Fatigue instead of Wounds and gives the victim the Berserk Edge for as long as the Fatigue lasts.
- *Spirit:* Spirits of feral rage cannot manifest on their own, but live close to the join between worlds. Anyone who knows of their presence and is sufficiently enraged can summon any within 12 inches to the physical plane by spending 5 Pulse and taking a level of Fatigue. This doesn't guarantee any control over the spirits, as they are often hungry and always angry.

Emotion Wisps

(See page 123)

Stones And Bones

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

Earthquake!

The characters won't be able to solve all of the problems caused by nature, but that's all right. They're only being paid to chase down a single dwarven assassin – and they already know where he'll be. How hard can it be?

To The Gallows

The morning of this Savage Tale, Garris' animals are skittish. They can tell that something is wrong, and need to get away. Confirming their fears, a mid-morning rumbling in the earth causes jars to fall from shelves. Just a minor earthquake, nothing to be worried about.

Soon afterward, the city watch informs the characters that Grey Hesse, the famed dwarven assassin, is in town. They want to ask him a few questions about a missing knight, but everyone who's able to take him down is on assignment. He moves fast, so they could use a little help.

Hesse was last seen at a local pub for poets called the Gallows (where dreams go to die.) He was drinking half an hour ago, but they'll have to hurry to catch him. The watch captain provides the characters with a sketch and wishes them good luck.

Hesse knows that he's not wanted in town, but his situation made it necessary. He recently discovered a cache of dragon bones that would pay off his debt to a cadre of mercenary anatomists who make Garris their home. He hasn't met his contact yet, and is right surly when the characters arrive.

As soon as the characters are about to come crashing down on Hesse, that's when the real earthquake hits. He throws his sample dragon bone in the characters' faces and melds through the Gallows' wall into the street and all the panicking people there.

Rock And Roll

Chasing Hesse follows the normal Savage Worlds chase rules. However, the following modifiers apply:

- For the first five minutes after the quake begins, all Agility rolls receive a -2 penalty due to shifting earth and falling rocks. This can be avoided by using dwarven racial powers.

- Hesse is a dwarf and able to pass through solid stone as per normal dwarf rules. If hard-pressed he will duck underground momentarily. However, due to the shifting nature of the earth, he sees it as a great risk under present circumstances.

- Obstacles include runaway carts pulled by spooked horses, burst cisterns, and entire buildings sliding down the city's hillsides.

The chase should have a wild, busy feel. Hesse is running for his life, sliding down terraces and slipping around rubble like a ball of hot wax. If he manages to get a slight lead on the characters, he'll hold his action and use his Elemental Manipulation (Earth) ability to trip the speediest of his assailants.

Elevator Action

At some point during the pursuit, make sure the characters pass close to a terrace edge and can see down the cliffs to the city's docks far below. The workers responsible for operating an elevator to the river have run off in the confusion, leaving the elevator dangling several stories above the stony dockside. Aftershocks still rumble through region from time to time. One good jolt could snap the elevator's rope, sending its four occupants to their death. They shout out for help, unaware that the only people who can hear them are closing in on a dangerous criminal.

Turning the giant elevator winch requires a combination of four successful Strength checks and raises. For each person less than four working the clumsy winch, the checks are made at -2. Making this check requires a minute of concentrated labor, giving Hesse time to disappear for good. For best effect, spring this encounter when it looks like the guy has no way out.

Back To The Wall

Eventually, Hesse's going to run out of Pulse and dirty tricks. At that point he turns to bribery. He offers to share his stash of dragon bones with whoever will look the other way and allow him to escape. He contends that he doesn't know anything about the missing knight, but the guys who're after him probably did it. He'll even provide a name and an address: Dr. Slate of the Grim Surgery, Street of Mechanical Birds.

If Hesse is brought into custody, he relays much of the same information. He offers the opinion that the missing knight was hired to investigate the Anatomists Guild secrets, but will say no more without the promise of an escort out of the city. The next day, he's struck with a sudden, debilitating disease that drives him mute. The characters have learned something new, but have they also made new enemies?

Grey Hesse



Even the best assassins get cut once in a while. It was after a particularly tricky job involving an art critic, a glass fountain, and five tons of limestone that Hesse found himself in need of some serious medical attention. Dr. Slate was willing to help based on Hesse's reputation, as well as his own plans for the quick-footed killer. Hesse now lives in fear of what the grim doctor has planned; his life hasn't been a happy one, but he knows that it could get much worse.

Grey Hesse's name comes from the slate-grey color of his skin, lightly speckled with white quartz around his face, making him look like he has a dappled white, short-cropped beard.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d6, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Throwing d8, Swimming d6

Pace 7 Parry 7 Toughness 8(1)/10(1) Pulse 15

Edges: Dwarf, Fleet Footed, Quick, Luck.

Hindrances: Phobia (minor): Thinks the PCs are anatomist agents, out to dissect him.

Gear: Leather Armor (+1 armor, all location), Warhammer (**Damage:** Str+d6, AP 2 vs. rigid armor)

Landscraping

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

The Valon town of Elenium overlooks Garris from across the Lehr River. It is an orderly center of art and learning, blessed with wide avenues and bustling markets. Erasmus the wool merchant, patrician of the marble-lined Hela Way, is one of the many Elenians who can't stand the sight of Garris. It is a sore upon the earth, splattering its stink in every direction. What's worse, its ramshackle buildings are visible from his newly dedicated theater.

How, Erasmus muses, can his peers pay tribute to the stream of magnificence performance flowing from his open-air stage when they're so distracted by stinking peasants across the river? It's a wide river and you could barely see the other side, but that doesn't stop you feeling the grime and depravation, and that's enough.

The only recourse is to clean the city up. If anyone gets in the way, well... he has already moved on to other projects. Wool is good this year, and he is a busy man.

Fumigation

Erasmus's agents have decided their primary target is Tanner's Row, a side street leading from the Fumes. The tanners have long been moved out to outlying parts of the city, but they've been replaced by tradesmen specializing in all manner of unsavory wares for the anatomist and alchemists. Through weeks of careful questioning, Erasmus has discovered Sigurd Hermokretes is storing a potent cache of highly explosive fertilizer. One spark while there's a good wind to fan the flames, and the resulting fire could solve all their problems.

The characters are in the Fumes on routine business with an alchemist, when a loud chain of explosions tears through the everyday hustle and bustle. To a trained professional, these are not neighborhood-leveling explosions; still, they are not welcome.

"Goodness!" exclaims their host. "I warned Sigurd not to store so much fertilizer in those old tanks. No sense, that hack!"

Although apologetic, he asks the characters if they'll check on his friend. If they resist, he offers a discount on their current order.

Miracle Growth

Sigurd's shop is only three streets away, but it appears to be in a different world. When his experimental fertilizer vats blew, they inundated several blocks with his newest discovery. Alien greenery sprouts from each pony-sized lump of jellified compound. Hungry roots burrow into nearby stone, while grasping vines go for higher structures. A jungle has sprouted in the middle of Garris, and it's fighting for its survival. Moving through the area counts as difficult terrain.

The shouts of trapped residents reach the characters over the unfamiliar humming of tropical insects that infest the undergrowth. It smells worse than usual, adding a tang of rotting meat and wet mulch to the ubiquitous stench of excrement and humanity.

The most immediate threats in this strange new land are the tzikas, crawler bugs that hide in the leaves. They won't strike immediately, waiting for the characters to make strong, decisive movements. The scent of sweat attracts them like nothing else, and they prefer Fatigued targets over all others.

Approaching a glob of fertilizer will trigger another of the jungle's inhabitants. Anyone passing within two meters must make an Agility check at -2 or take 2d8 damage from dripping sap. This damage can only Shake a character, not deal actual damage. However, recovering from it gets -2 penalty to the Spirit check. Anyone who is Shaken is a valid target for the drill-tipped roots, as described below.

As the characters cut deeper, give them a few clues about what's going on: some well-dressed, desiccated Elenians, sewn to the ground by networks of roots, perhaps. A Common Knowledge check is enough to reveal that their presence in Tanner's Row is just as odd as the jungle's.

Slash And Burn

Eventually, the characters will reach the shop of Sigurd Hermokretes. Knots of bulging greenery pour from its openings, the upper windows choked by gaudy shocks of magenta flowers. Getting through the tangle will be difficult, as the fertilizer chunks are tightly packed this close to the source.

Sigurd is barricaded in the root cellar underneath his shop. It is defoliated when the characters arrive, sharply contrasting with the outside. He's hard at work brewing a way out of there, but is lacking a few key ingredients. If he could get out of the jungle and to a decently stocked alchemist lab, brewing an acid to disrupt the goopy fertilizer would be the work of hours. Without their foci, the plants and the tzikas will wither and die.



Sigurd's strangled herb garden is behind his shop. The fertilizer storage vats are back there as well, crumpled from strong internal force. An Investigation check will reveal a pair of skeletonized legs peeking out from under a collapsed shed. Digging them up will reveal the relatively unharmed upper body of Erasmus's top agent. He's holding a scroll case in one hand with the seal of his employer on it. Inside is a map of the Fumes, with a big old X on Sigurd's shop. If the characters want to pursue the matter any further, they have all of the information they need.

Tzikas

In the legendary island jungles of Yul, far off the coast where only the Aquasaar go, the sky is streaked with yellow clouds that smell of sweetness and death. Multi-fanged predators that walk with the shattered gait of a hanged man live in huts carved from the shattered skulls of their soft-footed prey. In the night, the tzikas come, insects as large as jungle cats. They coat the skulls like electrified puzzle pieces, buzzing and squirming until they find sightless entrance. There is no light to shine off their segmented bodies, no armor that can long protect against their seeking mandibles. They feed and are gone.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d10, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d6, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d6, Tracking d6

Pace 8 Parry 7 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Special Abilities

- **Bite:** (**Damage:** Str+d6)
- **Go For The Throat:** The hunting instinct is strong in these predators and with a raise on an attack roll they automatically hit the targets most weakly armored location.

Drill-Tipped Roots

Although the wooden-shoed freemen of Yul trust the jungle floor over its verdant canopies, the danger of the drill-tipped roots is never far from their minds. It is well known that even the sturdiest of lacquered shoes is nothing to the plant's hungry bore. Those who fall prey to the bite lose more than just their footwear. The freemen have a phrase that is relevant: "to lose one's soul through one's feet."

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts -, Spirit -, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6

Pace - Parry 3 Toughness 5 Pulse 15

Edges: Improved Sweep

Special Abilities

- **Drill-Tipped Roots:** (**Damage:** Str+d6). Damage from the roots can Shake an opponent but not wound them.
- **Weak Defenses:** This plant doesn't actively defend itself beyond continuing to attack and suffers -2 parry.
- **The Drop:** Unless a person knows about exotic plants and is on the lookout for such dangerous greenery they are likely to stumble straight into a patch and be taken completely by surprise giving this plant the drop against its first victim/s.
- **Plant:** A non-sentient predatory plant is fearless and takes no additional damage from called shots - it lacks vital organs.

Sigurd Hermokretes

Sigurd is a credit to his community. He's knowledgeable, kind-hearted, and apart from an interest in exotic fertilizers, is completely harmless. Whatever trouble that he gets into is the result of raw scientific drive overruling common sense. The cheerful, bustling little man will gladly sell dangerous alchemic compounds to young punks, questionable drugs to criminals, and explosives to adventurers in the hopes of learning more about the forces that he studies. Every sale he makes is backed by a full disclaimer and several reliable scholarly sources, but they never listen. Oh my, they never listen...

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Knowledge (Alchemy) d10+2, Knowledge (Biology) d10+2, Notice d8

Pace 5 Parry 4 Toughness 6 Pulse 10

Edges: Scholar

Hindrances: Elderly

Gear: Alchemical Equipment, Soiled Apron, Crusty Boots.

Air To The Empire

Realm: Mortal realms, Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

A youthful group of djinn separatists known as the Nistral Storm find records 'proving' that members of the djinn race were the original inhabitants of the Garris region. The Trader Imperium took it from them, then later settlers built on the ruins to create the current city. They've been kidnapping influential historians and trying to convert them using the Ritual of the Emergent Squall, a risky way of changing people into djinn which involves changing race while falling.

The ritual requires a willing subject though, so mostly they've just been throwing historians from a cliff. The characters could be introduced to the problem several ways, including finding the philosophical musings of a Nistral Storm member or being asked to track down a missing academic.

The Nistral Storm has about a dozen members but there are two groups within that number. The hardliners want the official Garris records changed as the first step of setting up an ancestral governing body and taking control of the city. The moderate faction is less influential; they don't care about political power and would be happy to sell 'their land' to the citizens of Garris for a hefty fee.

Although both groups are working together for now, there will be a turbulent split if they accomplish their shared goal of legitimizing their cause. The hardliners see the moderates as wishy-washy and pampered, while the moderates consider the hardliners dangerous and greedy.

Paying The Toll

At first, the Storm just appears to be one set of wackos among many who proselytize from the perches outside the temple of Eтарo. The plaza outside of the Valon trickster god's home is protected by holy law, allowing anybody to speak their mind within its boundaries. Wooden beams extend from both the earth and the cliff face, giving the speakers spiny perches from which to preach.

A group of young nobles visiting from Elenium has made mocking the square's speakers their favored pastime. Their combination of academy-trained

rhetoric and smug assuredness often provokes the speakers into physical altercations, at which time the temple guards step in and pummel the one who threw the first blow. This is great fun for the Elenians, who tend to pick on withered hermits and zealous-yet-unimposing cultists.

When the characters arrive, six Nistral Storm speakers have already laid out the temple guards and are advancing on the Elenians. Djinn are air elementals and tough to defeat in combat, especially these enraged members of the race, doubly so since these are members of a terrorist organization and travel well-armed. They plan to engage the students in 'ancestral duels of honor' (beat them to within an inch of their life, and maybe not stop there). Since the students are armed with daggers at best, the fight is hardly fair. If the battle starts to go against the djinn, they'll transmute themselves into clouds of vapor and escape, perhaps pausing on the temple rooftop to shower everyone below with throwing knives and insults before they finally depart.

While the students are pretty obnoxious people, their central claims are true: there is no evidence that a djinn nation ever existed, and the Nistral Storm refuse to share their 'definitive proof' (a silver cloak of prophecy) with anyone who would be able to validate it.

The nearest Valon legionary unit is a few minutes away, by which time it'll all be over. The characters are the only help the Elenian students can get. How the characters act will define the rest of this scenario.

A Fit Of Peak

As the Nistral Storm ramps up its campaign, more historians disappear. The agitators who are caught slip through their prison bars and pop up on the streets the next day. Like all elemental races there are few djinn, and they keep a tight community. Those who aren't involved with the organization still help to hide the active members and contribute funds to 'the cause'. Still, there's some hope of infiltrating the community and finding out more – perhaps by picking up on the split in philosophy between the moderates and the hardliners and using that to gain sympathy with a reasonable member of the djinn community.



Whether through careful tailing, interrogation, or convincing a trusted Nistral Storm sympathizer to go turncoat, the characters should eventually learn about the site of the Emergent Squall ritual. The most dedicated members of the group keep a training camp in the mountains, a week upriver from the city. Reaching the camp by foot is a dangerous process, vexed by crumbling paths and rock falls. Three shattered towers rest beyond these challenges, leaning like drunken sightseers over the mountain's ridge.

Two historians are imprisoned in one of the towers, being forcibly purified for the ritual. Tarin Muj, the leader of the movement, stays in the camp at all times to keep an eye on the converts. With him are 4-6 of his most dedicated followers. Only this inner circle is allowed to view the silver cloak of prophecy which started this entire mess. If any of them suspect that Tarin created the cloak and the prophecy out of scraps, they don't care. Each has their own reason to see the movement succeed, and will defend it forcibly.

Nistral Storm Member

Humans have never done these rabble-rousers and counter-culturists any favors. They're out to stir up trouble and look good while doing so. These are true believers in the goals of the Nistral Storm.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d4, Notice d4, Stealth d6, Taunt d6, Throwing d6

Pace 6 Parry 6(1) Toughness 6(1) Pulse 10

Gear: Valon Thin Blade (**Damage:** Str+d4, +1 Parry), Leather Jacket (+1 armor to torso and arms), Concealed Throwing Knives (**Ranges:** 3/6/12, **Damage:** Str+d4)

Special Abilities

- *Djinn:* For 3 Pulse a djinn can transform his physical form into air making him immune to many things and allowing him to float through the air. He may move in three dimensions at a walking pace (and yes, his clothes and most treasured possessions become ethereal too). The effect lasts one round but its duration can be extended by paying a further 1 Pulse each round.

Tarin Muj, Leader Of The Nistral Storm

Tarin's plan was so simple he was surprised no one had ever tried it before: gain unsurpassed political power in New Garris by creating a false prophecy and stirring racial tensions. He doesn't want too much power – just enough to live comfortably and have strangers tip their hats to him as he gusts past. With power of that caliber, he could court a fine wife, raise some healthy children, and get started on a legacy to last the ages.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Investigation, d6, Persuasion d8+2, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d8+2

Pace 6 Parry 6(1) Toughness 5 Pulse 15

Edges: Charismatic, Command, Natural Leader

Gear: Valon Thin Blade (**Damage:** Str+d4, +1 Parry)

Special Abilities

- *Djinn:* For 3 Pulse a djinn can transform his physical form into air making him immune to many things and allowing him to float through the air. He may move in three dimensions at a walking pace (and yes, his clothes and most treasured possessions become ethereal too). The effect lasts one round but its duration can be extended by paying a further 1 Pulse each round.

Elenian Students

Poseurs and jerks, in another time these would be wearing tweed and calling each other "Chet" and "Bunny". Still, they have a right by law to make their opinions known (that is to say, their daddies have enough money to bail them out of most any mess). They may be jerks but they're right, which makes them doubly annoying. Do they deserve to die for that?

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d4

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (Religion) d8, Notice d4, Taunt d6

Pace 6 Parry 4 Toughness 4 Pulse 10

Gear: Knife (**Damage:** Str+d4)

Heroic Savage Tales

These Savage Tales take the characters far from the realm of Relic, into situations both strange and exciting. All of them depend on having some form of realm travel, whether via Telesmae or seemingly random portals throwing them into a new set of surroundings every week. The Tales are listed in date order, from realms in ancient history to far future realms, and a couple of Maelstrom Tales are included at the end.

Land Of The Rising Surf

Realm: Mortal realms, Japan (1609).

The Great Spirit of Order has noticed a decline in recruits from what was once a bustling portal to medieval Japan. Many of the gods have treaties with the Great Spirit, so they ask the heroes to check it out. Upon arrival, they learn history is in danger of being changed: the monks and samurai who would normally join the Great Spirit of Order's crusade against universal chaos have more immediate problems to worry about!

Fight Them On The Beaches

Feral sea spirits have snuck into the Sea of Japan in 1609, halting the Lord of Satsuma from invading the Ryuku Islands. In the history the characters are familiar with, his invasion fleet was so large the islanders were ordered not to throw their lives away. With feral spirits and unearthly weather on the

A Gentle Reminder

The immortal realms of the gods and Great Spirits are places where everyone is Dual Aligned by default, so spirits don't need to manifest to engage with the characters and they don't need The Sight to see them. Spirits get rules for manifesting so you can use those stats in other adventures, where the spirits might find their way to the mortal realms. It's something to bear in mind for the next couple of Savage Tales and for several of the Demigod Savage Tales that follow.



islanders' side, the story may end quite differently. Now, barefoot Ryuku samurai skim the wild waves, storm cloud hair whipping around them. Their weather shamans scribe octopus-ink spells on eelskin before offering them to the Great Spirit of Storms with sparks of Pulse lightning. Every day, the winds separating Japan from the rest of the world grow fiercer, the waves less navigable. If the samurai are allowed to reap their whirlwind, the resultant tides will be too fierce for even the finest ship.

The heroes arrive in the realm in a cloud of mist near the Lord of Satsuma's military camp. His war against the Ryuku rebels is at a stalemate despite the vast number of well-trained soldiers under his banner. The edge they need rests not in strength of arms alone, but in driving a wedge between the interloping spirits and their island allies.

Each Ryuku raiding party consists of one samurai commander, one weather shaman, and eight hulking crab oni. Their approach is heralded with rain, heavy winds, and thunder, but always too quickly for organized bodies of troops to respond. The samurai and the shaman explode onto the shore in sprays of surf and strike at targets of tactical significance while their crab soldiers run interference.

Observant heroes may notice that although many of the locations targeted by raiding parties contain great wealth, all that's ever stolen are pearls. The raiders will spoil food and slash at fine tapestries, but it's the strings of pearls that go into the swag-bags at the end of the day. This is because of an agreement between the feral sea spirits and the Lord of the Ryuku Kingdom. Every week they receive 54 pearls, that's a week the kingdom will remain free. To any hero who doesn't want to take on an entire army of spirit-bolstered warriors, this should suggest a plan: robbery!

The Sting

A Ryuku informant tells the characters that the feral sea spirits receive their payment in the middle of a bay protected by a curtain of unending rain. The bay itself is well hidden and unlikely to be located without his aid (and he might demand payment that leads to further adventures), but once there it's unmistakable. Nestled within the circle of rain is a patch of pure calm where the undulating sea spirits circle. Every payday, a ship sails from a nearby fort and tips the fee into the ocean at sunset. As the pearls sink, they shift to

the spirit world and are consumed by the spirits who love these crunchy morsels. If even a single payment is missed, the spirits will depart forever, denied their favorite delicacies. The crab oni will shrivel soon after, and the shamans will no longer be able to count on the help of the spirits when performing rituals. History will proceed as planned.

The fort where the pearls are stored is well guarded and will require careful planning to infiltrate. It's built into the cliff overlooking the bay, and protected by thick forests and dangerously slick rocks. The main gate can only be reached by foot during low tide; the rest of the time it is only accessible by small boat. Furthermore, crab oni dot the beach, disguised as large smooth stones. A small garrison resides inside, as do three weather shamans. Pearl shipments come in every month under heavy guard, and are collected personally by the garrison commander. After locking the pearls in a carved wooden chest, he returns the key to a chain on his neck. This is an excellent opportunity for the characters to show off their breaking and entering skills. It should be possible to sabotage the deal without being the target of a single attack... but make them work for it. Alternatively, there's always piracy.

Sea Spirits Denied

The sea spirits don't get fed; they pack up and go home. Simple, right? Well, it would be if they weren't *feral* sea spirits. Before leaving, the put-upon spirits will let their more bestial behavior slip – smashing nearby boats, controlling the crab oni to devour the innocent, and sending a tsunami heading toward whatever landmarks the characters and their patron gods hold dear. They had a good thing going, and now everyone is going to pay for ruining it. Time for the characters to save the day again.

This time the characters will need magic to help quell the sea, combat skills to fight back the oni and save the innocent, and generally accept that it's an action adventure after all, not just a stealthy-sneaky mission.

Crab Oni

Demon crabs who walk like men have long been a problem in polite society. They slash up whomever they please with their jagged pincers, and are known

to mumble blasphemies in their garbled tongue. It is best not to invite a crab oni to tea, for they will never reciprocate.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d6, Swimming d10, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 11(4) Pulse 15

Edges: Frenzy

Special Abilities

- *Tough Shell:* Provides the oni with +4 armor, all locations.
- *Pincers:* (**Damage:** Str+d6, AP 2)
- *Disguise:* Crab oni can make their form look like a large smooth rock. Doing so costs 1 Pulse per hour and grants a +4 bonus to Stealth checks made to hide in an appropriate environment, so long as the crab oni does not move.

Weather Shaman

The weather shamans are the key to the Ryuku islanders' resistance, and as such are accorded the rights and respect due to victorious samurai warriors. Most of them are unused to this grand treatment, and prefer to spend their time communing with wind and wave spirits. This often leaves their ceremonial garb salt-stained and disheveled.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Perform Ritual d8, Shooting d8, Swimming d8

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 7(1) Pulse 15

Edges: Sighted (The Sight, Speed, Obscure, Teleport)

Gear: Ceremonial Garb (+1 armor, all locations), Wakizashi (**Damage:** Str+d6, AP 1)

Special Abilities

- *Rituals:* During a raid the shaman will have already performed rituals for Speed on himself and his samurai wingman. He will also have performed Obscure and Teleport so they're ready to trigger if needed.

Samurai

Most legends told about samurai are true. They are the elite warriors of medieval Japan, each honed into a powerful weapon at the command of his lord.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Notice d8, Throwing d8, Swimming d8

Pace 6 Parry 7/8 Toughness 8(2) Pulse 15

Edges: Florentine, No Mercy, Quick Draw

Gear: Katana (**Damage:** Str+d6+2, AP 2), Wakizashi (**Damage:** Str+d6, AP 1), Samurai Battle Armor (+2 armor, all locations)

Feral Sea Spirit

The largest tsunami begins with the smallest wave. These waves ebb and flow around the serpentine loops of the feral sea spirits, held in check by the spirits' whims. With the sinuous unfurling of their pale white coils, the spirits allow waves to slip loose and expand like ripples on a pane of glass. The resulting destruction is monumental.

Sea spirits can be benevolent or malicious, minor or mighty. Without exception, feral sea spirits are petty, lazy, and greedy. Who let these ones have so much power?

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d8

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 6 Pulse 20

Special Abilities

- *Elemental Control:* Feral sea spirits have the equivalent of Elemental Manipulation for all 4 elements and affect 100 times more of the element than normal!
- *Claw:* (**Damage:** Str+d4)
- *Spirit:* These spirits cannot manifest, but they'll use their claws on anyone who enters the spirit world, and use their elemental control ability to affect the physical world.



The Heart Of All Saints

Realm: Mortal realms, USA (1935).

This Savage Tale crosses over into the realm of American Grit, our look at magic, spiritualism, and the weird things riding the rails during the Great Depression. The American Grit realm is the subject of a whole setting book called *Noir Knights*. Keep an eye out for it!

Kalfu, the big, bad loa spirit who's literally the devil at the crossroads, wants the characters to do him a favor. There's a rare artifact that would look splendid in his collection, but it was last referenced in 1935. The treasure in question, the Heart of All Saints, is actually the shellacked brain of Adrien Toussaint, the first taximancer, who disappeared from history in 1732 - taximancy is a specialized form of necromancy, dealing solely with the manipulation of dead bodies. The Heart must be returned to Kalfu's agent, Sid Harker, who will pay the characters the agreed-upon price. The price should be a good one - if anyone knows how to make tempting deals, it's Kalfu.

What Kalfu doesn't tell the characters, but they can probably guess, is that the Heart is best used for malicious acts. It contains Toussaint's considerable knowledge in reanimating human remains. Zana, a goddess of justice from the Relic realm, isn't pleased with the proliferation of such foul magic - especially since Harker has caused trouble in her realm before. She has tasked Jason Yancy, one of her chosen ones, with giving the characters an offer counter to Kalfu's: bring Yancy the Heart instead and they'll receive a favor. Ally with Kalfu and they will have a new enemy.

The Heart Of Mold

The PCs have to do some investigating to track down the Heart. The most immediate route of investigation involves making friends with the Filial Order of Saint James, the heirs to Toussaint's studies who are still active in 1935.

The Filial Order operates as a public church, although all mention of taximancy is relegated to trusted friends. From there the characters will learn that Toussaint disappeared with Captain Cesar Raleigh,

a pirate descendant of Sir Walter Raleigh, on his final voyage. Raleigh settled down to live the life of a gentleman in New Orleans soon after, and the map to his greatest treasure still rests hidden in his ancestral library in the Garden District. If the characters are spirit-friendly, the restless ghosts of the men Raleigh killed to keep his past hidden could help; otherwise, there's always honest archival work.

The map shows Raleigh buried his treasure in the Florida Keys. Renting a boat to travel to the Keys will be easier than the characters may suspect. Though it's not common knowledge, Adrien Toussaint had a family and one of his descendants is an unassuming man called Thaddeus. Unless the characters have been especially sneaky in obtaining the map from Raleigh's library, Thaddeus will notice. He's been after the map for years, and isn't about to let some johnnies-come-lately take it away from him. He will offer his service as their boatman at the most convenient moment, neglecting to mention his family name when he introduces himself.

One day from land, the map will lead the characters into a supernatural hurricane – the first line of defense arranged for the Heart of All Saints. The spirit of Cesar Raleigh's ship, The Royal Blue, will manifest into the physical world and attack at the storm's peak. Even while the waves course over the characters' deck, pirate ghosts will surge forward and manifest with rusty cleavers and ill intent. Two Wild Card spirits direct their action from the Royal Blue's wheel.

Raleigh's Rest

The island where Captain Raleigh buried his final treasure is a squat, ugly place. Treasure Island it ain't. The beach is a broken, rocky affair. A battered wooden stockade sits at the highest point, serving as a way station between the beach and the swampy interior. Several huts sit inside of the stockade; they're in better repair than the exterior, but not by much. The island's keepers sleep here on occasion.

Twelve Escoltadoros live on the island, gnarled and twisted plant men grown from the mangroves as supernatural guardians of the island. They are tasked with protecting the Heart of All Saints until the end of time. Although they have never been off the island, they are content with their role in life. The sun and earth keep them fed, the Heart gives them purpose.

Upon death, they are buried in the swamp and are born again from their sacred trees.

An old cannon pokes out of the east face of the stockade. Despite its broken-down appearance, it is still operational. The Escoltadoros will fire upon the characters' ship given the chance. Other tactics they may resort to in protecting the treasure include hit-and-run attacks, disguising themselves among the swamp trees, and unearthing the island's final store of Toussaint's black-powder packed zombies. The last measure is far from subtle, but there's a certain impressive show of arms involved in deploying shambling bodies studded with hissing fuses.

Battle Royale

When the characters arrive back in New Orleans, Harker is waiting for them at the docks. Yancy and six G-men are observing the transaction from nearby buildings, ready to step in if the transfer is made. Of course, if the characters refuse the transfer, Harker will get right mad. It'll take some fast talking or a faster draw to get out of this one, especially once Toussaint joins the fray (and he will, if he hasn't tipped his hand already). Seeing his ancestor's remains about to get away from him, he'll join the tussle and make off while the attention is on the big players.

Thaddeus Toussaint, Taximancer

Thaddeus is a quiet man in his mid-30's who keeps to himself. He doesn't want the trouble of being the sole heir to Adrien's taximancy abilities, but he doesn't want anyone else messing with his family's remains either. He's a good, Christian man who knows that the dead deserve their rest. He'll stop animating corpses as soon as he's able to obtain his ancestor's remains and remove all traces of weirdness from his family history.

You know the old adage about power and absolutes, though. If Thaddeus gets the Heart of All Saints, who knows what he'll really do with it? And really, when you have a horde of shambling zombies at your command, everything starts to look like a stick of jerky.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Boating d8, Fighting d6, Guts d8, Investigate d10, Notice d10, Shooting d8, Stealth d6

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 5 Pulse 20

Gear: Pistol (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1, AP 1)

Special Abilities

- *Taximancy:* Through means unknown, Thaddeus is able to animate the dead and command them as the power Zombie, but the dead remain animated indefinitely if animated using the Heart of All Saints.

Taximaciated Zombies

Unlike many zombies with which you may be familiar, these fellers don't eat brains. Mostly, they shamble around being nuisances. They are able to perform simple commands, such as guarding locations, carrying objects, and exploding violently.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4

Pace 5 Parry 5 Toughness 7 Pulse 10

Special Abilities

- *Undead:* +2 Toughness, +2 to recover from being Shaken.
- *Claw:* (**Damage:** Str+d4)
- *Fearless*
- *Explosive:* The zombies guarding the island that the Escoltadoros release are packed with gunpowder. This ability can be activated voluntarily or when destroyed by a shot to the torso. The effect is a Medium Burst Template centered on the zombie dealing 2d8 damage to anyone under the template.

Pirate Spirits

A ghost ship deserves ghost sailors. When the Royal Blue manifests, so does its crew. For these spirits, simply use standard soldiers from Savage Worlds adding the Spirit and Fear creature abilities.

Escoltadoros

Use standard soldiers from Savage Worlds with Stealth d8. Describe them as covered in bark and smeared with mud, possessing of choking hands and rough, ancient knives. They offer the ultimate in jungle warfare guerrilla combat.



Sid Harker, Kalfu's Chosen

That Sid Harker's bad news. He's a spirit wrangler who's made a career travelling the Deep South, making people deals they can't refuse. A young couple wants to get married, but the stern family patriarch won't allow it? The old man can hardly protest when he starts speaking in tongues, unable to operate the family business. A grisly landlord's giving his tenants a hard time? He'll end up dead of fear the next day, fingers clutched around a melted rosary. No matter what sorts of intentions people have going into a deal with Harker, the results are always bad.

Harker delights in causing mischief, but hides it behind a snake oil salesman's grin and a list of guarantees and testimonies so long it will make a prospective client's head spin. As he tells it, there was only one time when he got the bad end of a deal – and that was with Kalfu himself.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Persuasion d10

Pace 4 Parry 6 Toughness 6 Pulse 20

Edges: Sighted (The Sight, Armor, Boost/Lower Trait, Fear, Invisibility)

Flaws: Lame

Gear: Pistol (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1, AP 1), Travel Bag Full Of Bribes.



Jason Yancy, Zanua's G-Man

In an era of straight-laced government operatives, Yancy is one of the most direct. In his search for the Truth, he trailed a band of extra-dimensional bootleggers to the realm of Relic. After apprehending them, he found himself accosted by an elderly lady with the piercing eyes of divinity. She spoke to him about justice, and how his realm needed it more than ever. Yancy agreed, despite his desire to see more of the mysterious world that was like the pulp magazines he read.

"Someday, my champion," promised Zanua. "When your task is finished, you may return and claim that which was taken from you so long ago."

Yancy didn't know what that last part meant, but he sure intends to find out. And who knows, maybe you can turn that plot hook into an adventure of its own at some point.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Investigation d6, Notice d8, Stealth d8, Shooting d8, Streetwise d6

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 6 Pulse 15

Edges: Marksman, Patron God: Zanua

Gear: Pistol (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1, AP 1), Sharp Suit.

Yancy's G-men

Use experienced soldiers from Savage Worlds, equipped with Tommy guns and the Rock And Roll! and No Mercy Edges. They trust Yancy unconditionally; if he falls, they will try to recover his body and withdraw.

Black And White And Red All Over

Realm: Mortal realms, USA (1939).

The streets of Los Angeles don't care that there's a war going on; they've got their own things to think about. Half a world away, a madman has invaded Poland, but back home industry has never been better. There's more than one way to make money from human suffering though, and Sam Davies knows it. He runs the *Los Angeles Crescent*, circa 1939. It's a dreary social issues newspaper, wet with the blood of the city's unfortunates. It carries the stories of dirty crime more respectable papers wouldn't touch. That's one reason it's sold so well since Davies launched it twenty years ago. The second reason is because Mr. Davies can see spirits.

With his spirit eyes he can see the spirits of rage and jealousy that feed in the tenements and flophouses, and their greasy cousins that stalk the corridors of high society. Ever a realist, he writes about the physical effects of the spirits while investigating their more ethereal qualities in his free time.

Davies' most hard-hitting interviews have been with spirits of feral dread. Although it was simple information gathering in his mind, Davies' most recent project has turned out to be much tougher - a gilded invitation to talk with the spirit of malice

known as the Gravedigger. The Gravedigger's attention has caused a dark cloud of negative emotion to descend upon the city. Now, Davies is imprisoned within his own home by a labyrinth of wailing spirits... but the *Los Angeles Crescent* is doing better than ever.

How much of this adventure gets set in the physical world and how much is in the spirit world depends on the characters' abilities. You can play it either way, with physical storm clouds on the horizon, or have the characters moving to the spirit world to see the storm of dark energy circling L.A.'s finest areas.

MMB PJL

The characters are alerted to the ominous storm clouds and lurking doom by Mick Mercury, a no-nonsense private eye who shares headspace with the Greek god of travelers (among other things.) He's the realm's divine representative for Mount Olympus, much to his chagrin. Greek gods in fedoras? Togas and Tommy gums? It doesn't add up.

Through hook or by crook Mick calls the characters into his office and lays the facts bare: he's at the end of his rope and had to call in the specialists. He'll fight a mob enforcer with scales from time to time, but the whole clouds-of-doom gig is beyond him.

The investigation should take as long as everyone's having fun following leads. This could be a multi-step process that starts with interviewing witnesses, noting how the *Los Angeles Crescent* always has the scoop on storm-influenced crimes, and infiltrating the central offices to learn that the owner hasn't been in for several days. Alternatively, someone could just demonstrate with a color-coded map that the number of crimes reported increases rapidly in the vicinity of Sam Davies' home.

The house is a fine one, a small mansion in fact, indicative of the popularity of the *Crescent*. It is this very wealth that now has its owner imprisoned. The wrought iron fence that stretches around the grounds is rusted shut under the weight of supernatural decay. The once-trim garden has exploded into a skeletal hedge maze that blocks access to the mansion. Despite the lack of healthy greenery, brightly colored flowers burst from the walls of the maze, decorating it like offerings on a grave. Feral spirits patrol the maze under magically enforced obedience to the Gravedigger. No one is to enter or leave until his reign has been cemented.



Sam Davies is hiding in his study, the one room in the house that is still lit. He knows what he has done and regrets it, but refuses to leave his room. If the characters can guarantee his house's safety, he'll share the means of banishing the Gravedigger's influence in the city: a mystic sigil that must be replicated 10,000 times and spread around the area under the dark cloud. Good thing they have a newspaper to work with!

Stop The Presses!

At some point in the investigation, the characters will encounter Sam's daughter, Lola. She'll be dressed in red, smoking a cigarette from an ebony holder, drawn from an embossed silver cigarette box. Despite looking like trouble to anyone with an inkling of

genre awareness, she'll prove herself a real sweetheart. According to her story, she heard from Mick that the characters were out to help her father. She'll tag along with them, staying out of danger but helping with directions and quirks of the realm.

What the characters don't know is that she didn't get the information about them from Mick, but Hades. The femme fatale is in the employ of the god of the underworld, who gets generous kickbacks as long as the Gravedigger's hanging around. She wants her father rescued, but would prefer to keep her patron happy at the same time. She'll sabotage any efforts to get the sigil into the *Crescent's* printing office. If that doesn't work, she'll resort to hired muscle.

Lola knows a lot of dangerous men, as you'd expect from a beautiful woman in a hard boiled story, but the ones she has in mind for the hit are some of Hades favorites. Don Calamari's boys (or informally, the Fish Mafia) are a band of toughs that heard the sea's siren song and... changed. Their skin is pale and clammy to the touch, and delicate webbing grows between their fingers and toes.

Sam Davies

All those other schmucks can chase the cops, chase the ambulances, chase the moon red, for all Sam Davies cares. He has leads like no one else, and he's going to use them. He's a newspaperman's newspaperman, all cheap whiskey, strong cigars, and long nights. Despite his wealth, he takes pains to depict himself as a good ol' working class kinda guy. When he's not held captive within his own home by feral spirits he enjoys dirty jokes, baseball, and showing off his collection of ancient Greek pottery.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d6, Guts d6, Investigation d8, Notice d8, Perform Ritual, d6, Persuasion d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise, d8, Swimming d6

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 5 Pulse 15

Edges: Sighted (The Sight, Detect/Conceal Arcana, Shape Change)

Gear: .38 in a concealed holster – just in case (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6, 5 shots, Revolver), large sacks of money.



Lola Davies

Lola isn't a bad girl, she just happens to be working for the god of the underworld. She knows that her father's a small fry compared to the keeper of souls, but she can't help having a fondness for the poor old fool. He was the first man to try and buy her love after all, and she learned a lot from him.

The times are changing though, and she's learning to look out for herself these days. When Lola wants something – and she has expensive tastes – she'll find a way to get it.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d6+2, Notice d8, Throwing d8, Persuasion d12+4, Shooting d8, Streetwise d8+4, Taunt d6+2

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 5 Pulse 25 Charisma +4

Edges: Very Attractive, Connections, Reader, Strong Willed, Trait Perfection: Heroic (Persuasion)

Gear: Svelte red dress... what more does she need?

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Lola all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for her own use, enhanced recovery rate, and so on.

Don Calamari's Boys

These wise guys are pale, clammy, goggle-eyed gangsters. The Don controls the whole waterfront, from the fishermen's docks to the Santa Monica Pier. Nothing gets through his net of informants and heavies, which is where his 'boys' come into the picture. He dines at El Crusto, the finest seafood restaurant on the west coast, which is also a place for people like Lola Davies, and explains how the Don's boys are doing a job for her.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d10, Notice d8, Throwing d8, Swimming d10

Pace 6/10 Parry 7 Toughness 7 Pulse 15

Edges: Berserk

Gear: Pistol (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1), Nightstick (**Damage:** Str+d6)



Special Abilities

- *Aquatic:* Can breathe underwater and have a Pace while in the water equal to their swimming die.



Rico "Tentacles" Vasquez, Mob Enforcer

The largest of Don Calamari's boys is a right mean son-of-a-gun, always ready to bust a head that needs cracking. When he gets angry, his skin takes on a bruised purplish color. Rico doesn't think it's polite to mention it; anyone who does gets to witness Rico removing his huge overcoat. From there, it's just a zip and a slap and he's giving the poor guy the tentacles.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+1, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Guts d10, Notice d8, Throwing d8, Swimming d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 9 Pulse 20

Edges: Berserk, Ambidextrous, Two Fisted, First Strike

Gear: Two pistols (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1), Two Nightsticks (**Damage:** Str+d6)

Special Abilities

- *Pseudopods:* Rico has the disturbing ability to sprout tentacles, four in fact. Each is capable of taking an action without incurring a multi action penalty though all four suffer a -2 off-hand penalty.
- *Size +1:* They grow 'em big in his neck of the woods.

Operation Grimm Woodsmen

Realm: Mortal realms, Germany (1943).

Bunker 13. Officially it doesn't exist and never did. Unofficially, it was a top secret German facility where the Nazis first made contact with spirits from another realm. The Great Spirit of Hope needs a few strapping heroes to infiltrate the bunker in July of 1943, and end the spiritual warfare program before the 1944 development of the Leaden Rift. The quickest way to accomplish this is to assassinate the Nazi's sole shaman: Frau Totenkreuz.

Berlin And Onwards

The most convenient portal to 1943 deposits the characters in a run-down hotel in the heart of Berlin. Travel in and out of the city requires papers, and the only people who're getting them for the time being are soldiers. The characters' Telesmae will take care of any language issues, but they'll still need disguises to move around freely.

Any inquiries about Bunker 13 will be initially met with laughter; it's an old military prank to tell new recruits to report there because it doesn't exist; the number's unlucky so they skipped it, see? Continued inquiries will be met with a private invitation from Sturmscharführer Jaeger to discuss the matters at Ernst's, an underground cabaret.

This is, of course, a trap. Jaeger will find out what the characters know before calling in his goons to execute them. Ernst's is a frequent SS hangout, so he can get away with pretty much anything there. In the process of the interrogation, Jaeger demonstrates minor arcane abilities – reading the characters' Pulse, perhaps. This should demonstrate that Totenkreuz is not the only threat. Conveniently, he also possesses the proper clearance to get the characters on the train to Bunker 13.

Bunker 13 is a squat, concrete affair surrounded by barbed wire and chain-link fence. Ancient, gnarled trees stretch upward outside of the perimeter, leaving artificial lights to provide illumination. In the spirit world, the entire area surrounding the bunker is a blasted wasteland: no trees, no spirits, no ghost trains.

Once inside, security is tight. Guards make regular patrols, and are familiar enough with the bunker's inhabitants that any new faces will be met with heavy suspicion. Any number of nasty experiments can be going on in here, but the primary one that the characters should be concerned with are the thirteen (there's that number again) imprisoned spirits of feral dread.

The spirits are contained in the bunker's second basement, where Frau Totenkreuz has bound them within ritual circles of Pulse-infused runes. If the base is on high alert, she will cancel the runes and send them shrieking out at any intruders. Otherwise, they spend most of Totenkreuz's waking hours sharing dark secrets of their master's immortal realm. A special chamber has been constructed for these sessions, consisting of a comfortable wheeled chair and rows of blackboards covered with perilous spirit data.

Before her death, Totenkreuz will try to poison the characters with despair. "I may fall, but others know the truth," she laughs. "We are the Gravedigger's favored race; his armies are promised to us!" This is not an idle threat; as long as the Gravedigger, the Great Spirit of Despair, supports the Nazi war machine, it will be able to train shamans with impunity. To reverse that, a trip to the Immortal Realm of Despair is required.

Grilling The Gravedigger

As can be surmised from the name, the Immortal Realm of Despair is not the most cheerful of places to spend one's time. The prevailing legend is that it used to be a crystalline metropolis created by a race of supermen until its citizens summoned the Gravedigger without knowing his true nature, and he brought ruin upon them all. On the other hand, it's entirely possible that's just propaganda put out by the Great Spirit to make the realm's inhabitants responsible for their own slavery.

The Realm of Despair follows a five-hundred year cycle of destruction and rebirth. structures rise, new science uplifts the lives of its inhabitants, and it always seems like the predestined destruction will miss the next time. It never does. Logic turns to barbarism, monuments are torn down, and dreams give way to dust. The Gravedigger laughs, a new plot already unearthed.

When the characters enter the Realm of Despair, it's in its Cold War paranoia phase. Looming buildings tower over narrow streets, choking the thoroughfares like a barbed wire noose. Cloaked figures rush frantically from building to building all day, only to return home to an empty mirror and metallic soup. It doesn't rain, but it's never sunny either.

The Gravedigger can be found outside the city limits, hard at work on a new graveyard. If the characters want his undivided attention, they'll have to offer something in exchange for withdrawing his blessing from his 'chosen people of the 20th century'. One way to do this is to convince him that another party – say the Allies – would serve his purpose just as well. There are thorny moral issues involved with that choice, so be ready to accept other options as well. The Gravedigger isn't a charity though, and will put the bargaining screws to the characters if they give him a chance.



Sturmscharführer Jaeger

You know the type – a Grade-A, by-the-book Nazi officer. Highly trained, cruel, and precise.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Investigation d8, Intimidation d8+2, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d8, Persuasion d8, Streetwise d8, Shooting d8, Taunt d8+2

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 6(1) Pulse 20

Edges: Reader, Strong Willed, Dodge

Gear: Heavy Coat (+1 armor, all locations), Luger Pistol (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1)



Frau Totenkreuz

Frau Totenkreuz isn't much for politics, but spirits enthrall her. When soldiers first discovered her cottage in the depths of the Black Forest, she wasn't even aware that there was a war going on. Totenkreuz is smart though, and quickly learned the proper jingoistic Nazi phrases to parrot if she was to continue receiving funding.

Life without access to the spirit world is a slow, foggy nightmare to her. It is a barren land where all her dark imaginations are invisible, forgotten. The immortal Realm of Despair is so much better though,

with its shadow-blasted halls and endless litanies of the occult. To put it another way, Totenkreuz is only happy when she's truly miserable.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Knowledge (Occult) d8, Notice d8, Shooting d6, Perform Ritual d8, Persuasion d8+2

Pace 6 Parry 4 Toughness 6 Pulse 20 Charisma +2

Edges: Attractive, Sighted (The Sight, Speak Language, Boost/Lower Trait, Stun, Fear)

Gear: Luger Pistol (**Ranges:** 12/24/48, **Damage:** 2d6+1)

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Frau Tokenkreuz all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for her own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

Nazi Mook

Use standard soldiers from Savage Worlds.

Nazi Squad Leader

Use veteran soldier from Savage Worlds with Combat Reflexes and Command.



Spirits Of Feral Dread

Spirits of feral dread are the sole survivors of realms that have fallen to a being of divine power known only as the Gravedigger, their Great Spirit and master. They appear in the spirit world as large, leaden shadows, each erupting with dozens of eyes with which to see threats. They avoid contact with others whenever possible. If forced to fight, they will share the tales of their demise (Intimidation) until their opponents collapse from the terrifying woe, or the spirit can find an escape route.

Despite their fearful nature, spirits of feral dread can be convinced to share their ancestral memories if given that rarest of commodities - hope. Many were originally from realms rich in secrets of the dark arts, which could be shared with the proper bribe. Depending on how amicable the deal is, the spirit may even reveal how its dark magic first lured the Gravedigger to its realm.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d10, Notice d12+2

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 6 Pulse 15

Edges: Alertness

Special Abilities

- *Tale Of Demise:* Fatigue inflicted through Intimidation can Incapacitate an opponent.
- *Fear:* Leaden shadows with dozens of eyes, the spirit world personification of dread? You bet they're scary.
- *Spirit:* Cannot manifest.

Escape From Zhiming Dao

Realm: Mortal realms, China (2019).

In 2019, Zhiming Dao, a small island in the South China Sea, disappeared. The island officially only had one inhabitant, so Shanghai officials covered the matter up and quickly forgot about it. The gods were not willing to let it go so easily. In addition to being the private sanctuary of Tian Long, the power behind the XiCorp electronics giant, the island was home to a useful portal to the Maelstrom. With the island's

destruction (let's not mince words), the portal and its ancestral keepers were likewise destroyed. The characters are sent to this time and place to set things right, or stumble upon it while portal surfing.

All signs point to Tian Long being the culprit. As of 2019, she was 97 years old and pouring great chunks of her vast fortune into prolonging her life. Her most eccentric plan was her final one: hosting an underground martial arts tournament to determine the world's best warriors. The winners would have the dubious (and unmentioned) honor of providing her with the organs that she needed to stay alive.

Unfortunately for Tian Long and the gods, Dioxippus Jones, the contest's eventual winner, was too powerful to be defeated by Tian Long's post-championship ambush squad. Instead, the experience of taking down the island's forces bare-handed drove him over the edge of heroism into demigodhood. The resultant Pulse surge, coupled with Jones's rage, shook the island to its core, destroying all traces of its existence. If the characters wish to avoid that fate, then they'd best discover Jones's role in the destruction and either pacify him or beat him fairly.

Entering The Ring

The PCs appear at the island's portal just before the fateful tournament begins. They can either infiltrate Tian Long's base by their own means or earn an official invitation by defeating one of the last hopefuls who are fighting for the last wild card slots on the main beach. The former method will test their infiltration and evasion skills, as Tian Long has made many enemies over the years. Her island defense systems consist of the standard-issue guard towers manned with searchlights and machine guns as well as armed patrols of XiCorp security that ensure that all visitors to Zhiming Dao stay in the authorized zones. Bordering the perimeter fence, the island's motor pool could be one way in. It holds several jeeps and enough black market helicopters to make the characters worry. Once inside the perimeter, though, they should be able to make it to Tian Long's private mansion relatively easily.

Facing the other hopefuls is as simple as filling out the necessary paperwork. They're aware of the rules of engagement, and are prepared for the consequences. Note that not all of the characters have to win a qualifying match to be allowed on Zhiming

Dao; every successful martial artist has access to a support staff, merchandisers, managers, etc. Some of the contenders, such as stuntman Yang Chi, will fight with honor. Others, including ex-KGB Yelena Konev, will resort to trickery and deceit.

Zhiming Dao

The visitors' quarters of Zhiming Dao are the equivalent to a four-star hotel, complete with extensive gym facilities, tennis courts, and trail rides. The rooms are small, but well furnished by one with an eye for quality. This is a tropical vacation on top of an underground martial arts tournament! Despite the luxury, it is difficult to not feel constrained. Chain-link fences overlaid by more photogenic bamboo keep visitors from walking off the beaten path and onto Tian Long's private preserve. The only time that armed guards won't turn visitors away is when the battles are in progress; Tian Long's arena is reserved for the purpose.

Tian Long's mansion is architecturally simple, but large and built of expensive materials. Above ground, it is built around a central courtyard where the coliseum-style fighting arena has been set up. A warren of secret labs undercuts the mansion, each staffed by a staggering array of doctors. Thanks to their patron's desperation and deep pockets, they have been able to rig up a chemical bath that will make any harvested organ suitable to her body's particulars, as long as it is administered quickly and under controlled conditions.

Anyone who takes the trail rides or makes an effort to get away from the restrictive visitors' quarters will notice an old-fashioned windmill and wisps of campfire smoke in the distance... these belong to the portal keepers who oversee Zhiming Dao's portal to the Maelstrom, where the characters first arrive (and their way out too, hopefully). Although they don't understand the full extent of the portal's power, several of them are able to see and converse with spirits. They don't know much about the island, but they do send information back to the Maelstrom whenever they learn something new from any passing spirits, making them useful information gatherers for the gods.

Tian Long's Ritual

The tournament's closing ceremonies take place on the Amber Balcony, which overlooks a heavily forested valley. Several long tables are set for dinner. All of the surviving participants are in attendance, along with their staff.

Without any intervening action by the characters, this is how the next several minutes unfold: first, Tian Long praises the top three contestants and places ceremonial talismans around their necks. The talismans contain powerful drugs, which make the already weary fighters confused and complacent. She invites the winners to eat on the Emerald Balcony, apart from the courageous losers. There is no Emerald Balcony, but there is a secret, underground lab just waiting for three drugged organ donors! If Dioxippus won the tournament, he will resist the drug long enough to take down Tian Long's guards. At this point, his ascension has begun: the island's portal flares to life and begins releasing Feral Spirits of Rage into the peaceful hermitage. Dioxippus, flush with his taste of divinity, tears through Zhiming Dao, slaughtering everything in his path until he reaches the portal. It begins to twist and tear; the island begins to shake, sinking within ten minutes.

Somewhere along the way, the characters will hopefully intervene to stop that happening!





Dioxippus Jones

Jones is a master of the Greek martial art pankration, and a chosen of Ares. He was born on the battlefield, the smell of blood and smoke his first companions. When he closes his eyes, he sees himself on a throne made of skulls, the banners of every nation crumpled at his feet. He never tries explaining any of this to his buddies when they're out rock-climbing or shooting promotional spots for the newest line of muscle-boosting powder. They'd tell him to lay off the drugs. Jones doesn't do drugs, though; he's a winner. Winners don't do drugs. Life is a natural high, and fighting is the pinnacle of life.

Jones is a bluff, cheerful man of Greek/English ancestry. He hides his doubts beneath a thick layer of machismo, knowing that if he keeps on fighting he'll get past his demons. There hasn't been a foe yet that he couldn't drive into submission. He carries a long spear which he has learned to use as well as his martial arts skills. Since this isn't the sort of tournament where melee weapons are banned, he has his spear with him at all times. Jones doesn't recall where he got the spear, but he thinks it really makes him look cool. In fact, it was a gift from Ares who looks forward to seeing it used in a real full-scale battle.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Guts d10, Notice d8, Throwing d8, Swimming d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 8 Pulse 35 Charisma +2

Edges: Attractive, Improved Cool As Ice, Flight Of The Ascendant: Improved, Improved Sweep, Improved Frenzy, Stutter

Gear: Spear Of The Damned (**Damage:** Str+2d6, AP 4, HW)

Special Abilities

- *Demigod Entity:* This ability grants Jones all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rate, and so on.

Ouroborous Emergent: Episode II

Realm: Mortal realms, Garden of Athena (far future).

Now that the heroes are recognized as such, they finally have enough resources to decode the treasure map that they found in *Ouroborous Emergent: Episode I*. The stained map explains how to open a portal to the starship *Sagittarius*, where a great jewel, the Ouroboros, will be forever buried. The jewel is, in fact, the physical manifestation of a pocket dimension that the characters will be able to visit once they are demigods. For now, it's enough to know that possessing it allows the bearer to regenerate Pulse at triple the standard rate. That should get their treasure-hunting juices flowing.

When the characters beam aboard the starship, it is one month out from the Garden of Athena, a futuristic realm settled by the best of the Greek gene pool with sci-fi technology and the blessings of the Olympian gods on their side. The *Sagittarius* is a pleasure liner peopled by squabbling philosophers, grey-bearded statesmen, and purveyors of all sorts of amusements. In six hours, barbarian terrorists will blow up the ship, killing everyone aboard.

If you like this *Savage Tale*, you'll be delighted to know there's a whole setting book about the Garden of Athena realm called *Dogs Of Hades*. It has a plot point campaign, plenty of options for characters, and stacks more besides.

Waltz For Sagittarius

The Ouroboros is currently being used as the lucky charm of Anakletos, a Heroic rank veteran of many Athenian campaigns. The characters will spot a great jewel around his neck when they see him first, and any glimpse into the spirit world will confirm that it's spiritually active. Very active. Anakletos is vacationing on the *Sagittarius*, dividing his time between displays of arms, engaging in philosophical duels, and gambling. This last pastime is what will eventually get him into trouble. If he doesn't lose at dice or a wrestling contest with one of the characters, he'll lose it to one of the barbarian terrorists. Of course, nobody onboard knows that the characters are as great as they say they are, and obtaining an

introduction to the glorious soldier may require navigating a foreign social web.

The barbarian terrorists will attack whenever it's most convenient for the story. This could be as the characters are about to win a bet against Anakletos, or soon after they see a laughing barbarian terrorist walking away with the Ouroboros. At this point, explosions will rock the ship as terrorists detonate the bombs hidden in the cargo hold.

The ship's captain will be quick to alert the passengers to the trouble, calming them with the knowledge that the hull had not been breached. He is interrupted by Caspian Harloch, leader of the barbarians (despite his cultured voice and dress, Harloch is still considered a barbarian, as is everyone who isn't from the Garden – that's just the Athenian way). His demands are simple, but untenable: return sovereignty to his people and grant remunerations for their ongoing war. Since peace cannot be brokered, he settles for taking all of the valuables onboard the ship and crashing it into an asteroid.

Harloch commands the operation from the ship's flight deck, where he stands with a gun to the captain's head at all times. Five of his most trusted revolutionaries share the room, keeping an eye on ten of the most high-profile prisoners. The rest of the ship is divided into sections, which are looted by rank-and-file terrorists. As soon as the escape pods are filled with valuables, they'll jam the controls and depart.

Portal Rescue

If any of the characters get the idea to try saving the ship, it will be more difficult than simply packing their favorite passengers into their pocket dimension. The destruction of the *Sagittarius* is integral enough to its realm that history will conspire to ruin any large-scale rescue programs. The only way around this is a devious loophole that will banish the passengers from their home realm forever.

Close attention to the ship's navigational equipment will indicate that there's a black hole not too far off course. If the characters contact the gods, they'll learn that the black hole is Hephaestus' Forge, a star that the god of the forge fired so hot when creating a new alloy that it collapsed upon itself. The gods will tell them that if they can navigate the ship through it,



they should be able to activate the portal to Olympus that's still there, in the middle of the black hole.

Normally, any characters less than Heroic rank are unable to handle the chaotic pressures of the Maelstrom. In order to protect the passengers of the ship, the characters must arrange a deal with the portal's spirits of the Veil, the twin spirits known as the Palici. Spirits of the Veil are known for driving a hard bargain, often involving unpleasant terms. Just ask Gregor at the start of the campaign on page 91. The Palici have d10 in Smarts, Spirit, and Persuasion.

If the characters can convince them of the universal importance of saving the starship, the Palici can craft a reality bubble that surrounds it as it goes through the Veil and into the Maelstrom. It should last the ship until it reaches Olympus. The bubble is quite an oddity in the Maelstrom though, and will attract all sorts of unpleasant spiritual turbulence. Between navigating a black hole and the rigors of the Maelstrom, there's no way that autopilot's going to do the trick.

Anakletos



Anakletos is an iconic Athenian, trained in all of the noble arts of his people. He knows a little bit of everything, which has served him well in his dozens of military campaigns. The last one was a hairy one even for the brave champion though, so he's taking some time off. Freed from the authoritarian rule of his homeland, Anakletos is letting his hair down and engaging in all of the pleasures that he has fought so long to protect. Although he has little practical experience with many of the more refined activities aboard the *Sagittarius*, he's willing to try them out with gusto. After that, there's always gambling!

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d10, Guts d6, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Knowledge (Philosophy) d6, Notice d10, Shooting d8, Persuasion d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 6 Pulse 30

Edges: Penetrating Strike: Improved, Natural Leader, Command, Master Leader, Improved Block, Jack Of All Trades

Gear: Hades Blade: Short Sword (**Damage:** Str+d6+2, AP 4)

Special Abilities

- **Heroic Entity:** This ability grants Anakletos all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.



Caspian Harloch, Barbarian Terrorist

He's the blond-haired barbarian who is taking the space lanes by storm. Nobody knows where he's from, but he is as cultured as he is passionate about the freedom of his people. Although deeply apologetic about his demands, he has so little in common with the crew of the *Sagittarius* that finding compromise is extremely difficult.

Caspian can be temporarily distracted by a spirited debate. Just once in his life, he would like to prove that he has the chops to take on a trained rhetorician.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Gambling d8, Guts d6, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Knowledge (Philosophy) d6, Notice d8, Shooting d10, Persuasion d8

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 6 Pulse 20

Edges: Hold the Line, Fervor, Command, Block, Jack of All Trades

Gear: Light Recurve Blaster (**Ranges:** 15/30/60, **Damage** 2d6+1), Hades Blade: Knife (**Damage:** Str+d4+2, AP 4)

Barbarian Terrorists

Use veteran soldiers from Savage Worlds with Strong Will and Combat Reflexes, using the same blaster weapon as their leader, Caspian Harloch.



The Ill-Tempered Cauldron

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Yggdrasil.

With the characters becoming heroes in the eyes of the universe, it's time to start networking with other like-minded troubleshooters. The universe is a big place, and having bold allies is a career move encouraged by everyone who hopes to keep the current system of divinity in place. To this end, Bors the Daring has invited the characters to train in the Maelstrom realm of Yggdrasil. It is a domain of great deeds and hardy challenges – not to mention sumptuous feasts.

The First Challenge

This is a good opportunity to introduce story threads of your own, as the characters could encounter important people from a number of realms at Bors' revel. Together, they can face mythological creatures and form rivalries that are the heart of legend. These events should by no means be easy, but the stakes for failure are low; it's just training, after all. Other important figures who will be training are Nils Squaretooth and Bjorn Snorrason; these leaders of rival mercenary bands are using the occasion to cement their new alliance. The first great event is flushing out a nest of Lindwurms. They're not quite dragons, but they're big enough and twice as mean.

The lindwurm nest is located in the shallows of a deep, black lake in the foothills surrounding a spine of snow-capped mountains. Standard procedure is to lure the amphibious beasts out of the lake before engaging in battle, but it is a sign of great skill to defeat them on their home terrain. Other complications could include under-trained youngsters and landslides from the shifting tides of battle.

The Second Challenge

Following the destruction of the Lindwurms, it is traditional to roast their bodies and feast upon the remains. Mighty warriors have mighty appetites to match! The pre-emptive entertainments begin as the central dish is cooked. Hours pass. The Lindwurm still refuses to retain heat. If anything, it has cooled down after several hours in the pot. Bors is outraged – the cauldron was a special gift from a senior hero at the gathering, and it refuses to cook?

Consulting the spirit that lurks within the pot (or researching its legend with a knowledgeable tale-teller) reveals that the pot won't cook meat for cowards. If this becomes widely known, the banquet's cordial mood soon sours. Who among them is a coward? Who would dare?

Tensions flare and memories leading back for years are examined. No one wants to admit cowardice among so many heroes, but everyone wants this rare meat; it is a delicacy, and they are hungry. Soon talk turns to throwing out the least brave of the revelers so that the rest can eat. It doesn't take long for Nils and Bjorn to go at each other with weapons, renewing their bloody feud. If only there were some test to prove that everyone at the meal was truly brave...

The Final Challenge

One way to go here is to have someone suggest a one-week break for everyone to go out and perform a brave deed. Upon reconvening, they will share the tales, eat the meat, and be comrades once more. This will give your adventure the air of a fairy tale; after all, how easy is it to go out and intend to be heroic? Is it something that just happens, or can it be forced? Give your players' suggestions lots of weight here. If they want to investigate the cauldron further, that's an interesting way to go (it was made by Loki, after all.) Alternatively, if they want to spend the next week wrestling electric sting-sharks, that could work.

If no such ideas are forthcoming, the same tale-teller who explained the cauldron could be convinced to share some tales of a nearby camp of trolls. Surely, defeating this filthy knot of brutes would be a heroic action. On the way to the troll camp, test them once or twice. Is it brave to attack a sleeping troll? How about one who is feeding his two young children from a bag of stolen chickens? After the warm-ups, hit them with the full-fledged camp.

The troll camp consists of twelve warriors in varying states of battle readiness. They have been clashing with the war bands that crisscross the region, occasionally allying with one long enough to legitimize their brutality. They keep two human slaves, and aren't particularly concerned with the value of human rights. Not when they're hungry, at least.

In the course of events, one of the characters may feel the blame for the meat's failure to cook. Perhaps

he had a notably cowardly moment, or is waiting to reveal a dark secret to the rest of the gang. There's no set answer for who actually triggered the cauldron's power: it may have been a young warrior who turns to the characters to teach him strength, it may have been Bjorn for behavior on the battlefield, or it may have been nobody at all. The god of misdirection loves his jokes, especially when they can get a group of proud, warrior-types bickering like children.

Like many delicacies, Lindwurm does not taste particularly good. At least it makes a memorable story!



Bors The Daring

Bors is old school - a bold Norseman with a beard as fiery as his temperament. Although his friendships are not deep, they are many. Has he ever told you about the time he had to sneak out of a camp of giants while disguised as the King of the Trolls? Share a barrel of mead with him and you'll soon be best friends, at least until the hangover hits.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d12, Gambling d10, Guts d8, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Notice d4, Swimming d6, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 12(3) Pulse 30

Edges: Brawny, Cool As Ice, Cat's Descent, Trademark Weapon - Nine-World Axe, Giant Killer, Surge, Contacts

Gear: Fur Of Mountain Wolves (+3 armor, torso), Nine-World Axe (**Damage:** Str+d12+1, AP 6, HW, 2-Handed)

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Bors all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.



Nils Squaretooth

A loud-mouthed Norseman with oddly square teeth, Nils leads the Frosthhammer mercenary band with honor and distinction. Although others will tell different variations of the story, Nils prefers to boast about the time when he tore the burning blade from a dark álf's hand and used it to slay a score of spearmen.



Nils is the gourmand of the group, and would much rather discuss food than brave deeds. He knows what is expected of him, however.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d12, Gambling d6, Guts d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Shooting d6, Swimming d6,

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 14(6) Pulse 25

Edges: Improved Frenzy, No Mercy, Improved Nerves of Steel, Feel My Pain

Gear: Enchanted Pendant (+6 armor, all locations), Wizard Bane Greatsword (**Damage:** Str+d10, AP 2, 2-Handed. Any “leftover” damage - damage above that required to inflict a Wound - is instead drained from the victim’s Pulse)

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Nils all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.



Bjorn Snorrason

Although not as large as the other assembled heroes, Bjorn has no shortage of heroic deeds about which to boast. There was the time that he won his Concussion Maul from Thor in a game of dice, for one. Even more amazing was the time he outran Thor after winning his Concussion Maul in a game of dice.

When Bjorn’s not demonstrating his prowess with his amazing Concussion Maul, he’s poking holes in Nils’s tale of the burning blade.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d12, Gambling d10, Guts d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d4, Swimming d6, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 9(2) Pulse 25

Edges: Improved Sweep, Quickness, Mighty Blow, Monkey Grip: Improved, Pulse Armor

Gear: Oil Of Surety (+2 armor, all locations, and nullifies 10 points of AP), Concussion Maul (**Damage:** Str+d10, AP 2, 2-Handed, anyone sustaining a Wound from this weapon is knocked back from the attacker d6 inches per Wound away)

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Bjorn all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

Lindwurm

Use the Drake from Savage Worlds, and take away his feet.

Troll

Use the Troll from Savage Worlds.

Do Gremians Dream Of Crossed Gears?

Realm: Maelstrom, Fey Realm Of Dreams.

It’s inevitable: the characters will need a piece of obscure technology to complete a task, and the only one who can help them is a brilliant scientist. Stanford McKenna is just the man they need, no matter what realm or device they’re looking for. He’s just the “hook” as we like to say in the business. McKenna is easy to find, but difficult to work with. He seems absent-minded and uncoordinated, and is unable to help with the characters’ question.

This is because the man they meet is not Stanford McKenna at all, but a lifelike android/clockwork golem/wax figure animated by a tribe of gremians. The real McKenna set off to the Realm of the Pure Mages months ago; the gremians tried to continue his work, but found it beyond them. Traveling through the Realm of the Pure Mages after him isn’t going to work; McKenna prepared for his trip for 18 years, and had a substantial collection of notes to guide him. No, the only way to access his figures and plans is by directly appealing to the Duke of Crossed Gears, lord of the gremian spirits. He monitors the dreams of scientists from his mound in the Fey Realm of Dreams, mining them for grand inventions and prospective subjects.

Crossing The Realm

During the day, the Fey Realm of Dreams is a thick, fairytale forest dotted with lush pastures and flowing streams. Animal life is plentiful, but there are still a few dangers (so don't let it get too much like a theme park). Upon nightfall, the fey spirits emerge from their homes on missions both dreadful and frivolous. Dream logic takes control over standard, logical flow. Don't be afraid to describe strange, symbolic background elements like maidens harvesting skulls from red-barked trees studded with thorns, or packs of hounds tearing across the sky in pursuit of silver-lined clouds. It's also the time the howlers are at their worst, caged within the night terrors of mortal sleepers.

The first sign that the characters are approaching the domain of the Duke of Crossed Gears is that the rivers turn to oil. Cog-blossomed vegetation sprout along their banks, providing ample perches for miniature mechanical fliers plucked from mechanics' fancies. Grass becomes stiff and metallic enough to puncture shoes.

A gang of sprites have elected themselves the Duke's welcoming committee, and take it upon themselves to introduce newcomers to the duchy's finer points. Their methods are crude, but ensure that nobody gets too familiar with the wild, industrial beauty. More than anything else, it keeps the sprites entertained.

As the characters make their way past a garden of rusted metal war-machines, one of them will roll from its resting place and block their way. A second one will clamber up behind them. They won't attack except to defend themselves, but won't let anybody pass either. If the characters are deadlocked, the sprites will get bored and reveal themselves. In exchange for calling off their machines, they'll demand a toll. In spring, this will merely be a fresh idea or a few seconds of embarrassment. Come winter, they'll be out for blood – or Pulse.

Impressing The Duke

The Duke of Crossed Gears has been picking through some of the most creative minds of the universe since before the characters' ancestors were born. It's going to take something special to pull him away from his dream decompiling. Luckily, he frequently hosts symposiums under the sprawling boughs of his titanic

steelwillow. He invites the most brilliant performers into his inner circle until he is next distracted.

Fey spirits, primarily gremians and sprites, attend these boisterous events for the wine, gossip, and shining ideas. Each gathering has a specific theme, such as light sources or howler deterrents. Anyone with a contribution is invited to speak. Jeers and tangential arguments are quick to develop, however, unless the speaker is presenting an idea that is both new and in line with what is currently popular – a tough mix to achieve! Contradictions are the current fad in the Duke's court; a hero who could invent reproducible cold fire or that which is dead, yet also alive would be guaranteed time with the Duke.

To those he favors, the Duke is all compliments and probing questions. He is appreciative of their smallest insight, but is endlessly curious about the reasoning that led to it. Any contradictions are seized upon at once and dissected and reassembled until they are completely understood. He has McKenna's collected dreams, and will share them in return for stimulating conversation, inserting the characters into the collected dreamscape.

The dreamscape before the characters will vary greatly depending on what kind of scientist he is. If they required the plans for a submarine, the realm will be one of undersea domes and bio-synthesoid sharks. If they needed a hacking protocol, they'll instead be confronted with a 3D datafield constructed from pulsing nodes and cables. No matter what the external trappings, the realm is inhabited by two sets of sentient creatures: doppelgangers of McKenna, each representing one facet of his personality, and fanged, multi-tentacled night terrors. These psychic parasites feed on the creative aspects of McKenna's personality, injecting them with doubt and contempt. The characters are shining beacons of personality, and will no doubt attract swarms of parasites themselves. Better find the right scientist and run!

This is largely an abstract adventure in an ever-shifting setting (both the Fey Realm of Dreams and McKenna's dreamscape are subject to change without a moment's notice). It's a session's interlude between more 'regular' action and it should feel magical and enchanting to the players while also keeping them off balance. The duchy is a place where rhetoric, rhyme and logic are the only real weapons and armor a person can hope for and the denizens of the realm

are voracious Pulse sucking and Fatigue inflicting predators. It's a realm where being able to calculate pi to seven places is enough to destroy a dozen predators, a dirty rhyming couplet more effect than a submachine gun and a good riddle offers nigh impenetrable armor. Wounds are dealt in Fatigue till characters' minds temporarily break down (Incapacitated), and good use of imagination by a player should spontaneously remove Fatigue from his character. This isn't a session of many rules, and may not suit everybody, but it'll be a lot of fun for some of you who want to explore the strangest extremes of the Maelstrom and the immortal realms therein.

Sprites

Sprites resemble beautiful human specimens with butterfly or dragonfly-like wings. They're tiny, measuring six inches at the shoulder, and fond of pranks that few mortals are able to comprehend. Their laugh is as magically contagious as it is grating. Sprites change their natures with the seasons: spring pranks are the lightest, only causing embarrassment to the chosen victim. Summer jests raise the stakes, and may cause the target's friends to begin to worry – and woe betide any mortal who encounters a Sprite come winter! While not physically very powerful, their laugh and Pulse Leech ability make them a danger when they appear in groups.

When in the mortal realms, sprites prefer remaining manifested in the physical world, coasting on their powers of misdirection to live life to its fullest. If local dangers get to be too hot to handle, they hightail it back to the spirit world as quickly as possible. If they've angered anybody enough to be pursued there, they'll make a beeline for the nearest dream, the more vivid the better, disappearing into it and fleeing to the safety of the Fey Realm of Dreams, where they inevitably have friends and relatives who serve as messengers for the greater fey spirits.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Notice d4, Persuasion d8+2, Taunt d8

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 3 Pulse 10 Charisma +2

Edges: Improved Dodge

Special Abilities

- *Size -2:* -2 Toughness and regular-sized creatures get -2 to hit them.
- *Magical Laughter:* The laugh of a sprite allows the Fatigue from their Taunts to cause Incapacitation. Anyone knocked out by this laugh will fall under the sprite's influence for 1 minute if the sprite chooses to pay 1 Pulse.
- *Flight:* Sprites have a flying Pace of 6 and a climb of 3.
- *Beautiful:* +2 Charisma.
- *Pulse Leech (4/8/12):* As a ranged attack sprites have the ability to drain Pulse from a target who is in the same world as it (spirit world or physical world). Any damage dealt by this attack is instead taken as Pulse loss by the target, and the same amount of Pulse is added to the sprite for its own use later. A sprite may never use this attack to get beyond 15 Pulse.
- *Spirit:* Sprites can manifest in the physical world at night-time as an Action costing 1 Pulse and lasting until dawn.

Spritemech One: Alpha

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+7, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d12+2, Guts d8, Notice d4, Stealth d6, Throwing d8

Pace 10 (cannot run) Parry 9 Toughness 25(10) Pulse 20

Edges: Improved Block, Improved Trademark Weapon – Restless Dreams Grindwheel, Surge

Gear: Restless Dreams Grindwheel (**Damage:** Str+2d10, AP 6, 2 Handed, Deals Fatigue not Wounds, can Incapacitate not kill)

Special Abilities

- *Hardy*
- *Captured First Love's First Sunset Together:* (+10 armor, all locations)
- *Tracks:* Alpha has tank tracks not legs so ignores most difficult terrain and it would be very hard to trip.
- *Size +8:* +4 to hit this massive machine, and it takes up a 3x2 inch space on the battlefield.



- *Spirit Construct*: Cannot manifest, but never leaves the Fey Realm of Dreams so never has to. Follows the normal rules for constructs.

Spritemech Two: DoubleDibble

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+5, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d12, Fighting d12, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d8, Swimming d6, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 10 Toughness 19(6) Pulse 20

Edges: Improved Block, Improved Dodge, Improved First Strike, Improved Sweep

Special Abilities

- *Hardy*
- *Fond Memories In Sepia*: (+6 armor, all locations)
- *Improbably Jointed, Vaguely Rubbery, Sometimes Telescopic Limbs*: Reach 2
- *Two Heads*: Ganging up bonuses against Double Dibble are reduced by 2
- *Serrated Tears Of Joy*: (**Damage:** Str+d8, An opponent who takes damage from this attack must make a Spirit check and if they fail must roll on the Fright table – permanent effects such as phobias last only until the character leaves the realm)
- *Size +6*: +2 to hit this impressive machine, and it takes up a 2x2 inch space on the battlefield.
- *Spirit Construct*: Cannot manifest, but never leaves the Fey Realm of Dreams so never has to. Follows the normal rules for constructs.

Gremians

The gremians are curious about technology first and foremost, throwing their lives into the ever-spinning gears of experimentation. Every time a dream of an unbuilt invention makes its way into the Fey Realm of Dreams, a gremian grows from the kernel. She (for gremians are predominantly female) then makes the solution to the dream-contraption her life's work. Solving this riddle may require tracking down the original dreamer and observing him secretly

as he works. Other times it may require taking the dreamer's other inventions apart, examining them for the key component that could lead back to the dream-contraption. The gremian then toils to try and smooth the way to the invention being constructed. If the inventor is working on other things, for instance, she'll manifest at night and pull out the plans for the unbuilt invention and leave them in his workshop. If his girlfriend is taking up too much of his spare time... well, the gremian might see that as a threat to the invention being built, and that would be bad for the poor girlfriend.

Gremians tend to be associated with mechanical contraptions, but some are born to electronic inventions and bio-tech creations. It is even whispered that a few are born purely in software, no more than a collection of binary code.

Although the vast majority of gremians respect their progenitors and aren't maliciously-minded, a few outright loathe their origins. These hexagon-knuckled miscreants see their dream-contraption as a waste of time and their creator as an addlebrained simpleton. In order to make their cursed lives bearable, they content themselves with causing trouble among the more well-behaved gremians and plotting to maim or kill their creator.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d6, Investigation d6, Notice d8, Repair d10

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Edges: McGyver

Special Abilities

- *Tool Hands*: Gremians can change their fingertips into a variety of useful tools, from small hammers to assorted screwdrivers. As a weapons these deal Str+d4 damage, but they're mostly used when manifested to tinker and construct their life's work.
- *Spirit*: In the presence of technology and machinery, gremians can physically manifest for 1 hour at the cost of 4 Pulse. Each additional hour costs a further 1 Pulse. While manifested, gremians do not recover Pulse.

Howlers

Unlike most fey spirits, which display whimsical mixtures of light and darkness, howlers are bad news all around. These spectral forms were incubated in the darkest nightmares and fed by their loathing for the freedom that they will never have. Each howler is bound to the location where several dreamers – human or spirit – are unable to escape persistent night terrors. When the howler can no longer bear the slow burn of freedom denied, it gives in to its malicious nature and willingly shares its soul-withering grief with all in its domain.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d8

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 7 Pulse 10

Edges: Berserk

Special Abilities

- *Necrotic Shriek:* A howler's grief is communicated through a necrotic shriek costing 5 Pulse that deals 3d6 damage to all targets with a Cone Template. The howler also makes a Spirit check, opposed by Guts, against anyone under the template. On a success and for each raise, the howler inflicts a level of Fatigue which can kill. The Fatigue can affect characters in the physical world despite the howler having no physical presence, though no damage is dealt to physical beings by the attack.
- *Claws:* (**Damage:** Str+d6)
- *Spirit:* Cannot manifest.





Demigod Savage Tales

This is it. The big time. The characters are probably legends in several realms by now, and have access to large support networks. There's no such thing as a quick trip to the store to buy milk; every action they take is infused with higher purpose.

Each of these Savage Tales takes place in either a distant, alternate reality or one of the Pulse-inundated domains within the Maelstrom. Stand tall, for these are the tales that will form a new pantheon.

Scarbone

Realm: Mortal realms, Alternate Earth (65 Million B.C.).

An alternate prehistoric Earth is threatening to invade the real one. This is a world where dark, psionic saurians (dinosaur men) became the dominant species rather than ape-descended humans. From their mobile cities of basalt and steel they scheme endlessly for new allies against their roach-like enemies. Recently, their neural explorer program paid off. For the price of lobotomizing their most brilliant minds, they were able to construct a dimension-spanning portal. It leads to a world much like theirs, but where the Titanosaurs aren't the size of skyscrapers and don't carry entire military bases on their backs.

The Green Earth Coalition, as the saurians are known, have entered our reality and constructed a gigantic Pulse reflector in the year 65 million B.C. Anything that endangers Earth's dinosaurs (say, a meteor) will be blasted to paste. Dinosaurs will rule the Earth, and in time, the universe. They'll go back to the other dimension and save their brothers from the roachocalypse.

If the characters were hoping to smash a machine and be home in time for cocktails, they'll be sorely mistaken; the Pulse reflector is considerably more complex than that. Initial reports suggest that it's actually a lake of glowing magma, kept warm by thermal fissures and saurian tenders. Any time Pulse is injected into the lake, it's reflected back with ten times the power. Aiming this blast requires esoteric knowledge and several simultaneous vantage points. Saurian Pulse-engineers can do this as a function of

their job. All other Pulse-users will need to make a Smarts check at -4.

Observant characters will figure out that thermal vents and a few dozen saurians in robes aren't enough to blast meteors out of the sky. The body of a dead god, on the other hand, will do the trick. Deep at the bottom of the lake, a forgotten deity bleeds rich streams of raw creation into the churning magma. None of the Maelstrom gods know his name, but his power is unmistakable. This is because he's all that remains of the prior End Times. When all of creation was destroyed uncounted eons ago, it was at his bidding and he survived when our creation came into existence. Well, his corpse did at least.

When the Pulse reflector focuses at least 1,000 Pulse in a single round, a semblance of life flows through the god once again. His pitted, crumbling arm of the blackest stone thrusts from the lake's surface, gathering all ambient Pulse into its palm. One cyclopean finger points at the chosen target, and releases the Pulse in a screaming torrent of heat and pressure. That's how you blast meteors out of the sky.

Green Earth Expeditionary Force

A trio of Titanosaurs has been sent to watch over the site of the Coalition's greatest triumph. They've been ample defense so far: time machines from a staggering number of eras litter the broken earth surrounding the magma lake. Each one is wrecked beyond repair, stripped by a wing of saurian engineers after their inhabitants were defeated. It's obvious the gods have already tried more than once to neutralize this threat. Could the characters be the last hope of stopping our universe suffering its End Times?

Each Titanosaur is covered with slabs of reinforced basalt from the Coalition's alternative dimension home. Tunnels run through the mammoth battle armor, allowing the monsters' crew access to the dozens of machine gun ports that stud the outer shell. Each Titanosaur is topped with a squat fortress boasting eight Pulse cannons. There are 50 battle-ready saurian commandos in each fort, as well as a floating squadron of twelve Pulse engineers. Let's meet the three Titanosaurs individually:

- **Mirrorhide:** Field command. Grillisk Slythe meets with his 15 field commanders here, leaving his carved halls as rarely as possible.

- **Obelisk:** In addition to the standard armor, Obelisk is covered in natural spikes. Its bite attack deals 6d6 damage, and it has an additional +4 Toughness.

- **Salamander:** Salamander stands over the Pulse reflector, observing it at all times. Only when the device is about to fire does Salamander move. The controls for the Green Earth reality displacement ray are aboard.

Destroying the Titanosaurs and draining the Pulse reflector is a good first step, but it doesn't stop the Green Earth Coalition from cramming more forces into the breach. They have an entire alternate Earth at their command; the characters only have themselves. There's only one thing to do: travel to the Coalition's alternate reality realm and hit it so hard it will never recover.

The Coalition's weakest point is its power base. While the saurian overlords are busy with upper-level tasks like penning wicked philosophy and engaging in shadow wars, as well as holding back the roaches as well as possible. A thriving slave class takes care of all the real work. The slaves are predominantly human, taken from two other Earth-like realms the saurians have conquered.

Inviting the slaves to riot is easy; they have the will and the numbers. What they don't have are charismatic leaders or military-type support. After the characters help them liberate a Titanosaur city or two, they should have all the resources they need to keep Coalition forces occupied. If that's all the characters need, they're free to return home... there's always the saurians' initial problem to worry about, though. Will the characters help lead the slaves against the roaches, or leave them to suffer whatever fate befalls them?



Green Earth Coalition Soldier

What if dinosaurs evolved into bipedal humanoids? They'd end up a lot like the Green Earth Coalition soldiers. The soldiers' unique brain structures allow them to communicate anger on a narrow-band psionic frequency.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Swimming d8, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 12(5) Pulse 15

Edges: Marksman, Combat Reflexes, First Strike

Gear: Assault Armor (+5 armor, all locations), Strikelight (**Ranges:** 12/14/48, **Damage:** 2d10+2, AP 4, Double Tap), Dispersion Gauntlet (**Damage:** Str+d10, AP 10, HW)

Special Abilities

- *Psionic Follow Through:* Fatigue inflicted through Intimidation can Incapacitate and even kill!

Green Earth Coalition Pulse Engineer

The Green Earth Coalition engineers are responsible for maintaining the Coalition's Pulse reflector as well as the numerous strikelight weapons used by the soldiers. Each beam weapon is a powerful display of saurian technology, but something in Earth's atmosphere doesn't agree with them. Every week of operation in our version of Earth, the strikelights need to undergo minor maintenance by a trained Pulse engineer or stop functioning altogether.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d10, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Pulse) d8, Notice d8, Repair d10, Shooting d8, Swimming d8, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 12(5) Pulse 20

Edges: Marksman, Combat Reflexes, First Strike

Gear: Assault Armor (+5 armor, all locations), Strikelight (**Ranges:** 12/14/48, **Damage:** 2d10+2, AP 4, Double Tap), Dispersion Gauntlet (**Damage:** Str+d10, AP 10, HW), Toolkit

Special Abilities

- *Psionic Follow Through:* Fatigue inflicted through Intimidation can Incapacitate and even kill!



Grillisk Slythe

Slythe is the field commander of the Coalition's expeditionary force to our Earth. Competent and experienced, he'll use every resource available to him when fighting the characters... and he has a lot of resources!

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d10(d12), Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Knowledge (Battle) d12, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Swimming d8, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 13(6) Pulse 25

Edges: Command, Inspire, No Mercy, Marksman, Combat Reflexes, Improved First Strike

Gear: Commander's Assault Armor (+6 armor, all locations, +1 step to Strength), Strikelight (**Ranges:** 12/14/48, **Damage:** 2d10+2, AP 4, Double Tap), Dispersion Gauntlet (**Damage:** Str+d10, AP 10, HW)

Special Abilities

- *Psionic Follow Through:* Fatigue inflicted through Intimidation can Incapacitate and even kill!
- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Slythe all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

Pulse Maggots

Ambient Pulse is a delicacy to many creatures in the spirit world. The least of these are the ghostly grubs known as Pulse maggots. Individually, they aren't a threat – but where there's one, more will quickly follow. Within minutes of the arrival of the first maggot, a roiling swarm of bloated Pulse suckers will be ready for its next meal. Wounded spirits, unguarded Pulse springs, and the corpses of dead gods are all popular locations to find these parasites.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d4, Vigor d4

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d4, Notice d4, Swimming d4

Pace 2 Parry 6 Toughness 4 Pulse 25

Special Abilities

- *Swarm:* Medium Burst Template, +2 Parry, immune to all but blunt weapons and area of effect attacks.
- *Pulse Leech (2/4/8):* As a ranged attack a swarm of maggots has the ability to drain Pulse from a target who is in the spirit world with it. Any damage dealt by this attack is instead taken as Pulse loss by the target, and the same amount of Pulse is added to the swarm.
- *Spirit:* Cannot manifest.

Titanosaur

Really? Okay. The characters are demigods now!

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8(A), Spirit d8, Strength d12+32. Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d4, Swimming d6

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 121(80) Pulse 35

Edges: Improved Sweep

Gear: Coalition military installation and crew.

Special Abilities

- *Demigod Entity:* This ability grants the Titansaur all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for its own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.
- *Size +30*
- *Fearless*
- *Saurian Titan:* +4 Toughness
- *Gargantuan*
- *Fear -2:* Yeah, they are pretty scary.
- *Bite:* (**Damage:** Str+3d12, AP 40, HW)
- *Thick Skin And Scales:* (80 armor, all locations)



Ouroborous Emergent: Episode III

Realm: Mortal Realms, Alternate Relic (Yr208 of the Third Age).

With the power of demigods on their side, the characters are finally able to unravel the outer defenses of the Ouroboros. This Pulse-infused gemstone they found with Cale Poplin's treasure map back when they were novices, is more than a handy relic. Something great is inside: an alternate version of the Relic realm where the War of the Wild never happened. Instead the Trader Imperium flourished, creating a peaceful world based on consumer capitalism and non-intrusive religious benevolence.

So, what's the problem?

The realm has been used like a mobile battery for too long. Pulse levels in all of the citizens have dropped to dangerous levels. Pulse is what the human soul is made from. Despite their fantastic tech, they're listless and weak – and now their realm has been unsealed.

The second the characters open the realm, it's like loosing the door between a cage of sharks and a wounded seal sanctuary. Rippling masses of Pulse-sucking astral remoras flow into the newly opened portal and begin their feast. The only way to defeat them all is to re-arm the realm and give its inhabitants the strength to fight. To do this, the characters must travel to the alternate Relic's spiritual core and reignite it.

Looking Around

Garris+ looks much like Garris during Acts III and IV of our campaign, but larger and cleaner. Its mega-ziggurats reach into the clouds, each terrace marked with parks full of dying plants and still fishless ponds. There are few people about, all of whom are dressed impeccably but have a haunted look in their eyes.

They know their world is dying. Some have barricaded themselves in the ziggurats, immersing themselves in weeks of final, squalid parties. Others went to the plains, hoping to ride out the death of the world in cabins stocked with value packs of tinned beans. The ones the characters will be most interested in are the Pulse users. Most of them set off to toward the metropolis of Atelco. There, between the three Holy Hills, the realm's spiritual core has revealed itself

in a silent shriek for aid. That's where the characters will want to go.

As the characters enter Atelco, they should realize that something is amiss. The utopian ziggurats that they saw from far away are smeared with smoke and marked with deep red banners. Rubble fills the streets. Any pilgrims they may have encountered on their journey reveal themselves as being less balanced than they initially appeared; doom cults from across the realm have converged upon Relic+'s spiritual centre to prepare for the end.

The most influential of the cults sprang from the lifeless church of Atelco Tecuhtli - the god of cold, death, and stasis. Its guiding belief states that not only is the realm doomed, but that its destruction will be the first in a chain reaction that will herald the End Times for all men and gods equally. This may or may not be true, but gives the characters a good reason to fix what they can.

Although the outlying districts of Atelco are still fiercely contested, the three hills of Trinity are solidly under control of the Atelco Tecuhtli cultists. They've seized the city's garrison and are using it to defend the sacred nexus from all challengers until the astral remoras arrive and drain it dry.

Remember the arc towers from Act III of the campaign? Those have been outdated tech in Relic+ for more than a hundred years. Reaching the Great Temple will require penetrating a jagged battle line studded with arc busters, hover platforms, and void spirits. The defenders give no quarter, as they're fighting for total oblivion.

The Great Temple

The spiritual heart of the realm is a sun-like sphere of Pulse that orbits the Great Temple, bounded by three imposing hills. Even as it's guttering and fading through all the shades of blue to a sickly purple, it's an impressive sight. The purity of the Pulse is unmatched by anything that the characters have experienced, short of the unmasked might of a god.

Depending on your pacing, the astral remoras may already be gorging themselves on the core by the time the characters arrive. In that case, a second big battle is the most likely option. If the characters arrive ahead of the wave, they may have time to prepare for the remoras before they arrive.

Preparing may involve anything from convincing the high priest there's a chance for the realm to survive, building a positive wave of energy from the population (hence strengthening the realm's Pulse core for the coming assault), all the way up to the ultimate sacrifice. Nothing tells a realm "I love you" like offering to be the living Pulse battery inside its spiritual sun for untold generations.

Spending time in Relic+ after it has been saved will give the characters the chance to ask all sorts of questions about its history. If anyone's after a more material reward, it will only take a Streetwise or Knowledge check to compare the location of treasure in Relic+ with those in the more familiar realm. Time to get digging!

Astral Remora

Long, lashing, and foul, astral remoras are suspected by Pulse scholars to be members of the same genus as Pulse maggots. Both are parasitic spirit creatures that leech pure Pulse, and the two creatures inhabit the same role in ecosystems in the distant reaches of the Maelstrom.

Remoras possess segmented, shimmering bodies that ooze through the air like raw meat on glass. Large Pulse sources draw them in, they feed, lay eggs, and move on. The fact that they stay in the spirit world but their attack can affect the physical world is a rarity, and a nasty shock for those who encounter these spirits.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6(A), Spirit d6, Strength d8, Vigor d6

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Swimming d8, Tracking d8

Pace 8 Parry 6 Toughness 6 Pulse 10

Special Abilities

- *Size +1:* Long remoras are long.
- *Spirit:* Cannot manifest.
- *Bite:* (**Damage:** Spi+d4). This is a dual-aligned attack, equally capable of hitting physical and spirit targets.
- *Pulse Leech:* Every raise on bite attack damage also drains 1d6 Pulse directly into the astral remora.

Void Spirits

Void spirits are defined by lack. Nature abhors a vacuum, but it despises void spirits even more.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d4, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d6

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 8 Pulse 15

Special Abilities

- *Void Touch:* Touch attack. On a success, the target must make a Spirit check at -2 (-4 on a raise), or suffer a level of Fatigue. This can kill.
- *Spirit:* May physically manifest for 1 minute at the cost of 4 Pulse. Each additional minute costs a further 1 Pulse.

Assorted Cultists

Go ahead and use the standard soldiers from Savage Worlds for most of these guys. Each cult will have its own clothing and customs, but they're mechanically identical.

Arc Buster

A battery of Pulse-generators that shoot focused electricity.

Arc Buster (**Ranges:** 24/48/96, **Damage:** 3d10+2, AP 8, Snapfire, ROF 5, HW)

Hover Platforms

Although boxy and unfashionable, hover platforms are surprisingly durable and a popular form of quick transport for armed cultists.

Type: Hover Vehicle

Acc/TS: 12/100

Toughness: 18(6)

Crew: 1+15

Cost: Unknown.

Notes: Climb 8



Battle For The Desolation Engine

Realm: Maelstrom, The Red Realm.

Long ago, the Great Spirit of Red fled the realm he created, leaving it to the Great Spirit of Hate, who rather liked the color scheme. Since then, the Red Realm has been one of the most contested pieces of real estate in the Maelstrom (see pg. 61) Ask any god-watcher what's going on in the stinking badlands that day, and it's going to be some variation on a new spirit being in town, trying to claim the burnt-out shell of the Desolation Engine.

One of the 'lesser' spirits caught up in the struggle is getting dangerously close to ending the deadlock, which can't be a good thing for anyone. What's worse, it has the nightmare-creating Desolation Engine up and running. The only ones who're cheering this news are unsavory sorts who want what it's peddling: nightmares. Not just the kind that slip into a dreamer's mind and come out trailing secrets all over the floor, but the sort that stand twelve feet tall and have razor wire intertwined with their muscle fibers.

No doubt the characters know someone who would employ nightmares like that. This enemy is being supplied with additional forces thanks to the Desolation Engine. Cutting them off at their source is the best option, so it's off to the Red Realm.

Doing Time

The only way to reliably get into the Red Realm is through the oubliette portals used by gods of dubious morality to dispose of their special captives. Mortals who can't be killed for various reasons are thrown into the Red Realm, making it a prison of sorts. It's a rough place for those incarcerated in it, but it beats being turned into a tree, a pillar of salt, or a pile of smoking ash.

The portal drops the characters in a toxic swamp of oily puddles and a scratch, thick red moss. It was home to a penitentiary building sometime in the past, back when the gods cared about providing such luxury for prisoners, but only the prison's columns and half-walls remain. Rusted shackles trap unwary feet under the muck, and hang from blood bark trees like crusted copper nooses.

Everybody who escapes is soon scouted by the mortal gangs who inhabit the realm. Most of them are of the post-apocalyptic warlord variety, sporting fashions from a boggling spread of worlds. The most influential of these call themselves the Gorgons. They tear across the treacherous wastes in their rusted tanks, causing as much mayhem as the native spirits on most days. They're led by Boss Dio, a hawk-headed son of Horus who blasphemes as well as he fights.

Rusted tanks aren't the only way to survive the realm. The Free Thought League, which is formed primarily of militant atheists, instead trusts their usefulness to the other gangs. The League has learned to communicate with the realm's native spirits (which they do from behind the walls of their solid stone fort), and they barter information gleaned from the natives for their safety.

On the other side of the coin, the Longshots work at eradicating all signs of the spiritual taint from the realm. They hate the color red after being marooned here for eternity. Hate it, hate it, hate it. All the remaining spirits of red should be destroyed utterly, as far as they're concerned.

These gangs are important because they know the land. The characters will have a substantially more unpleasant time tracking down the Desolation Engine if they don't find themselves some form of aid... for example, someone who has a swamp-runner to get them across the Scarlet Hollows. And don't forget, the closer the characters get, the more of the Desolation Engine's creations they have to deal with.

Desolation Drive

The most immediate path to the Desolation Engine runs right through the Hollows. The last great monsterwork from the Great Spirit of Hate is said to reside at the bottom of this flooded valley.

Rubbery tree trunks stretch above the oily swamp water, giving the impression of rowing into a solid shadow. The feeling of dread and insignificance is so strong here that Spirit tests must be made every four hours. Failure causes two levels of Fatigue from the mental duress. If this causes a character to become Incapacitated he instead becomes supernaturally confrontational. No issue is too small to fight about, and friendship is but a momentary shield.

The revolutionary force driving the realm is the Desolation Engine itself! It has been soaking up tempestuous emotions since the day it pumped out its first warty bog goblin, and now it's getting the hang of things. Production and consumption are all it knows – specifically the bloody kind.

The Engine is a solid, angular factory complex surrounded by blocks of uninhabited buildings. Nightmares dash across their eaves and hunt between the shadows, but they never go in. Those buildings are reserved for something. Or somethings.

The active parts of the factory are all conveyor belts and crushing presses. Through force and opposition, the bad dreams of the realm are minted, drawing upon such ingredients as insanity ore and sulfurous bile. Anyone who tries to shut down the Engine is likely to receive a hopper of corrosive shadows for his trouble, or at least a spinning web of hooked chains.

After razing the factory and ending the Desolation Engine's existence, getting home is the ready matter of waiting until the Engine's next customer arrives. Instead of receiving a new crop of made-to-order monsters, they'll receive the characters. Payback has its moments.

Nightmare Ogre

Does exactly what you imagine it'd do after midnight. Nightmarish spirits of ogres roam the Red Realm in search of easy victims to crush into a red paste.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d10, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d12, Fighting d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 14 Pulse 20

Edges: No Mercy

Special Abilities

- *Size +6:* Attacks against a nightmare ogre get +2 to hit. It takes up a 2x2 inch space.
- *Claws/spikes/other torturous implement for inflicting pain:* (**Damage:** Str+d8). If the damage exceeds the target's Toughness they must make a Guts check or take a level of Fatigue.
- *Hardy*
- *Fearless*

- *Fear -4:* The sight of these creatures reaches deep into the soul of even the stoutest hero.
- *Spirit:* Cannot manifest.

Nightmare Breath-Stealer

A simple pile of rags rests in the corner, or perhaps a scum of unidentifiable flotsam floats across the surface of a still pool. Ignore it at your own peril; there are breath-stealers about. They're made of the discarded threads from the Loom of Fate, or perhaps the cloaks of murderers mixed with the final breaths of a miser. No matter what the story, they are one of the unnatural predators designed by the Desolation Engine. Their only purpose is to cause conflict and suffering, which they do without complaint.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d6, Notice d6, Shooting d12, Swimming d8

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 8 Pulse 10

Edges: Marksman

Special Abilities

- *Breath Stealer:* (**Ranges:** 3/6/12) A large blob of mucus attached to a long tongue; ick! These vile creatures use their appendage to literally steal the breath from their unfortunate victims. The nightmare breath-stealer must make a head shot for this to take effect. On a success there is no damage but the mucus has encased the victim's head and he must now make a Vigor check each round or suffer a level of Fatigue. Once Incapacitated, the target dies in a number of rounds equal to half his Vigor unless someone gets the mucus off.
- *Fearless*
- *Spirit:* Cannot manifest.



Spirit Of Conflict

Upon first glance, spirits of conflict are often mistaken for macabre decorations. Each one resembles a fleshy sack the size of a human head, marred by a scowling face. A sharp, hooked nose disguises a lipless opening lined with thousands of softly waving cilia.

As the spirit's Breeds Conflict power takes effect, the spirit balloons larger and tighter. If the feeding is good, its scowl will turn into a cheerful O-shape and cheerful gurgle will trickle through the air.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d12, Guts d8, Notice d6, Stealth d12, Throwing d12

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 6 Pulse 10

Special Abilities

- *Breeds Conflict:* Anyone using Pulse within 12 inches of a spirit of conflict must make a Spirit check with a penalty equal to half the amount of Pulse used rounding up. Failure gives the character the Hindrance Mean for the next hour. If he already has Mean he gains Greedy (minor). If he already has Greedy (minor) he gains Greedy (major).
- *Spirit:* May physically manifest for 1 hour in the presence of a conflict situation at the cost of 3 Pulse. Each additional hour costs a further 1 Pulse.

Prison Ganger

A hodgepodge of survivors, Chosen Ones, and those unlucky enough to anger the gods. After a couple of years in the Red Realm, they all start to blur together. Unique goods get traded for essentials or buried beneath churning muck, and the true heroes fall battling the nightmare creatures.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Repair d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Survival d8, Swimming d8, Throwing d8

Pace 8 Parry 9 Toughness 8(1) Pulse 15

Edges: Fleet Footed, Dodge, Block

Gear: Patchwork Armor (+1 armor, all locations), Visceral Implement (**Damage:** Str+d8), Backup Visceral Implement (**Damage:** Str+d6), Sack (with a whole life inside).



Boss Dio

After crashing Anubis' millennial party with his favorite band of rowdies, not even his father's influence could save Dio. The son of Horus was banished to the Red Realm, where he's been having the time of his life. Never before has he been able to engage in the carnage that was his birthright, playing all the war games he wants with the cast-offs from countless realms. Dio's a bully and a megalomaniac, playing up his god's blood far more than it actually affects him. If the characters want to go anywhere without bowing and scraping to The Man, they'll have to deal with him at some point.

Dio will get bored of the Red Realm some day, at which point his true situation will dawn upon him. At that point, the realm's power structure is due for a definite upheaval.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d10, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d12, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Notice d10, Repair d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d10, Survival d8, Swimming d8, Throwing d8

Pace 8 Parry 10 Toughness 9(2) Pulse 25

Edges: Fleet Footed, Improved Dodge, Improved Block, Hard To Kill, Surge, Patron God: War

Gear: Improved Patchwork Armor (+2 armor, all locations), Especially Visceral Implement (**Damage:** Str+d10), Backup Visceral Implement (**Damage:** Str+d6)

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Boss Dio all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

The Desolation Engine Core

The factory from your nightmares, where you're always running but never able to get away. It ends not in a bang or a whimper, but leisurely series of crunches followed by a drawn-out slurp. The very core of the engine is a sentient machine of pure malice, delighting in the hopelessness it generates.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d12, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Climbing d12, Fighting d12, Intimidation d12, Notice d8, Stealth d6

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 20(5) Pulse 35

Edges: No Mercy

Special Abilities

- *Size +6:* Attacks against the Desolation Engine Core get +2 to hit and it takes up a 2x2 inch space.
- *Blades/Hammers/Chains/etc:* (**Damage:** Str+d10, AP 2)
- *Fearless*
- *Fear*
- *Hardy*
- *Armored:* +5 armor, all locations.
- *Demigod Entity:* This ability grants the Desolation Engine Core all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for its own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.
- *Desolation Engine:* All damage dealt to the Desolation Engine is also dealt to whoever inflicted it. This doesn't have to Wound the Desolation Engine for the effect to occur.
- *Spirit Construct:* Cannot manifest, but never leaves Red Realm so never has to. Follows the normal rules for constructs.

Scarlet Sharks

Something swims in the oily waters of the Scarlet Hollows. Go ahead and use the great white shark from Savage Worlds for these guys.

Mechanoverminous Parasite

Each of these metallic beetles the size of an iron filing was crafted to polish a specific aspect of the Desolation Engine. As components fell into disuse or were stolen by greedy spirits, many of the parasites found themselves without purpose. Gathering in formless swarms, they now travel across the Red Realm in search of objects to buff, polish, and maintain.

The maintenance protocols of the mechanoverminous parasites are infused with such dark energy that any object "upgraded" by it that isn't part of the Desolation Engine will instead begin to warp and decay.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d8, Vigor d10

Skills: Climbing d8, Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 7 Pulse 10

Special Abilities

- *Mechanofail:* Anyone Shaken or worse by Mechanoverminous parasites gains the All Thumbs Hindrance for the next 12 hours.
- *Deconstruct:* Anyone caught under the swarm template as it moves suffers Str+d8 damage, ignoring armor. However any character may choose to lose a sizable piece of equipment such as a weapon or their armor to get a free Soak roll against the damage.
- *Spirit Swarm:* Cannot manifest, but they never leave the Red Realm so never have to. Follow the normal rules for swarms. Use a Medium burst Template.

The Heat Is On

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Fire.

In the realm of Relic, King Freder of Caladon has been struck with a terrible madness. When he is awake, he's listless and unresponsive; at night he screams blasphemous prophecies about the death of the gods and the End Times. Normally the gods wouldn't be concerned with the afflictions of a mortal, even a hero of such an important realm as Relic. On the plus side, Freder has the benefit of being owed a favor from an especially zealous Archangel. On the minus side, the king's personal squad of Blade Evangelist inquisitors are over-stepping the bounds of religious tolerance, taking advantage of his malaise to run a-mock while he's stricken and unable to rein them in.

The Archangel in question tasks the characters with being the mad king's guide on a transformative journey to the Realm of Fire. Only the Crucible of the Great Spirit of Fire will be able to burn the impurities of the Dark One from the king's mind. Getting there's not going to be easy though.

Kingnapped

The court of King Freder is currently stocked with a rogue's gallery of heretics and secret servants of the Dark One. They've used the king's inquisition as cover for some pretty twisted excesses, and they're not looking forward to letting their figurehead escape. Life in the court is muted, consisting of hushed whispers and back room conversations about the future of the Caladon Kingdom.

The king's personal physician is secretly a filth-eater demon. Every night it mixes two drops of its boiling blood with the king's medicine to ensure that the king's illness remains spiritual as well as mental. He never lets the king out of his sight, going so far as to cling to the ceiling above the sleeping man's bed.

Official protocol holds that King Freder is not to leave the palace under any circumstances. It is a familiar, safe location. Those who speak with the voice of the Goddess Trinity may be able to get him out of the castle legitimately, but it's only a matter of hours until the journey is repainted as a kidnapping attempt. The most depraved of the king's inquisitors know that they will not be able to get away with their most heinous excesses if his sanity is restored (although lesser excesses would still be A-OK.)



As the characters make their escape, they'll be harried by corrupted Blade Evangelists, duped knights, and disguised filth-eaters. The Realm of Fire isn't an easy place to get to these days, either. The Great Spirit who made it has sealed it off from the rest of the Maelstrom while dealing with some great, unspoken issue. The only way in requires a huge, blazing source of heat – a forest fire, or a volcano. The rest of the process is relatively simple: make an offering of 10 Pulse and jump in. If it works, the characters appear in the Maelstrom city of Pyre. If not... but the Archangel is fairly certain her information is correct and it'll work. It should do. It seems feasible at least. Right?

More or less crispy, the characters and Freder will arrive in Pyre. Once freed from the demonic aspect of his disease, King Freder shows a turn toward the better. He's still undeniably mad, but moments of surprising clarity will shine through from time to time. His prophecies about the End Times will become more coherent, providing names and places – albeit cloaked in metaphor.

Unfortunately for the characters, they've come into Pyre at a terrible time for prophets. The city's inhabitants are gearing up for war with the realm's other dominant civilization, the efreets (and that's why the Great Spirit sealed off the realm, to keep his civil war quiet). The king's raving resonates strongly with them. As the characters get their bearing in the new realm, they will have to fend off several efreets' attempts to steal the king, as well as ploys to intensify his madness.

Crossing The Realm Of Fire

The trail to the Great Spirit of Fire is daunting, even without a war in the works. Traveling from Pyre to his divine mountain home crosses burning deserts of black sand, volcanic ridges, and lava-seas. These can be individual challenges or window dressing, as you desire.

Upon reaching the Great Spirit, the characters learn that he will not share the Crucible unless they first do him a favor. Three thousand years ago, the Great Spirit of Thought posed a philosophical quandary. So far, it has stumped the Great Spirit of Fire. This is because the riddle ("Is the fundamental nature of fire to create or destroy?") does not have an answer. The Great Spirit of Thought posed it as a thought exercise, meant to guide the Great Spirit of Fire toward a more complete understanding of its own being.

If nobody can aid the Great Spirit of Fire, taking control of the Crucible by force is always an option. The characters don't need to keep Freder near it for long: it takes five rounds to remove a minor Hindrance, and ten rounds to remove a major one. Every round, the coruscating flames deal 3d6 damage. At the end of the process, the Hindrance is wiped away as if it never existed. If the characters took the combat route, that's a pretty good cue to start running away, devising some cunning escape plan as they go. They'll have succeeded, but as far as the Great Spirit of Fire is concerned they'll have burned their bridges, so to speak.



King Freder of Caladon

King Freder is hardly a just king, but he is a great one, and a stellar politician. If anyone can maintain order in Caladon's coming dark days, he will be the one to do it. When in the grip of his cursed madness, he alternates between self-destructive despair, wild rages, and bouts of blasphemous prophecy. His doctors are unable to discover any triggers for those conditions, but that may say more about them than his madness.

Once freed from the shackles of his curse, King Freder is grateful, but wary. After saving him, the great warriors no doubt want a grand boon of him? Why, that could ruin his kingdom! Politely, but firmly he will try to head off any requests with a gift of his own choosing and the request to go save somebody else for a while.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d10, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d10, Riding d6, Persuasion d10, Shooting d6, Swimming d6

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 5 Pulse 25

Edges: Noble, Filthy Rich, Improved Arcane Resistance, Indomitable, Iron Inside

Hindrances: Being Driven Mad

Gear: Jewelry of a pious nature.

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Freder all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

Blade Evangelist Heretic

Use Veteran Soldiers from Savage Worlds.

Caladonian Knight

Use Veteran Soldiers from Savage Worlds.

Filth-Eater Demon

In the hierarchy of demons, those on the lowest rungs aren't always the least powerful. The filth-eaters are a prime example; although they live among the scraps and refuse of the Dark One's minions, they do so out of choice. The juiciest morsels always sink to the bottom: betrayed hope, forgotten sacrifice, well-intentioned blasphemy... the very poisons that ruin men's souls nurse the filth-eaters like a vigorous meat-broth. They revel in the garbage and grow robust.

When filth-eaters are out in the field, they take the form of their poisoned victims. This allows them to infiltrate key targets and tease out the specific morsels they so desire.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d8, Vigor d12+4

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Intimidation d8, Notice d8, Shooting d8, Stealth d10

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 10 Pulse 15



Special Abilities

- **Poison:** The blood of a filth-eater can be fashioned into assorted different poisons as the filth-eater sees fit. "Harvesting" a dose inflicts a level of Fatigue on the filth-eater, but can recreate the effects of any disease or poison in Savage Worlds or a wasting poison which inflicts Fatigue levels on the target instead.
- **Spirit:** Filth-eater demons are able to manifest and wear the form of anyone they have poisoned to death themselves at a cost of 1 Pulse per hour. The arcane ritual that follows death to achieve this? Well, they are called filth-eaters for a reason.

Pyre Militia

Use Veteran Soldiers from Savage Worlds. They're armed with flaming spears and large clubs wreathed in permanent fire.

Efreet

Efreet are creatures of smokeless fire, valuing pain, nobility, and conquest. When they speak, their booming voices sound as though they could be heard for miles. The eternal flames of their home realm, the Realm of Fire, have hardened their hearts, and trail behind every gesture that these hard-faced humanoids make. Each stands taller than a man and is covered with scars from a lifetime of hard-won campaigns. Efreet often hire themselves out as elite mercenaries, but their services come at a price steeper than most. If their employer cannot pay, refuses, or simply looks at the wrong efreet in the wrong way, he may find his realm a barren plain of ash and cinders.

Efreet arm themselves with a wide variety of curved, obsidian weaponry – although they hardly need it to win most fights.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12, Guts d12, Intimidation d10+2, Shooting d8, Throwing d8, Notice d8

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 11(2) Pulse 20

Edges: Improved Frenzy, Penetrating Strike

Gear: Flaming Obsidian Blade (**Damage:** Str+d8, AP 1, shatters when the efreet who owns it dies in a

Small Burst Template dealing 2d6 damage to anyone caught by the template), Efreets Mail (+2 armor, all locations).

Special Abilities

- *Size +1*: Taller than your average man and hardened by battle.
- *Booming Voice*: +2 on Intimidation checks.
- *Flametouched*: As per the power Smite, activated with a Spirit roll. Also, efreets are immune to damage from heat and fire.
- *Spirit*: Efreets can physically manifest in their humanoid form for 1 hour at the cost of 5 Pulse, or 1 Pulse if manifesting in the middle of a fire (bonfire or larger). Each additional hour costs a further 1 Pulse. Alternatively, efreets may manifest as a blazing wildfire. This costs 10 Pulse and lasts only 1 minute, with each additional minute costing another 5 Pulse. During this time, any Pulse consumed by this fire (such as a living creature that perished in the flames) is added to the efreets' pool, up to double its maximum amount. The wildfire is a Medium Burst Template with a Pace of 6 that deal 3d6 damage to anyone it moves over. Damage dealt to the fire is taken as Fatigue, and if an efreets is Incapacitated while in this form he is immediately ripped back to the spirit world.

The Great Spirit Of Fire

Probably unkillable. The PCs' goal should be to last ten rounds against it, its bodyguards, any flame spirits it chooses to summon, and all other hordes you choose. More appropriately, the characters should be trying to help the Great Spirit with his riddle and making a new ally, but it's up to them of course.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Gambling d6

Pace 6 Parry 2 Toughness 5 Pulse As much as he wants

Special Abilities

- *Immune*
- *Immolate*: Anything automatically, except possibly other Great Spirits and gods. Or things that really are totally immune to fire.



The Apollonian Gambit

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Mount Olympus.

Reports abound throughout the Maelstrom that the Olympian gods continue to have undue influence on the lives of mortals, despite their formal hands-off policy. The Egyptian gods cite modern-day secret societies, shady mystery cults, and even the prevalence of Olympian gods in corporate branding. Each repetition is a sigil or invocation of the gods, and an eyehole into the world they were supposed to leave behind.

If confronted, the gods on Mount Olympus consider the intrusions so minor that it annoys them to even talk about it. Some will present it as an issue of free will; it's hardly their fault if mortals decide to worship them. If they want to act as divine conduits, that's their problem. Over all, the Olympians reckon it's a lot of fuss about nothing.

The truth of the matter is that free will isn't the only factor at work. Olympus's priesthood of Apollo is running its propaganda engine at full tilt behind the scenes in accordance with a prophecy delivered by a dire oracle.

Phoenix And The Deep Blue Sea

In the early days of Olympus, high priests learned a dark secret. According to their interpretation of a particularly thorny prophecy, there is enough ambient Pulse in the universe to allow a select group to survive anything – even the End Times. Sucking up all of this power will make the End Times come so much sooner for everybody else. It's inevitable, the priests reason, so they may as well guide their patron into a new age. They formed a secret pact known as the Phoenix Plan dedicated to collecting the universe's ambient Pulse and channeling it toward the Greek gods.

None of the gods know about this plan, and the priesthood doesn't plan on sharing until after it's too late. But just because the gods don't know about something doesn't mean that the information is safe from the characters! They could stumble across an increasingly unlikely string of monuments to Papa Zeus across the universe. Alternatively, if the campaign has already had a strong focus on aiding the Greek gods, the Plan's priests could approach the characters directly with an offer of membership.

Whatever happens, if the Phoenix Plan isn't stopped, the universe will end a lot sooner than everyone would like.

The movers and shakers behind the universe's largest PR campaign rarely leave the realm of Olympus. Any attempt to undermine their organization will eventually take the characters there. The bulk of this segment should be spent finding out which members of the priesthood are involved and wresting the location of Charybdis from them. Out of the 400 priests and temple staff, 100 of them know something about the conspiracy. A quarter of those are full-fledged members of the Plan.

Lazy heroes may wonder why they can't just present their suspicions to someone higher up on the totem pole. It's Apollo's priesthood, shouldn't he be cleaning it? The short answer is that it would be a matter of great embarrassment for everyone involved. Not only would the Olympian gods appear weak to outsiders, Apollo would be blamed for not keeping a better eye on his worshippers. That ill will would transfer to the characters. If they solved the problem on the down-low, they'd be assured of some staunch allies later on.

If the characters are lax in their infiltration, they'll attract the attention of one of Apollo's chosen who has decided to back the conspiracy. Golden-Haired Orpheus is more a poet than a warrior, but his schemes are many. He will play to the characters' vanities before luring them on a side-quest against a great monster. At the key moment, he will betray them to their deaths.

All of the ambient Pulse drained by the Phoenix Plan's sigils needs to be processed before being packaged out to the gods. This happens at the centre of the ur-sigil, a four-dimensional construct that is only wholly comprehensible from the farthest heights of the Maelstrom. Because of its similarities to a coursing whirlpool of sparkling life energy, the central sigil is known as Charybdis, the devouring mouth.

If the Plan members can't be convinced to halt their scheme peaceably, the only way to stop their Pulse-siphon is to scatter Charybdis to the corners of the Maelstrom. Any ambient Pulse will then disperse back into the universe as soon as it's gathered. There's a problem with that, though. Charybdis has attained rudimentary sentience, and will fight to stay in operation. Charybdis is aided by a squad of Scyllians, elite soldiers trained in Maelstrom combat.

Destroying Charybdis will weaken the Olympian pantheon considerably, but allow the universe to exist for as long as is natural before the End Times make their inevitable return – at least if the Apollonian oracle can be believed. Maybe it's time to pay her a visit and see what else she knows...

Charybdis

Charybdis is a four-dimensional sigil that serves as the linchpin to the Phoenix Plan scheme. It sucks Pulse from around the universe at a constant rate, causing it to throb and flash with light as it careens around the Maelstrom, gathering it and concentrating it in the hands of the Phoenix Plan priesthood, who secretly release it to the Olympian gods, making them stronger. Think of Charybdis as a huge whirlpool among billowing clouds of Pulse.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d12, Strength d12+10, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d4, Notice d4

Pace 2 Parry 4 Toughness 16 Pulse Unknown

Edges: Improved Spiritual Recharger

Special Abilities

- *Size +10*
- *Slam:* Str+d10 damage and drains the victim of 1d10 Pulse, plus 1d10 more if there was a raise on the damage roll.

Scyllian

Scyllians are snake-bodied warriors from a realm that worships the Greek gods. Their culture is one of rigid castes, where the only way to advance is through highly ritualized combat. At some point, their finest warriors were blessed by Apollo and brought to the Maelstrom to act as temple guards on Mount Olympus. More recently, the Phoenix Plan members have given the Scyllians the solemn duty of protecting Charybdis, a duty they will carry out to the last snake-man.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d6, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Climbing d6, Fighting d10, Guts d12, Intimidation d10, Stealth d6, Shooting d8, Throwing d8, Notice d8, Swimming d6

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 10(2) Pulse 20

Edges: Improved Frenzy, Penetrating Strike

Gear: Blade (**Damage:** Str+d8, AP 1), Olympian Mail (+2 armor, all locations).

Special Abilities

- *Maelstrom Warriors:* Despite not being Heroic entities, Scyllians are able to comprehend the Maelstrom due to the blessing they received from a god. They have become expert warriors in the Maelstrom, and get a +1 bonus to all attack actions while floating in-between realms.



Golden-Haired Orpheus

The deeds of Golden-Haired Orpheus are the subject of legend across a hundred realms. He is a poet, a warrior, a doctor, and the bringer of light to civilization. He's also a charmer, a rake, and a sneak. Beware of Golden-Haired Orpheus, for he has already written the song of your doom. If you ask nicely, he'll even sing it to you with a laugh.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d8, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d10, Guts d12, Healing d10, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Poetry) d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d12+6, Taunt d12, Shooting d10,

Pace 6 Parry 7 Toughness 6 Pulse 35 Charisma +6

Edges: Strong Willed, Trait Perfection: Demigod (Taunt), Flight Of The Ascendant: Demigod, Very Attractive, Charismatic, Patron God: Knowledge

Special Abilities

- *Demigod Entity:* This ability grants Golden-Haired Orpheus all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

Priest Of Apollo

They're good guys, mostly. Even the members of the Phoenix Plan just want to serve their gods as best they can.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d6, Knowledge (Prophecy) d8, Notice d6, Persuasion d6, Throwing d6

Pace 6 Parry 4 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Gear: Ritual Dagger (**Damage:** Str+d4).



Norse Elm's Disease

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Yggdrasil.

Yggdrasil, the world tree, is sickening and dying. Its once-sprawling boughs are twisting back on each other and giving off waves of tangible rot. Every village that is struck by a portion of the diseased world tree soon falls prey to a wasting disease. Those who die come back as shambling beasts, equal parts dead flesh, rotting vegetation, and pestilence. Heimdall, guardian of the Norse gods, sees this as a sign of the End Times. Who is mighty enough to end the blight without being brought low by its taint?

This Savage Tale works best if the characters have already proved their valor in Yggdrasil. It is a realm of burly braggarts who will only allow the most worthy bodies to strive for further glory. If the characters have solved the conflict between Bors the Daring and Nils Squaretooth (see pg. 153), that would be a perfect lead-in. Having already proven themselves without fear, no one would deny the characters their right to walk the heavens.

Friends In Low Places

The Norse gods immediately suspect their long-buried foes have poisoned Yggdrasil's roots. Several malicious spirits of great power are trapped down there, they say, entangled in the living prison. As for the gods within their own ranks it's Loki, god of trickery, who is the most likely culprit.

Yggdrasil's roots are no longer the home of the great god-spirits Odin imprisoned ages ago. Long escaped, they've left the rots to be haunted by hungry spirits of the unworthy dead – those who nearly made it into Valhalla but in the end fell short. Most of them are peaceful, if depressing, but those who've been tainted by the mystery disease are willing to strike en masse to end their agony.

No one in the roots knows what's going on with the sickness, but they know about all sorts of disturbing rumors. Damage to Yggdrasil's extremities has forced roaming tribes of giants to cross into zones populated by peaceful spirits, for instance. The characters may decide that it needs their attention, or choose to continue investigating the disease.

Interviewing Loki isn't much more useful. He won't admit poisoning the world tree, but that proves

nothing. In truth, he has little to gain by destruction of Odin's realm. He'd have to set up his own realm, and that's too much like hard work (unless you fancy the idea of Loki setting up a hidden realm where all the morally dubious gods of all the pantheons meet, in which case go for it).

Close investigation of a diseased segment of Yggdrasil is a good chance for science-skilled characters to show their worth. Naturally, the best samples are found smack in the middle of formerly thriving settlements that are now home to hordes of shambling plague Vikings.

Analysis of the rot reveals that the cause is biological in nature: a super-virus that sucks the Pulse out of enhanced plant life and transmits it elsewhere. The rot and plague Vikings are a side effect of the tree's weakened state; as the world tree struggles to stay alive, it sucks up the next closest source of Pulse: its inhabitants.

There are myriad ways of halting the virus, but it always returns unless stopped at its source. The virus seems to proliferate when it senses a particular psychic signal, at which point it drains Pulse from its surroundings and channels it back along the path of the signal. Following the signal will lead the characters through several dangerous areas of the Maelstrom before they finally arrive on the 94th level of the Realm of the Pure Mages.

The Greater Good

Each of the Realms of the Pure Mages is built around a central riddle or scientific quandary. The guiding quandary of the 94th level is whether true altruism can exist in sentient life. One cabal of initiates seeking to become full-fledged Pure Mages has pursued the question with such vigor that they've descended into true villainy in the name of science.

The Greater Good, as these virologists have styled themselves, argue that the fatal flaw with altruism is that ego gets in the way. Only by eliminating ego and self-interest can pure altruism be isolated and studied. The first step to eliminating ego is to eliminate differences: Q.E.D., all beings must be made level before the theory can be adequately tested.

In most respects, the 94th level resembles a sprawling university campus. Robed students discuss esoteric theories underneath the watchful gaze of



somber statues. The primary oddity is that everyone wears a complex breathing apparatus; the region is so inundated with viral experiments that travelling unfiltered is a death sentence – or worse.

Infecting the world tree and sucking the Pulse from everything in Odin's realm guarantees that all beings will eventually become equally weak. At that point the Great Good will observe to see whether the Norse gods are willing to sacrifice themselves to save the other residents of the realm.

It's time for the characters to teach a little lesson in ethics to these Pure Mage wannabes.

Plague Vikings

There is nothing left of these brave warriors' spirits. They have been absorbed into the World Tree as fertilizer, leaving the diseased husks to shamble from conflict to bloody conflict.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d12, Vigor d8

Skills: Boating d6, Fighting d8, Guts d10, Intimidation d8, Swimming d6

Pace 6 Parry 7(1) Toughness 9(1) Pulse 5

Edges: Berserk

Gear: Sword (**Damage:** Str+d8), Shield (+1 Parry, +2 armor vs. ranged attacks), Fur And Leather Armor (+1 armor, all locations)

Special Abilities

- *Undead Spirits:* Cannot manifest. Plague Vikings follow all normal rules for undead.

Underworld Spirits

Underworld spirits come in two varieties for the purpose of this Savage Tale: the wry, gloomy observers, and the infected. The infected will attack with the barest provocation, while the former observe. They've seen it all, or at least they like to think so.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d6, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d6, Persuasion d6+2, Shooting d6, Stealth d6, Streetwise d6+2, Taunt d6

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 5 Pulse 10 Charisma +2

Edges: Charismatic

Special Abilities

- *Spirit:* Cannot manifest, but don't need to since they're in the roots of a Maelstrom realm and will never find their way anywhere else.

Giants

The giants of Odin's realm are similar to ogres, but much larger. The ones detailed here are the tiny ones – named giants in the Norse realm can be as tall as mountains, but fortunately they're all sleeping.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d12+5, Vigor d8

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d10, Notice d6, Swimming d6, Throwing d6

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 13 Pulse 15

Gear: Big Hittin' Stick (**Damage:** Str+d12)

Special Abilities

- *Size +7:* Attacks against these guys get +2 on account of their size, and they take up a 2x2 inch space.
- *Reach:* Not only can giants beat up anyone standing adjacent to them, they can also bash foes up to 1 inch away.
- *Vitality:* A giant automatically Soaks the first Wound in any encounter. The damage gets through, but he simply ignores it - it doesn't count as a wound and the giant isn't Shaken.
- *Spirit:* These giants could manifest if they found themselves in the mortal realms. It would cost 5 Pulse for 1 hour then 1 Pulse per additional hour after that.

Greater Good Security Team

The 94th level of the Realm of the Pure Mages takes its campus security seriously. Each member of the force is a campus alum as well as a crack-shot with raw autoimprobability. Some are spirits of science, others mortals who've entered the realm by travelling across the Veil to pursue their scientific study in the ultimate lab.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6+2

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 13(8) Pulse 10

Edges: Noble, Filthy Rich, Improved Arcane Resistance, Indomitable, Iron Inside

Gear: Autoimprobability Accelerator (**Ranges:** 15/30/60, **Damage:** 3d6, AP 6), Targeting Array (+2 on Shooting rolls), Comms Kit, nSpace Dispersal Personalware (+8 armor, all locations)

Greater Good Masterminds

The masterminds of the Greater Good have reacted poorly to Yggdrasil's energy as it gets channeled back through the Maelstrom to their level of the Realm of the Pure Mages. Their mortal forms have been shredded by its vast power, replacing flesh with vegetable matter seemingly at random. Many have installed cybernetics to regulate the transformation, making each one a patchwork of flesh, glittering metal, and rough, bark-like scales. Despite this setback, they all believe that increasing the siphoning process will provide the proper data and justify the plan.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12+2, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (The Unfathomable) d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d10, Shooting d6

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Edges: Indomitable

Gear: The most advanced clipboard in the universe and a lab coat.

Thought Is The Mindkiller

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of The Pure Mages.

Here's another reason for the characters to enter the Realm of the Pure Mages, under very different circumstances than in the previous Savage Tale though. A Pure Mage mimetic killer is on the loose! The Delilah Protocol (or DL-475P) is a sentient thought-form that infects peoples' minds, turning them into unwitting agents of its will. Over time, the symptoms become physical, causing new nodes to grow in the targets' brains. The consumed identities are prone to hyper-violent mania, refusal to compromise, and slavish loyalty to the products and technologies of the 34th layer's Yoyodyne Research Corps.

The characters first hear about the problem through a private memo delivered by a grim, innocuous-looking man in a double-breasted gray suit. This Mr. Johnson is a Pure Mage of some standing, and refuses to change his wardrobe based upon the "backwater customs" of whatever realm he's visiting. According to an agreement between the old gods and the Pure Mages, if ever a time arrived when the Pure Mages invented something that they could not control, it would become the job of a team of duly appointed divine trouble-shooters to intervene. The characters are demigods at this stage of their epic career, and it just became their job to deal with DL-475P.

Don't Think About It

Mr. Johnson has evidence showing that several pilgrims to the 34th layer of the Realm of the Pure Mages have been infected with the Delilah Protocol. Six of them are about to solve the riddle of the layer and proceed to the next stage of the cosmic puzzle-cube. If this happens, it will be a catastrophe. The 35th layer is a crossroads sub-realm where visitors from across the Maelstrom meet to engage in high-stakes trade. If the Delilah Protocol gets there, 73.152% of Maelstrom residents will be infected in the next five years.

DL-475P wasn't insane, just more effective than anyone could have guessed. Much like the splinter of a song that gets lodged in the minds of everyone who hears it, conventional protection was useless. Even worse, consciously not thinking about it only hastened its eventual victory. In an effort to protect the characters from the same fate, he refuses to tell them anything more. It's the sort of Maelstrom logic that the characters will get a lot during their time as heroes and demigods.

The 34th layer of the Realm of the Pure Mages is known as Technotopia to its residents. Its civilization is centered in a region much like the Sol starsystem where Earth is situated. The largest of the planets in the 34th layer is owned and operated by the Yoyodyne Research Corps, a privately funded think-tank that exists to train residents in the esoteric math necessary to solve the scientific conundrum that defines the realm. Along the way, Yoyodyne branched out into space travel and consumer goods, making it the de facto governing body of the 34th layer sub-realm.



Any investigation into the Delilah Protocol will eventually take the characters to Yoyodyne's central offices in the Tower of Progress. Dark-suited men and women with tight, anachronistic hair keep the building humming 28 hours a day, 374 days a year. The data on their pocket computers and the insight in their heads are equal parts enlightenment and rational schemata. Whatever problems are occurring in the city below, the corporate suits are cool, collected, and above all, professional.

Keep up the ruse for as long as you can, but eventually someone should figure out that all of the researchers are infected. So is anyone on the planet who has had access to television or the computer networks in the past five days. The only uninfected inhabitants of the realm are in deep-sea research arcologies or in outer space.

The Delilah Protocol is not a physical creation, nor is it a spirit. It can only be defeated by eradicating it from the memory of every infected being. Corporate espionage will tell the characters as much. They can do this one at a time with opposed Persuasion rolls or by programming an alternate thought-form with less dangerous properties and spreading it through the media.

They probably won't have the skills to do this on their own. Luckily, the pilgrims who they had been sent to stop have just learned the sum of Technotopia's knowledge and are itching for a chance to show it off.

Assuming the characters treat Ranjet and Swetter with the respect due to prize-winning academics who have willed themselves a third of the way to godhood, this does not have to turn into a battle. They will help the characters storm the Sentient Thought-Form Labs on the 253rd floor and develop a counter to DL-475P. Given that they're vain and already infected, any disagreement will cut their aid short.

Chances are good that the characters will have to complete the thought-form and broadcast it on their own. This will require travel to the most isolated reaches of the realm to confer with scientists and programmers who've kept themselves off the grid.

As the characters get closer to their goal, the Delilah Protocol will begin to notice them. Any attempt to erase it will be met with heavily armed squads of Technotopian soldiers and attempts to infiltrate key

resistance points. Without a decisive plan, this could quickly turn into a war of attrition. God speed!

Infected Soldier

These are regular soldiers from the near-endless pool of Technotopia soldiers. Have as many dozens as you like. They're all infected, which is bad news for the characters.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d10, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d10, Intimidation d10, Notice d12, Persuasion d8, Shooting d6+1

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 11(6) Pulse 10

Edges: Improved Arcane Resistance, Indomitable, Iron Inside

Gear: Plasma Focusing Array (**Ranges:** 10/20/40, **Damage:** 3d6, AP 4), Tactical Computers (+1 on Shooting rolls), Headspace Communications (telepathic link between squad members up to 24 inches), Celestium Flex Armor (+6 armor, all locations)

Special Abilities

- *Infected:* If dealt Fatigue from mental or spiritual sources such as Taunt or Intimidation, the researcher undergoes a terrible transformation increasing Strength and Vigor to d12+2 and gaining the Berserk Edge. The Protocol can be reversed with a successful, opposed Persuasion check.



Zax Ranjet and Phil Swetter

Ranjet and Swetter deserve some kind of science prize for being the biggest geniuses in a realm of geniuses. Sadly, they're infected by the Delilah Protocol and as soon as they help the characters (and maybe before then), their life expectancy is shockingly short.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12+2, Spirit d10, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Guts d6, Knowledge (Algorithms Of The 34th Layer) d12, Notice d12, Persuasion d10, Shooting d4

Pace 6 Parry 5 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Edges: Indomitable

Gear: Cranial Implants (project all manner of lovely holographic displays around them with real time data scrolling past at a very impressive speed).

Special Abilities

- *Infected:* If dealt Fatigue from mental or spiritual sources such as Taunt or Intimidation, the researcher undergoes a terrible transformation increasing Strength and Vigor to d12+2 and gaining the Berserk Edge. The Protocol can be reversed with a successful, opposed Persuasion check.

Delilah Protocol Researcher

Welcome to Yoyodyne! Can I help you today? Splendid, please ho—RRRRARGH!

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d12, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d4, Knowledge (Delilah Protocol) d12+2, Knowledge (Mimetic Principles) d12+2 Notice d12, Persuasion d6, Shooting d6

Pace 6 Parry 4 Toughness 5 Pulse 10

Edges: Scholar

Special Abilities

- *Infected:* If dealt Fatigue from mental or spiritual sources such as Taunt or Intimidation, the researcher undergoes a terrible transformation increasing Strength and Vigor to d12+2 and gaining the Berserk Edge. The Protocol can be reversed with a successful, opposed Persuasion check.

The Delilah Protocol

The Protocol lacks a physical or spiritual form, making it very difficult to deal with. It is a dispersed sentience. The only way to engage it is to inflict Fatigue until it can take no more. The Delilah Protocol has d12 in any Trait it might need to roll and a d10 Wild Die. Its only weakness is that a simultaneous hit with enough stimuli in multiple locations would cause the multi-action penalties to cripple it. This results in information overload.

Lords Of Order Angelic Throwdown

Realm: Maelstrom, Realm Of Archangels.

We know you've been itching for it, that big scene where the players' demigod characters get to use every trick they've learned, that huge battle scene that gives them the ultimate challenge. Alright. Brace yourselves. It's time for the Lords of Order Angelic Throwdown....

The endless battle between Trinity's angels and the forces of the Dark One have swung in an unexpected direction. Fiendish beasts reach higher on the Archangels' alabaster spires daily. If the reports can be believed, they've even occupied the lower levels of Grace Pinnacle. Unwilling to risk losing their landmark, the Pinnacle's attendants have called upon the Lords of Order to aid them.

The Archangels have fought on the side of the Lords of Order in the past, but every alliance has ended with disagreements and the vow that it will never happen again. Both pantheons fight for order and justice, but of vastly different stripes. The Lords of Order flourish under a strict command structure, valuing hierarchy and protocol; the Archangels are more egalitarian, able to approach most situations from multiple angles. In order to prevent the squabbles of campaigns past, one of the forces has asked the characters to act as go-betweens.

Unless the characters have visited the Realm of Ascendant Order before, take some time to introduce them to its rigid precepts of discipline (see pg. 67). Give everyone the evidence they need to decide for themselves whether the Lords of Order are free-will-smashing fascists or stern, honorable warriors. Better yet, shatter that dichotomy and show how both views have some element of truth in them.

Yagy Tomoe of the 7th Band of Heavenly Youth is waiting for the characters to arrive. Despite her small stature, she's all arrogance and business. Although protocol demands a feast before proceeding with talk of battle, she enjoys the sumptuous banquet very little. Talk of battle excites her though, especially details about demons; she has never fought any demons.



Grace Pinnacle

As soon as Tomoe's warriors breach the sealed portal into the Realm of Archangels, the Archangel Ramel sends a messenger with his battle plan: the Heavenly Youth charge first, striking the defenses at Grace Pinnacle from all angles. His hosts hang back, striking with their bows at targets of tactical importance. When Ramel gives the signal, his highly mobile troops will sweep in and seize the Pinnacle for the glory of Trinity.

It's a good plan, but treats the Heavenly Youth as cannon fodder. Yagy Tomoe's counter proposal reverses the roles: the angels, who know more about hand-to-hand with demons strike first, while her own forces gather their chi for a tower-cleansing blast of purity. She relates her plan to the characters, hoping that they will approve of it without change. This is their chance to speak up, argue with Yagy Tomoe, and craft a brilliant battle plan of their own devising. Getting Ramel in on the conference will require crossing contested airspace, but wouldn't trigger an all-out charge.

Once a plan has been negotiated (and keep reminding the characters that time is ticking, with demons crawling all over sacred places while they have their conference of war), it's time to turn the plan into reality. Overall, the forces are evenly matched and it'll take a few demigods to make all the difference – the massed battle is a background for the characters' commando action. The enemy forces have a battery of terrifying grub cannons overlooking the battlefield. If left unmolested, they could tear both sides into meaty chunks. Only the characters see this threat as the forces of Good start their assault on the Dark One's hordes... time to get involved!

Withdraw The Troops

After Grace Pinnacle is retaken with the characters' help, Ramel hopes that Yagy Tomoe and her force will pack up and go home. No such luck. Flashing the signet of the Great Spirit of Order, she informs the gathered forces that she has the authority to set up a forward staging ground for any and all future actions against the Dark One. In effect, it is authorizing an armed garrison in the heart of Trinity's capital.

Ramel is furious at her gall; his displeasure shatters columns and echoes to the depths of the Pit. She remains unmoved. All of the posturing comes to a head when one of them strikes first. It may be an honest mistake or an over-reaction to a defensive gesture. If the characters don't think fast, a second battle will blossom from the first, leaving the Dark One laughing heartily at the inevitable outcome.

The best way to defuse the situation is one that draws the Great Spirit of Order's attention elsewhere. Starting a crusade against a different, more active evil would do the trick. The evil doesn't even need to be real; an illusory attack on the Realm of Order would result in all foreign outposts being called home to defend the realm.

Of course, there's no rule saying the characters need to back the Archangels. They may feel their time's better spent convincing the followers of Trinity to accept the new outpost. If handled carefully, it needn't be the start to a full-scale colonization – and everyone could use a few more well-armed friends. Both of these options may take several sessions to navigate, but the alternative of doing nothing would be worse.



Ramel, Trinity's Thunder

Marked as the Archangel of hope by Trinity, Ramel is more often these days the Archangel of hope in battle, having been put in charge of the defense of the realm from the Dark One's demons. As the first among the angelic host, he leads from the front, inspiring those around him with his total fearlessness in the face of any evil and any odds.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d12+2, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d12+2, Guts d12, Intimidation d12+2, Knowledge (Battle) d10, Persuasion d10+4, Notice d8, Shooting d12, Streetwise d8+4

Pace 6 Parry 9 Toughness 15(6) Pulse 35 Charisma +4



Edges: Attractive, Charismatic, Command, Fearsome Presence: Improved, Fervor, Hold The Line, Inspire, Improved Tough As Nails, Improved Sweep, Living Standard, Natural Leader, Quick Draw, Steady Hands, Stutter, Trait Perfection: Demigod (Fighting)

Gear: Thunderblade (**Damage:** Str+d8+4, AP 2, emits a thunderclap whenever a foe is taken down, shaking all enemies adjacent to the victim), Soul Bow (**Ranges:** 24/48/96, **Damage:** 2 Spirit dice, AP 2)

Special Abilities

- *Celestial Aura:* +6 armor, all locations.
- *Flight:* Flying speed of 6 inches, climb of 3, can 'run'.
- *Demigod Entity:* This ability grants Ramel all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

Angelic Host

The host of angels may look all peaceful when they're sitting around preening their wings, but they can be mighty tough when it's time to draw swords. Almighty tough, no less.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d12, Vigor d10

Skills: Fighting d12+1, Guts d12, Persuasion d8+4, Notice d8, Shooting d12, Streetwise d6+4

Pace 6 Parry 8 Toughness 13(6) Pulse 30 Charisma +4

Edges: Attractive, Combat Reflexes, Charismatic, Improved Frenzy, Quick Draw, Steady Hands, Trait Perfection: Heroic (Fighting)

Gear: Trinity Sword (**Damage:** Str+d8+2, AP 2, grants owner +4 arcane resistance against evil beings), Soul Bow (**Ranges:** 24/48/96, **Damage:** 2 Spirit dice, AP 2)

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants an angelic host all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for their own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.
- *Celestial Aura:* +6 armor, all locations.
- *Flight:* Flying speed of 6 inches, climb of 3, can 'run'.

Yagyu Tomoe



Commander of the 7th Band of Heavenly Youth, Yagyu Tomoe was once a normal mortal from the Lord of Satsuma's entourage. In medieval Japan the Great Spirit of Order's recruitment spirits found her. Fast forward a dozen military campaigns and she's one

of the finest leaders in her realm, hugely respected by allies and enemies alike.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d12+2

Skills: Fighting d12+2, Guts d12, Knowledge (Battle) d12, Persuasion d10, Notice d8, Shooting d12

Pace 6 Parry 9 Toughness 15(4) Pulse 35

Edges: Command, Fervor, Hold The Line, Inspire, Improved Tough As Nails, Improved Sweep, Living Standard, Natural Leader, Pulse Armor: Improved, Quick Draw, Stutter, Trait Perfection: Demigod (Fighting)

Gear: Two Heaven Katana (**Damage:** Str+d8+6, AP 60, HW), Armor Of Order (+4 armor, all locations)

Special Abilities

- *Demigod Entity:* This ability grants Yagy Tomoe all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for her own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.



Ishikawa Hideki, The Silent Wave

Yagy Tomoe puts great faith in her right hand man. The Silent Wave is another Japanese recruit, but from quite a different realm – he faithfully served in the Imperial army in the 1940's, willing to die for the Japanese way of life. He became a hero in those days and joined the Great Spirit of Order on his first visit to the Maelstrom.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d12, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12+2, Guts d12, Knowledge (Battle) d12+2, Knowledge (The Way) d12+2, Persuasion d10, Notice d8, Shooting d12

Pace 6 Parry 9 Toughness 14(4) Pulse 30

Edges: Command, Fervor, Hold The Line, Inspire, Improved Tough As Nails, Improved Sweep, Pulse Armor, Quick Draw, Scholar, Trait Perfection: Demigod (Fighting)

Gear: Cooling Breeze Katana (**Damage:** Str+d8+6, AP 6), Armor Of Order (+4 armor, all locations)

Special Abilities

- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants Ishikawa Hideki all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.

Heavenly Youth Defenders

Picture samurai warriors in force armor as tall as two normal men. Wings like dragonfly wings let them fly, but are far less maneuverable than the angels'. The Heavenly Youth Defenders believe in order above all else and are blinded by their youth from any other way of life.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d12+4, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12+2, Guts d12, Persuasion d10, Notice d8, Shooting d12, Throwing d8

Pace 6 Parry 9 Toughness 17(4) Pulse 30

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Improved Sweep, Pulse Armor, Quick Draw, Trait Perfection: Heroic (Fighting)

Gear: Heavenly Youth Katana (**Damage:** Str+d10+4, AP 4), Armor Of Order (+4 armor, all locations)

Special Abilities

- *Size +5:* These are big boys and girls, taking up a 2x2 inch space on the field of battle.
- *Heroic Entity:* This ability grants the Heavenly Youth Defenders all the perks enjoyed by Heroic rank characters, i.e. +1 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +1 Karma for their own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.
- *Flight:* Flying speed of 5 inches, climb of 2, cannot 'run'.





Irygthon The Foul

For all the mythic names fighting for the good side, there has to be a bad guy worthy of all that glorious ability. Irygthon the Foul is that demon, the perfect foil for any one of the battle leaders lined up against his demonic swarm. He isn't twice the size of normal men. He isn't a multi-tentacled horror. He is pure evil, though, evil so strong that it sustains him and has turned him into the Dark One's most important war knight.

Irygthon unspectacular appearance should be deeply unsettling to anyone who watches him during the battle, as he walks casually from target to target and destroys their very essence with a single strike of his flail.

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12+2, Guts d8, Intimidation d12, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Persuasion d8, Notice d8, Shooting d12, Streetwise d8, Taunt d8

Pace 6 Parry 9 Toughness 13(5) Pulse 35

Edges: Combat Reflexes, Improved Nerves Of Steel, Improved Sweep, No Mercy, Penetrating Strike: Improved, Quick Draw, Stutter, Trait Perfection: Demigod (Fighting),

Gear: Serrated Flail (**Damage:** Str+d12, ignores bonuses from shields, Shakes an opponent on a hit irrespective of damage, 2 Handed)

Special Abilities

- *Demigod Entity:* This ability grants Irygthon the Foul all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for his own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.
- *Demonic Foulness:* Seeing Irygthon the Foul, even through a telescope at great distances, requires a Guts check at -2. That's how evil he is.
- *Dark Hide:* Toughened by bathing in corrupt souls and provides +5 armor, all locations.
- *Vile Caress:* By making a successful touch attack Irygthon can make an opposed Spirit check (which gets an additional d6 added to his total if the touch attack scored a raise) on the target. Irygthon inflicts a level of Fatigue for a success

and for each raise on the check. This Fatigue can kill. This ability costs 2 Pulse which must be paid after every successful touch attack.



Leaper Spawn

The forces of good aren't the only ones with powerful champions at their beck and call. Irygthon the Foul has a pair of leaper spawn assassins on his side, and unleashes them at the start of battle. They orders: to find and eliminate all the Wild Cards fighting on the other side. In case we need to spell it out, that might mean the characters having to save Ramel, Yagyu or Ishakawa (at a really inconvenient time when they already have plenty to deal with, of course). It might also make the characters the primary target!

Attributes: Agility d12, Smarts d8, Spirit d8, Strength d12+2, Vigor d12

Skills: Fighting d12+2, Guts d8, Intimidation d12, Persuasion d8, Notice d8, Shooting d12, Taunt d8

Pace 6 Parry 9 Toughness 15(4) Pulse 35

Edges: Berserk, Combat Reflexes, Flight Of The Ascendant: Improved, Improved Frenzy, Improved Sweep, No Mercy, Penetrating Strike: Improved, Quick Draw, Stutter, Trait Perfection: Demigod (Fighting)

Special Abilities

- *Demigod Entity:* This ability grants Leaper spawn all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for their own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.
- *Spawn Form:* +3 Toughness and +4 armor, all locations.
- *Brachiation:* Can climb at their Pace normally, and "run" while climbing.
- *Spawn Claws:* (**Damage:** Str+d12, AP 8)
- *Vitality:* Leaper spawn automatically Soak the first wound in any encounter. The damage gets through, but they simply ignore it - it doesn't count as a Wound and the spawn isn't Shaken.
- *Improbably Hooked Guns... ..that fire explosive shot!:* (**Ranges:** 24/48/96, **Damage:** 2d10+2, Medium Burst Template)

Witching Spheres

Floating globes containing the dregs of witch souls, witching spheres hum with an air of malice. Each witch made an infernal pact to live beyond death, and this is the form the Dark One chose for them.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d6, Spirit d8, Strength d4, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Guts d8, Notice d6, Shooting d8, Stealth d8, Witching d12

Pace 6 Parry 6 Toughness 5(2) Pulse 20

Edges: Improved Dodge

Special Abilities

- *Small:* Attacks against witching spheres suffer a -2 penalty
- *Infernal Pact:* +2 armor, all locations.
- *Flight:* Flying speed of 6 inches, climb of 6, cannot 'run'.
- *Witchfire:* For 2 Pulse a witching sphere can unleash a blast of Pulse (**Ranges:** 3/6/12, **Damage:** 2d10, ignores armor unless the armor is magical in nature).
- *Witching:* As an action using the Witching skill a witching sphere can cast Boost Trait or Deflection. Each costs only 1 Pulse (lasting 5 rounds plus 1 Pulse for every 2 rounds thereafter) and has double the normal effect. i.e. Boost Trait increases a Trait by 2 step normally, 4 with raise. Deflection gives attacks -4 to hit or -8 with a raise.

Grubcannons

The Dark One's hidden ace in the battle is a battery of grubcannons he's been obfuscating from that fool of an Archangel, Ramel, and all those Great Spirit of Order lackeys. Grubcannons are huge living siege weapons, bred in the depths of the Pit for this moment – to scythe down the ranks of angels and Heavenly Youth Defenders as they charge forward, oblivious to their imminent doom. Mwahahahaha.

Lucky for the forces of Good, the characters manage to get a glimpse past the Dark One's veiling magic and have a chance to destroy the grubcannons before they spring their trap. The Dark One wouldn't make an assault on the grubcannons easy, and neither should you.

Attributes: Agility d4, Smarts d4, Spirit d8, Strength d12+8, Vigor d12+4

Skills: Fighting d4, Guts d12, Notice d4, Shooting d10

Pace 4 Parry 9 Toughness 29(8) Pulse 35

Edges: Marksman, Feel My Pain: Improved

Special Abilities

- *Demigod Entity:* This ability grants a grubcannon all the perks enjoyed by Demigod rank characters, i.e. +2 on Soak rolls and checks to recover from being Shaken, +2 Karma for its own use, enhanced recovery rates, and so on.
- *Size +9:* +4 to hit these easy targets.
- *Gargantuan*
- *Pestilential Persistence:* +2 Toughness and +8 armor, all locations.
- *Grubcannon:* A living weapon, and every bit as vile as it sounds – it spits shells filled with demonic maggots. (**Ranges:** 48/96/192, **Damage:** 4d10+2, AP 20, HW, Large Burst Template, cannot be fired at targets closer than 20 inches).
- *Claw:* Used as a stabbing implement to rid itself of unwanted guests, it wouldn't be effective except for the creatures great size (**Damage:** Str+d4).
- *Putrescent webs:* For defense grubcannons can secrete webs of liquefied, rotting flesh. Moving through an area sown with webs counts as difficult terrain and once a victim enters a patch of web it grows teeth and chews at the victim as they pass, each scrape and tearing noise vexing the soul of the target with moments of personal weakness. Each inch moved through requires a Guts check, failure results in a level of Fatigue. This can Incapacitate but not kill.



Name: _____ Gender: _____

Race: _____ Age: _____ Player: _____

Agility: Strength: Parry:
2 + 1/2 Fighting

Smarts: Vigor: Toughness:
2 + 1/2 Vigor

Spirit: Pace: Charisma:



Boating Wounds incl Fatigue
(Agi)

Climbing -1 to trait checks for each wound & fatigue level, -1 pace per wound
(Str)

Driving Hindrances
(Agi)

Fighting

Gambling

Guts

Healing Armor Bonus Notes
(Sma)

Intimidation Head
(Spi)

Investigation Torso
(Sma)

Knowledge Arms
(Sma)

Legs

Weapons Range Dam Notes

Lockpicking

Notice

Persuasion

Piloting

Repair Possessions Wt

Riding

Shooting

Stealth

Streetwise

Survival

Swimming

Taunt

Throwing

Tracking

Encumbrance Penalty Total Wt: _____

Power Cost Range Duration Effect

Character-Description-/Illustration

Edges

5

10

15

S20

25

30

35

V40

45

50

55

H60

65

70

75

L80

90

100

110

D120

130

140

150

160

170

180

Telesma

S20

V40

H60

L80

D120

Telesma-Description-/Illustration

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