

## The Cargo of Doom

### A Quickstart Demo Adventure for The Secret of Zir'An RPG

By Martin Hunter Caplan

This adventure is an introduction to the Secret of Zir'An Role-Playing Game. It contains a quickstart rules guide and a short scenario complete with sample characters that should last a few hours for two to five players and a Hand of Fate (the storyteller or game master). Moderately experienced gamers familiar with RPGs will find this adventure a mix of action-packed roleplaying, exploration and combat, suited to the abilities of the Adventurers provided.

First off, print out a copy of the Quickstart rules for each player, one copy of each player character sheet, and one complete copy of the adventure and NPCs for the Hand of Fate. One player should take the role of the Hand of Fate while the others choose an Adventurer to play. Make sure everyone has a 10-sided-dice and something to make notes with. With that, your gaming group should be ready to enter the world of Zir'An!

### About the Game System

The Finesse System is a versatile way to customize the actions of your character dynamically from round to round in combat, and to create a flowing narrative that takes into account the player character's skills so that mundane or unchallenging situations can be narrated by the players themselves under the direction of the Hand of Fate.

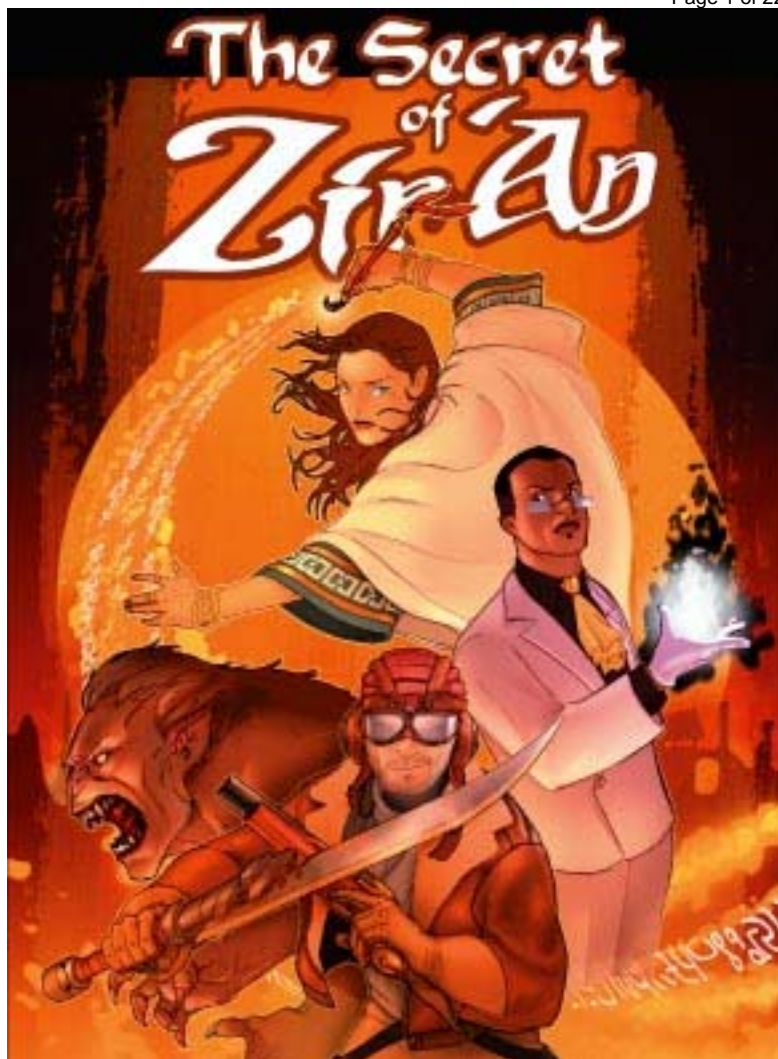
The characters included in the adventure have their Stats, General Wounds & Location Wound States, and pre-figured skill rolls listed on their sheets. They each have some special abilities like Magic use, martial arts, or other powers listed on the sheet with the basic rules for their use included.

### About Paragon Games

Paragon Games is a game design and production company started by Chris Hockabout, Martin Caplan, Marcus Flores and Aram Gutowski in 2002. For years previous, they developed a variety of in-house games that met with increasing enthusiasm on the part of players at home and at conventions, so much so that they decided to bring their first game, The Secret of Zir'An, to the rest of the world.

Partnering with White Wolf, Paragon will offer a complete line of roleplaying game products based in and around the speculative fantasy world of The Secret of Zir'An.

Paragon also intends to develop and publish other games the principals have developed, including an anime RPG, a sci-fi RPG, and to extend the Paragon worlds into novels, comics, animation, film, and television. More information is available, including community boards and announcements, at [www.ParagonGames.us](http://www.ParagonGames.us).



## The Finesse System Quickstart Rules

Paragon Games' Finesse System uses seven steps during a game combat round to simulate cinematic action:

1. Players & HoF spend Speed, adding to Reaction for an Initiative Bid that determines Turn order at the beginning of each Round
2. When their Turn occurs each player and NPC pay a Speed cost for actions (defensive interrupt actions can cost Speed too)
3. Actions with a Difficulty or that are Opposed are resolved with a Skill Test: a single 10-sided-die roll added to a Stat, Aptitude and Skill Practice that is compared with the difficulty number or opposed roll
4. Finesse Effects are bought by the winner with points rolled above the action's difficulty (these points are called Successes)
5. Damage Location is determined (either with 2d10 roll on Hit Location chart or through spending Successes)
6. Number of Vitality and Lethal Wounds taken by target are determined and subtracted
7. After every player and NPC has acted, a new Round begins with new Initiative Bids

Every character or creature has a Speed Derived Stat, a pool of action points that is replenished every game Round. During their turn, an individual can bid as much Speed for initiative as they like. The amount they bid is added to their Reaction stat for that turn – this is their Initiative. The highest value goes first, followed by others in descending order. Individuals must also spend Speed from the same pool to perform actions like attacking, defending, and moving. Will your character hang back and perform complex actions late in the round, or go first and take advantage of surprise?

All players reveal their Speed bids at once, while the Hand of Fate determines the bids for all NPCs. Players declare actions on their turn when it comes up during the round – players that go later can therefore react to unfolding events.

Speed Cost	Action Description
2, 3, 4	Attack. Depending upon the type of attack being launched, the speed cost is 2, 3, or 4. Unarmed attacks, Melee (short), and Ranged Weapon (small), only cost 2 speed to attack with. Melee (medium), and Ranged Weapons (medium) cost 3 speed to attack. And Melee (long), and Ranged Weapon (heavy) have a speed cost of 4.
1 per +1	Active defense. For each point of speed spent toward defense, they gain a +1 to their defense roll, and may make use of any special Defensive Finesse Effects they are capable of.
4, 6	Autofire Bursts. Using automatic weapons, a Short Burst costs 4 Speed and a Full Burst 6.
6, 8	Autofire Spray. 6 Speed (90-degree arc), 8 Speed (180-degree arc). This fires a Full Burst over an area. all within the arc must make a defense roll versus the gunman's attack roll. Failure indicates a hit at base weapon damage to one rolled hit location
1	Move 5' All characters get a free 5' move once per Round. Thereafter, they must pay 1 point of Speed per 5'. See Movement
2	Swim 5'
1	Shield Block, can be used with or without an Active Defense, but even if their defense roll fails and they are hit, the attack strikes the shield first.
8	Use Non-Combat Skill (including Runemagic or Shadowmagic use, unless spell defines otherwise)
1	Reload weapon
3	Aiming, +2 to roll for ranged weapons only per Speed Spent
1	Wind Up +1 to HTH/Mêlée damage per Speed spent.
1 per Vitality	Recovery. Characters may devote any amount of their Speed to recovery, regaining 1 point of Vitality per 1 Speed. Characters taking a Recovery can perform no offensive actions that turn, but may run or defend themselves if need be. Recovery does not return Lethal Wounds or restore function to damaged limbs.

The character sheets detail other Actions and Finesse Effects granted by knowledge of martial arts, magic, or possession of exotic weapons and equipment that may be performed by spending Speed or Successes. Spellcasters have specific Speed costs noted on their character sheets that define the amount of Speed that must be spent to activate their powers.

### Skill Tests

In a non-combat or Unstressed situation, the Finesse Level of the skill (Basic, Advanced, Expert, or Elite) the character possesses will allow them to do many things automatically because of their experience. The Hand of Fate may even let the player narrate their character's action for a bit, as long as they keep in mind their character's relative skill level. However, rolling for a Skill Test is always called for whenever an action-oriented or Stressed situation comes about.

When the outcome of an action is uncertain, an individual adds the values of their Stats (basic capabilities), Aptitudes (general abilities) and Skill Practice (specific experience) together with a 10-sided-die roll to try to beat a difficulty number. Difficulties are rated 10 = basic, 15 = advanced, 20 = expert, 25 = elite and 30 = impossible. If an individual rolls less than the difficulty, their action fails and they lose the Speed points they used to attempt it (but they may always try again if they have enough speed or on their next turn in the following round). If they roll the difficulty number or higher, they succeed. Any points rolled in the test above the Difficulty (these are called Successes) are spent to perform Finesse Effects (see below). The fast general rule to the die roll is that 1 is an instant failure, while rolling a 10 is an instant success, regardless of the total score.

Two individuals may engage in an opposed Skill Test, as most often occurs in combat with an attacker and defender. In this case each combatant rolls their Reaction + Personal + Skill Practice (usually Athletics for the defender and the weapon or unarmed skill for the attacker) + d10 and compares the result. If the attacker's result is greater, they can spend any Successes above the defender's roll on Offensive Finesse Effects. If the defender's result is greater, they may spend any Successes above the attacker's roll on Defensive Finesse Effects. Any number of Finesse Effects can be bought as the result of an attack, limited only by the number of Successes scored in the Skill Test.

A sampling of Finesse Effects are listed below (The Secret of Zir' An Core Gamebook will have scores more, including powerful Unarmed, Blunt, Bladed, Ranged, Advanced, Expert and Elite techniques that can be chained or combined for cinematic effects):

#### Difficulty Descriptions

**Basic: 10** - There is little doubt that the character can pull off the attempt.  
**Advanced: 15** - There is some doubt as to whether the character can succeed.  
**Expert: 20** - The situation actively works against the character and what she is attempting.  
**Elite: 25** - Everything is working against the character or what they're trying to do has never been attempted.

### Combat Finesse Effects

Success Cost	Description
1 per point	Increasing damage – This is the most basic and often used Combat Finesse Effect. All weapons in The Secret of Zir'An have a base damage value. For every 1 Finesse Success, that base damage can be increased by 1. This total amount is what is compared to the defensive value of armor that is struck.
4 per AV	Armor Penetration – For every 4 successes scored, the attacker may decrease the AV of the defender's armor by 1 for that attack only. This has no effect on the damage defense value of the armor, only its AV.
4, 6, 8	Choosing hit location – For 4, 6 or 8 Finesse Successes, the player may choose a hit location as opposed to rolling a random location. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For 4 Finesse Successes, the player may choose a random upper or lower body location (roll d10 – upper body locations are 1 Head, 2-4 Torso, 5-7 Left Arm, 8-10 Right Arm; Lower Body locations are 1-4 Left Leg, 5-8 Right Leg, 9-10 Abdomen).</li> <li>For 6 Finesse Successes, the player may choose any specific non-head location.</li> <li>And for 8 successes, the player may choose any specific area on the target's body.</li> </ul>
2	Grapple - By scoring 2 successes in an attack roll, the character can grab anyone with a lower combined PHY and MASS. Once grabbed, the defender will only escape with a new contested attack roll.
4	Crush - If the attacker scores 4 successes, they can grab their opponent and squeeze them to do damage equivalent to their base Hand-to-Hand damage plus or minus the relative values of their MASS stats. The attacker can continue to deal damage each round in lieu of rolling an attack until the target escapes.
2	Throw - Picking up and throwing someone into the nearest hard object, be it a floor, a wall, or out over a balcony, if the target is small enough to score a Grapple on, then they can be flung 5 feet plus 5 feet for every point the attacker's MASS exceeds that of the victim. Damage is the attacker's base Hand-to-Hand +1 point per 5 feet thrown.
2 per +1	Defensive: Set Up – The defender manages to block the attack and set the attacker up for their next attack. For every 2 successes scored on the Defense Roll, they gain a +1 bonus to their next attack roll against that enemy.
6	Defensive: Counterattack - If the defender scores 6 successes or more on an opposed attack roll, they have the opportunity to counterattack right then and there for no Speed cost. The tables suddenly turned, new attack rolls are made. But keep in mind that Counterattacks can be counterattacked.

### Taking Damage

Hit locations are determined randomly after a successful attack by rolling 2d10 and using the Hit Location chart, unless the attacker uses Successes for a Finesse Effect that targets a specific area. Any damage taken is subtracted from Vitality. Vitality represents the character's ability to take nonlethal damage. When a character has taken damage to their Vitality, they also subtract those damage points from the Lethal Wounds (LW) of the location struck. Each LW consists of Damage Points, and when these are exhausted the character takes a Lethal Wound. Lethal Wounds represent actual flesh-and-bone damage that debilitates the character. A character can lose all their Vitality and still be relatively unhurt. If all the Lethal Wounds in a body part are lost they have taken serious and potentially fatal damage.

Losing all the Lethal Wounds to a vital location (the Head, Chest or Abdomen) causes immediate incapacitation, even if Vitality is left. The individual falls helpless and is clinging to life. If all Lethal Wounds to a vital location and all Vitality are lost the character dies. Arms and Legs that lose all LWs are incapacitated. An unconscious character can spend Speed to recover Vitality with the Recovery Action.

To figure damage on an armored opponent, all attacks have Damage Points (DP) and an Armor Piercing (AP) factor. Any protection will have a Damage Point value in defense, and an Armor Value (AV). To determine how much damage penetrates a target's defense, first compare the AP value of the weapon to the AV value of the armor. If the armor's AV value is greater than the weapon's AP value, the difference indicates the maximum number of Lethal Wounds subtracted from the location struck, regardless of damage points. If the armor's AV is lower than the AP value of the weapon, the difference indicates the number of times the armor's Point Value is halved.

We find Sir Melereton confronted with a Talusian Assassin. The assassin strikes with a thrust from his rapier. The rapier has a value of 9AP4, versus Sir Melereton's armored jerkin, which has a value of 12AV2. Normally, Sir Melereton's armor has a point value high enough to stop the rapier, but since the pointy rapier has an AP value of 4, some damage gets through. With the rapier's AP value 2 points higher than the AV value of Melereton's armor; Sir Melereton's 12-point armor is reduced to 3 (12 points reduced by 50% to 6, reduced by 50% again to 3). 6 points of the rapier's damage penetrates Sir Melereton's armor. Example

The Zhalanti adventurer, Sasvati, is facing the Fire Reaches pit fighter, Suma Chom. Sasvati is lightly armored, but magically so, with a defensive capacity of 12AV5. Suma wields a large hammer with a value of 26AP1 (damage adjusted upwards for Suma's strength). Unfortunately for Sasvati, he is hit. His armor sucks up 12 points of the hammer's damage, leaving him to take the remaining 14 points. The rolled location is to Sasvati's torso. Sasvati marks off the damage from his Vitality. Since he has 4 DPs per Lethal Wound, this ends up translating to three LWs he would subtract from the location (the damage is 2 points shy of being 4 LWs). However, since his magical armor's AV is 4 points higher than the hammer's AP of 1, he subtracts 4 from the wound states done to his torso, which reduces the Lethal Wound damage completely to zero. He has still taken the 14 points of Vitality and is reeling, but his magical armor has saved him from many broken ribs and ruptured internal organs.

By using the Recovery Action, a player can recover General Wound State damage, but not Location Wound States. Medical treatment or magical healing is required heal lost Location Wound States.

## Cargo of Doom

### A Secret of Zir'An RPG Adventure

#### Background

It is the year 302 After the Endwar. The *Vermilion Tide* is an Ianu Vossian Runic steamer making a routine trip from the Valluneian coastal city Rengin to the Ianu Vossan port of Mahoro. Unbeknownst to her passengers and crew, the ship carries a terrible cargo below her decks. This cargo is the **Krazhok Fragment**, a vile relic of evil recovered from the tomb of a fallen Fane that is being transported by a priest of Mirkule and his Shadekin minions. **Sir Timothy Ditherton**, a Valluneian Secret Service Seven agent has tracked the foul thing to the deepest hold of the *Tide*. Furthermore, he has discovered the cult intends to sink the ship and rendezvous with an ancient Shadekin sea leviathan, sacrificing all aboard to their malevolent master Mirkule. Knowing he cannot face this threat alone, Sir Ditherton executes a Call the Chosen Lyssian Rune in the hopes that he can contact and convince whatever Adventurers are aboard to help him foil the Cult's plans.

The *Tide* is a five-tiered Runic-steam powered vessel with a crew of 40 and berths for 300 3rd class, 120 2nd class and 25 1st class passengers. The 1st class staterooms, officers' quarters and command stations take up the first and second tiers, while 2nd class berths are on the third tier, 3rd class passengers are on the fourth, and the engine and cargo spaces are located in the below-the-waterline fifth tier.

The Mirkule cult's **Shadekin** have been preying on the 3<sup>rd</sup> class passengers, reducing their number from nearly 240 men, women, and children to 150 over the course of the fortnight-long trip – the crew, with the typical Ianu Vossian classist attitude, have ignored these poor people's pleas for help and forced them to remain below decks. The first officer, a **Mr. Krowe**, is actually a high priest in the Cult and has played to the crew's bigotry to keep the entire ship under his thumb. Players will have their hands full convincing the **Lord Captain Adolph Vizlani** to do anything for the "dirty scummers" and will most likely have to take matters into their own hands and descend into the depths of the ship to investigate.

#### All Hands on Deck

Sir Ditherton has been writing the Lyssian Call the Chosen rune for three days in a stateroom on the third tier of the ship. Read the following to start the adventure:

His Majesty's Vessel the *Vermilion Tide* powers across the churning Sea of Anjur, a week out on its journey from Vallunei to its homeport in Ianu Voss. You have all booked first-class passage on the *Tide* to points unknown and, after a balmy journey you have two days until arrival. Suddenly, a storm sweeps over the horizon and drives everyone on the ship below decks. You find yourselves drawn mysteriously into the third deck, to the 2<sup>nd</sup> class staterooms. You make your way to berth number 222 and find that several others have gathered themselves around the doorway. The handle turns, revealing a shining light coming from within – and silhouetted against it is a tuxedo clad Valluneian man who rises from the rune he was etching in the floor. "Adventurers" he says, "you have answered the call of Lyiss. Who would like a drink?"

Timothy entreats the players to come into the stateroom, which is lavish and well furnished but dimly lit by two lanterns. He explains that they will all surely perish should the Cult of Mirkule succeed in their plans and thus it is in the interest of even the most mercenary of them to pitch in and give it the good college try. He can tell the players the following information:

- The Cult of Mirkule has a powerful relic of a dead Fane called the Krazhok Fragment somewhere on the lower decks.
- The *Vermillion Tide* will never reach port, as the Cult intend to summon some sort of Shadekin monster of the deep using the artifact's power before the ship reaches Ianu Voss, and set it to disrupting trade in the Sea of Anjur.

#### Lexicon

##### Cult of Mirkule

Mirkule is the most powerful Fane known, one who even the Savior Fane Kah could not defeat but only drive into the far north of the Tilerian Empire. Some hear his call from afar and engage in sabotage, murder, and mayhem in the rest of Zir'An, joining the secretive Cult of Mirkule.

##### Endwar

An apocalyptic war that occurred thousands of years ago between legendary countries using advanced Runemagic weapons that devastated Zir'An and nearly destroyed all life in the world. The remnant structures and artifacts of these civilizations pose a constant mystery and their surviving devices are coveted treasures.

##### Fane

Ianer who have gained godlike powers and been corrupted by it. Thousands arose spontaneously around 2,000 years ago, nearly ending life on Zir'An, but Kah, the savior and only known benevolent Fane, destroyed all but the most powerful and liberated Zir'An 1,300 years ago in the War of the Fane.

##### Ianer

The most common intelligent race in Zir'An. It is they who have inherited the world from the declining numbers of the older races: the Zhalanti and Dolonorri.

##### Ianu Voss

The largest naval power in Zir'An, it has mercantile and imperialist ambitions almost everywhere, but especially in the country of Arivonne.

##### Runemagic

Ancient art utilizing the symbols of creation, weaving them on paper, into the air, or into the mind to create magical effects.

##### Shadekin

Once-normal people and animals twisted into horrifying monsters by the power of Mirkule or other Fane.

##### Shadowmagic

A newly emergent kind of magic power that manifests through the shadow, bending reality to the will of the Shadowmage.

##### Vallunei

The largest confederation of states in Zir'An, Vallunei is a benevolent monarchy that works to unite disparate countries against the threat of Fane like Mirkule.

- If any players are mercenary in nature, Sir Ditherton offers a substantial reward for anyone assisting him in investigating and dealing with the Cult. He has 500 flats on hand and can promise more from his superiors when they return to dock safely.
- Something has been preying on the 3<sup>rd</sup> class passengers over the past two days, something whose howls echo through the lower decks' corridors. 90 people have disappeared already.

Finally, Ditherton begins to reveal the reason why no official action is being taken: a senior officer leads the Cult on the ship! But just before he can name the officer, a shadow comes alive on the wall and wraps itself around him, dragging him into a patch of darkness on the floor! If the players try to help they will unfortunately take 8ap5 damage per attempt (verses difficulty 25) if they manage to touch the shadow-thing or the shadow-gate. Weapon fire passes harmlessly through both shadow-things, but may injure Timothy at the Hand of Fate's discretion. In the end it is clear that Ditherton has been taken by some sort of Shadowmagic, leaving the players to fend for themselves.

The stateroom has a creaky spring-bed, a closet with two fashionable tuxedo suits and a set of cold-weather clothing. A tray with two glasses, a crystal bottle of whiskey and a sweating bowl of ice stand on a shelf, which also has a number of magazines and books, mostly pulp stories of adventure. In one of the drawers built into the bed, amongst Timothy's shaving kit, cologne, and other personal items, is a folio of paper clippings. His notes about the Cult are attached to four or five newspaper articles about missing ships, mass murders, and museum robberies – putting the blame squarely the Cult of Mirkule for the crimes and connecting them to the recovery of the Krazhok Fragment. The most recent note reads: "Use of Krazhok Fragment? Related to Worm of the Abyss? Channel power to the ocean trench at Mahoro? Shipping disasters in 3103."

## An Officer and a Gentleman?

If the players wish to meet the commanding staff of the ship, they can easily encounter them at the lavish first class Captain's Table on the second deck. Lord Captain Cameron Vizlani (an Ianu Vossian) and his first officer, First Officer Mister Krowe and an assortment of officers and guests will be taking their luncheon or supper whenever the players decide to try and find them. Read or paraphrase the following when they enter the dining room:

Stiff-necked sailor guards eye your group as you come to the door the first class dining hall, asking to see your tickets before they allow you to enter. "Can't 'ave the riff-raff bothering the Cap'n, eh wot?" they say by way of explanation. Once inside, your senses are assaulted by luxury. The sparkling crystal chandelier, the polished silver railings, the tenth-century antique Ianu Vossian furniture gilt in gold, and the glowing carved hardwoods that fairly drip from the walls, ceilings, and floor stun you with their lavish effect. The strains of a string quartet waft through the room, competing with the sound of clinking glasses and flatware as sophisticated passengers dine on gourmet steak, lobster, and apolai dishes. The room is quite large, over 200 feet long and as much wide, with exits to the kitchen on the far side of the room. The Captain's table commands the room on a raised floor to your left. Lord Captain Cameron Vizlani is there, his moustaches wagging as he shares jokes with his officers and speaks with guests who approach the table.



**Lord Captian Vizlani**

The players are approached by the hostess and asked if they would like a table for supper. If they choose to dine and 'work the room' they can discover the following with the appropriate skill checks:

- Basic (10) Conversation or Socialize Skill Test: The first class passengers are totally unaware of any problems on board. The players may want to start rumors, which will cause a few of the more nosy passengers to go to the Captain to confirm or deny the scuttlebutt.
- Basic (10) Intuit Skill Test: There is an undercurrent of fear and nervousness in the room underneath all the small talk and witty banter. People seem overly touchy and upset easily.
- Advanced (15) Conversation or Socialize Skill Test: A few first class passengers have had to deal with First Officer Krowe and seem shaken by the experience – they literally start shivering when talking about him, spilling a drink on the player character.
- Advanced (15) Persuasion or Intimidation Skill Test: The hostess attempts to seat the characters out of the way behind the swinging door of the kitchen and some plants. To get a better seat (especially to observe the Captain's Table) they must succeed in persuading or intimidating her.
- Expert (20) Socialize Skill Test: A wealthy couple is just beginning to be distraught because their two children are missing. They last saw them being taken to tour of the ship's bridge by Mister Krowe this morning.

Approaching the Captain's table directly is possible, but any uncouth characters that do so will find the guards and officers reaching for their carbines and pistols if the players appear hostile. Otherwise, they are received as guests and the Hand of Fate should read the following:

Eight uniformed officers sit at the sides of the heavy hardwood table at the top of the platform. Two men-at-arms stand at attention at the top of the stairs with carbine rifles slung at their shoulders. Lord Captain Vizlani is resplendent in his snowy white dress uniform with

gold buttons and numerous medals. He sips his soup at the end of the table to your right and a sharp faced, heavily bearded man in a black uniform sits stiffly at the opposite end to your left. All turn to look at you as you approach.

Being a bit of a pompous boor, Vizlani will comment freely in a bigoted Ianu Vossian way about the player character's nationalities to begin the conversation. He is used to his position being respected and his opinions carrying the weight of his station. If asked about the situation on the ship, he will assure the players that nothing is amiss and everything is under control. If accused of neglecting the 3<sup>rd</sup> class passengers or being uninformed as to the disappearances among them he will scoff at the very idea he should care about the lower classes and suggest the missing are most likely hiding somewhere, stealing supplies. Vizlani is concerned only with the well being of his career and makes it clear that aboard the *Vermillion Tide* his authority is absolute. If the players are insistent he refers any complaints or concerns to be investigated by his First Officer, Mr. Krowe.

Krowe will gaze coldly at the characters until he is addressed on their behalf by the Lord Captain, at which point he will openly scoff at the players and their concerns, making an Intimidation opposed skill check with the most talkative PC. If he succeeds, the players must retreat to maintain peace – the conversation is over. If the player beats Krowe, or if Krowe thinks the players are going to present a problem or make a scene that would embarrass him or the Captain, he will stand and offer to accompany them below decks for an inspection. See “The Lower Classes” section below for descriptions of the lower tiers of the ship and what the players will find there in the company of Krowe.

## The Lower Classes

The players may decide on their own to descend to the lower decks to investigate, or may be taken there on an “inspection” by Mister Krowe. Either way, the *Vermillion Tide*'s compartments and corridors should be described as filled with shadows and disconcertingly claustrophobic. A disconcerting low-pitched vibration is omnipresent everywhere on the ship below the third deck; it sounds like low chanting carried along the pipes and metal decking from somewhere below.

If the players do not investigate the lower decks after Krowe disappears (either because they attack him or when they reach the 5th tier), the ship begins to shudder and list and the storm outside gets worse. Lord Captain Vizlani will encounter the characters as he races about the ship looking for First Mate Krowe. If they can't provide answers he declares that he is going below decks to find out what's happening, and will be devoured by the Shadekin lurking there.

## Deck Three

The *Vermillion Tide*'s second-class berths are located here, and Krowe will march the players right past the stateroom 222 without a second glance on the way to the lower deck stairs. If asked about Timothy Ditherton or any other questions he answers with a monosyllabic grunt and quickens his pace.

If the players are on their own they won't encounter anyone but vacationing upper-middle-class Ianer and Dolonorri. A single large main staircase in the center of the ship leads down to Deck Four.

## Deck Four

If they are with First Officer Krowe, he will give them a quick tour of the Fourth Deck, a sneer of contempt twisting his black beard. The deck consists mostly locked-up storage and bunk-filled rooms crammed with 3<sup>rd</sup> class passengers. Most everyone encountered in this area of the ship will retreat from Krowe in fear, scattering down corridors or into hiding places. A few passengers show no fear, and merely bow or curtsy with a curious smile on their face as Krowe walks past.

If investigating without Mr. Krowe, the players will find the 3<sup>rd</sup> class passengers eager to talk about how the trip has been a deadly nightmare. Madden Arkus, an angry Dolonorri passenger, will speak for the group, telling the players about the strange whistling howls from Deck Five and the 90 people who have disappeared over the last few days. Read the following if the players encounter him:

A ragged-faced Dolonorri approaches you, shaking off the restraining hands of his fellow passengers. “I be Madden Arkus, and if yer here to help us ye've come too late – the things down there've taken any who venture outside the bunk rooms!” He says, his voice cracking. “They're like wolves or dogs, but their snouts are whistling tubes with whipping tongues that will suck the marrow right out of your bones...”

Madden grabs the hand of a sympathetic-looking player character and falls to his knees, begging them to help. They can tell the players that the disappearances started a few days into the voyage and that the attacks of the creatures became bolder as the voyage wore on. A few survivors have glimpsed their attackers in the shadows and say that most attacks were by the dog-things, but some kind of humanoid has recently been feeding on them as well. An Advanced (15) Lore: Shadekin Skill Test can identify the wolf-creatures as Howling Marrow Hounds (read the description from the NPC section to the player) but there is too little information on the other one to guess what it might be. The gaggle of frightened passengers won't leave their stateroom in any event.

The fore and aft stairways down to Deck Five are deserted. Occasionally the fluted howling of the Marrow Hounds can be heard echoing through the chambers below.

## Deck Five

Due to the corruptive influence of the Khazok Fragment, the lowest deck of the *Vermillion Tide* has become warped and mazelike, filled with false shadows and bizarre fused passageways of rusting metal and rotting wood. The Hand of Fate should feel free to improvise a map of the deck – below are a list of encounters that can be used randomly or in the order presented. The final confrontation in the main cargo hold should occur sometime after Mr. Krowe has disappeared and had 40 minutes to prepare himself for the Worm summoning ritual.

### Encounter 1 – The Twisted Stairs

When the players descend from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> deck via one of the stairwells, read or paraphrase the following:

As you step down the narrow, spiral stairwell the air becomes even fouler, like a hot breeze from a garbage pile. The stairs and walls take on a melted appearance and seem slick with black oil. The chanting vibration gets louder and stronger, and as you reach the bottom of the stair you stumble over a pile of small bones. They seem to have been discarded here and look well gnawed, including several Ianer skulls. A single wood and metal door is twisted in its frame here, its parts melted together in an exceedingly unnatural way. An eerie fluted howl sounds distantly from behind the door.

After leading them to this location, Mister Krowe will promptly fade into the shadows under the stairs and abandon them to the marrow hounds. If the players attack Krowe during their inspection tour, he will vanish using his Enshroud Shadowmagic spell and wait for ten to fifteen minutes before emerging, then head down to the cargo hold to proceed with the summoning of the Worm.

The players must somehow open or destroy the door – it can take 20 damage points and has an armor of 10av2. A successful Advanced (15) Athletics, Mechanics or Security Skill Test will get it open. A Basic (10) Healing or Lore: Medicine skill test will reveal the bones to be the remains of five Ianer and Dolonorri that have been sucked dry of their marrow through drill-bit like holes in the bone. Once open, the hallway beyond extends into darkness, twisting this way and that.

### Encounter 2 – Engine Room

A corridor dead-ends at a large bulkhead door whose latch is stuck, requiring a Physique check of 15 to open. Heat blasts the players as they look into the cherry-red glow of the engine room. Read or paraphrase this to the players:

Hundreds of pipes and cables lead from the walls, floor and ceiling of this enormous room to an enormous structure suspended in the middle of the cavernous space. A cacophony of whistling steam, clanking gears, and thrumming motors assaults your ears. What seem to have been the main engines have been transformed into a great beating metal heart hundreds of feet across that visibly expands and contracts as you look at it. Below it are mouth-shaped metal orifices into which, in a frenzy of limbs and shovels, a multitude of sweating, half-naked figures are shoveling fuel. Some notice your arrival and lope towards you, hefting their shovels and picks with evil grins splitting their ash-smeared faces.

The mob of cultists attack the players with abandon and fight to the death. The engine room is a dangerous place – the cultists will try to knock opponents into the feeder furnaces (this requires a grapple Action, then a 2<sup>nd</sup> successful melee attack against the victim's static defense). Anyone knocked into a furnace will take 8ap1 heat damage the first round and 15ap2 at the beginning of every round thereafter if they don't extricate themselves by making a difficulty 12 Athletics roll (costing 8 Speed).

### Opponents

#### Cultist Engine-Feeder Mook Mob

20 Individuals

These once-normal seamen have been corrupted by the Krazhok Fragment and become mindless slaves to the *Vermilion Tide's* semi-living engine room. Tactics: They concentrate on attacking one target at a time, preferably the closest, after bidding ¼ their speed in initiative, reserving enough Speed to move and/or attack.

Speed: 20 (-1 per point of damage taken).

Melee: Medium 20+d10 (-1 per point of damage taken).

Shovel/Fuel Pick (10ap1).

No Armor.

Vitality: 20 ☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐☐

### Encounter 3 – Corridors

The players wander the bowels of the ship they hear the keening of the 3 Marrow Hounds converging on their location. If the players make a successful Expert (20) Awareness Skill Test, they are not surprised when the attack happens (they may bid for initiative and spend Speed). All characters that fail this Awareness roll cannot spend Speed until the following round.

See the NPCs section for stats and abilities of the 3 Howling Marrow Hounds. The Hounds will try to separate a single player character from the group, herding them away around a corner to knock them down and feed with their tongues. One Hound will try to hold off the rest of the players for a round or two before joining the others. See the NPCs section for the Hounds' stats and abilities.



## Opponents

<b>Marrow Hound 1</b> Armor: <b>14av2</b> . Bony armor plating. 28 Vitality _____ Lethal Wounds (4 damage points per)			<b>Marrow Hound 2</b> Armor: <b>14av2</b> . Bony armor plating. 28 Vitality _____ Lethal Wounds (4 damage points per)			<b>Marrow Hound 3</b> Armor: <b>14av2</b> . Bony armor plating. 28 Vitality _____ Lethal Wounds (4 damage points per)		
2	Head	□□□	2	Head	□□□	2	Head	□□□
4-5	Left Foreleg	□□□□□	4-5	Left Foreleg	□□□□□	4-5	Left Foreleg	□□□□□
6-7	Right Foreleg	□□□□□	6-7	Right Foreleg	□□□□□	6-7	Right Foreleg	□□□□□
8-10	Upper Torso	□□□□□□	8-10	Upper Torso	□□□□□□	8-10	Upper Torso	□□□□□□
11-14	Abdomen	□□□□	11-14	Abdomen	□□□□	11-14	Abdomen	□□□□
15-17	Left Hindleg	□□□□□	15-17	Left Hindleg	□□□□□	15-17	Left Hindleg	□□□□□
18-20	Right Hindleg	□□□□□	18-20	Right Hindleg	□□□□□	18-20	Right Hindleg	□□□□□

## Encounter 4 – Handle with Care

The corridor opens into a 30'x30'x40' cargo storage hold with a two 10'x10'x15' crates within that have large "Handle With Care" labels affixed to them. The lightning storm outside sends blazing spears of light from the portholes above. As you watch, the crates starts to creak and groan, and nails pop out of them, clanging onto the walls. The crates shatter, sending flinders of wood and metal flying – and revealing two somethings with long ropy arms and vast mouths that work over tiny beady eyes within. They roar and head towards you!

First off, all the characters need to make Advanced 15 Athletics Skill Tests (costing 8 speed) to avoid shrapnel from the crates, taking 6ap1 if they fail or decide not to spend the Speed. The Gaunt Ones attack the largest target in a frenzy – they haven't eaten for weeks. See the NPCs section for their stats and abilities.

## Opponents

<b>Gaunt One</b> Armor: 8av1. Thick hide. 40 Vitality _____ Lethal Wounds (5 damage points per)		
2	Head	□□□
4-5	Left Arm	□□□□□
6-7	Right Arm	□□□□□
8-10	Chest	□□□□□□
11-14	Abdomen	□□□□
15-17	Left Leg	□□□□□
18-20	Right Leg	□□□□□

<b>Gaunt One</b> Armor: 8av1. Thick hide. 40 Vitality _____ Lethal Wounds (5 damage points per)		
2	Head	□□□
4-5	Left Arm	□□□□□
6-7	Right Arm	□□□□□
8-10	Chest	□□□□□□
11-14	Abdomen	□□□□
15-17	Left Leg	□□□□□
18-20	Right Leg	□□□□□

## The Fragment and the Worm

After making their way through the corridors of the fifth deck the players arrive at the main cargo hold, a vast circular space 500 feet across that seems too large to fit within the ship. Read or paraphrase the following when they decide to look within:

In the center of the cargo hold a large group of robed cultists prostrate themselves and chant around an altar made of woven metal and warped wood that resembles a giant, headless body lying on its back. The metal deck beneath the altar is transparent, and light falling down into the water below illuminates it a few hundred feet below. Atop the altar a tall man in a black uniform raises a small glass box over his head, and a skull made of shadow whirls into existence around the object. The figure, Mr. Krowe, shouts over the chanting, "In the name of Mirkule I command the power of your remains – Krazhok!" Black malevolence emanates from the shadow-skull's sockets and Krowe smiles wickedly as he sees you enter the chamber. "So good of you to join us, Adventurers. All your meddling is for naught, for I hold the power of the Fragment! Kill them!" The cultists rush at you, and two hulking Gaunt Ones emerge from the shadows, their jaws gaping in anticipation of a feast. Krowe speeds his chanting, and you see a deeper darkness forming in the waters below the ship's transparent hull.

Krowe must spend a total of 60 Speed (4 rounds of uninterrupted actions) to finish the ritual. He will have prepared himself with the Infuse Self and Hideous Strength Shadowmagic Cardinals in addition to his Runemagic Shield talisman by the time the players confront him (these changes in stats are noted in parenthesis on his NPC sheet). He has also performed his Absorb Melee Damage Finesse Effect and can shrug off the first 12 damage points that gets past his shield. He will spend Speed for active defense while continuing to perform the summoning, counting on his cultist and shade kin minions to hold the players off. If they manage to kill him before he finishes, the summoning ends and the players have saved themselves and the ship.

If Krowe manages to expend the final amount of Speed points, read the following text:



The Worm will burst through the deck on its next action, most likely at the end of the round since it only has enough speed for one attack and none to bid with. This will give the players 1 round to prepare and/or finish off Krowe and his minions. Once it emerges everyone within 30' of it will have to make difficulty 12 Meditation or unskilled Physique + Personal rolls to avoid being incapacitated with nausea at its horrendous smell (those that fail can make another attempt every round to resist the nausea until they succeed). It whips back and fourth, devouring a random target with its single attack every round.

The Worm's bulk will mostly plug the hole it makes, but water will leak in steadily, becoming a hazard after about 5 minutes. Allowing the summoning to succeed has doomed the Vermilion Tide, but the players can still drive the Worm off by inflicting enough damage to it. This will release a gushing fountain of water that presents its own dangers, detailed below.

Mister Krowe (see NPCs section for stats, powers, and damage tracking).

## 30 Individuals

Speed: 30 (-1 per point of damage taken)

Melee: Small 30+d10 (-1 per point of damage taken)

Curved dagger (8ap1)

Heavy robes (4av1)

[illegible]

Gaunt One 1			Gaunt One 2		
Armor: 8av1. Thick hide.			Armor: 8av1. Thick hide.		
40 Vitality _____			40 Vitality _____		
Lethal Wounds (5 damage points per)			Lethal Wounds (5 damage points per)		
2	Head	□□□	2	Head	□□□
4-5	Left Arm	□□□□□	4-5	Left Arm	□□□□□
6-7	Right Arm	□□□□□	6-7	Right Arm	□□□□□
8-10	Chest	□□□□□□□	8-10	Chest	□□□□□□□
11-14	Abdomen	□□□□	11-14	Abdomen	□□□□
15-17	Left Leg	□□□□□	15-17	Left Leg	□□□□□
18-20	Right Leg	□□□□□	18-20	Right Leg	□□□□□

**Ochvach, The Worm of the Abyss**

1 Giant Shadekin Tube Worm

Speed: 6

Base Combat Roll and Finesse Level

Attack. 19+1d10 (Expert).

Defense. 13+1d10. Dodge. (Advanced).

Attack Speed cost and damage

Slam. 6 Speed. 15ap1. Ochvach may spend Successes on Knockback

Swallow Whole. 6 Speed. 10ap2. Victim must make additional Physique check verses Attack roll to avoid being swallowed and incapacitated. They take Swallow Whole damage every round until they or a friend succeeds at the Physique check to get free.

Armor: 30av2 Horny scales on Body, 15av2 Skull plating on head, 15av1 thick blubber in mouth

120 Vitality

Lethal Wounds (10 damage points per, 4 successes required to target Head or Body, 8 to target mouth)

2-3 Mouth ☐☐☐ (can't attack with Swallow Whole if depleted)4-8 Head ☐☐☐☐ (Retreats if depleted)9-20 Body ☐☐☐☐☐ (Retreats if depleted)**Concluding the Adventure**

If the players have to drive off the Worm, the water from the hole it made fills the rest of deck twenty minutes after combat ends, as other parts of the hull, weakened by the now-ebbing power of the Krazokh Fragment, burst in and contribute to the sinking of the ship. All told, it will take one to three hours for the ship to sink after the Worm withdraws from the hole. The Tide is still two days from shore, but if the storm abates rescue aircraft from Ianu Voss will home in to the disaster and rescue survivors.

If they managed to stop the summoning, the passengers and crew, even Lord Captain Vizlani, hail them as heroes. If not, the players will have to evacuate the ship with the help of the crew using lifeboats, and may choose to help or hinder the Ianu Vossian's 1<sup>st</sup>-class-first evacuation methodology, though with the serious drop in the 3<sup>rd</sup> class population there just might be enough lifeboat space for everyone to escape.

Assuming they make it to shore, the players are now faced with many questions:

- What shall they do with the Krazokh Fragment? Its corruptive influence is powerful enough to pose a danger to anyone who bears it for too long. Is there a way to destroy it? Might the cult or other sinister conspiracies be after the thing and those who have possession of it?
- Should "Secret Section Seven" be notified of the disappearance of Sir Timothy Ditherton? How would this be accomplished?
- How did Mister Krowe rise to such an influential position in the Ianu Vossan merchant marine? Is there some connection between Ianu Voss and the Dominion of Drakan that centers on the Cult of Mirkule?
- Why did the Lyissan rune Call the Chosen attract the player characters' attention, seeming to retro-actively arranging events so they would be present to meet the threat of Mr. Krowe and the Cult on the *Vermilion Tide*? What does the Goddess of Fate have in store for them?

The Hand of Fate will find the secret answers behind these questions in the forthcoming Secret of Zir'An Core Gamebook, coming Spring 2005! Please log in to the Secret of Zir'An Yahoo Group forum and tell us what you thought of this adventure – reports of game sessions are especially encouraged. Make sure to keep up on the latest via the Paragon Games website at [www.ParagonGames.us](http://www.ParagonGames.us)!

## NPCs

### Mister Krowe

High Priest of the Cult of Mirkule

The leaders of Cult of Mirkule cells are highly dangerous individuals. Krowe is the First Officer of the *Vermilion Tide* and has spent weeks preparing for the voyage, infiltrating his people into the crew, converting 3<sup>rd</sup> class passengers to the worship of Mirkule, and making sure his Shadekin pets are well fed. He isn't expecting too much trouble, but rapidly rethinks his plans when the players start meddling. Tactics: He will use his influence on the ship and his Shadow Autonomy power to lead the players down into the engine and cargo holds so that his marrow hounds can chase them into a trap in the main hold.

Character Race: <b>Ianer</b>		Skills	
Age: <b>56</b>		Athletics. Ex	<b>d10+13</b>
Character Origin: <b>Vallunei</b>		Awareness. A4	<b>d10+17</b>
		Conversation. A	<b>d10+13</b>
		Intuit. A3	<b>d10+14</b>
		Leadership. A4	<b>d10+17</b>
		Meditation. Ex	<b>d10+12</b>
		Melee: medium. A	<b>d10+14</b>
		Melee: short. A	<b>d10+14</b>
		Persuasion. A5	<b>d10+16</b>
		Security. Ex	<b>d10+12</b>
		Shadow Magic Ex4	<b>d10+18</b>
		Stealth. Ex	<b>d10+14</b>
		Tracking: Urban. Ex	<b>d10+14</b>
		Unarmed. Ex3	<b>d10+17</b>
		Battle Arts (w.Unarmed)	
		<b>Absorb Minor Melee Damage</b>	
		(requires the character to make	
		an Advanced Difficulty (15)	
		Unarmed Skill Test. Resulting	
		Successes are a pool of Lethal	
		Wounds that substitute for the	
		character's own when taking damage from non-magical, blunt force attacks. Every 2 successes	
		puts 1 Location Wound State into this pool. Absorb Minor Mêlée Damage lasts for the duration of	
		combat or until its pool has been depleted.).	
		<b>Second Wind</b> (Take Recovery Action and attack in same turn).	
		Magic	
		Expert Shadowmagic	
		Cardinals: Ex. Body, Ex. Warp, B. Shadow Autonomy, B. Shadow Form (see below)	
		<b>Talisman of Shield</b> (6 Speed cost, Creation time: 1 minute Duration: Permanent)	
		15av3 shield will automatically defend against missile attacks originating from the front of the	
		caster. Dissappears after it absorbs 15 points of damage.	
		<b>Talisman of Terror</b> (6 Speed cost, 1 use only, Zone 15' radius)	
		Those who are in the Zone of this rune must make an Advanced (15) Shadow+Personal unskilled	
		skill test, or drop whatever they are holding. So long as they are under the effects of this rune they	
		are considered stressed, and suffer a -5 to all skill tests. If those under this rune's effect are	
		injured, their fright will turn to flight and they will retreat on their next Combat Turn. Afflicted	
		targets who possess a Shadow score of 5 or less will be paralyzed with fright and will remain	
		rooted in place unless attacked, at which time they flee. An Expert (20) Meditation skill test can	
		relieve the feelings of fright.	
		<b>The Krazokh Fragment</b> (Item of Power)	
		A reliquary contains the jawbone of the Fane Krazokh. The Fragment gives a Shadowmage 10	
		Animus to spend each round as long as they are in physical contact with it.	

Character Race: **Ianer**

Age: **56**

Character Origin: **Vallunei**

Stats

Physique

Mass

Intelligence

Acuity

Figured

Reaction

Speed

Perception

Shadow

HTH

8 (16)

7

10 (16)

8

12 (15)

14 (21)

9

12

5

Aptitudes

Knowledge

Personal

Social

4

4

3

Languages:

Drakani

Empyriar

Erimani

Rating

ex

a

b

Armor: 15av3 Runemagic Shield talisman

Absorb 3 Lethal Wounds of Blunt Damage

□□□

Vitality: 32

Lethal Wounds (4 dam. Pts. per)

Head

Right Arm

Left Arm

Chest

Abdomen

Left Leg

Right Leg

3

4

4

5

4

5

5

□□□

□□□□

□□□□

□□□□□

□□□□

□□□□□

□□□□□

Valdreyr

Shadekin Trait: **heightened speed**

(+2 Reaction. +4 Speed, included in

above stats)



### Casting Shadow Magic

1. Spend the Speed Cost of the Spell to cast. All spells have a numerical value of Speed it costs to complete the spell and a time factor (minutes, hours). For spell that has listed a casting time of 12 (minutes), a Shadowmage with a speed of 6 would take two minutes to finish the spell, or one minute for a Shadowmage with a speed of 12. Spells that list a numerical value are spells that can be cast in turn counts, instantaneous combat-related spells for instance.
2. Spend Points from Animus. All spells cost a base amount of Animus to use, starting at Basic spells, which have a minimum cost of 1, Advanced cost 2, Expert spells 3. Additionally, the Shadowmage can spend points from their Animus to add +1 per point any Shadow Magic roll.
3. Make a Shadow Magic skill roll: Shadow + Personal + d10 (plus any points of Practice the character possesses in Shadow Magic).
4. Compare the roll to the spell difficulty. Casting is successful if the roll is greater than the difficulty. Successes can be spent to enhance the spell's effect.

5. Spend Additional points from Animus. If the Shadowmage is successful in casting the spell, they may spend additional points from their Animus to further empower the spell. For every point of Animus spent, they get one additional success, which can be used to enhance the spell's effect, or purchase effects as listed in the spell description.

### Mr. Krowe's Shadow Magic Cardinals

#### Body

**Basic: Infuse Self.** Casting time: 20 (Minutes) / Difficulty: 10 / Duration: 1 hr / Animus Cost: None

System: Add +1 Physique or +1 Intelligence for every 2 Successes gained in the roll, its duration doubled or casting time halved for 4 successes.

**Advanced: Knit the Flesh.** Speed Cost: 10 / Difficulty: 10 / Duration: Permanent / Animus Cost: 1

System: Every 4 successes gained cures 1 Wound State. The recipient must make an Advanced (15) Survival or Meditation skill test otherwise they faint for a number of minutes equal to the number of Wound states healed.

**Expert: Hideous Strength.** Casting time: 20(minutes) / Difficulty: 15 / Duration: 15minutes / Animus Cost: 2

System: For the duration of the spell, the mage will immediately regenerate any wounds less than 1 wound state per 5 successes. Wounds greater than that will be fully healed if the Shadowmage spends one combat round doing nothing (spending no speed). Further, the Shadowmage will not be stunned, knocked unconscious or suffer from penalties brought about by damage taken. The duration of the spell can be doubled or the casting time halved for every 4 successes. If the spell is broken before its duration is over, all wounds that the Shadowmage has suffered will reopen, generally leading to a quick and bloody death.

#### Warp

**Basic: Warp the Elements.** Speed Cost: special / Difficulty: 15 / Duration: special / Animus Cost: None

System: The speed cost of the spell depends upon what element they wish to affect; some elements are more difficult to master and resist attempts to alter them, while others seem naturally suited to manipulation. Speed cost for maintaining control over the elements are as follows: Fire 4, Water 6, Air 8, Earth 10.

A fire's blaze can be extinguished or its power intensified. For 2 successes a square meter of flame can be extinguished. This area can be doubled for every 2 successes. A fire can be made to also burn twice as fast and twice as hot for 4 successes, adding 50% to its base damage.

Water can be evaporated or created spontaneously from thin air through the Shadowmage's power. One cubic meter of water can be evaporated or frozen solid for 10 successes, this volume doubled for every 4 successes after that. For 8 successes, the Shadowmage can call forth water from underground sources through anything but solid bedrock, creating small pools upon the ground.

For 4 successes, the Shadowmage can create a bubble of temperature controlled fresh air around them that will remain even if the Shadowmage is submerged in water. It will remain around the caster for 1 minute for every 1 success spent for duration, allowing them to breathe freely.

Rock and dirt from fertile earth to the hardest stone can be slowly broken down to powder, made malleable as clay, or have its durability strengthened. One cubic meter of stone or earth may be so affected for 20 successes, this area doubled for every 4 successes.

**Advanced: Malleable Matter.** Speed Cost: 8 / Difficulty: 15 / Duration: special / Animus Cost: 1

System: When under this spell, physical matter up to the strength of raw iron will take on the flexibility of soft wax, moving under the Shadowmage's control. The Shadowmage can affect up to 8 Structure of inanimate matter (anything without a soul), this amount doubled for every 4 successes. Multiple objects can be manipulated, as long as their combined weight does not exceed the mage's capabilities. Physical matter under the Shadowmage's control can be moved a number of feet equal to the Shadowmage's Shadow/2, every combat turn. To initiate the spell, the Shadowmage must touch the matter to be affected, but once complete the range of the spell is line of sight and lasts so long as the Shadowmage remains concentrated on the task, performing no other strenuous actions (attacking or casting Shadow Magic, but movement is OK). Normally when the spell ceases its effect, the objects return to their original shape and solidity, but for 6 successes, the objects will maintain whatever shape the Shadowmage contorts them into even after the spell ends.

**Expert: Transmutation.** Speed Cost: 10 / 20 / 15 minutes/ Animus: 2

System: By touching the matter to be affected, the Shadowmage can significantly alter it. A heavy iron door could be turned into water vapor, a lead slug into gold, even a living person into salt. The Shadowmage can affect 8 Structure or General Wounds of physical matter, which can be doubled for 1 success. How great a transmutation the Shadowmage wishes to exert is based on the number of successes they devote to the task. Without spending any successes, affected matter can be made to change its composition, changing its substance into any other related substance: iron to lead, oak to balsa wood, etc. For 4 successes, the Shadowmage can change the shape of the matter affected, while not changing its mass. For 6 successes, matter can be made to have its physical structure greatly altered, becoming something wholly different from what it was before. 8 successes allow the Shadowmage to actually create constructs of solid matter, virtually from thin air. And for 10 successes, the Shadowmage can turn anything in to anything else conceivable. The duration of this effect can be doubled for 2 successes. The process of transformation happens within a few heartbeats and once changed, requires no further effort by the Shadowmage to stay in its altered form until the spell's duration ceases.

#### Shadow Autonomy

**Basic: Phantasmal Doppelganger.** Speed Cost: 4/ Difficulty: 23 / Duration: 5 minutes/ Animus Cost: None

By granting their shadow limited autonomy, they can create a phantasmal image of themselves that can be used to distract or mislead others. While not able to pass as the actual Shadowmage in good light and at close range, at distances greater than 5 meters the shadow will seem completely solid and indistinguishable from the Shadowmage who created it. It can be made to run around corners or stalk persons. The Shadowmage cannot perceive through the shadow, nor can any information be gleaned from their doppelganger about what it may have witnessed. The doppelganger can be recalled instantaneously at any time, vanishing back to the mage.

System: The duration of the spell can be extended by 1 minute for 1 success each. Any magical attacks directed at the Phantasm will cause it to immediately disperse, with no ill affect to the Shadowmage. The Shadowmage specifies a specific routine for the Doppelganger, "lead anyone within sight in this (or that) direction" or "follow anyone who enters this area." The Doppelganger will follow this simple instruction until its duration ends, and requires no direct control of the Shadowmage.

#### Shadow Form

**Basic: Enshroud.** Speed Cost: 6 / Difficulty: 10 / Duration 10 minutes / Animus Cost: None

The Shadowmage may remove themselves from physical reality by stepping into their own shadow. They fade from view and in fact have completely vanished. Time seems to stand still within the shroud of their spirit, and when they step out once again, many minutes will have passed. The Shadowmage cannot move from the spot they stepped into, nor can they perceive anything but the darkness that surrounds them.

System: While Enshroud is in effect, the Shadowmage cannot be detected or affected by anything existing in the physical world, but the Shadowmage can do nothing to affect the physical world, and is effectively blind. The duration of the spell can be increased by 5 minutes for every 1 success. For every 2 successes, the Shadowmage can pull someone into the shroud with them.

## Gaunt One (*Myrkullan Homidai*)

### Physical Description & Behavior

Gaunt Ones are twisted remnants of the Endwar, found now only in extremely remote locales, far from civilization. They are deeply evil beings, wracked by a constant pain that is the source of their abiding hatred for all intelligent life. Gaunt Ones earn their name from their tall (8 to 10 feet), lean bodies of taut muscle. They seem to spasm and ache constantly. Pinprick eyes glow from deep sockets in a face that is dominated by its massive swollen lower jaw that can deliver a terrible bite. The creature relies mostly on its long, incredibly sharp talons, which it uses to wantonly rend its victims. Intelligent beings are its favored food.

Gaunt Ones often haunt a single desolate location in groups of 2 to 6, slaying any living thing that falls under their notice. If adventurers enter an area Gaunt Ones call home, they will ambush the victims if possible, and always use their knowledge of their territory to their tactical advantage.

#### Stats

Phy <b>8</b>	Spd <b>8</b>
Mass <b>10</b>	React <b>8</b>
Int <b>6</b>	Per <b>5</b>
Acu <b>4</b>	Sha <b>8</b>

#### Aptitude/Skills:

Knowledge: 1

Personal: 3

Athletics. A2

Awareness. A2

Stealth. B2

Social: 1

Valdryer:

Shadowmagic Vulnerability

For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 General Wound. General Wounds lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.

#### Hyperspeed

Gaunt ones can borrow Speed from the next Combat Round to use in the Combat Round they are currently in. Those borrowed points will be gone from the next Round, and so the ability cannot be used on consecutive rounds.

#### Move

5-foot Free Move.

Move 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.

Leap. As normal for Advanced Athletics. +5 feet.

#### Special abilities

Because of their intelligence, they may use Combat Finesse Effects.

Night Vision. 100 feet.

#### Base Initiative Bid, Aggressive/Defensive

Any value.

#### Base Combat Roll and Finesse Level

Attack. 14+1d10 (Advanced).

Defense. 13+1d10. Dodge. (Advanced).

Attack Speed cost and damage

Claw. 2 Speed. 10ap2

Bite. 3 Speed. 15ap2. Must grapple first.

#### Armor:

8av1. Thick hide.

#### 40 Vitality

Lethal Wounds (5 damage points per)

2 Head (3). 4-5 Left Arm (4). 6-7 Right Arm (4). 8-10 Chest (6). 11-14 Abdomen (4). 15-17 Left Leg (5). 18-20 Right Leg (5).



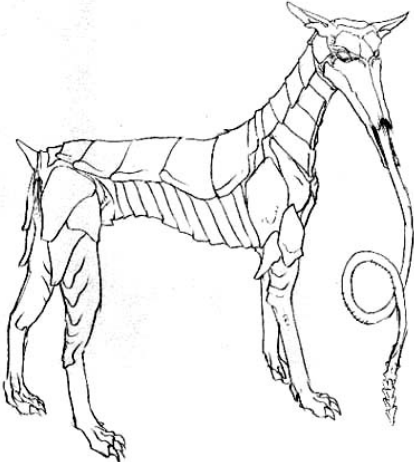
**Howling Marrow Hound (*Myrkullan Flautium*)**

**Physical Description & Behavior**

Marrow Hounds are a species of canine who had their birth in the aftermath of the Endwar. Once normal dogs, their early ancestors were warped into the shape Marrow Hounds are today. They are the size of large dogs, following that expected silhouette, but their bodies are covered head to toe in segments of bony armor. There are two variations to the Marrow Hound. In Klesht, the jaws of the Howling Marrow Hound have fused together into a bony funnel, through which issues their odd piping sounds that haunt the steppes of Klesht. The Growling Marrow Hounds encountered in some of the Treaty Nations have complete sets of jaws, heavily muscled and brimming with great bone-crushing teeth.

What links these two breeds together, and with their namesake as well, is their hunger for the marrow of other creatures. It is believed that they lack a certain nutrient or that raw marrow helps maintain the health of their bony plated hides. To gather the marrow they need, both breeds of Marrow Hound possess a long, whip-like tongue tipped with serrated bone. Growling Marrow Hounds use their powerful jaws to crack bones and use their tongue to core out the marrow. Howling Marrow Hounds use their claws to subdue their prey before inserting their tongue into a living host. Worming its way through the victim's body, it finds the nearest large bone and bores into the marrow, sucking it out like a straw.

Wild packs of Marrow Hounds are a menace to those traveling the world's more remote areas, but the Kleshti raise Howling Marrow Hounds as pets, even carving designs into their Hound's bone plates.

<p><b>Stats</b></p> <p>Phy <b>6</b>                      Spd <b>8</b>  Mass <b>8</b>                      React <b>7</b>  Int <b>2</b>                        Per <b>6</b>  Acu <b>5</b>                        Sha <b>5</b></p> <p>Aptitude/Skills:  Knowledge: <b>4</b>  Tracking: Wilderness. <b>Ex2</b></p> <p>Personal: <b>3</b>  Athletics. <b>A3</b>  Awareness. <b>A2</b>  Stealth. <b>A3</b></p> <p>Social: <b>1</b></p> <p>Valdryer:  <b>Shadowmagic Vulnerability</b>  For each point of damage that would be inflicted to a target's Shadow, the Shadekin also loses 1 General Wound. General Wounds lost in such a way will not heal naturally, and must be mended magically.</p> <p>Move  <b>5-foot</b> Free Move.  Move 5 feet for 1 Speed. Can move 10 feet in 1 Count.  Leap. 13 feet standing/8 feet vertical.</p>	<p>Special abilities  none.</p> <p>Base Initiative Bid,  Aggressive/Defensive  Aggressive. 3  Defensive. 6</p> <p>Base Combat Roll and Finesse  Level  Attack. 12+1d10 (Basic)  Defense. 13+1d10. Dodge.</p> <p>Attack damage and Speed cost  Howling Marrow Hound  Tongue. <b>2 Speed. Only vs. a Prone opponent. Causes 5 General Wounds of lethal damage each Combat Round.</b>  Claw. <b>2 Speed. 9ap2</b></p> <p>Armor:  <b>14av2.</b> Bony armor plating.</p> <p>Wound states:  28 Vitality  Lethal Wounds (4 Damage Points per)  2-3 Head (2). 4-5 Left Foreleg (3). 6-7 Right Foreleg (3). 8-10 Upper Torso (5). 11-14 Abdomen (4). 15-17 Left Hindleg (3). 18-20 Right Hindleg (3).</p>	
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Character Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Cyrooni Con Artist**

It's been an exciting life so far, so it has. You found you had to be cleverer and quicker than the others in the gang because you were the smallest drook in the bog. Lucky for you your small stature led them to underestimate you time and again, and you became the littlest Grudger in the city. You were relieved to finally get into the relatively posh position of a guild thief, and your size started to work for you then, it let you get into places nobody else could. You were a passable burglar, but what you really excelled at was the con, the swindle, the grift - and your talent was such you rose up into the big leagues of the Kagda Dovra.

Living like a beggar king, you was, will all the frogs you could lick. But all that's shiny tarnishes as they say and you got out-maneuvered and sent to freeze your bollocks in Drakan as a minor functionary. You was the proverbial small fish in a frying pan full of snow fangs, mate. You had enough of that and went independent, and have been seeing Zir'An, funded by the generous donations of your unsuspecting marks, o'course, ever since.

Character Race: <b>Ianer</b>	Skill	Subskill	Rating
Age: <b>27</b>	Area Knowledge	Cyroon	a <b>(5+1d10)</b>
Character Origin: <b>Cyroon</b>	Area Knowledge	Vallunei	a <b>(5+1d10)</b>
	Area Knowledge	Drakan	b <b>(5+1d10)</b>
Stats	Lore	Finance	b1 <b>(6+1d10)</b>
Physique <b>5</b>	Lore	Criminal	b3 <b>(8+1d10)</b>
Mass <b>4</b>	Lore	Contraband Information	b <b>(5+1d10)</b>
Intelligence <b>4</b>	Occupational	Appraiser	b2 <b>(9+1d10)</b>
Acuity <b>10</b>	Tracking Urban		b <b>(9+1d10)</b>
	Awareness		a3 <b>(14+1d10)</b>
Figured	Melee	Short	b <b>(10+1d10)</b>
Reaction <b>7</b>	Ranged	Small	a <b>(10+1d10)</b>
Speed <b>12</b>	Security		a <b>(13+1d10)</b>
Perception <b>8</b>	Slight of Hand		a <b>(13+1d10)</b>
Shadow <b>7</b>	Stealth		a <b>(13+1d10)</b>
HTH <b>3</b>	Intuit		ex2 <b>(14+1d10)</b>
	Persuasion		ex1 <b>(13+1d10)</b>
Aptitudes	Disguise		a <b>(7+1d10)</b>
Knowledge <b>1</b>	Unarmed		a <b>(5+1d10)</b>
Personal <b>3</b>	Connections	Thief Guilds	ex <b>(14+1d10)</b>
Social <b>4</b>	Connections	Zir'Ani Merchants	b <b>(14+1d10)</b>
	Connections	Criminal Underworld	ex <b>(14+1d10)</b>
Languages:	Socialize		a <b>(14+1d10)</b>
Cyrooni	Leadership		b <b>(8+1d10)</b>
Empyriar	Intimidation		a <b>(14+1d10)</b>
Drakalian			
Tilani Ryei			
Vitality: <b>12</b>			
Lethal Wounds (2 dam. Pts. per)			
Head <input type="checkbox"/>			
Right Arm <input type="checkbox"/>			
Left Arm <input type="checkbox"/>			
Chest <input type="checkbox"/>			
Abdomen <input type="checkbox"/>			
Left Leg <input type="checkbox"/>			
Right Leg <input type="checkbox"/>			
	Valdreyr		
	<b>Burglar's Nose:</b> By making an Awareness roll versus a difficulty of 23, you can literally "smell" precious metals and jewels that are hidden or otherwise out of view.		
	<b>Diminutive:</b> -1 Wound State, -2 to blocking rolls vs higher Mass opponent, +2 to dodge defensive rolls		
	<b>Fleet-Footed:</b> Move 10 feet per count instead of 5.		
	<b>Dubious:</b> -2 Social in normal society, +2 Social in criminal element.		
	<b>Debt:</b> You owe a debt of 1,000,000 flats to a criminal kingpin.		
	<b>Martial Art:</b> Sticky Hands (see below)		
	Martial Arts		
	<b>Martial Art: Sticky Hands</b>		
	<b>Casing da Bloke</b> - By making physical contact with the target (i.e. handshake, pat on the back, a scuffle) a fairly accurate catalog of items on the subjects' person can be made, provided an Advanced Observation (15) skill test is made. Every <b>3</b> Finesse Successes spent will provide a flat +1 to any attempts to pick the pockets of the target.		
	<b>Lightening da Mark</b> - Using a blow to keep the marks mind on other, more important topics, the thug can attempt to liberate a single item of value from the persons inventory for every <b>4</b> Finesse Successes spent after a successful attack. Success or failure depends on the subsequent Sleight of Hand Skill Test against the targets perception/observation.		
	Equipment		
	Houndstooth Suit		
	<b>Set of Maps</b>		
	<b>50' Rope</b>		
	<b>Breaking/Entering Kit</b>		
	<b>20 Tchakka Sticks</b>		
	<b>Talutian stealth leathers</b> (8av2 legs, abs, torso, +2 stealth rolls) Encumbrance 3		
	<b>V'tloc Enforcer</b> , Valluneian Magnum; Base Damage: 11ap3, Rate of fire: 1, Capacity: 7		
	Short Range (-0): 0-30', Medium Range (-5): 31-100', Long Range (-10): 101-300'; Encumbrance: 3		
	<b>Knab:</b> Cyrooni iron club (10av1); Encumbrance 3		
	<b>50,000 Flats</b>		



Character Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Ianu Vossian Imperialist

Even as an ensign in the greatest navy in the world, you knew you had the entrepreneurial spirit in spades – you had the entire ship’s black market in sweets, drugs, and contraband under your control in two weeks flat. You think of it as finding a need and filling it, simple as that. When your supply ring was busted you were shuttled around Arivonne, but even in that backwoods country opportunity smiled. You learned enough engineering to back up the patent applications you swindled out of the hands of some brilliant but naive Arivonneans, and your corporate empire was launched.

You parlayed “your” inventions with skill and panache into a profitable business that manufactured every imaginable type of industrial equipment. You were finally bought out for a princely sum by the Ianu Vossan government, and you spent the money on a decadent life until an Arivonnean terrorist attack nearly killed you and two hundred of your closest friends on your favorite pleasure yacht. The next day you contacted your great-uncle, a Voss Hiltzmon, and put your resources and personal expertise at the service of your King and Country. Since then your life has changed little, except that you occasionally get orders to attend certain social gatherings or inspect possible “investment” opportunities and report what you have seen.

Character Race: Ianer	Skill	Subskill	Rating
Age: 36	Area Knowledge	So. Empires	b1 (12+1d10)
Character Origin: Ianu Voss	Athletics		a1 (8+1d10)
<b>Stats</b>	Awareness		a1 (14+1d10)
Physique 4	Connections	I.V. Industrialists	ex (10+1d10)
Mass 3	Connections	I.V. Navy	b (10+1d10)
Intelligence 9	Connections	Dolonorri	b (10+1d10)
Acuity 6	Connections	Other Spies	b (10+1d10)
	Conversation		b (13+1d10)
<b>Figured</b>	Driving		b (10+1d10)
Reaction 7	Intimidation		b (10+1d10)
Speed 8	Intuit		ex2 (16+1d10)
Perception 10	Leadership		a1 (14+1d10)
Shadow 6	Lore	Trade Law	b1 (12+1d10)
HTH 2	Lore	Technology	b (11+1d10)
	Melee	Small	b1 (11+1d10)
<b>Aptitudes</b>	Ranged	Small	a (10+1d10)
Knowledge 2	Occupational	Lawyer	a2 (15+1d10)
Personal 3	Persuasion		a1 (11+1d10)
Social 4	Ranged	Medium	b (10+1d10)
	Ranged	Small	a (10+1d10)
<b>Languages</b>	Rune Magic		b (11+1d10)
Erimani	Seduction		b (10+1d10)
LaVas	Socialize		ex2 (12+1d10)
Empyriar			
Sambi Speech			
Estuado			
Vitality: 12	Valdreyr		
Lethal Wounds (2 dam. Pts. per)	<b>The Art of the Deal:</b> When engaging anyone in any sort of deal, contractual agreement, business proposals, etc, the Ianu Vossan may use their Intuit skill as though it were of the next higher Finesse Level.		
Head <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Rich:</b> Character has access to greater resources than most. The character can increase the Finesse Level of 1 connection and may take 1 Medium Availability piece of Equipment or Resource.		
Right Arm <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Prejudice (Arivonneans):</b> The character has a dislike for a certain people or subject, they receive –3 to all Social skill tests when dealing with them.		
Left Arm <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Sickly:</b> Character’s healing rate is halved and any poison or disease effects are increased by 1 level regardless of the character’s Mass or Physique stats		
Chest <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Willful:</b> The character is never stressed in situations of powerlessness: where the character is being bullied, intimidated, threatened, or otherwise coerced. The character gains a +2 bonus to any skill tests to resist domination, fear, or intimidation.		
Abdomen <input type="checkbox"/>			
Left Leg <input type="checkbox"/>	Battle Arts/Martial Arts		
Right Leg <input type="checkbox"/>	Ranged: Small		
RUNEMAGIC FATIGUE: _____	<b>Trick Shot</b> - With this battle art the character can pull off all manner of impressive feats like shooting cigars from the mouths of targets from a hundred meters or splitting an arrow with another arrow. All that is needed to successfully pull off a trick shot is score a 6 Successes.		
	Equipment		
	Silk Suit		
	<b>Fodorta V10</b> , Ianu Vossan accurized naval sidearm		
	Base Damage: 12ap2; Rate of fire: 1; Capacity: 12; Ranged Weapon: small		
	Short Range (-0): 0-60'; Medium Range (-5): 61-150'; Long Range (-10): 151-300'; Encumbrance: 2		
	<b>Designer Clothing</b>		
	<b>20 Tchakka Sticks</b>		
	<b>Telescope</b>		
	<b>Watch</b>		
	<b>Heirloom Jewelry</b> (rings, ear studs, necklaces)		
	<b>2 Daggers</b> w/ wrist holsters		

### Runemagic

A Runemage may cast as many Runemagic Charms a day as they like, but each casting increases their Fatigue penalty to their Runemagic Skill Test. Every Lesser Rune inflicts –1 to subsequent Runemagic rolls. All Fatigue penalties for casting Runemagic are cumulative.

### Lesser Runemagic

**Bolt** - Difficulty: 20 Creation time: 6 Speed Duration: Instantaneous

Runing papers are the common medium upon which bolt runes are inscribed. Once completed, they flash into a bolt of bright white light capable of striking any target within line of sight. It has a base damage of 7ap2 and for every 2 points added to the Creation Cost, the damage can be increased by 1.

**Heal** - Difficulty: 15 Creation time: 12 Speed cost during combat (near instantaneous outside of combat) Duration: Permanent

Wounds bound with a bandage bearing a Heal rune will knit closed to stop their bleeding. This will return 5 General Wounds, but will not heal Location Wound States. For every 1 point added to the Creation Cost, an addition point of General Wounds can be healed. Only a single heal rune can be used on each body location. Though heal runes cannot return Location Wound States, they can keep a dying person stable long enough to get more strenuous healing applied.

**Mending** - Difficulty 15 Creation time: 30 Seconds Duration: Permanent

Tears or breaks in any pliable material such as cloth or leather can be sealed back to its whole state if a Mending rune is inscribed across the break. These are considered minor tears, generally used to mend clothing or wicker baskets. Larger tears can be mended with the use of multiple Mending runes. A mainsail torn from stem to stern would require perhaps four or five mending runes to close.

**Shield** - Difficulty: 15 Creation time: 1 minute Duration: Permanent

This rune projects an invisible shield of force that protects against projectiles of all kinds: arrows, bullets, stones, etc, for a defensive value of 15ap3. The shield extends from the rune like a wide, flat mushroom, 3 feet out and 5 feet in diameter. If a projectile manages to penetrate the shield, that is causes its bearer to suffer a loss of Location Wound States, the shield will fade.

**Vision** - Difficulty: 20 Casting time: 1 hour Duration: 1 day

This complex rune allows its creator to see whatever the rune happens to be facing. For this reason people have placed them on jewelry or the walls of buildings, the applications are endless. There is no restriction to the range that separates Runemage from their vision rune, but since it only lasts for a single day, its ultimate range is limited.

Character Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**Illestani War Priest**

You killed your mother coming out of her when you were born, and ever since then Paran has been the one that watches over you. For years, you never were happier than when in the midst of combat, immersed in the stench of war, of blood, of smoke, of burning flesh. You nearly died only to recover many times, and after awhile life and death and killing all seemed the same as you helped hold back the endless Shadekin hordes. After an eternity of bloodshed, Paran appeared to you amidst the chaos of the battlefield and gave you a vocation to spread her faith beyond the eternal clash of arms on the Illestani border. You were reborn in blood that night.

Your training in the Rune Magic of Paran was easy with the Voice of Paran herself in your head guiding you in your studies. Now you were able to empower an entire platoon to greater heights of warlike destruction. After more years of service on the front, Paran gave you a holy mission, telling you to see what war was like in every part of the world. Your skills as a mercenary were much desired by many, and guided by the Voice of Paran you accept jobs that will teach you more about war and battle. Your intense devotion to the War Bride gives you visions of horror and chaos in your dreams, so much so you became addicted to Jabbash in order to relax and behave amongst civil society. You barely restrain yourself from erupting into violence to solve most problems. In combat however, you are devastating in applying your experience to the situation.

Character Race: <b>Ianer</b>	Skill	Subskill	Rating
Age: <b>28</b>	Area Knowledge	Illestani	b (8+1d10)
Character Origin: <b>Illestani</b>	Area Knowledge	The Fringe	b (8+1d10)
Stats	Lore	Shadekin	ex1 (9+1d10)
Physique	Lore	Parani Religion	b (8+1d10)
Mass	Lore	Rune Magic	b (8+1d10)
Intelligence	Awareness		a2 (13+1d10)
Acuity	Athletics		a2 (12+1d10)
	Meditation		a1 (11+1d10)
Figured	Melee	Medium	ex1 (14+1d10)
Reaction	Ranged	Heavy	a1 (14+1d10)
Speed	Stealth		a (11+1d10)
Perception	Survival		ex1 (9+1d10)
Shadow	Tracking Urban		b (11+1d10)
HTH	Tracking Wilderness		b (11+1d10)
	Driving		a (13+1d10)
	Intimidation		a (8+1d10)
Aptitudes	Rune Magic		ex (8+1d10)
Knowledge	Connections	Mercenaries	b (8+1d10)
Personal	Connections	Illestani Military	b (8+1d10)
Social	Connections	Runemages	b (8+1d10)
	Connections	War Priests	b (8+1d10)
Languages:			
Battlan			
Empyriar			
Zha Lee Thaal			
Vitality: <b>28</b>			
Lethal Wounds (2 dam. Pts. per)			
Head			
Right Arm			
Left Arm			
Chest			
Abdomen			
Left Leg			
Right Leg			
RUNEMAGIC FATIGUE: _____			
Magic			
Rune Magic Initiate: <b>Heal, Shield, Bolt, Explosive, Steel</b>			
Rune Magic Devotee: <b>Paran - Blood Rage, Chaos, Entropic Blast</b>			
Rune Magic Devotee: <b>Paran - Inspiration, Terror, Stagger Foe</b>			
<b>Parani Plate Armor:</b> Runic Full Plate armor provides 24av3 to all locations.			
	Valdreyr		
	<b>Battle Trance:</b> By making an Advanced Meditation Difficulty 15 Skill Test, for the duration of combat you cannot be stunned, incapacitated, or suffer roll penalties from damage taken until you've reached Zero General Wounds		
	<b>Addiction:</b> going without 1 dose of Jabbash every 24 hours results in -3 Wound States		
	<b>Psychosis:</b> Voice of Paran in head gives orders that tend to increase chaos and bloodshed in your vicinity		
	<b>Nightmares:</b> of Blood and Murder give you a -1 to all rolls unless you have a good nights' sleep		
	<b>Military Rank:</b> Illestani Major		
	<b>Item of Power:</b> Parani Plate Armor		
	Battle Arts/Martial Arts		
	Medium Melee:		
	<b>Trick Strike</b> (With this battle art the character can pull off all manner of impressive feats like shooting cigars from the mouths of targets from a hundred meters or splitting an arrow with another arrow. All that is needed to successfully pull off a trick shot is score a Superior Success.)		
	<b>Flurry</b> (In a blaze of action, the attacker strikes the target multiple times. In lieu of the standard 4 Speed attack, the Flurry attack costs 8 speed to execute. For every 1 success the attacker scores, they add 3 points of damage and strike 1 additional location, in a process similar to Burst Fire rules (q.v.), with a maximum Rate of Fire equivalent to their Personal Aptitude (+ any points of Practice they possess with their chosen skill).)		
	Equipment		
	Military Uniform		
	<b>Broadsword</b> (8ap2)		
	<b>Mah'tuad</b>		
	Ba-Duran long rifle; Base Damage: 33ap2; Rate of fire: 1; Capacity: 1; Ranged Weapon: heavy		
	Short Range (-0): 0-750', Medium Range (-5): 751-1500', Long Range (-10): 1501-3000, Encumbrance: 7		
	<b>Tailek;</b> Illestani combat knife (e/p); Base Damage: 4ap3; Encumbrance: 2; Melee: short		
	<b>Illestani Tactical Tower Shield</b> (8av2)		
	First Aid Kit (+2 to Heal Skill)		
	1,250 Flats		

**Runemagic**

A Runemage may cast as many Charms a day as they like, but each casting increases their Fatigue penalty to their Runemagic Skill Test. Every Lesser Rune inflicts -1 to subsequent Runemagic rolls and each Greater rune inflicts -3. Fatigue penalties for casting Runemagic are cumulative.

Lesser Runes:

**Heal** - Creation Cost: 15 Creation time: 12 Speed cost during combat (near instantaneous outside of combat Duration: Permanent. This will return 5 General Wounds, but will not heal Location Wound States. For every 1 point added to the Creation Cost, an addition point of General Wounds can be healed. Only a single heal rune can be used on each body location.

**Shield** - Creation Cost: 15 Creation time: 1 minute Duration: Permanent

This rune projects an invisible shield of force that protects against projectiles of all kinds: arrows, bullets, stones, etc, for a defensive value of 15ap3. The shield extends from the rune like a wide, flat mushroom, 3 feet out and 5 feet in diameter. If a projectile manages to penetrate the shield, that is causes its bearer to suffer a loss of Location Wound States, the shield will fade.

**Bolt** - Creation Cost: 20 Creation time: 6 Speed Duration: Instantaneous

Runing papers are the common medium upon which bolt runes are inscribed. Once completed, they flash into a bolt of bright white light capable of striking any target within line of sight. It has a base damage of 7ap2 and for every 2 points added to the Creation Cost, the damage can be increased by 1.

**Explosion** - Creation Cost: 20 Creation time: 6 Speed Duration: Instantaneous

Popular with mercenaries and other military types, this rune creates a great burst of concussive force a few seconds after it is inscribed (generally on something easily thrown such as a strip of runing paper or a small stone). All within a 10 foot radius suffer a 10ap1 attack. For every 3 points added to the Creation Cost, the damage can be increased by 1 point.

**Steel** – Creation Cost: 25 this rune can strengthen soft armors or any other object, granting them an additional point of AV, but of course, the armor is no longer soft.

Greater Runemagic

**Blood Rage** (target, continuous)

This rune of exploding red light and black arcs of electricity causes their intended target to fly into a murderous rage. Paran's influence has awakened the killer that lies deep (or not so deeply sometimes) within the hearts of all sentient beings. Those who fall under the rune's effect must make an Elite (25) Meditation skill test, or they will attack the nearest target on their next available action. They will continue attacking until the target stops moving (either because of unconsciousness or death), and then they will seek the next nearest target. At the start of every Combat Round, the victim can make an Expert (20) Meditation skill test. Each time they are successful, the CV of the Blood Rage rune is reduced by 5. Once the CV has dropped below 10, the effects of the rune cease.

CC Primary Effect

15 Enraging effects as listed above. The total CV becomes a value that can be reduced by 5 each time the target makes an Expert (20) Meditation skill test. Once it falls below 10, the rune is canceled.

**Entropic Blast** (target, instantaneous)

At Paran's core is her dominion over Chaos, and through Chaos there is Entropy, the dissolution of matter and energy. This rune of blinding, metallic rainbow hues bathes its target in the forces of entropy. Inorganic substances crack, crumble, and are rapidly worn away, but against living tissue the effects are far more dramatic. Those unfortunate to be targeted by this rune find their bodies withering away, their life force draining back to the Ylar as their flesh desiccates.

CC Primary Effect

10 5ap5 damage to the target.

15 7ap5 damage to the target.

20 Expert 10ap5 damage to the target.

**Inspiration** (zone, continuous)

The banner of Paran has given its faithful the courage to face any enemy. With the War Bride as your matron, there is no force that can halt your advance. The power to instill courage in battle has been one of the most renowned abilities of Paran's Domain, and those who bask in the rune's golden aura feel no fear. So heartening is this aura, that at greater levels of ability, Inspiration can cause its benefactors to feel no pain, or to even shrug off any attempts to manipulate their minds through magic. This rune only affects allies of the Runemage who happen to be in the rune's Zone.

CC Primary Effect

15 All under the rune's effect will never be stressed in combat situations and are immune to Intimidation or any other attempts to cause fear.

20 Expert As above, but all affected targets gain a +1 bonus to all attack rolls. Those under the effect of the rune are also instilled with a warrior's mindset. While in combat, any moral qualms any affected targets may have, any fears concerning the battle or whom they are fighting will be forgotten and they will be unhesitating in their attacks. They are unaffected by Insane, Pain and Stun Handicaps.

**Stagger Foe** (target, instantaneous)

Another weapon rune of the War Bride, the target of this rune must always be a melee weapon. Once the weapon has been targeted, the rune will hold, even if it is a charm, until the next time the wielder scores 6 successes in any attack roll, doing so activates the rune. If the wielder scores at least 6 successes, their attack inflicts half the normal amount of damage (whatever amount gets past any armor) and if the location struck is an arm or a leg, it is instantly disabled. An Expert (20) Healing skill test is required to return function to the limb. This does not actually cost the attacker their 6 successes, however, which can be spent on an additional Special Combat Finesse Effect or extra damage.

CC Primary Effect

15 Disabling ability as listed above.

20 Expert Acts as an 8 point Disable, rendering the defender unconscious if the location struck is the head, chest, or abdomen.

**Terror** (zone, continuous)

This rune of nightmarish murkiness, wrought with flashes of unhealthy green light, causes all who are caught within its Zone to quake in fear. Those who are under the effect of this rune must make an Advanced (15) Shadow+Personal unskilled skill test, or drop whatever they are holding. So long as they are under the effects of this rune they are considered stressed, and suffer a -5 to all skill tests. If those under this rune's effect are injured, their fright will turn to flight and they will retreat on their next Combat Turn. Afflicted targets who possess a Shadow score of 5 or less will be paralyzed with fright and will remain rooted in place unless attacked, at which time they flee. An Expert (20) Meditation skill test can relieve the feelings of fright, but if they do not leave the rune's Zone, they will have to make a new Meditation skill test on the next Combat Round or suffer the rune's full effects.

CC Primary Effect

15 Fear effects as listed above.

Character Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Player Name: \_\_\_\_\_

## The Gogachi Gladiator

You born. You fight in pit, volcanoes all around. You fight more. You win, smash other smashers. Long time you fight every sun up, sun down. Food taste bad. Then you led on rumble metal thing. Now big mountains, no volcano. You sad. But you fight littler smashers. You smash them, make you feel happy. Feed you lots food. But not long. You get confused, smash wrong smasher. Small ones with shiny pictures make you move stones for long time. No give you lots food.

Wake up one sun up, small ones all dead. Old wrinkly one take shiny picture off you, you free. New small ones teach you Koba, Screaming Fist. You help them smash bad smashers. You smash much much good now. Lots food. But one time old wrinkly one killed and mountain sleep place burn, too many bad smashers for you to smash. You run into mountains.

Tall man wake you up, you try to smash him. He smash you good. He take you Gallios, teach you Longboxing. You older, wiser smasher now. Now you smash all over Zir'An. You smash for you, make lots food. You happy.

Character Race: <b>Gogach</b>	Skill	Subskill	Rating
Age: <b>23</b>	Artisan	Weaponsmith	b <b>(6+1d10)</b>
Character Origin: <b>The Fire Reaches</b>	Athletics		a2 <b>(15+1d10)</b>
	Awareness		a2 <b>(8+1d10)</b>
Stats	Connections	Pit Fighters	a <b>(6+1d10)</b>
Physique <b>9</b>	Connections	Screaming Fist	a <b>(6+1d10)</b>
Mass <b>9</b>	Intimidation		a1 <b>(7+1d10)</b>
Intelligence <b>2</b>	Intuit		b1 <b>(7+1d10)</b>
Acuity <b>2</b>	Lore	Metallurgy	b <b>(5+1d10)</b>
	Lore	Bhuket	a <b>(5+1d10)</b>
Figured	Mechanics		b <b>(5+1d10)</b>
Reaction <b>7</b>	Meditation		b <b>(6+1d10)</b>
Speed <b>5</b>	Melee	Long	ex2 <b>(13+1d10)</b>
Perception <b>2</b>	Melee	Medium	ex <b>(11+1d10)</b>
Shadow <b>6</b>	Melee	Short	a <b>(11+1d10)</b>
HTH <b>6</b>	Occupational	Laborer	b <b>(6+1d10)</b>
	Security		b1 <b>(7+1d10)</b>
Aptitudes	Socialize		b <b>(6+1d10)</b>
Knowledge <b>3</b>	Survival		a1 <b>(7+1d10)</b>
Personal <b>4</b>	Unarmed		ex <b>(11+1d10)</b>
Social <b>4</b>			
Languages: Rating	Martial Arts/Battle Arts		
Goucha <b>ex</b>	Shree Kat		
Pa'Daskret <b>a</b>	<b>Mountain Roots Stance</b> - This technique firmly grounds the subject as if they are rooted into the very earth. By spending 2 Speed and making a successful Advanced Unarmed Skill Test (15), the Shree-Kat practitioner is firmly fixed in place. Upon successful execution of this technique Absorb Minor Melee Damage (Absorb 1 wound state of blunt damage per 2 successes on a skill test) is in effect. Also PHY + MASS value is considered doubled for purposes of a Grapple. While in Mountain Roots Stance the subject may not move during combat without breaking the stance and its positive effects. Similarly, if the subject is moved out of the stance all effects are lost.		
Erimani <b>b</b>	<b>Snow Flower Palm</b> - Allows the Set Up (q.v.) finesse effect to be used with any Unarmed attack for a reduced cost of 1 Finesse Success per +1 on the next attack.		
Vitality: <b>45</b>	<b>Lightning Leaps from the Clouds</b> - This technique allows one who is close to mastery of Shree Kat to Counterattack so suddenly any incoming attack, the two attacks appear to happen simultaneously. By either 1) Spending 4 Finesse Successes after winning the Unarmed defense skill test, thus defeating the attack with your own, or 2) Borrow and spend 4 Speed from the NEXT combat round to make an attack in the current round which occurs simultaneously. This technique can only be employed once per turn and the speed points spent are not available in the successive round.		
Lethal Wounds (5 dam. Pts. per)	Longboxing		
Head <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Spearleg</b> - Any kick performed by a Longboxer does normal damage and hit location determination, however, the cost to increase damage or penetrate armor is halved in terms of Finesse Successes. I.e. each Finesse Success spent to increase damage provides a flat +2 to damage.)		
Right Arm <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Longfist</b> - The Longboxer can strike a target 10 feet from their current position for 6 Speed. Every additional 1 Speed spent adds 5 feet to the range of the attack. On a successful attack, the Longboxer can return to their original position by spending 4 Finesse Successes. If the attack fails, the Longboxer enters Melee and HtH range and does NOT resume their original position.)		
Left Arm <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Unarmed Battle Art		
Chest <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Ignore Pain</b> - By making an Advanced Difficulty (15) Unarmed skill test, the character can dismiss all skill penalties incurred from Wound State loss. This lasts for the duration of combat or until the character is knocked unconscious. <b>Second Wind</b> - Second Wind allows a character to take a Recovery (q.v.) and still attack during the turn in which they do.		
Abdomen <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Equipment		
Left Leg <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	Oversized Tuxedo		
Right Leg <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Hronda Bosh</b> – “Death’s Friend” Fire Reaches War Club - Base Damage: 30ap1 (fan blade), 12ap2 (stabbing tip); Encumbrance: 10; Melee: long		
Valdreyr			
<b>Env. Tolerance</b> : 2x Mass to resist poison, alcohol or drugs			
<b>Gigantic</b> : modifiers figured into stats			
<b>Illiterate</b> : cannot read or write			
<b>Impoverished</b> : no cash to start with			
<b>Shree Kat</b> : see Martial Arts			
<b>Longboxing</b> : see Martial Arts			

You can't quite remember what happened, but you know it was bad. The kind of bad with guns, and screams, and fire. Your Hantsu village was wiped off the face of the Periphery that night, and you survived in the desert for years, alone. You joined a warlord's tribe for a time, until you found out it was they who had done it. You got your first taste of vengeance then, and did a lot of terrible things to good people - a stone cold killer. You were headed on the road to oblivion, but a Marshal stopped you from going completely bad. She taught you right from wrong, calmed the hatred in your heart to a cool burn for justice.

After a long time as a Deputy, you became a Marshal in your own right. Now you bring what justice there is to the badlands, but avenging wrongs be your specialty. You'll go to any length to right a wrong, or bring payback to those who deserve it. Sometimes this takes you away from the deserts and jungles to the mainlands, but people, they're all the same no matter where you go. Some good, some bad. It's making the bad ones pay keeps you going.

## Runemagic

A Runemage may cast as many Charms a day as they like, but each casting increases their Fatigue penalty to their Runemagic Skill Test until they rest. Every Lesser Rune cast inflicts –1 to subsequent Runemagic rolls and each use of a Greater rune inflicts –3. Fatigue penalties for casting Runemagic are cumulative. Every hour of rest (sleep or meditation) reduces Runemagic Fatigue by 1.

**Explosion** - Creation Cost: 20 Creation time: 6 Speed Duration: Instantaneous

**Explosion**—Creation Cost: 20 Creation time: 5 speed: Duration: instantaneous  
Popular with mercenaries and other military types, this rune creates a great burst of concussive force a few seconds after it is inscribed (generally on something easily thrown such as a strip of runing paper or a small stone). All within a 10 foot radius suffer a 10ap1 attack. For every 3 points added to the Creation Cost, the damage can be increased by 1 point.

**Heal** - Creation Cost: 15 Creation time: 12 Speed cost during combat (near instantaneous outside of combat Duration: Permanent. This will return 5 General Wounds, but will not heal Location Wound States. For every 1 point added to the Creation Cost, an additional point of General Wounds can be healed. Only a single heal rune can be used on each body location.

**Shroud** - Creation Cost: 20 Casting time: 6 speed Duration: 1 hour

This rune generates a pale, hazy shroud about the inscriber. It obscures details and identities and generally makes the bearer difficult to see in dim light. When attempting to pass unnoticed in the right conditions, the rune's bearer can decrease the difficulty of any Stealth skill test by 1 Finesse Level.

**Signal** - Creation Cost: 10 Creation Time: 30 seconds Duration: 5 minutes

A simple variation of the light rune, signal runes create bright flares or even simple symbols or letters up to ten feet tall. The signal will glow brightly for the duration of the rune, hovering above the caster at a height of their choosing. Each 5 added to the Creation Cost can double the signal's duration. An additional 5 to the Creation Cost alone will allow the caster to add special properties to the signal: coded flashing, complete words, brighter radiance, etc.

**Slave Rune** - Creation Cost: 20    Creation Time: 1 hour    Duration Permanent

This despicable rune is widely used by the Slavers of Bhuket and the Theocracy of Dharsus, creating head harnesses equipped with slave runes, or some slaves even have slave runes branded or tattooed onto their bodies. Because of this, the Slave Rune is illegal in all civilized countries. Using one, or even possessing one carries dire penalties in the lands of Vallunei and Edyss. Those under the effect of this rune will follow every command given them by the creator or owner of the rune, even if their mind refuses, their bodies will be compelled to obey. Resistance to this rune often develops after about a year, requiring the reapplication of a new slave rune.

### **Greater Runemagic**

**Fly** (target, continuous)

The bearer of this rune is made weightless for a time, and under direct mental command can fly through the air. Because of the weightless state granted by the rune, the load-bearing capability of a flying Runemage is limited. The rune grants weightlessness to the Runemage and all their carried possessions, and they may bear with them someone of equal or lower MASS without suffering any loss to their flying speed. Encumbered Runemages, those whose total carried equipment exceeds three times their MASS, fly at half normal speed, as do those bearing a passenger with a MASS that is half again greater than their own. Flying Runemages are grounded if they attempt to bear someone with a MASS twice their own.

Inanimate objects can bear a Fly rune, but will simply hover or drift (depending upon prevailing weather and wind conditions) until a guiding mind comes in contact with the rune. Generally, Charms, Wards, and Talismans will allow an inanimate object to fly that is roughly man-sized or smaller. For larger inanimate objects, Glyphs function much better. Large objects with a Fly Glyph have a greater load-bearing capacity, but the Glyph must be at least half the size of the object in question. A Standard Glyph could make a rug, a door, or something of similar size able to fly, while an Enormous Glyph could make something as large as an airship float unaided in midair.

CC      Primary Effect

10      Flight speed is 20MPH. In combat, the flying Runemage can move 5-feet for 1 Speed as normal, and can move 40 feet in 1 Count. Inanimate objects bearing a Fly Rune move at half this speed when under the direction of the Runemage.

15      Flight speed is 40MPH. In combat, the flying Runemage can move 10-feet for 1 Speed and can move 80 feet in 1 Count. Inanimate objects bearing a Fly Rune move at half this speed when under the direction of the Runemage.

20      Expert Flight Speed is 60 MPH. In combat, the flying Runemage can move 20-feet for 1 Speed and can move 120 feet in 1 Count. Inanimate objects bearing a Fly Rune move at half this speed when under the direction of the Runemage.

**Rebuke the Unnatural** (zone, continuous)

Shadekin are anathema to life and as such are an affront to Drandlur, who has no connection to these unnatural creatures. When Drandlur's energy is invoked in its purest form, Shadekin respond violently and negatively to its presence, shrinking from its radiance and sometimes even being wounded by it. The rune itself is simply the true name of Drandlur, expressed as a single brilliantly glowing sigil of rainbow hues. Simply seeing the rune, Shadekin will be reluctant to approach it. Those Shadekin that are inside of its Zone will, on their Turn, attempt to move out of the rune's area of effect. As the Runemage grows in power, their Rebuke the Unnatural rune has the capability to harm some Shadekin and cause others to flee in terror or become confused.

CC      Primary Effect

15      All Shadekin caught in the rune's Zone must spend their Turn moving out of the rune's area of effect.

20      Expert As above but all those Shadekin with an INT of 5 or less flee in terror, leaving the Zone on their Turn and fleeing the immediate area for the duration of the rune. Those Shadekin with an INT of 5-10 must spend their Turn moving out of the rune's area of effect and from then on are Confused for the duration of the rune. Shadekin with an INT of 10+ are unaffected by either of the above conditions.